

DIGEST

ISSUE 016 / SUMMER 2026



Image: © Stefan Kruczkowski

UPDATES

News from members of our
Committee team.

CONTENT BY
TAMAR

We are incredibly grateful to everyone (past and present) who's been part of the team. We're sorry that Gary Smerdon-White stepped down from the Committee, and from being our Treasurer this spring. Gary has been an great asset to the Society - and to the Committee. Not only bringing with him a lifetime of management experience, but also a great interest in active travel, heritage, and good design. He led our SkillFest event - from funding bid to managing the event itself; and co-led the Design Awards 2025 to be their most successful event ever. Gary's always had hands-on 'get stuck in' attitude to the Society's activities, and was always one to show up on the day. We appreciate all he's done, and wish him the best of times in his second retirement!

Projects

Our team of volunteers are busy crew - with **all of us** involved in other projects, groups and charities; as well as family and work life to balance too. We have to be mindful of 'burn-out' or the risk of stretching ourselves too thin.

Each Committee meeting we always have a raft of vibrant ideas and projects we want to support and be involved in.

We now have a number of sub-groups which exist to explore these ideas and

Our team consists of:

JEANIE O'SHEA

CHAIR + TRUSTEE

BEESTON STREET ART + LIGHT NIGHT

JOHN BLANKLEY

HON. TREASURER

MERVYN BROWN

HON. SECRETARY + TRUSTEE

TAMAR FEAST

VICE CHAIR + TRUSTEE

DR CLYDE DAVIES

DR JANE HARVEY

DR STEFAN KRUCZKOWSKI

MIKE SPENCER

SUE SPENCER

CHRISTY TANG

CHRYSE TINSLEY

DR PETER ROBINSON (*PRESIDENT*)

discuss ways of taking anything forward.

Sub groups include:

Environment Group

Energy Group

Events Group

Placemaking Group (planning + heritage)

Action Group

Beeston Fields Golf Club Group

Transport Group

You do not need to be a Committee member to join these groups – each has a WhatsApp group chat, and will meet on occasion. So if you would like to be more involved, or volunteer some time without the commitment of joining the committee, this is a great way to BE MORE CIVIC!

Be kind

All team members are volunteers. They have families, jobs, and commitments outside the Society to work around. Your patience is appreciated.

EcoTrail-NG9

19 July 2026, 2pm

Meet: 2A Bramcote Drive, NG9 1AW

Guide: Sue Spencer

Duration: 2 hours

Distance: 2 miles

Please dress for the weather

A tour of local houses on the EcoTrail to find out how NG9 homeowners are saving energy and reducing the costs of running their homes.

The brainchild of **Greening Beeston**, this newly launched digital trail has been designed here in Beeston.

Find out more about the Trail:
ecotrail-NG9.uk



Find out more about our walks:

beestoncivicsociety.org.uk/walks

Jean Phyllis Cameron

1924 – 2026



Beeston Civic Society remembers with respect and affection the life of a long-standing supporter of local heritage and an invaluable member of our community.

Born on 2 December 1924 in Croydon, Jean Phyllis Bremner spent a childhood shaped by travel and curiosity. Jean was an only child, but grew up in close companionship with her cousin, Kenneth Stacey, whose family remained central to her life. Her early years included periods living in Malta and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), experiences that broadened her outlook and nurtured the love of culture and learning that would characterise her entire life.



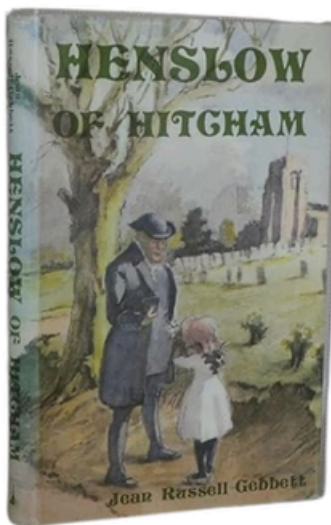
Jean aged five or six years old.

(Cover image: Jean in her twenties, Lambeth, London.)

Jean pursued studies in Biology and Education; first at the Westfield College, London. Owing to the Blitz, the College was evacuated to St Peters College, Oxford. When it was safe to, Jean returned to London University to complete her degree.

Her first post was at James Allen's Girls' School in Dulwich, where she also nurtured a growing interest in botany. By the early 1950s she had taken up a post teaching Biology at The University of Nottingham (UoN), where she remained for the rest of her professional life, later became Senior Lecturer in Education at UoN, and the Warden of Florence Boot Hall of Residence, a role in which she greatly influenced student life and welfare – not least because female senior staff members at this time were uncommon; academia was a very male dominated environment. In 1957, Jean married Paul Russell-Gebbett, a colleague at the University, though the marriage was not to endure.

Jean led an exceptionally full and active life. She cared devotedly for her mother, who came to live with her in Beeston, while continuing to write prolifically. Her writing, published widely in the *Journal of Biological Education* and other outlets, contributed meaningfully to discussions on biology teaching, student life, and teacher training.



Henslow of Hitcham, 1977.

