

SHROPSHIRE VOICE

Campaign to Protect Rural England



A wintry view from the front porch of Wilderhope Manor, Wenlock Edge

The newsletter for Members of CPRE Shropshire



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
SHROPSHIRE

Shropshire Voice

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Editorial: Shropshire Branch and 'Shropshire Voice'

The Shropshire Branch finds itself at a turning point: the Bear Steps office has been vacated and Sarah Jameson has taken over the administrative role from David Challoner. Andy Boddington, who was a very active chairman until his recent decision to step down, has injected an energy and a sense of urgency about the campaign to protect rural England which is refreshing and necessary.

With volunteers so unequally distributed throughout the county, a new structure for campaigning on particular issues may be required, with the district boundaries becoming less rigid. While there is no substitute for local knowledge and involvement, unfortunately this is often not possible in large parts of Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin.

We think it is also time to experiment with the newsletter format. Eventually we plan to introduce some colour (using as eco-friendly a product as we can) and to print sufficient extra copies for distribution to libraries and other information outlets. Individual district reports will continue to appear with updates on specific campaigns, as well as other articles. Please let us know what you think. Letters of support or criticism, or ideas for doing things better are welcome! The organisation needs to involve more of the membership if it is to achieve as much as Shropshire's countryside deserves.

Ed.
November 2010

Shropshire Voice

Building a CPRE fit for the twenty-first century

CPRE was founded by the planner Patrick Abercrombie 84 years ago. Sixty one years ago the CPRE Shropshire branch was established. In the intervening period CPRE has resisted unsightly and unwarranted development, championed good design and defended green spaces. Some campaigns have regrettably been lost, but CPRE has been a clear voice throughout, urging planners and developers away from the worst excesses.

CPRE is not an anti-development body. For example CPRE, both nationally and locally, has called for more affordable rural housing to meet local needs, without destroying the countryside.

The coalition government has set planning on an uncertain course: the environment is to be protected by legislation, but protection is unlikely to be funded; housing targets and regional plans have been abolished, but councils and communities will be given incentives to acquiesce to new developments.

As the planners' influence weakens, CPRE will need to become stronger. For CPRE Shropshire, with an ageing and declining membership, and with its key people so overstretched, this is a difficult undertaking. Abercrombie and his successors inspired and supported the passing of Town and Country Planning, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty legislation to ensure that rural England got some protection. In an era of cuts and deregulation, CPRE must be strong enough to ensure that rural England still has some protection in the 21st century.

CPRE news from around Shropshire

Shropshire Council planning 'Core Strategy'

Shropshire Council has submitted its Core Strategy to the Planning Inspectorate. 27,500 new homes in Shropshire by 2026 is now a maximum projected figure, rather than a target.

Most housing in rural Shropshire will be delivered through Shropshire Council's Core Strategy and other related policies, which proposes housing and other facilities in rural areas where there is an identifiable need. The Site Allocations and Management Development (SAMDev) document recently published by Shropshire Council, lists sites for development, whether suitable or not. CPRE Shropshire has strongly criticised this document. Council planning officers have suggested that settlement boundaries should be abandoned.

The new coalition government is championing 'localism' and a 'right to build', and national and regional housing targets and regional plans have been scrapped. This could allow communities to provide affordable housing and facilities and bypass the planning system if a large enough majority of residents vote in favour. This might involve Community Housing Trusts in villages.

The countryside must thrive if it is to be beautiful. Small scale affordable housing development near to places of employment in the countryside need not damage the quality and tranquillity of the countryside, if sympathetically sited within the rural landscape and complementary with local building styles.

North West Relief Road (Shrewsbury)

CPRE and its allies in the No Way! Group are battling for this road scheme to be thrown out for good and for the council's energies redirected to traffic management and public transport.

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CPRE news from around Shropshire, continued

Tesco Extra at Harlescott (Shrewsbury)

Tesco admitted it had allocated more space to 'comparison goods' (rather than 'convenience goods' such as food) than permitted. Tesco applied for retrospective permission but CPRE challenged Tesco's data. Tesco later withdrew their application. They have since submitted a new application and Shropshire Council officers are recommending it for approval.

Battlefield Incinerator (Shrewsbury)

Planning officers have recommended this, despite opposition by residents and other groups, including CPRE, on environmental and cost grounds. The incinerator is planned for a site adjoining the historic Battlefield site and the new Shropshire Food Enterprise Centre.

Granville Incinerator (Telford)

Sita UK has abandoned its plans for an incinerator within Telford's green network. CPRE and Telford and Wrekin Borough Council opposed the proposals.

