



NEWSLETTER MARCH 2013

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Dates for your diary – see back page for details

Civic Awards Presentation

Thursday 18 April 2013

Civic Awards Presentation and Lecture by Jonathan Glancey, architectural critic and author.

Visit to Wallsworth Hall, Twigworth

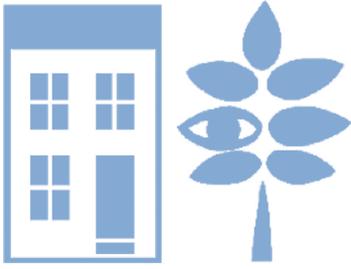
Tuesday 14 May 2013

Simon Trapnell, Director of Nature in Art will talk about the history of Wallsworth Hall and Gardens.

Lecture at Parmoor House

Tuesday 11 June 2013

Howard Barber, Cheltenham Borough Council Space Designer, will give a lecture entitled *Re-imagining Cheltenham's Public Spaces*.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

When I became Chairman some 4 years ago, we were all deeply frustrated by the deterioration in the town centre pavements and the Civic Pride programme, which had stalled at the starting line. What a difference now, despite the current economic gloom and public expenditure cuts.



Art Gallery Extension

2013 should see the opening of the Art Gallery extension and the extended Regents Arcade, and the completion of the first stage of the magnificent restoration of Pittville Gates. The Town Hall and Pittville Pump Room look set to move into a trust, hopefully to protect them for the future.

This year work should start on the Brewery Phase 2 development, which will replace that monstrosity along the High Street, and we should also see commencement of the redevelopment of North Place and Portland Street car parks.

As shops close, scaffolding appears and refurbishment commences, a number of sites, such as Haines and Strange, which have stood derelict for some time are now showing signs of redevelopment. The repaving of the Promenade continues and hopefully this will act as a catalyst for improvements to railings, forecourts and buildings in the area.

We should see plans for Boots Corner and other parts of the town centre, including St Mary's churchyard, emerging during the year.

The relocation of the Municipal Offices and the future of the existing building should become clearer. Added to this should come the release of the Joint Core Strategy with its implications for housing and employment. There are still other challenges ahead, and I would like to see the establishment of a unique "Cheltenham" identity for our medieval High Street.

This is a massive amount of change and a great vote of confidence in Cheltenham's future, but as always it carries with it great risk as well as great opportunities. There has never been a more important time for the Society to be ever vigilant and at the same time grasp the exciting opportunities to influence the future of the town.



Municipal Offices

Much of the work of the Society goes on behind the scenes in various groups. We need more members to get involved; perhaps just for a few hours assisting with an event, by providing expertise and advice or just letting us know what they think. The more that get involved the easier it is to exert our respected influence in protecting and enhancing the town, and also the better we get to know each other. If you can give a few hours to help us or if you have a relevant expertise then please let us know.



Pittville Gates

At the Open Forum following the 2012 Annual General Meeting a number of issues were raised, which the Executive Committee have pursued. I can now report the following achievements:-

- Tewkesbury Road – The improvement of this key gateway is now one of the future ambitions for the Cheltenham Development Taskforce.
- Involvement in other areas of the town – we had a very positive meeting with 16 Resident and Trader groups from around the town and we will be organising a second meeting in the Spring to discuss proposals on how we can all work together on a number of issues affecting the whole town.
- Cycling in pedestrianised areas – we have had a meeting with the Police and the Borough Council to discuss the issue and a members meeting has been organised for July.

This is my last Chairman's Report as I stand down at the Annual General Meeting. It has been a fascinating time for me, and gratifying to find how highly the Society is regarded. Over the years the

Society has gathered many more activities beyond those of monitoring developments that were so important to our founders back in 1925. All this would not be possible without a very hardworking Executive Committee along with many others who get involved with subcommittees or just helping out at some event to whom I am eternally grateful. Without you there would be no Society and no influence. I especially want to thank Roger Woodley and Bob Keevil for picking up the management of Parmoor House following Phil Newcombe's death and dealing so ably with a number of unexpected issues. Ken Stephens and David Martin do a marvellous job looking after the accounts. Mike Duckering has brought new life to the Newsletter. Diane Lewis has worked hard to maintain the Civic Awards standards and John Henry's comments on the Planning Forum. My sincerest thanks go to the indefatigable Sheila Chaplin who steps down from the Executive Committee this time. Sheila's contribution to the Society over the years is immeasurable, always stepping forward when others hesitate, always there with ideas and enormous energy, always introducing, persuading, and of course cajoling.