Her scholarly pursuits extended to biography and local history. In 1977 she published *Henslow of Hitcham: Botanist, Educationalist and Clergyman*, a study of the noted botanist and mentor to Charles Darwin who served as the Rector of Hitcham, Suffolk, from 1837 until his death. Her fascination with the history of Place would become one of the most enduring threads of her life.

Jean became closely involved with Professor Kenneth Cameron CBE, head of English at The University of Nottingham, assisting him in extensive research for his six volume *Survey of Lincolnshire Place-Names*. Kenneth had worked with his first wife, the geographer Kathleen Heap, on the Derbyshire Place Names project. When Kathleen became gravely ill with MS and her condition deteriorated over a long period of years until she died in 1977, Jean provided invaluable support.

After many years of friendship and collaboration, Jean and Kenneth married in 1998. Both held key positions within the English Place-Name Society. As he writes in the introduction to *The Place-Names of Lincolnshire*: 'My wife led me on our numerous practical place-name trips around the area looking at the topography of individual places and fields. My debt of gratitude to her is considerable, not least for her constant support and encouragement whilst literally living with Lincolnshire place-names' (she had a cottage in Tealby).

After Kenneth died in 2001, Jean assembled his remaining notes for publication. In later years she wrote several articles for *The Journal of the English Place-Name Society* together with Paul Cavill on the history of Nottinghamshire names including Kelham and Lowdham.

Her service to the community extended beyond academia, and Jean's commitment to Beeston and the region continued steady and wholehearted. For many years she sat on the Board of Governors of the Nottingham Bluecoat School on Aspley Lane. She contributed her immense local knowledge to countless conversations about the history and character of our town. Those who worked with her recall not only her encyclopaedic understanding of Beeston's past but also the generosity with which she shared it.



Jean on her 90th birthday.

Outside her academic and civic contributions, Jean lived a life distinguished by curiosity and humour. She was a devoted reader – tackling *War and Peace* once more in her nineties – an enthusiastic traveller who ventured to the Galápagos Islands in her 80s, and a seasoned cricket follower who delighted in matches at Trent Bridge.

Even in later years, Jean left lasting impressions. Attending a family wedding at Woburn Abbey at the age of 85, she captivated guests of all ages by wading through deep snow to get there, her cousin Pam Baker recalls, '*Many guests of all ages were delighted to meet such an elegant, intelligent and witty lady. Everyone loved her.*'

Her love of theatre and ballet endured throughout her life; her 100th birthday celebration, marked by four generations of her family attending a ballet at the Theatre Royal, remains a cherished memory for the family.

Beeston Civic Society honours Jean not only as a dedicated committee member but as a custodian of local history, a champion of learning, and a woman of remarkable spirit. A long-standing Committee member, Jean would continue to host meetings in her home well into her nineties; when she was no longer able to take an active part in proceedings, her warmth, kindness, copious tea-making, and gargantuan home-measures of Sherry were very fondly appreciated.

Jean Cameron's contributions to the understanding of our town and region, her lifelong commitment to education, and her unwavering support for community life have left a legacy we admire and value.

Tamar Feast

Thanks go to Pam Baker, Marion Wallwork, Virginia van der Lande, Barbara Selwood, Thorlac Turville Petre, Peter Robinson, Mervyn Brown, and the English Place Name Society for their helpful recollections of Jean for this piece.

I'm grateful to Pam Baker for all photographs of Jean.

PLANNING + HERITAGE

Planning applications and protecting our local heritage remain our core duty – and with applications ever-increasing, and potential changes in Planning and Local Authorities in the pipeline it's never seemed more important. We always need help!

CONTENT BY
TAMAR
PETER ROBINSON



Artist's impression of the development.

25/00663/FUL

12–14 Moore Gate, Beeston,

Proposal: Construct two additional floors to facilitate conversion from Use Class E to form 4 cluster flats (*Sui Generis* Use).

We objected to this application on the following grounds:

- 1. Scale and Overdevelopment**
- 2. Harm to Neighbouring Amenity:
The Star Inn**
- 3. Design and Heritage Impact**
- 4. Lack of Justification for Further
Student Accommodation.**

It was refused at Planning Committee.

Developers have lodged an appeal – which can be viewed [here](#)



Beeston Railway Station

The newly refurbished Beeston Station Canopy has been nominated for a National Railway Heritage Award by Colt Construction Ltd.

This is the latest of a number of station repairs and improvements to our station since 2016 to ensure passenger safety and improve the passenger experience to an important Grade II listed gateway to Beeston.

It is one of 60 projects nominated nationally for this year's NRHA annual awards, with winners announced in Autumn 2026.

PR



The refurbished canopy. Peter Robinson.



Lower Regent Street
Beeston

View from King St

MATTHEW MONTAGUE
ARCHITECTS



Lower Regent Street
Beeston

View from Nether St

MATTHEW MONTAGUE
ARCHITECTS

Planning application 3D views

26/00343/FUL

**Works Burgass Carrier Bags Nether
Street Beeston Nottinghamshire NG9
2AT**

Proposal:

**Demolition of existing general
industrial buildings (B2) and
redevelopment of the site for the
erection of 40 apartments, including
parking, landscaping and associated
works**

The buildings in this application are on the
Local Heritage List we are helping
Broxtowe Borough Council populate.