Great and Little Ness

The Strategic Planning Committee has thrown out plans for two large broiler sheds. Council officers recommended the scheme be approved. The Nesses Action Group, local parish councils and CPRE made a clear case against the proposals. Even farming-related developments are not always suitable amid narrow country lanes and quiet countryside.

Oswestry

Oswestry is a bustling market town full of character. It also has a number of supermarkets. Oswestry is now threatened simultaneously by four separate supermarket applications. Independent research for Shropshire Council research and analysis by CPRE Oswestry indicates that another superstore will not be required for several years.

A campaign was mounted by a coalition of CPRE Oswestry, Oswestry 21, Oswestry Civic Society and other groups opposed to the applications. In rejecting one of the schemes councillors said: 1) the traffic it would generate could not be accommodated, 2) it failed to preserve and enhance a conservation area, and 3) it would have a negative impact on residents' amenity and the town centre.

CPRE Oswestry has been awarded the *Marsh Christian Trust Group Award* in recognition of the quality and innovation of its campaigning. Mike Bullen, Chairman of CPRE Oswestry said: "The award is both a surprise and a delight. We have a great team of people campaigning in Oswestry. We have always tried to be positive during the Keep Oswestry Special campaign, the main aim of which is to protect the local shops and markets. The campaign has been successful so far because we work so closely with local groups who are full of energy and ideas."

Branch and district news: Bridgnorth District Committee

The Committee has discussed a number of planning issues. Among them was the Lea Manor Hotel, Albrighton, which has been empty for over three years. Attempts are being made to bring it into use again, either as an ongoing business or as private dwellings. The Committee recently studied and responded to the consultation documents from Shropshire Council on "the Spotlight on the Shropshire Economy" and the Draft Statement on Community Involvement. The Committee continues to monitor local planning applications of interest or concern.

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Other rural matters

Local food networks

CPRE Shropshire has worked closely with Transition Towns Shrewsbury on local food networks. Volunteers in Shrewsbury explored the network of local foods, and the links between local producers and consumers.

Light pollution

CPRE Shropshire ran an innovative online '**dark skies**' project to draw attention to light pollution earlier in the year. The long term aim is to create a Starlight Sanctuary in the Shropshire Hills.

Litter and fly tipping

Shropshire Council announced earlier in the year that 6,138 tonnes of litter and fly-tipping had been cleared in the previous eight months. "Our beautiful hills, valleys and towns bring great pleasure to the people that live here and bring thousands of tourists into Shropshire. We must stop them being defaced by litter."

Volunteers

We are always **looking for volunteers** for a wide range of activities, ranging from roadside clutter, transport, litter, dark skies and so much else. If you can help in any way, please contact your local district group (see back cover for details).

A short history of the Shropshire Hills AONB

by Claire Cox (CPRE representative for the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership)

The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding natural Beauty (AONB) was designated way back in 1958. It was only after the 2000 Countryside Act, when AONB's were given the same protection as National Parks, that money was allocated on a fairer scale. In the Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-2014 the principal purpose of our AONB is stated as '**to conserve and enhance natural beauty**'. Is that not very like CPRE's aim?

The other aims of the AONB are keeping the Shropshire Hills countryside thriving, working alongside nature, mitigating climate change, awareness, enjoyment and community involvement. Therefore, we have much in common with the AONB. Although CPRE may influence planning more, especially at national level, the AONB does so much to advise and help with grants for local community projects, and it has a huge influence. The AONB has had a Sustainable Development Fund for years and now also encourages applications for LEADER money (money for projects that benefit the AONB area) and also European grants.

I enjoy attending AONB Partnership meetings 3 times a year. I report back to the CPRE Shropshire branch what the AONB's general policies are, mentioning recent successes. I have made the CPRE Shropshire Branch aware that AONB Management Plan policies are relevant when objecting to planning applications in the AONB. These policies cover **design, scale, broadleaved woodland, agri-environment funding, quiet enjoyment** and the **Wrekin Forest**.

The AONB Planning Officer, Glyn Barratt, together with the Manager, Phil Holden, receive copies of planning applications for sites within the area, and react accordingly. If an application is intrusive because of its height and is within 5km of the boundary, the AONB will feel free to object. They do not comment if the application is outside the AONB boundary. The AONB liaises closely with **Natural England** and **Shropshire Council** (its masters) and the Wildlife Trust. It is a strong supporter of EAT LOCAL FOOD.

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Explore Coalbrookdale - 'birthplace of Industry'

(Numbers in brackets refer to sites on the accompanying map)

(1) Stretthill House, (2) Arboretum, (3) Quaker burial ground, (4) Tea Kettle Row, (5) Rosehill, (6) Dale House, (7) Carpenter's Row, (8) Darby Furnace and Ironworks - Museum of Iron, (9) Holy Trinity Church, (10) The Coalbrookdale Institute, (11) The Rotunda.