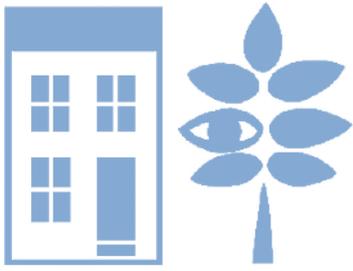
I will not disappear, but continue working behind the scenes on various projects. I give my best wishes to the new Executive Committee under the capable chairmanship of my mentor and successor, Douglas Ogle.

Stephen Clarke

PARMOOR HOUSE

Three well-equipped meeting rooms at Parmoor House are available for private hire.

For bookings, please contact the House Manager on **01242 524632** or email: parmoor@cheltenhamcivicsociety.co.uk



PATERSON MEMORIAL LECTURE

In December 2012, the Civic Society was delighted to welcome Ben Bolgar, Architect and Director of Design at the Prince's Foundation for Building Community, to give the annual Paterson Memorial Lecture.



Ben Bolgar

A large audience gathered at Christ Church to hear this year's speaker, Ben Bolgar, Director of Design at the Prince's Foundation for Building Community (confusingly a new name for the Prince's Trust for the Built Environment, previously the Prince's Institute of Architecture: but if you think about it, these changes indicate a widening of the organisation's range and Prince Charles's interests). Ben's talk was entitled *Learning from Cheltenham – sustainability and the Pre-War City*. In the event however, his subject matter and arguments came from a much wider base than Cheltenham alone, which was used simply as one example of how we should be learning from the past.

The Prince was quoted several times, including his comments from the 2009 Dimbleby Lecture, to the effect that we face today a triple threat from climate change, insufficient resources and population increase, all at a time of an unbelievable increase in energy consumption. Against this menacing future, we still live in towns and cities which, being ever-static architecture, and not changing at the speed of technology and economics, perennially, by their very nature, exhibit life as it used to be.

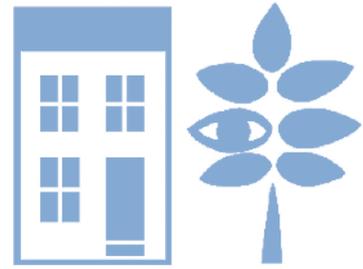
Therefore, the argument runs, the new communities which must unavoidably be built should constitute, not megacities, but small sustainable units of living, where you can walk to the amenities you need: 'poly-centric' is the jargon. Ben talked in some detail about Sherford, a new project which the Prince's Foundation is developing near Plymouth. It will be a group of adjoining walkable neighbourhoods, rather larger than the now-settled and well-known Poundbury, but with separate small centres, all embodying the same principle of harmony in the design.

That harmony is achieved by the use of variety. In street design, the ideal entails curves, bends and corners, coming across the unexpected; not grids, not straight lines, but surprise, nothing predictable. And similarly in architecture; reflect the rich vocabulary of the past in terms of appearances, styles, materials, functions; create beauty, community and sustainability, not commercialism. This means short distances from one amenity to another, and from home to the places we need to visit: a new approach to planning.



The Whistling Witch, Poundbury

Ben Bolgar thus put before us a challenging and seductive vision. Among the questions, perhaps inevitably after such a widely-conceived presentation, the point was raised as to what had been learned from Cheltenham specifically, as his title had



encouraged us to expect. The answer was: Regency. Ben believes that the Regency approach to building and planning was the ideal. By the Victorian age the detail has become fussy and repetitive, and the dire influence of commerce intrudes. The calm restraint, but nevertheless varied, stylistic and visual consistency of the Regency period is one to be conserved and, in spirit, emulated.

It was a sentiment with which the audience could easily agree.

Roger Woodley

PLANNING FORUM REPORT

The most important development in recent months – and indeed years – is the proposed scheme for North Place. This is a large mixed-use scheme in the centre of town that includes a supermarket, shops, car park, housing and public open space. The scheme has been widely discussed, and our views on it are probably well known. Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that overall we remain disappointed by the final scheme. We had hoped for an iconic development on this important site that could sit proudly alongside the traditional historic architecture of Cheltenham, as called for in the Council’s own ambitious design brief. Instead, there is a set of buildings that are little more inspired than many mundane proposals regularly put forward elsewhere in the town. The whole project fails to create an important sense of space, and lacks the presence and grandeur needed to complement the rest of the town centre. Despite a certain amount of tinkering in response to public concern, not enough has been done to rescue the basically flawed scheme that has recently been approved.

