

CIVIC VOICE CONVENTION and AGM - Canterbury 24-25th October 2014

In October, the 2014 Civic Voice Convention and AGM were held in the historic city of Canterbury. Chris Horner and Jane Maggs represented Southgate District Civic Trust at the event hosted by The Canterbury Society and supported by Canterbury City Council & Kent County Council. The weekend was well attended by Civic Voice members, many of whom were present last year.

On the Friday, the convention began in Westgate Hall, a 1913 drill hall saved and restored by the local community during an incredible campaign. The hall was officially opened during the convention.

The convention was started by Griff Rhys Jones, the Civic Voice President launching the 'Localism for Real' civic manifesto.

Griff Rhys Jones gave an entertaining speech on the importance of the civic movement and the need to involve local communities. He emphasised how as a society we need to ensure that developments reflect the long term needs, wants and desires of the different groups within an area. He also stressed the importance of civic societies understanding the detail of local areas. The whole speech made it clear that we should not only talk within our group, but also make sure that a wider audience hears our voices.

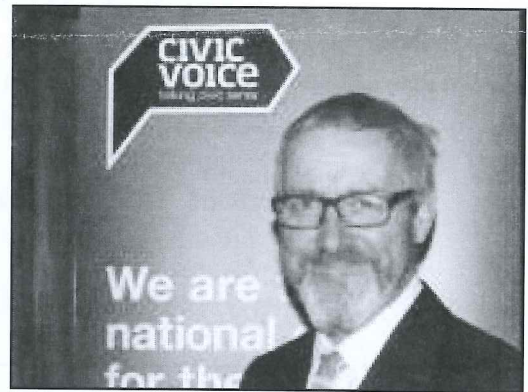
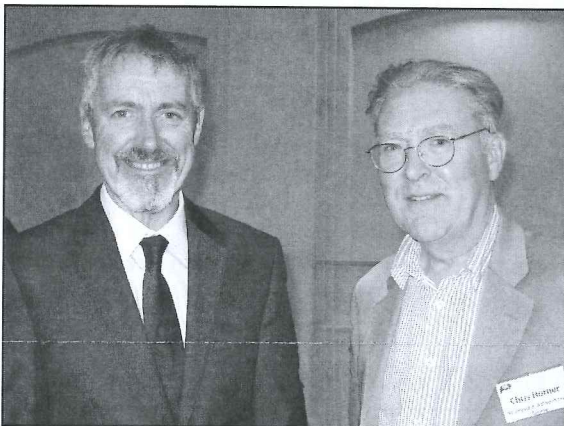


Photo: courtesy Civic Voice



He said: *"If the Government is serious about Localism, they have to listen to the concerns coming forward from civic groups, resident associations and local councils. Government must give local communities the powers they need to enable their town and city centres to prosper"*.

Griff Rhys Jones & Chris Horner

Photo: Jane Maggs

As part of the launch, we were all urged to go out and spread the message of what we are doing and the importance of this manifesto.

If you would like to see the full speech, a video can be found at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=vE1x6dF4JUs

Following the opening of the restored Westgate Hall, delegates split into groups to follow various tours of the city centre. These gave us a fascinating insight into the development of the city and the different challenges it has faced over time. The tours highlighted both successful developments, as well as some less good examples.

This year, there was an evening talk from the author, TV presenter and historian, Dr Jonathan Foyle, who gave an insight into the complex history of the east end of Canterbury Cathedral.