Topography and Geology

The Severn Gorge and Coalbrookdale are very young indeed, formed since the end of the last ice age, about 20,000 years ago. As the ice melted a great lake (Lake Lapworth) covered the plains of Cheshire and North Shropshire. Instead of draining into the Dee estuary, which was blocked by ice sheets covering Wales, a channel was carved through the relatively soft geological layers in the south east corner near to The Wrekin. The accessible supply of almost every mineral resource within a very short distance of Coalbrookdale made it uniquely well-placed to be a location for innovation and experiment. The geological map of the area reveals an extraordinarily diverse geology. The area was in this respect "the most extraordinary district in the world".

Industrial history

Coalbrookdale was the setting for one of the most important events in the course of the 'industrial revolution'. In 1709 Abraham Darby I used coke to fuel the furnace **(8)** in which the Darby enterprise manufactured mostly workaday objects. Immediately it became feasible to produce cast iron in large quantities.

Thus 70 years later, Abraham Darby III could produce enough cast iron to build the bridge across the Severn which is so celebrated today. It was not so much the bridge's design as its material which attracted, and continues to attract, such interest. Its design also allowed sufficient clearance for boats even when the river was high. In the floods of 1795, the Iron Bridge was the only bridge downstream of Atcham to survive.

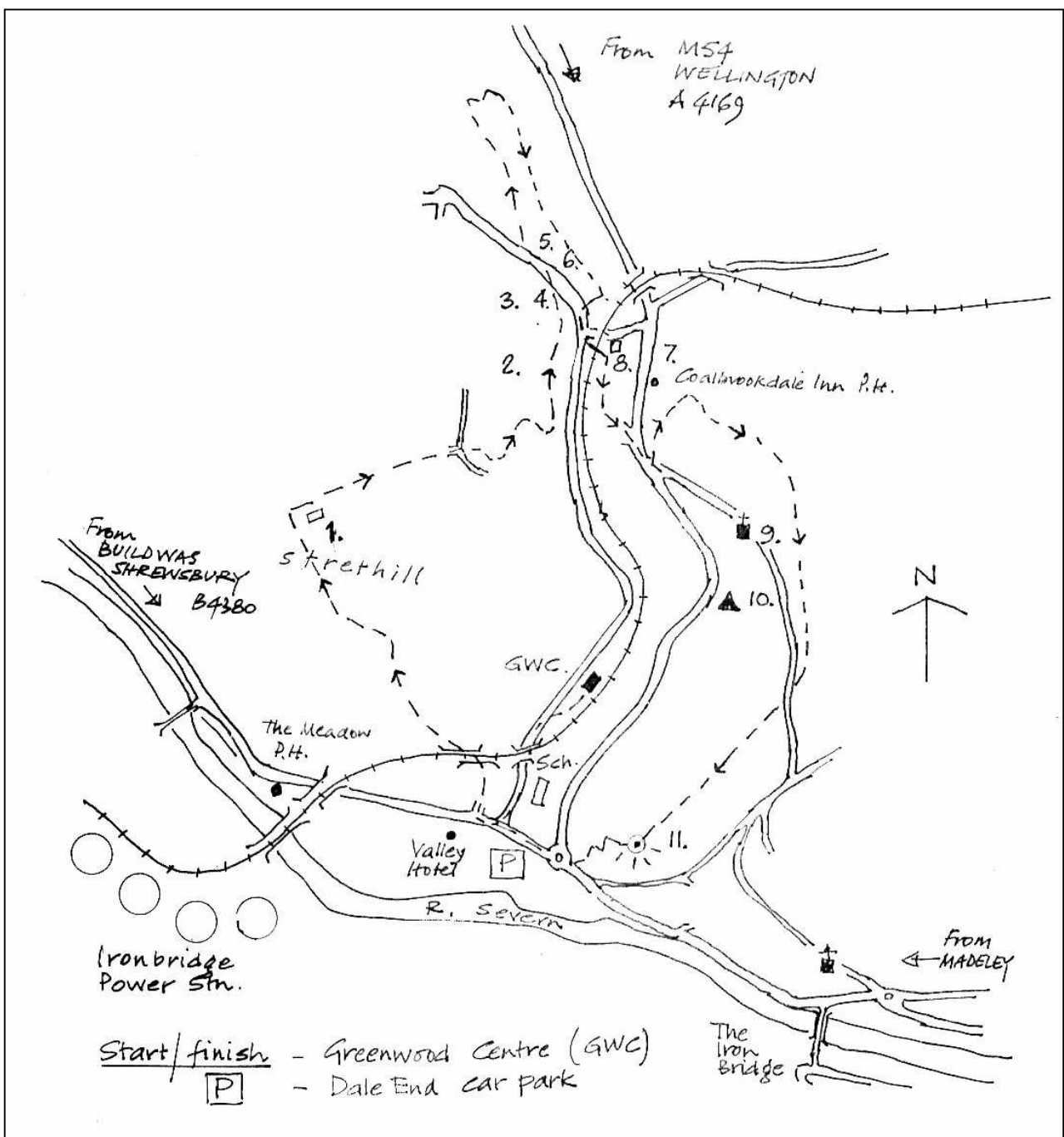
The local natural resources quickly became exhausted. The relative isolation of Coalbrookdale and the difficulties of navigation on the river through the Severn Gorge also contributed to its decline. By the beginning of the nineteenth century its most prosperous period was over. The area continued to attract some manufacturing activity throughout the nineteenth century, but the focus of industrial development had long since gone elsewhere.