It is disappointing that it is not better, but looking on the bright side, the site has been awaiting development for many years. Let us hope that its redevelopment will proceed in the present economic climate, and that it will help to make this part of town a vibrant part of the town centre. The option of it remaining in its present state for 20 years is not one I would welcome!



Proposed Offices, St George's Road

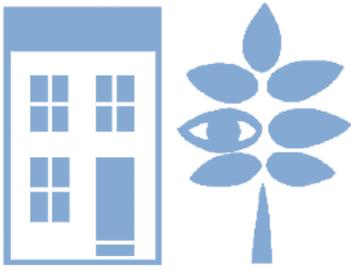
It may be as a result of the harsh economic climate that there are few important schemes to report on. The number of interesting schemes at our meetings has been small. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning two relatively modest schemes, which stand out as significantly better than the average. The first is a small office block on the corner of St George’s Road and Honeybourne Way, which has been well-designed to fit its site.



Proposed Apartments, Hatherly Road

We also liked an apartment block on Hatherly Road, opposite Hatherley Court. It is an interesting and innovative design well tailored to the site. We particularly liked the fact that the mature trees will be retained and form an important part of the ambience of the site.

John Henry



CIVIC AWARDS

2012 CIVIC AWARDS

For projects, which through vision, design and craftsmanship beyond the ordinary, both respect their surroundings and give an example for the future, resulting in a feature of which Cheltenham will be proud.

The 2012 winners of Civic Awards and Commendations in each category are:-

BUILDING RESTORATION

Commendation:

- **Library, Theatre and Green Room, Cheltenham College, Bath Road**



The Library

The refurbishment of the Library, Theatre and new Green Room acknowledges the original architectural attributes of these College buildings, whilst bringing the school facilities into the twenty-first century. In the Library, the removal of the peninsula bookshelves has restored the room's original spatial qualities, and the new Green Room, developed from a former storeroom, has revealed a previously concealed nineteenth century wall frieze, now restored. All the building works have been carried out to an exceedingly high standard of design and workmanship.

- **2 North Place**

One of two Georgian townhouses, the building has been returned from commercial to residential use. The ground floor elevation has been restored and a mansard storey added to match its neighbour.

- **Charlton Kings War Memorial, Horsefair Street**

The panel was pleased to see this thoughtful restoration of the Charlton Kings War Memorial. The commemoration of the fallen of the First World War is now restored in slate, and the names of those killed in subsequent wars have been added on engraved slate panels around the base.

NEW BUILDING

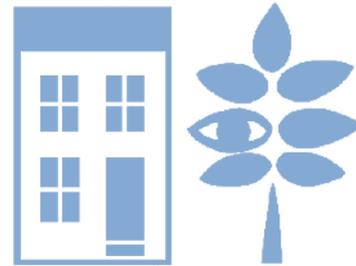
Award:

- **The Fire Station, College Baths Road**



The Fire Station is the third of four new community stations for Gloucestershire. Designed by architects, Calder Peel Partnership, the awards panel was impressed by the way in which a large, functional building was accommodated discreetly on this prominent corner site. The elegantly curved modernist building succeeds in turning the corner with panache, whilst visually breaking down the scale and mass of the development. Its dramatic form is a delight, and makes a significant contribution to Cheltenham's twenty-first century architecture.





- **Elysium, Ham Road**



Set in a prominent location just below the crest of Ham Hill, this beautifully conceived private house nestles into the hillside with a discretion that belies its size. Almost unnoticeable from the road, Elysium is built to an exceptionally high standard and clad in local Cotswold stone with a dry-stone wall aesthetic. This is fine, sustainable, contemporary architecture that responds to its context with the same innate qualities as traditional farm buildings. Its fortress sense of enclosure within the landscape, without all the usual outwards signs of domesticity, reinforces its unassuming sensitivity.

Commendation:

- **The Coliseum, Albion Street**



Designed by architects Stanley Partnership, this new complex of shops and apartments gives a much-needed lift to Albion Street. The modern design, with its curved corners reflecting the Art Deco cinema that formerly occupied the site, is immaculate in its detailing and use of materials. The panel was impressed that this same attention to good design extends to the return elevation with its interesting stepped façade successfully breaking down the building's mass. The Coliseum's crisp modernity cannot fail to be a stimulus for other developments in the area.

- **Timbercombe Gate, Little Herberts Road**

This small gated estate is a well-designed, varied group of two and three storey houses that are linked by the use of a small palette of contemporary materials. The well considered layout makes good use of a compact site, and will undoubtedly contribute to creating a good community ethos.

