

DERBY DAY

Well, not quite Derby Day. Rather, a day in Derby on 30 June, the Trust's Away Day this year. The notice about the trip described Derby as 'one of England's less well-known cities' and indeed it quickly became clear that a good many of us had never been to Derby before. But the city interested and delighted us, all the more so because of the warm welcome and full programme offered by the Derby Civic Society. In accordance with Trust tradition, the day ended with a generous tea in the grand surroundings of the Opulence Restaurant in the Cathedral Quarter Hotel.



Derby Cathedral

We encountered history as soon as we got off the coach: the statue of Bonnie Prince Charlie, erected to commemorate the fact that Derby was the southernmost limit of the 1745 rebellion. From there we walked to St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, the first major church to be designed by Pugin. Looking around its elegant Neo-Gothic interior, where the simplicity of the nave set up a wonderful contrast with the decorated chancel, was an enjoyable treat before we set off on a walking tour of central Derby.

First, however, we had cake and biscuits, tea and coffee, followed by an illustrated talk from John Forkin, Managing Director of Marketing Derby, about how Derby is trying to project a more positive image of itself, both to improve the marketing of the city to potential investors, and to build pride in the city both for the local inhabitants (250,000 people) and

for those in the 45 minute travel-to-work radius (c. 2.1 million). A recurrent theme was the need to base the image on substance, not on spin. And for Derby, as he demonstrated, the substance is remarkable. Thanks to such firms as Rolls Royce, Bombardier, and Toyota (not by any means an exhaustive list), it is out on its own as a high-tech employer, having 11.8% of the workforce directly engaged in such work, by comparison with 5.8% for Cambridge and 3-4% as the overall UK figure.

Yet, despite this, and despite its distinguished industrial profile, past and present — evidence of which we saw on our outer-area bus tour later on — Derby has suffered from a lack of self-esteem. In particular, in the new millennium it became clear that, although there had been inward investment around the central area, the city centre itself had suffered from a lack of focused attention. A Masterplan was accordingly drawn up in 2005 — and then, for two years, nothing happened! But between 2007 and 2010, despite the recession, confidence began to be rebuilt as the Westfield Shopping Centre was opened, providing 3,000 new jobs and drawing in retail footfall from the whole of the densely populated hinterland; the historic railway Roundhouse (built 1839) benefited from a £50m investment, becoming part of a college for vocational training; 500 hotel bed spaces were added in the city centre through a mix of conversions and new build; and the city established a programme of events and activities which has given it a new sense of itself. The recession meant that progress



Westfield Shopping Centre

stalled in 2011 but, with £1bn investment already achieved, there is a continuing drive to invest a further £1bn, capitalising on the city's unique position in the UK as a centre of high-tech employment, which in turn strengthens the attraction of the city for employers and investors in other areas.



Streetscape

For our city centre walk we were in small groups, with the result that some got caught in a dramatic downpour while one group (mine!) was nicely in the dry inside the thirteenth century Bridge Chapel (reminiscent of Wakefield), hearing about its many lives: from chapel to cottages, to carpenter's shop, to Victorian Sunday School, to once again being a building for worship serving a number of different communities. For my group the Silk Mill came next. What stands on the site now is mostly from 1910, but the substructure is that of the

mill of 1718-21 which, in combining all the processes of manufacture under one roof with a common source of power, was England's first factory. Then came the cathedral, highly unusual in having a Tudor tower (the second highest in England) and a Baroque nave. It was made a cathedral in 1927. We paid our respects to Bess of Hardwick, whose memorial is preserved from the earlier church. Then on through the medieval streets, with their Viking names ending in -gate just like some of ours, past buildings old and new, to the markets, one from the nineteenth century, with iron girding that reminded us of Derby's place in railway culture, and one which was, as our guide put it, 'an industrial shed badly done'. You might guess which we enjoyed the most, and which was also the livelier of the two!



Silk Mill



Trust members alongside Silk Mill

Further walking through the pedestrianised city centre led us past St Peter's Church, the oldest in Derby, and past a 1938 building which sported on its mock-Tudor façade some of the great figures of Derby's history. Hard to believe that we were going along the old A6! Beyond this, we entered an area where there was demolition and dereliction, clearly areas awaiting the further £1bn investment that John Forkin had spoken about.

In the afternoon we visited the City Art Gallery to enjoy their pre-eminent collection of the paintings of Joseph Wright of Derby, born in a house on Irongate in 1734. There we came face to face with famous portraits of Erasmus Darwin, Jedediah Strutt, the Arkwrights, father and son, and the much-reproduced painting, The Orrery, among many others.

Then it was on the bus for a 90 minute tour of the outer parts of the city, which took us past the Railway Roundhouse, with its weathervane in the form of Stephenson's 'Rocket' and the striking new college buildings beside it, the nineteenth century Railway Village, the iconic façade of the old Rolls Royce building, and the breathtaking expanse of the modern complex a little farther out. The tour introduced us to the great range of Derby's industrial heritage and modern manufacturing, as well as giving us a glimpse of attractive parks and the 1997 Football Stadium, with its well-known statues of Brian Clough and Peter Taylor.

There was something for everyone throughout the day, and more to see than we had time for. Many thanks to everyone involved in organising it.

**Joyce Hill,
Trust Member**

Photographs courtesy of Clifford Stead

August 2012 Newsletter