As such there should be Heritage Impact
Statement (currently none included) and
assessments on Built Heritage to enable
full evaluation on retention/demolition of
the site.

We are in the process of drafting
representation to Planners to this effect.

Beeston Fields Golf Course Development

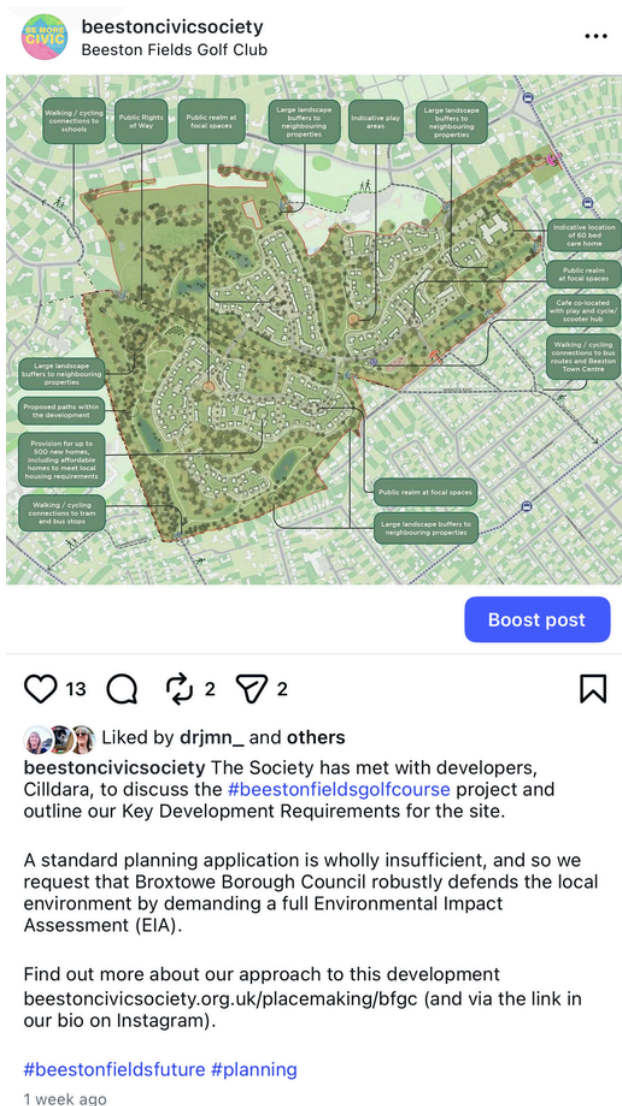
For more than fifty years, Beeston Fields Golf Course has been a valued part of the town's landscape. Established the same year as this Society, 1973, it has provided a distinctive parkland setting that generations of local people have enjoyed and appreciated.

Today, the future of the site is under consultation.

While we would prefer to see the whole golf course preserved, we recognise that development may now be inevitable. If this is the case, then it must be done properly: with ambition, care, and a genuine commitment to quality.

Action we have taken:

- Formed a sub group to engage with members of the public, to ensure that the our Planning team are informed of their views.
- Planning group has met with developers to present our Key Development Requirements (KDR) for the site.
- We have **objected** to the developer's case that the site shouldn't require a Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Unfortunately, the developers opinion was upheld.
- Lobbied Councillors on the Planning Committee.
- We continue to track the development and provide updates to the community.



Screenshot of our Instagram post about the development.



image: beestonfieldsfuture.co.uk

What Happens Next?

This consultation is a critical moment. We are ready to collaborate with developers and decision-makers to achieve the highest possible standards. But we are equally prepared to oppose proposals that fail to meet these expectations – with strong community backing and clear, evidence-based arguments.

Let's Work Together

The future of Beeston Fields should be something we can all be proud of. The question is simple: Will this be a development shaped with the community – or imposed on it?

Contact us about BFGC:

beestonfields@beestoncivicsociety.org.uk

EASY FUNDRAISING

We're delighted to announce that we've joined the national online platform easyfundraising, enabling supporters to raise free donations for the Society simply by shopping online.

CONTENT BY
TAMAR

Easyfundraising.org.uk partners with more than 8,000 popular retailers. When shoppers begin their online purchase through the platform, the retailer donates a small percentage of the sale to the chosen cause – at no cost to you.

Jeanie O'Shea, our Chair, said:
"This is a simple, effective way for anyone in the community to support our work – whether that's championing local heritage, delivering talks and events, or working on improvement projects around Beeston. Small contributions add up and make a big difference."

How it works

Supporters can get involved in just a few minutes:

- Visit easyfundraising.org.uk and search for us
- Create a free account
- Start shopping with thousands of participating retailers
- Each purchase generates a free donation
- Optional: install the "Donation Reminder" plug in to never miss an opportunity to give

**SUPPORT US
WITH YOUR
ONLINE
SHOPPING
FOR FREE**

Sign up to raise donations for
Beeston Civic Society when
you shop online by visiting:

e easyfundraising
org.uk
easyfundraising.org.uk

Urban Safari

**16 August 2026,
2pm and 3:30pm**

Meet: Canalside Heritage Centre

Guide: Nigel Slater. Victoria McMillan.

