

Buzz

Digging in for the bright new Day Care Centre at Treetops *by the Editor*

THE Treetops Ripple Appeal, set up to raise funds for a new day care centre to be built at the Risley hospice and boosted by help from *Beeston Express* readers, has moved forward with a gigantic leap!

On Wednesday, December 2, BBC weatherman Des Coleman was invited to cut the first turf to mark the start of building work for the new centre.

As Des found himself receiving some short and concise instruction on how to operate the two levers of a mechanical digger to make it do what he wanted ("It's not easy for us chaps to multi-task, you know!"), invited guests at the turf-cutting ceremony toasted the success of the project to date with a glass of bubbly.

With the guests was George Cameron, Chief Executive of the Treetops Hospice Trust, who received a donation of £125,000 from The Rotary Club of

Stapleford and Sandiacre at the ceremony.

Club President Richard Taylor said: "Eight years ago, the Stapleford and Sandiacre Rotarians had just received some money from the estate of Tom Blaney, the friend of a fellow Rotarian. When we sat down to decide what to do with the money, the idea for this new Day Care Centre had just seen daylight. It was such a worthy cause that it came out top of our list."

As Des Coleman got to grips with the digger, Treetops CE George Cameron said: "This is such a momentous occasion for Treetops, signalling as it does the start of the next phase of development.

"In six months, we'll have a new unit that will double the number of people attending the Day Care Centre, and will enable us to make big improvements to our services for guests coming to Treetops."

Mackays Plant Hire of Ilkeston, who had loaned the excavator, were on hand to give Mr Coleman his operating instructions.

Des soon got into the swing of things. When Kate Shaw, Ripple Appeal Fundraising Manager, thanked him for taking the time out and complimented him on his prowess in handling a mechanical digger, he replied: "The Treetops Hospice Ripple

Appeal is a great appeal, and I'm pleased to have been invited to come along and support it in this way.

"I might only have dug a small hole here today, but from it will grow a wonderful new building!"

(Fundraising for the Ripple Appeal continues with 'The Final Challenge'. If you would like to help, please see the Appeal poster on page 13).

Snippets

Correction re Railwaymen's Memorial

IN *The Beeston Express* of November 20, in a piece entitled 'Railwaymen's Memorial rededicated' on page 7, we said that the Attenborough Railwaymen's memorial had found a new home with help from the Beeston and District Local History Society.

This was a mistake on our part. It had been the Beeston and District Civic Society that worked assiduously for a number of years to find a suitable site for the commemorative plaque to the memory of six railway employees, based at Attenborough station, who died in WWI. The memorial had been 'lost' when the station buildings at Attenborough were demolished.

We apologise for the error.

Footfall and the High Road

BEESTON'S High Road improvements are almost complete, and Broxtowe Borough Council has released comparative footfall figures for the same time last year.

The fixed footfall counter showed that the number of people walking along the High Road fell by around 30 percent due to the disruption of laying of the new paving.

However, in October and November, an average of 97,500 people walked through Beeston each week – compared to 95,000 the previous year.

Free tree giveaway

DURING the last two weekends of November, Broxtowe Borough Council gave away 4000 trees for residents to plant in their front and back gardens. The trees were all native British species: silver birch, mountain ash, hazel, crab apple, wild cherry and field maple.

Trees play an important part in reducing temperatures and providing shade, and will help adapt towards climate change. Broxtowe's free trees form part of the council's target to plant 100,000 new trees over a five-year period.

Between you and me...

BROXTOWE MP Nick Palmer writes his monthly column for the Beeston Express to keep us, his constituents, up-to-date and informed. We would like to remind you, however, that the views he expresses are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of The Beeston Express. If you would like to comment on any of the issues he raises, please write to the address on page 2.

The Beeston Express has no allegiance to any political party.



Reforming Parliament – the good news and the bad

THE expenses scandal will shortly bubble up again for one more convulsion as Sir Thomas Legg's detailed analysis of all MPs' expenses since 2004 is published and some MPs are asked to repay up to £60,000. Some names that haven't yet hit the headlines are expected to feature.

It's all necessary in view of the horrors that have been uncovered, but I wish the successive investigations were themselves a bit more careful. I had a letter from Sir Thomas early on saying he'd checked my records and they were fine. Then, out

of the blue, I had another letter saying I should repay £900 for excessive mortgage claims in 2005. I scratched my head, and pointed out that I didn't have a mortgage (I've always simply rented) and anyway the 2005 figures looked correct – what was the problem? After a week, Legg's assistant wrote back that when they said "mortgage" they'd meant "rent" and when they said "2005" they meant "2004".

Duh. So I looked at 2004 and that looked OK too. I wrote back: "The 2004 total also seems in order. What is the problem?"

No reply. So I wrote again 10 days later, saying very politely that I was sorry to

be a nuisance but I'd really like to know. This time I did get a reply: they'd made a mistake, I owe nothing, and they "unreservedly apologise".

Well, that's nice, and we all make mistakes, but I must admit to a slight feeling of exasperation. I have no objection to being inspected – you are all welcome to go over every receipt and whatever else it takes to persuade people that we're not 'all the same'. But it's getting like being a schoolteacher with Ofsted coming back every month – there comes a point where you feel you've been inspected enough for now, and can you please get on with the job?

On the positive side, the Reform Committee that I won election to has agreed conclusions, and although most of the press wasn't in general very interested - no scandals, celebrities or naked women, so who cares? – I think the recommendations would make a real difference.

They're in three groups:

1. We propose that it should be possible for any widely-supported petition (assuming it's not obviously a wind-up) to get a full debate in the House of Commons. For example, all the major parties are in favour of staying in the European Union (and so am I), so the issue of withdrawal

is simply never debated. But there are a lot of people out there who disagree, and it's not fair that they can't even hear the arguments discussed. I'd also argue that one can only win people over if one actually listens to what worries them and debates it.

2. We propose that backbenchers should be able to control non-Government time, so that issues which many MPs think important get debated whether the party leaderships want it or not.
3. We propose that Select Committees (which monitor each government department) should be elected within each party

by secret ballot, so that the most-respected people get on, rather than just the whips' choice.

It'll get debated and voted on in December. The whips on both sides have made cautious noises and we'll have to see if we can get it through. But if we can get the main reforms adopted, it'll make a real positive difference to Parliament. A good Parliament should not merely be defined by the absence of scandal, but the presence of genuine, intelligent debate on the issues that matter to people.

If you'd like to read the report and don't mind the absence of page 3 ladies, it's at <http://tinyurl.com/yztwfw>