LANDSCAPE / BUILT ENVIRONMENT

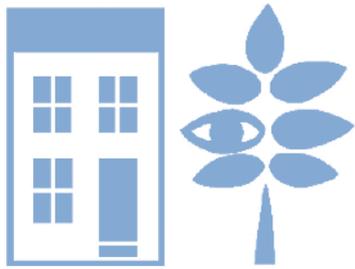
- **Hudson and Manser Street Terraces**

As part of the St Paul's regeneration scheme, transformational improvements to the existing houses in Hudson and Manser Street resulting from direct consultation have positively enhanced the appearance and well-being of the neighbourhood.

- **Railings, Drake House, Malvern Road**

Until the railings and stone piers were reinstated, Drake House was almost completely hidden behind a large coniferous hedge. The restored railings are a welcome improvement to the streetscape, and hopefully a stimulus to others to do likewise.

Diane Lewis



DEAN CLOSE: THE FIRST 100 YEARS



In February, we had an entertaining talk from the Revd Charles Whitney, the School Archivist, and former Deputy Head of Dean Close Junior School. Charles, who has written a book on the history of the school, proved to be an engaging and energetic speaker who brought to life, what could have been a rather 'dusty' subject, by tracing the progress of the school through the influence and contribution of each Headmaster over the first one hundred years.

Charles started by saying that in the nineteenth century the rising middle class felt secondary education was inadequate for the growing demands of industry, commerce, government and empire, and consequently there was a tremendous growth in the setting up of independent schools. The Revd Nathaniel Woodard, an Anglo-Catholic clergyman, was successful in setting-up schools such as Lancing College, Hurstpierpoint and Ardingly. However, the Evangelical branch of the church was horrified, fearing that the middle classes were being set up to eventually be reclaimed by Rome, especially since the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829.

The Revd Francis Close, the rector of Cheltenham at the time, and later Dean of Carlisle, was a leading Evangelical and he became intent on countering this 'Popish Plot'. He became involved in setting up a number of schools, including Cheltenham College, the Ladies College, St Paul's Teacher Training College and several infant schools in Cheltenham. When Francis Close died in 1882 it was resolved to set up a school in Cheltenham in the evangelical tradition to be called the Dean Close Memorial School. The school opened in 1886 with 12 boys.

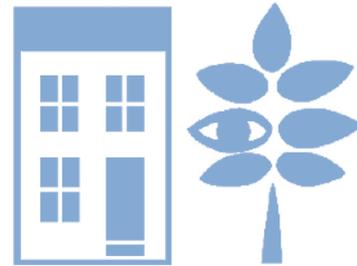
The Revd Dr William H Flecker 1886 - 1924

Flecker was 26 when he became the first Headmaster. One of his sons was James Elroy Flecker, the poet and dramatist, who was remembered with a blue plaque erected by the Civic Society at the school in 2011. Flecker built the school up to over 200 boys, the vast majority boarders. He persuaded the governors to build more classrooms, more dormitories, a swimming pool/gym and other facilities. His last project was the building of the School Chapel, which was dedicated in 1923 in memory of those who gave their lives in the Great War. Before this the school worshipped in St Marks church.



Dr Flecker, the first Headmaster, and his staff, 1886





Percy Bolton 1924 - 1938

Introduced the house system and upgraded the Arts, notably drama – during his time the Tuckwell Open Air Theatre was built (opened 1937). But numbers went down largely because of the Wall Street crash and its aftermath.

Hugh Elder 1938 - 1946

Guided the school through World War II. The school was evacuated to Monkton Combe near Bath and numbers dropped very low – it is said that the school was within three minutes of closing if a generous benefactor had not stepped in and teachers agreed to a pay cut.

Anthony Gilks 1946 – 1953

The shortest reign of any Headmaster thus far. His priorities were to build up the numbers after the war, to improve academic standards and to widen sporting and extra-curricular choices, and to bring new younger men onto the staff.

The Revd Douglas Graham 1954 - 1968

A remarkable man - classicist and theologian; Irish rugby trialist; later Royal Naval light-heavyweight boxing champion, when a chaplain in World War II; bridge player; Cheltenham horse racing enthusiast and a man of considerable charm. He managed to build the numbers in the senior school to over 300 while also improving facilities – including an up-to-date gym and swimming pool and opening the first dayboy House in 1957.