Social history

The Darbys were an industrious Quaker family, and it was their settled and ordered business which made such an important contribution to the industrial development of Coalbrookdale. Following their Quaker principles, they provided housing and security at a time when such things were rare - see Tea Kettle Row **(4)** and Carpenters' Row **(7)** for early examples of workers' housing.

The Darbys provided for the recreation of their employees by planting an arboretum **(2)**, and creating paths and walks, including the Rope Walk, over the adjacent steep sides of the Dale. Several buildings were constructed for sitting in and enjoying the views - one such is the Rotunda **(11)**, of which only the foundations remain.

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Sketch map of Coalbrookdale

A burial ground **(3)** was established by Abraham Darby II for the Quaker Friends in 1763, and it was here that many of the later Darbys were buried. William Reynolds is also buried here.

The Darbys built several houses in Coalbrookdale. Dale House **(6)** was the first, close to their iron works. Rosehill **(5)** was built by the works manager, and later became a Darby family home. Large houses were later built at Dale End and Stret Hill. Stret Hill House **(1)** is a fine late Victorian house, remote from the noise and pollution of the industry which paid for it. Ultimately the Darbys did so well for themselves that a move to the Church of England became inevitable! At this stage they were the benefactors of Holy Trinity, Coalbrookdale, built in the 1850s **(9)**.

A workers institute **(10)** was built in 1859 to provide training in skills relevant to the industrial enterprises nearby, including design and draughtsmanship. This building has some interesting student designs displayed inside and is now a Youth Hostel.

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The rural Church in the twenty-first century

What place does the Church have among rural communities in Shropshire? Economic necessity and declining attendance has resulted in the amalgamation of parishes and the sharing of a single member of the clergy between several parishes. The separate denominations, particularly Methodists and Anglicans, work closely together in some areas, sharing premises and ministries.

Rural churches face formidable challenges: small congregations grapple with the difficulties and expense of maintaining what is usually an ancient building which exceeds in architectural interest and value all the other buildings in the parish. All church buildings maintained by the Church of England are inspected routinely every five years. In addition to maintaining the building, legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act requires churches to provide accessible facilities. This is achieved with little or no financial assistance*.

The challenge is two-fold: to maintain the physical structure of the church building and to adapt the ministry of the church – perhaps adapt the building in some way – to ensure that the Church continues to serve the needs of the community in a changing world

**(The Shropshire Historic Churches Trust, established in 1991, financially assists in cases of need, its main aim being “to ensure that churches and chapels in Shropshire remain open as places of worship”).*

CPRE Shropshire: Contacts

Officers

President

Sarah Bury D.L. / sarah@millichope.com

Vice President

Selby Martin
01743 343784 / selbymartin@btinternet.com

Chairman (Vacancy)

Vice Chairman (Vacancy)

Membership Secretary/Administrator

Sarah Jameson
01547 528546 / admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk

Honorary Treasurer

Phil Hibberd
01743 762228 / phil.hibberd@btinternet.com

Web address

www.cpre.org.uk

National Office

The Campaign to Protect Rural England
Registered Office 128 Southwark Street
London, SE1 0SW
Tel: 020 7981 2800 / Fax: 020 7981 2899
Email: info@cpre.org.uk / www.cpre.org.uk

Districts

Bridgnorth

Stella/David Voysey
01746 780356 / david.voysey@jacd.co.uk

North Shropshire (Vacancy)

Oswestry

Mike Bullen
hebullen@btinternet.com

Shrewsbury and Atcham

Roger Carlyle
cye@cardeston.zx3.net

South Shropshire

Pam Farquhar
pamela.farquhar@mypostoffice.co.uk

Telford & Wrekin

Nigel Conner
01952 592224
nigel.conner@tiscali.co.uk

Newsletter Editor

Nigel Conner
01952 592224
nigel.conner@tiscali.co.uk