

Baronet's Diary June 2023

I was delighted to be asked to the installation of Derbyshire's new High Sheriff Theresa Peltier at the beginning of April. The service took place in St Mary's Church Wirksworth and hosted a gathering of 200 made up of Theresa's family, friends and the great and the good of Derbyshire. Theresa is our first black lady High Sheriff and kicked off her year with a rousing service in her home church with a gospel choir and inspiring music. Theresa gave an uplifting speech as she entered her year of Office and thanked Michael Copestake of Turnditch as he handed the baton(or should I say sword) over. Theresa is focusing in her year on working with the deaf community (Derbyshire has the biggest deaf community in the country bar London) and on her links with the adoption and fostering sector in the County. Theresa is an amazing person-hers will be an uplifting year.

After 12 years I have stood down as Councillor for the Dovedale & Parwich ward on the Derbyshire Dales District Council. 3 terms is about the right time to leave our local authority that collects our bins and our council tax but the one aspect that I will miss is the Planning Committee and the team of dedicated officers that studiously analyse all the applications that are received for the towns of Ashbourne Matlock Wirksworth and Darley Dale. Although the last application (that I was involved with on a personal note) for a glamping pod and associated works in Rowsley was narrowly defeated 5 votes to 4 I do feel that I have made a difference over my time. At the end of my final meeting I was permitted to talk about the decade citing various successes that we had approved with the biggest one being the stunning and successful conversion of Callow Hall Hotel at Mapleton into the Wildhive of thirteen tree houses and a fabulous atrium restaurant resulting in the hostelry winning the Sunday Times Hotel of the Year in 2022. It has been a satisfying 12 years and we all had some cake at the end.

The news that Baslow Hall which hosts Fischer's restaurant, is up for the sale and is likely to be returned to a private residence means that over the last three years several hotels within 5 miles of Bakewell will have closed to the public. Hassop Hall and East Lodge at Rowsley are the other two and that means that 40 superior rooms have been taken out of the visitor market. In our Tourist Board discussions, we often cite the need for a really smart and spacious hotel in the Peak District that as well as being able to host large conferences can also show off the fantastic landscape of our County., In late June a new hostelry will open between Bamford and Hathersage called BikeandBoot which will offer accommodation for discerning walkers and cyclists. It is to be welcomed and I will write more about this new venture in a future column.

One of my final duties as Ward Member on the District Council was to represent my constituents of the village of Thorpe at a planning meeting at The Peak District National Park. The submission from the Park themselves was to introduce pay and display machines on the two carparks that they operate in the Village. The fear, once introduced, is that visitors to the area will refrain from paying the charge and park on the verges adjacent to these areas or park on the extensive hardstanding at The Old Dog . This pub has been rejuvenated by the new tenants Ross and Gemm Pollock and they have already transformed it into a welcoming and attractive hostelry . They fear that the introductions of charging will mean that they will have to install a number plate recognition system at the potential cost of £10,000. The Park seems to have overlooked these consequences and I made the case that these scenarios were highly probable. Although I made a good argument the vote was carried by 7 to nil with three abstentions. In other words, it was a pyrrhic defeat but my voice was heard. We shall monitor progress with interest.

The majority of my speaking engagements are to Women's Institutes and History Societies in and around the Midlands. But in March I was asked by Messrs C Hoare & Co bankers to travel to Fleet Street to address the assembled throng on the subject of succession in a seminar entitled 'What to leave to the kids...'. Our family have banked there for 350 years and it was a daunting task in front of 140 distinguished customers. I was confronted with the opening slot followed by Robert Batt from Norfolk (who incidentally inherited at the age of 5 when his father died in a plane crash) and then Georgian/American wealth manager Mark Daniell concluded the talk with tales of extraordinary hue. It was an amusing evening and the following day the Bank granted us £1000 each to charity. I chose the amazing Mark Osborne who has just rowed across the Atlantic in aid of awareness for child cancer. See his achievement at www.rowforamy . Altogether a very satisfactory speaking engagement.