Duration: 1 hours

Distance: 1.5 miles

Please dress for the weather

Pre-book required. Spaces are limited!

Join us on one of two sessions looking at Beeston Rylands in a way you've never before. Nigel and Victoria take you on a tour of the streets of the rylands and identify the wildlife that lives alongside us.

Booking: Scan the code to book direct, or see our website.



Find out more about our walks:

beestoncivicsociety.org.uk/walks



MUCH TO DIG

Look close... go on, look closer. What do you see? You'll see beauty and nature all around us, thanks to garden holders opening their gates for two day event in June. All in aid of charities.

Stefan Kruczkowski does the leg work on our summer longread review of this great event.

WRITTEN BY
STEFAN KRUCZKOWSKI
EDITED BY
HELENKA KRUCZKOWSKA
PHOTO GALLERY BY
STEFAN KRUCZKOWSKI

2026's *Beeston and Chilwell Garden Trail* (BCGT) showcased wonderful gardens and allotments, each boasting a unique character. BCGT shines a light on the importance of these valuable and hidden spaces that are normally off limits to the general public.

It is hard to put into words the beauty of sunlight as it filters through the canopy of trees in the summer. Magical moments when the sun backlights leaves turning them an incredible green. Then in the blink of an eye, a gentle breeze moves the leaves and dazzling sunlight pours through the canopy. The wonderful and sunny weather of the BCGT weekend gifted plenty of these magical moments in the gardens and allotments that were open for all to enjoy.

As I left the second garden with my sister, she asked "*Which one is your favourite, Stefan?*". With only two gardens under our belts at this point I said I would try and answer her question later in the day. But then I added, "*I thought the first garden was going to be my favourite until I saw the second one.*"

Sponsored by  **Trowell**
Garden Centre

*Beeston
&
Chilwell
Garden Trail*

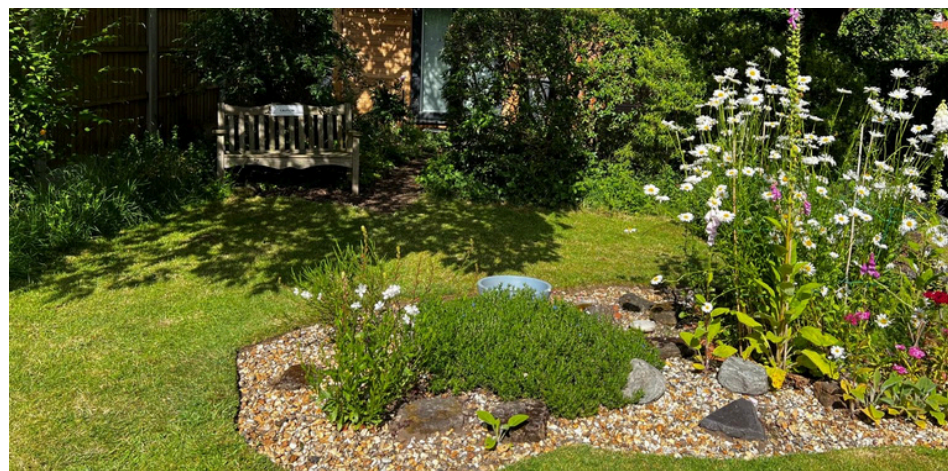
We worked our way along a route of gardens, one favourite garden was replaced with another favourite garden... and then another... and another after that. It was proving hard to pick a favourite, so here are a few highlights.

A delightful cottage garden wraps around the front of a bungalow in Beeston with the most delicate, colourful plants and flowers. Stunning lillies stand proudly in their pots basking in a south facing spot overlooking the most perfect of lawns. The owner warmly encouraged visitors towards the back of the house, through a little glass house of sorts containing a fascinating array of tropical plants. Tucked away from view, a delightful and shaded courtyard beckoned. A handsome tree offered some cooling relief from the heat of the day. Hostas and palms sat beside a pond that was home to the largest fish I have ever seen in a garden pond. I am sure I let out an audible gasp when it appeared from the depths.

To the side of the pond and under the protective canopy of the tree, dappled light fell onto a tadpole nursery. A little notice created by the owners explained that their efforts were to try and help revive the declining local frog population. The nursery made me wonder if more could be done to encourage local residents to help frogs (as well as bees)? When I was young, Blue Peter showed us how to make mini ponds in our back gardens to help Kermit and his pals. I wonder how many children today have made a little garden pond and planted flowers for the bees?

Time was marching on so it was time for us to march on too.

A short distance away a miniature railway was busily making its way around a delicately manicured garden. This special 'Beeston Line' tootled in and out of a garden shed. Inside the shed lay organised railway sidings and incredibly detailed miniature buildings – a credit to their creators. The gentleman owner shared an aerial photograph of his home when he first moved in. A tree (still there) could be seen in the back garden. He explained that the tree was part of an orchard that once covered the land now occupied by houses. It was fascinating to see how this garden had been transformed into a beautiful backdrop for a model railway. But it did make me wonder just how big the old orchard was and whether the apples harvested were used for pies or cider?



Ponds and fountains were a plenty in the gardens we visited but streams less so. Peacefully tracing its way across another favourite garden, a little stream quietly 'dabbled' away. A thoroughly delighted little bridge crossed the stream. Had it not been so busy I would have happily lay down on the perfect lawn (yes, another perfect lawn!) and listened to the flowing water, glass of Aperol in hand. What a soothing and relaxing space the owners of this garden have created and enjoy.

A peloton of Raleigh bicycles brought back memories. Neatly arranged on a driveway they reminded me of my own Raleigh bikes. Remember that wonderful golden heron logo on the face of Raleigh bikes? To the back of this delightful home was an equally delightful garden with perhaps the neatest and cleanest shed on earth. It was a sight to behold and no doubt admired by the countless people enjoying tea and cake on another stunning lawn. I heard someone say, "*I've never seen a shed like it. It puts mine to shame!*". It was most definitely my favourite shed of the day!

A few streets away, colourful bunting fluttered in the breeze marking our arrival at the next garden on our grand garden tour. This time the garden sat to the side of a beautiful Victorian house. Hidden from the street the garden boasts a stunning and beautiful wildflower meadow. Paths weave in and around the meadow, taking appreciative visitors past a World War II bomb shelter. I was not expecting to encounter a wildflower meadow or a bomb shelter but both were a pleasant surprise. I was reminded of the concrete bomb shelter in the garden of my childhood home. It was a brilliant den until my parents decided to remove it (I wonder if it would be protected now?).

The juxtaposition of the peaceful meadow and the old bomb shelter made me think. Here I was with many other people enjoying this garden. It was sunny, peaceful and safe. People were chatting. There were sounds of laughter. I was feeling relaxed (not fearful), I was bathed in sunshine (not cloaked by the darkness of the night) and with plenty of tea and cake on offer (not rations). The shelter has witnessed some very different times and human experiences in this garden. If gardens (or bomb shelters) could talk, what stories might they tell?

As my thoughts flowed, I wondered about the former residents of this house. Did they huddle in the bomb shelter during Britain's darkest hours? Or was it never used?

I imagine that it would have been impossible for the former residents to picture that over 80 years in the future tall grasses and delicate flowers would gently sway in the breeze of their garden, that people would be drinking tea and eating cake without a care in the world, far from the threat of war? If we could bring them back to join us today, what might they think and say?

Would the former residents be able to imagine that their garden would welcome the community and that children would dart around the paths of the meadow, perhaps where they had once grown vegetables? Would they be able to imagine that in the 21st century people would take a moment to sit where they might have sat in the snug shelter, trying to picture what an air raid might have felt like on a dark night? And finally, what would they make of the fantastic, contemporary extension on their home?

Sunday brought the opportunity to visit Grove Avenue allotments. Whilst I have never visited them before I knew they were big. It is not until you walk around the allotments do you truly appreciate the size of the place. It was a fascinating opportunity to see the various ways people tend their allotments and the things they grow. Allotment holders were kindly greeting visitors and showing them what they were growing.

Sue showed me around her allotment. What looked like an aviary protected precious cherries that were yet to ripen. Sadly, I had missed the asparagus harvest but I am hopeful that Sue noted my interest in the rows of ripening peas. I was in awe of what was growing, how well tended it was and how modest Sue was about what she and her husband Mike had achieved. It was interesting to see the sense of community and the camaraderie between allotment holders.

I overheard one allotment holder saying to another *"they've got them again, I can't believe it. I put in so much work"*. He was gently consoled by another allotment holder who patted him on the shoulder and said *"you can have some of mine, but I know it's not the same as having your own"*. I don't know what 'they' and 'them' are but presume the 'they' is a bug and the 'them' is something you grow! I hope the allotment holder has better luck next year.



@BCgardentrail on Instagram

At the heart of all the gardens was a strong connection to nature. Humans and nature living alongside in harmony. It is this connection and balance with nature that is vanishing in our times. BCGT shows how idyllic spaces can be created that benefit both humans and nature (yes I agree, humans *are* nature but it is alarming how unnatural we have become as a species). It was refreshing to see such a variety of nature friendly spaces when more artificial lawns are appearing and more front gardens are being lost to driveways. And we wonder why nature is in crisis when we are pushing it away from our own doorsteps.

BCGT offers us the opportunity to be reminded of how important our balance with nature is. It is also inspiring to see how spaces can be used differently, the experiences they create and the memories they can evoke. It is also the opportunity to be inspired by what others have achieved and the kindness of others: of those who open and share their gardens, and of volunteers who help to make the weekend happen.

Over the two days we visited almost all of the gardens. Did I find a favourite? By now, perhaps you have guessed. Every garden and allotment was my favourite. Each offered something special, wonderful and rather magical. Thank you to everyone who made 'BCGT26' happen.

BEESTON
STREET ART

 Beeston
AND DISTRICT
Civic
Society

BEESTON LIGHT NIGHT

#ILLUMINATETHEMIDLANDS

**Help put Beeston in
lights again, in 2027!**

DONATE to the fund:



**BEESTONCIVICSOCIETY.ORG.UK/BEESTON
STREETART/LIGHT-NIGHT**

Photo © A Touch of Frost Photography, 2025

Heritage Here

13 September 2026, 2:30pm

Meet: Technology Drive / Regeneration Way junction (South side of Beeston Station)

Guide: Toby Ebbs. Chryse Tinsley.

Duration: 2 hours

Distance: 2 miles

Please dress for the weather

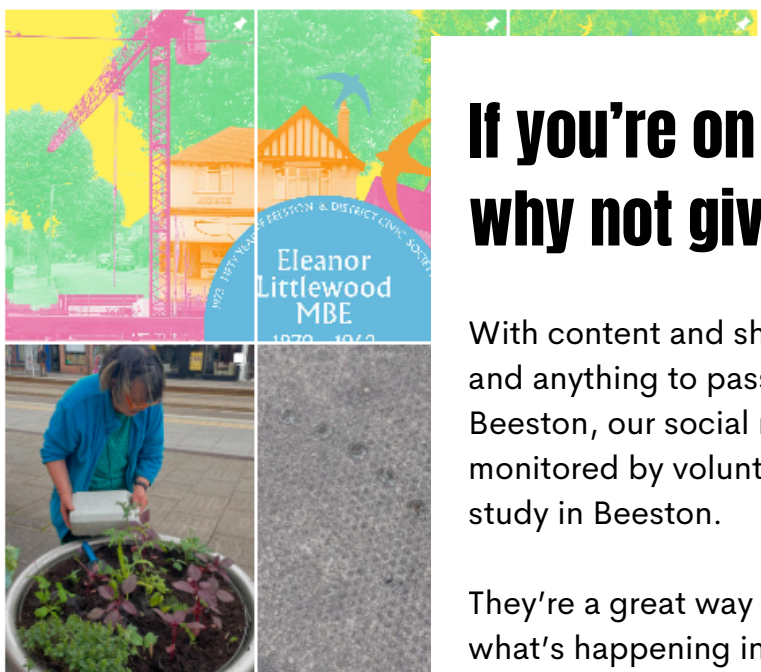
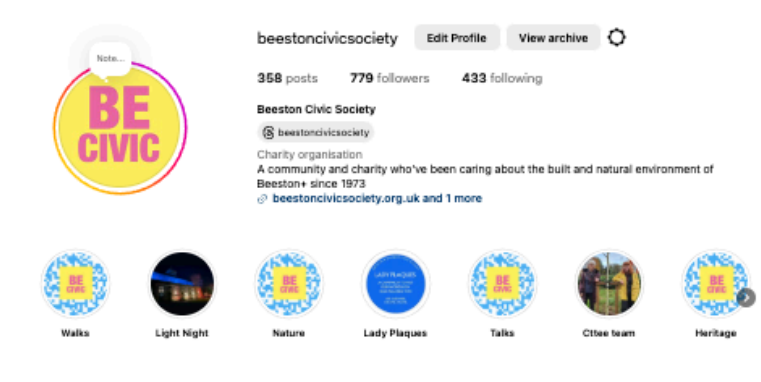
A walk around some of the surprises that have been discovered while researching the buildings and features for Broxtowe's Local Heritage List (LHL), led by some of team involved.

Toby is a heritage consultant working with Broxtowe Borough Council; senior lecturer at NTU, and Chair of the Nottingham Historic Building Trust (NHBT). Chryse is a landscape architect, Civic Society Trustee, and our volunteer lead on all things LHL.



Find out more about our walks:

beestoncivicsociety.org.uk/walks



If you're on social media, why not give us a follow.

With content and sharing on events, news and anything to pass the time of day in Beeston, our social media channels are all monitored by volunteers who live, work or study in Beeston.

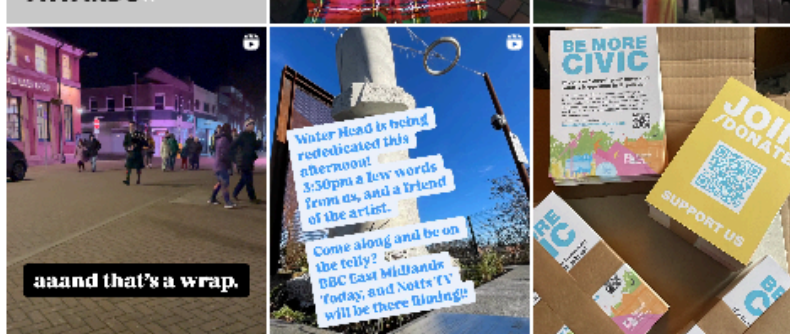
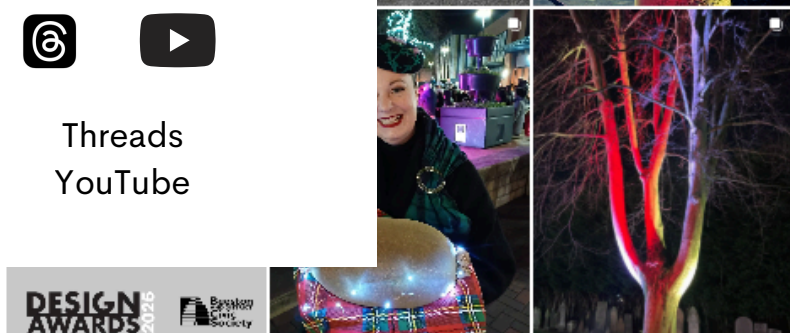
They're a great way to keep in touch with what's happening in your area, and to contact us for speedy responses!

Find us on socials, and YouTube:
[@beestoncivicsociety](#)



Instagram
Facebook

Threads
YouTube



GREENING BEESTON

We often hear about the three Rs of sustainability (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle). But how about Eight Rs?

CONTENT BY
JANET POLIAKOFF
GREENING-BEESTON.UK

RECYCLINGINBEESTON.WEEBLY.COM

As well as all the waste that we want to avoid by recycling, we shouldn't forget the energy implications of our waste. Nearly everything we use requires energy to make it and transport it to us, as well as energy to take it away when we have finished with it. There are exceptions, such as rainwater, provided that we let it soak away in the garden, and food if we grow it ourselves. With disposal, an exception is food waste such as stalks, cores or peelings, if we compost them.

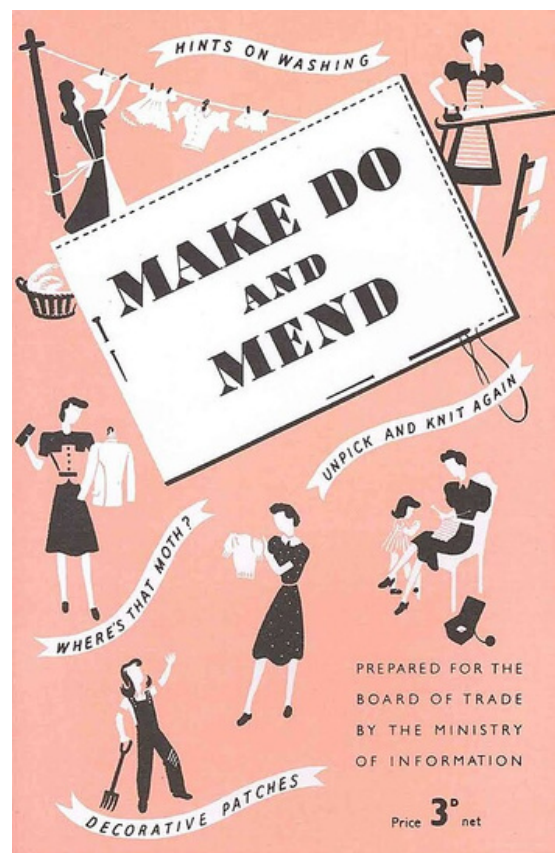
With the Greening Beeston Christmas tree we aim to use very little energy by using branches from a local tree which are then composted afterwards – the only energy is the lights. (If it was outdoors, we could have solar lights.) So, anything we can do to reduce our waste will help reduce our energy consumption and carbon emissions. We often hear about the three Rs: *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle*, and they help us to avoid all the energy consumption involved. Recycling uses less energy than making things from scratch, especially in the case of aluminium. You can find out where to recycle things in the Beeston area [here](#).

At Greening Beeston we have also thought of five more Rs, to make **eight** in total: **Refuse** (the verb) means that we avoid taking something that is offered, unless we really need it, as in the case where ice is automatically added to drinks.

Repair means that we try to mend anything that is broken or find someone else who can repair it for us. This has had a real renaissance since wartime campaigns first asked everyone to 'make-do and mend'. Beeston Repair Cafe is a great example of this ethos, locally.

Rot is for composting our food waste. If we can stretch the R slightly, we can make **fReeze** for freezing leftover food (provided that it is still edible, of course).

Re-imagine is for finding a different use for the unwanted item, for example using a mug that has lost its handle as a pen pot (below).



Cover of a Make-Do and Mend pamphlet (1943)

NATURE CONNECT

People who are more connected to nature are more likely to take action against the climate crisis. Does it follow then, that connecting people to nature can encourage them to be more active against the climate crisis?

CONTENT BY
JANE HAWORTH

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR
CONNECTION WITH NATURE SEE:
[NATURE PODCAST](#)

In the last two decades there has been increasing research, action and policy that positions cultural heritage and cultural and creative practices, as key to addressing the challenges of the interlinked climate, ecological, biodiversity and social crises, or 'Earth Crisis'. Earth crisis is a crisis of culture, reflecting disconnection and rupture of relationships, imagination and belonging.

Culture, cultural knowledge and artistic practices can foster connection, increase community capacity and activate action and regeneration.

Reflecting this imperative to repair and foster connection, the '*Roots & Shoots: Growing climate resilience and regeneration through traditional ecological knowledge and skills exchange*' project was a six-month project facilitated by Professor Careen Brown and Dr Victoria McMillan from the University of St Andrews and supported by St Andrews Centre for Critical Sustainabilities. Facing the Earth Crisis with hope and collective action, *Roots & Shoots* aimed to strengthen community resilience by bringing together biodiversity, climate

and heritage. The project did this through collaborative activities that share and revitalise cultural heritage, traditional ecological plant knowledge and skills.

The project Aims:

- Encourage community exploration and sharing the of living heritage and plant knowledge and skills specific to each place – including identity, food, medicines and materials.
- Make links between past, present and future wellbeing and resilience of people, biodiversity and environment.
- To foster deeper relationships with each other, nature and our places based on love, empathy, respect & reciprocity and notions of community and care.

Working across the UK and beyond, community groups from Skye in Scotland, Samoa, Barbados each collaboratively planned and led activities. Other international researchers and practitioners from Australia, Greece, Thailand and Guatemala amongst others shared their projects and research in two webinars. If you would like to view the webinars do get in touch.

Here in Beeston, a group of nine local volunteers, including members of the Society, worked together to create a programme that included three school sessions and a whole week of community activities during the May half term.

We were lucky to have Holly, a young leader, commissioned by St Andrews as part of the project to help at events. Held at the Canalside Heritage Centre (CHC), the actives were designed to foster connection with nature, place and community and regenerative thinking.



In addition to making cordage during Gardening Week at CHC, volunteers also ran a session at Grove Allotments during the Garden Trail weekend in June.



This symbolic activity encourages us to think about where things come from, and reflect on rare knowledge which could make our interaction with the world less extractive.

NETTLE WORTH

Best known as unwelcome weeds with a nasty sting, nettles are also one of nature's most useful plants.

CONTENT BY
SUE SPENCER with
information via Totworth Arboretum



Flora Danica, fasc. 13, tab. 746 (1778)

Visitors to the Society's Cordage session at Grove Avenue Allotments during the recent [Garden Trail](#) saw just how versatile these prickly pariahs can be.

A brief brush with history

Valued since Roman times, the Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) has long been used in remedies, folklore, food and practical crafts.

Why nettles deserve a second look

Nettles are a treasure trove of nutrients – vitamins A, C, K, and B. Rich in iron, calcium, magnesium, and potassium. High in protein too. Traditional medicine utilises their anti-inflammatory properties to treat symptoms of joint pains.

From sting to sustenance

Once cooked, dried or blended, nettles lose their sting and can be put to good use in the kitchen.

- **Nettle Tea:** Steep dried nettle leaves in hot water for a refreshing herbal brew.
- **Nettle Soup:** Add potatoes, onions and garlic for a bright green, nourishing soup.
- **Nettle Pesto:** Try nettles instead of basil for an earthy twist on a favourite.
- **Nettle Smoothies:** Blend fresh or dried nettles with fruit and yoghurt for a simple green boost.

Beyond the kitchen, their strong fibres can be made into cordage or fabric, while the leaves can provide natural dye and a nitrogen-rich boost for compost. So, next time you spot a patch of nettles, it may be worth seeing them in a new light.



WORDS: MATT TURPIN
ILLUSTRATION: DAN CULLEN

As some of you have heard, despite the best efforts of so many people and a brilliant bid, Beeston was unsuccessful in its attempt to become a Town of Culture for 2028. Looking at those who have been shortlisted, it's clear that our problem was we are already ace at culture, and while a few million quid never goes amiss, we'll be alright without it.

The East Midlands is traditionally overlooked in funding for these things, but in a way that has a positive: we do things our way, without big bureaucracies telling us what to do. We don't need their permission to be unique.

There is a story by the writer George Layton I always loved, about a schoolboy who is bullied by a bigger boy at school. In secret, the bullied boy takes up running lessons before a sports day, and becomes fast enough to beat the bully. But in a twist, once he has overtaken the bully (who collapses bewildered by the track) he himself stops running. No need to finish the race, he had won the moral victory. That story came to mind when I think of the amount of energy and sheer talent we encountered when we put the bid together. One question I could never answer was "I'd you already have all this wonder, why do you need to win the accolade?"

We are, therefore, allowed to call Beeston a *Town of Culture - Non Government Approved*. And we wish the best to the eventual winner, and hope their win allows them to develop a culture as rich, as fulfilling, as community cohesive as what we have in this wonderful town. And who knows? So many good ideas came out of the bid it would be a shame to just discard them now...watch this space!

Blue Plaques

20 September 2026, 2pm

Meet: Beeston Square bandstand

Guide: Dr Peter Robinson. Alan Dance.

Duration: 2 hours

Distance: 2 miles

Please dress for the weather

A guided tour around some of the highlights of our local blue plaques, led by members of the original Blue Plaque group responsible for their installation.

Peter Robinson is a retired architect; President of the Civic Society, and an original member of the South Broxtowe Blue Plaque Group. Alan Dance is a local historian and author.



Find out more about our walks:

beestoncivicsociety.org.uk/walks

CONTACT US

Here's how you can get in touch with the right person or team for the job.

Please **bear in mind that we're all volunteers** – we always respond as soon as we're able to!

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UP CLOSE

Can you recognise these local places from these details?

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