Christopher Turner 1968 - 1979

Co-education began with his first term. Dean Close was one of the first independent schools to go co-ed and by the time Turner left it was established throughout both the senior and junior schools. He also brought corporal punishment to an end and developed links between the School and local commerce and industry. The school had now grown to 400.



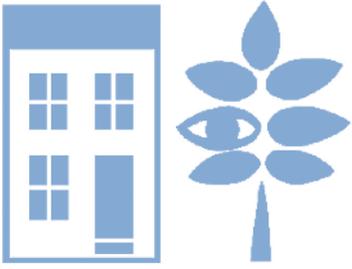
Main School Building

Christopher Bacon 1979 – 1998

In a sense the school came full circle after 100 years with the arrival of Christopher Bacon who, like Dr Flecker, was a strong Evangelical and demanded excellence in every facet of school life. During his time there was a significant improvement academically and in sporting and cultural performances. He also pushed forward a big building programme – the current Dining Hall, classrooms, a Design & Technology block, the Art School, the Music School and, of course, the superb Theatre, which at his retirement was named the Bacon Theatre and has become an important venue in the cultural life of Cheltenham. When Christopher Bacon left there were approximately 475 in senior school and under him the School's facilities had been modernised to rank alongside the best in the country, enabling the school to enter its second century with confidence and self-assurance.

Roger Brown





2013 PROGRAMME

Following on from our first lecture in February, when the Revd Charles Whitney entertained us with the first 100 years of Dean Close School, the programme continues with the **Civic Awards** presentation by Jonathan Glancey, at the Town Hall at 4.00pm Thursday 18 April. Jonathan will be giving the evening lecture at St Andrew's Church, Montpellier.



Jonathan Glancey

An Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Jonathan Glancey is a highly regarded architectural critic, and broadcaster. Architecture and Design Editor of the *Independent* newspaper from 1989 to 1997, he then became Architecture and Design correspondent of the *Guardian* until 2012. Previously he was Assistant Editor of the *Architectural Review* and a founding editor of *Blueprint*. Among the many publications he currently contributes to are the *Daily Telegraph*, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, the *Architectural Review* and *Architectural Digest* as well as making radio and television documentaries for the BBC. Published books include *New British Architecture*, *C20th Architecture*, *The Structures That Shaped the Century* and *The Story of Architecture*. Other books cover such diverse subjects as *Spitfire: The Biography* and *Nagaland: a journey to India's forgotten frontier*. A railway enthusiast, Jonathan has actually driven and fired steam trains worldwide, a recently published book being *Giants of Steam*.

In reappraising and updating Ian Nairn's polemic Architectural Review of 1955, an attack on post war development, Jonathan's campaigning for higher standards in architecture and planning, together with his infectious enthusiasm, should deliver a stimulating and enjoyable evening not to be missed and a chance to talk to the author over a glass of wine.

On Tuesday 14 May we have the opportunity to visit **Wallsworth Hall, Twigworth** for a lecture by Simon Trapnell. The visit to this eighteenth century house, included in Simon Jenkins' *England's 1000 Best Houses*, will start with a glass of wine and a walk around the gardens and its sculptures. Simon Trapnell, the distinguished Director of *Nature in Art*, will give us an illustrated talk on the history of Wallsworth Hall. Afterwards he will take us around the galleries before we leave at 9pm.



Wallsworth Hall, Twigworth

This is an opportunity not to be missed. Admission is £6 on the door including a glass of wine.

For those who wish to make their own way to Twigworth, about 10 miles, the parking is free and the map overleaf may be of use. For those who would like transport, and providing there are sufficient numbers, a coach has been provisionally booked to leave Parmoor House at 6.40pm. If interested, please telephone 01242 263394 by 23 April.



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

There are still a few members who have not renewed their subscription for 2013. If you cannot remember whether you have renewed then please contact me on **01242 239179** or email:

rjb@rbrown70.fsnet.co.uk

Anyone who I have not heard from by the end of March will be deleted from the membership register.

We warmly welcome to the Society Mr & Mrs G Lockwood and Ms Rose Lennard who joined us at the beginning of the year.

Cheltenham Civic Society welcomes new members. If you have family, friends or acquaintances who are keen to preserve what is best in Cheltenham and ensure that new developments suit the town, please contact me and I will send them details of events and an application form.

We particularly welcome those who wish to become actively involved in the society's work.

The membership fee per annum is £15 single, £20 couple, £8 student & under 18's, and £50 corporate.

Roger Brown, Membership Secretary

Do you have strong views about anything that affects the environment of Cheltenham?

