

The Queen Bee



On the 12th February 2014 two trees in the church grounds were destroyed by a storm, the major loss being a 140 year old elm tree and alongside it a 40 year old lime tree. The two trees, or rather their remains, were to play a part in the story which subsequently developed.

The sight of the vast elm tree stump set minds to work – how could this arboreal remnant be brought back to life, positioned as it was in such a prime spot. Thoughts about possible carvings of ecclesiastical figures, gargoyles etc. came to mind but without any conviction.

When the Borough Council provided information about a conference entitled “Pollinating the Peak” proposed for April 2015, here was food for thought. With concern growing about the continued existence of the bumblebee species in this part of the country, it was intended at the conference to highlight the insect’s crucial role as pollinator. The Conservation Trust sought a landmark emblem to raise awareness – what better than a Queen bumblebee, alighting in the heart of the town of Chesterfield.

Our Lady and All Saints Parish Church with a Queen Bee in the grounds, what could be more appropriate?

A Derbyshire-born wood sculptor – Andrew Frost – was appointed and a 1.25 ton oak tree trunk, provided by Tansley Mill Timber, Matlock was duly delivered. Two weeks’ meticulous carving provided the town with what must be the largest bumblebee in the country, weighing almost one ton. It was designed to sit on the original elm tree base carved as a plinth. When a title and text were sought, the Vicar (Revd Patrick Coleman) suggested:

“*Out of the strong came something sweet*” a Biblical text taken from Judges 14.14.

This is often referred to as ‘Samson’s Riddle’. The text links Samson, strength, bees and honey, a most apt reference to the Queen Bee on her plinth.

(Most of our homes, in the kitchen will have a copy of this text. Check the syrup container...Abram Lyle & Sons.. sugar refiners..Lion / bees – ‘out of the strong came forth sweetness’)

Within the setting, on the lime tree stump nearby may be found the following:

“*Saving the sound of summer for those who come after us*”



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