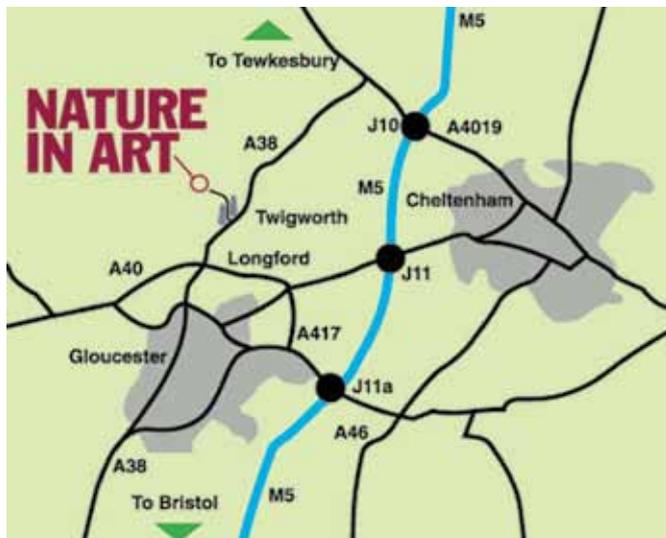
If the answer is yes – then please tell us about it.

The Editor welcomes letters, emails or any other contributions to the Newsletter.

Please note that the deadline for the next issue is 1 July 2013.

Please send letters to:

The Editor, Cheltenham Civic Society,
Parmoor House, 13 Lypiatt Terrace, Lypiatt Road,
Cheltenham GL50 2SX
or email: newsletter@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk



Nature in Art, Wallsworth Court, Twigworth

In June we will welcome Howard Barber to Parmoor House for our next lecture. Howard is Cheltenham Borough Council's Space Designer, and his talk ***Re-imagining Cheltenham's Public Spaces*** should be most informative.

Saturday 22 June is annual ***Civic Day*** and we hope to learn nearer the time of any special events planned for the day.

Cycling is a contentious issue for many in Cheltenham, and in July Members will have an opportunity to have their say and participate in the ***Cycling Forum*** on Tuesday 9 July, which will be attended by representatives of the County Council, Police and local cycling organisations.

Sheila Chaplin

LATE NEWS

The Civic Society has agreed to undertake the much needed refurbishment of the Gordon Lamp in Montpellier - more in the next issue.



FORTHCOMING CIVIC SOCIETY EVENTS

Thursday 18 April 2013 – 4.00pm

Civic Awards Presentation – Cheltenham Town Hall

Jonathan Glancey, architectural critic and author will present the awards.

Thursday 18 April 2012 – 7.30pm

Civic Awards Lecture – St Andrew's Church, Montpellier

Jonathan Glancey will give a lecture entitled *Outrage Revisited ... All Over Again!* Admission on the door £7.50 including a glass of wine. Tickets also available from the Tourist Information Centre.

Tuesday 14 May 2013 – 7.00pm

Wallsworth Hall, Twigworth

Simon Trapnell, Director of *Nature in Art* will give a talk about the history of Wallsworth Hall and Gardens.

Admission £6 on the door including a glass of wine.

Tuesday 11 June 2013 – 7.30pm

Lecture – Parmoor House

Howard Barber, Cheltenham Borough Council Space Designer, will give a lecture entitled *Re-imagining Cheltenham's Public Spaces*.

Saturday 22 June 2013

Annual Civic Day

Tuesday 9 July 2013 – 7.30pm

Cycling Forum – Parmoor House

Representatives of Gloucestershire County Council, Police and local cycling organisations will be attending a Forum to discuss and hear your views about cycling in the town.

The admission charge to a Civic Society Lecture at Parmoor House is £2 (members) and £4 (non-members). It would be helpful if you could tender the correct change at the door. Doors open at 7.00pm for tea or coffee and biscuits beforehand.

CHELTENHAM CIVIC SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman: Douglas Ogle

chairman@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk

Chairman of Planning Forum: John Henry

planning@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk

Honorary Treasurer: Ken Stephens

treasurer@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk

Civic Awards Convenor: Diane Lewis

dianelewis@waitrose.com

Chairman House Committee: Bob Keevil

robertkeevil@btinternet.com

Newsletter Editor: Mike Duckering

newsletter@cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk

Minutes Secretary: Roger Jones

arle@ukonline.co.uk

Cecil Sanderson

crsanderson@btinternet.com

Lesley Whittal

lesley@whittal.plus.com

www.cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk