



THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

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Just Keep Going...

WHAT AN amazing three months for High Wycombe. It seems an age since the new Bus Station opened, but Eden eventually let in the shoppers in March, amidst great razzmatazz, and in June we had the opening of High Wycombe's remarkable new Library. A few discordant voices remain. One of our members (see p.11) feels Eden's design pays not enough attention to Wycombe's very special surroundings. Certainly some of our members still hanker after the more modest MAB scheme which came before Phoenix (remember that?), but that proved uneconomic and could not be implemented. Eden is draughty, but that, we're told, can be fixed. And all are asking what will happen to the old Library – elegant but hopelessly “unfit for purpose” in this modern age.

Most important, how to revitalise the High Street and the Chiltern Centre? The Civic Trust knows something about this kind of problem, which is common in English towns after redevelopment, and we hope they can be of some help. There are exciting ideas in the air for the Chiltern Centre. And what a delight it is to see, and hear, South American musicians playing Andean music beside the Little Market House in the High Street from time to time.

Meanwhile, the Bus Station is convenient for Eden, Tesco and the new Sainsbury's – if not for the railway station – and the shoppers keep coming. The pleasing appearance of the residential blocks on Desborough Road owes much to the architect's rethink after our members likened their original design to “Eastern Europe in the 1950s”.

One uninformed criticism we still often hear is, “Why didn't they open up the River where it flows under Eden?” Well, the River Wye doesn't flow under Eden! It goes along under the Oxford Road, and then beneath the Abbey Way flyover, until it turns off near the Swan and the Police Station towards the Rye. And that is the answer to all of us who have campaigned to open up High Wycombe's historic river. Our District Council is, we know, totally committed to removing the Abbey Way and re-routing the A40 to the South-West. That will be the golden opportunity to “green” Wycombe's town centre, and all should work towards making that a success.

Chris Woodman



...caring about our town: past, present and future

Registered Charity No. 257897

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Planning This Quarter

THE GROUP continues to meet on a regular monthly basis, 13 members strong. The Group regularly receives invitations to participate in a wide variety of consultations not only from our members but also from our associated groups, developers (large and small) and WDC officers and councillors.

Bucks New University The new frontage to the university is now rising out of the ground and will ultimately provide tutorial facilities for students as well as discussion areas. It is understood the intention is to encourage interaction with the public wherever possible. The University is to be congratulated on its approach to community integration which covers Sport, Spatial Design and Travel and Tourism, to name just a few.

With regard to the student residential development on the CompAir/BroomWade site, after two long debates by the Development Control committee, this application has finally been deferred for Planning Obligation and Section 106 legal agreements (*i.e. approved!-Ed.*). On both occasions, members were addressed by residents and by representatives of the Chiltern and High Wycombe Societies. Concerns continue over the height of the buildings and the question of car parking availability. The University has indicated that a stringent Travel Plan is in the process of being approved, to control all aspects of transport including parking inside and outside the site.

High Wycombe Railway Station A follow-up meeting has been held with Chiltern Rail about the development of the Station and the immediate surrounding area, including transport issues. We understand that, despite the developer's meetings with Bucks County Council and Wycombe District Council Officers, no movement to develop the site has been possible at the time of writing. The Group is seeking further clarification on this issue with WDC Councillors and I hope to be able to report more positively in the next *Newsletter*.

Wellesbourne Public Inquiry This appeal has been upheld by the Secretary of State who accepted the Appeal Inspector's recommendation. In principle it has been highlighted that the Planning Application is in accordance with Local Plan Policy L3. The Secretary of State supported the Inspector's finding that the developer's "enabling development" argument (*i.e. that the proposed development at Wellesbourne would provide finance for the University's town centre development*) amounts to exceptional circumstances, justifying the loss of Green Space, subject to provision of alternative space of equivalent quality being provided within a reasonable distance. It was considered that satisfactory arrangements had been made to ensure that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on highway safety and would not

have an unacceptable impact on the highway network. In addition to this, a number of Conditions and Obligations were to be imposed.

Terriers Farm Public Inquiry The Inspector recommended, and the Secretary of State accepted, that both the appeals should be dismissed and planning permission refused.

The Secretary of State noted that while the proposal accorded in principle with the development plan allocation in Local Plan Policy H2, Local Development Framework Core Strategy Policy 15 sets out how housing provision is proposed to be met and, in particular, states that there should be no peripheral green field development before 2016. She considered that the appeal proposal would therefore conflict with the emerging Core Strategy and she accorded that conflict "some weight". With regard to transport and traffic, the Inspector reported a lack of transparency in those matters, which undermined local confidence in the proposals, and concluded that the development would have an uncertain impact. He noted that the transport assessment did not explicitly address such issues as the Park & Ride scheme, and the redevelopment of the Wellesbourne Campus and their total impact on the highway network.

John North Hall (Student Resident Campus) Bucks New University has sold this site to a developer who is pursuing a proposal for some 108 residential units. Local residents' concerns led the Fair Ridge, The Spinney & Fox Leigh Residents' Association (FSFRA) to contact the Group for advice on drawing up an objection, seeking to ensure a suitable development that would sit well with the character of existing houses in the area. We also understand there is some concern about the impact of traffic on A404 Marlow Hill and potentially on the Handy Cross motorway junction. We were approached by the developer and a meeting was arranged to discuss his proposals further with us and FSFRA. The Group will continue to monitor these proposals and report in the next *Newsletter*.

Eden Centre A feed-back meeting has been held recently with the Centre's management and directors. All members' comments were passed on, covering the wind-tunnel effect, car parking charges, seating, waste bins, cleanliness of the mall floors, signage within the Centre, payment machines for car parking and reported errors in the history panels. I am pleased to report that most of the issues raised are already in process

of being actioned by the management, with the remaining item being under consideration. A further meeting will take place in September.

South East Plan The Secretary of State's response is still awaited. This is now forecast to be released before the Parliamentary summer recess.

Planning Applications These continue to flow, despite the credit crunch that we hear about every day! Some are more complex than others. Recently the group has raised the issue of Pre-Application Presentations (by developers to WDC and other "stakeholders", including ourselves) as, despite the initial flurry of them, they have dried up in recent times, which has resulted in some heated and prolonged debates in the Development Control Committee. We have recently been assured that every effort is being made to bring these back on a more regular

basis. The Group would like to thank all those who responded to the Leader's request for comments concerning the volume of flats being built in Wycombe District. These comments along with other factors are being considered by the group and a report will be issued in the next *Newsletter*.

The Sociable City The Society has recently attended a presentation sponsored by the Civic Trust and the Economic Forum on "The Sociable City". This focused on issues of "Night Life" and activity in the High Street, and general regeneration of run-down areas of town centres. The Society is in discussion with Wycombe District Council and I hope to report fully on this subject in the next *Newsletter*.

Tony Fooks

AGM 2008

THE SOCIETY'S 2008 AGM took place in the Guildhall on Friday 4th April with some 70 members present. The first part of the evening was occupied by the formal business. After opening remarks by the Chairman, Roger Lawson, there were reports from the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer and then the elections of Officers and Committee.

The Hon. Secretary, Frances Presland, gave her usual concise summary of the year, noting that membership had increased by 19 to 403 with 18 other organisations affiliated to us. She summarised the meetings held during the year: Gary Marshal, National Trust archaeologist, had described "National Trust and Archaeology in the High Wycombe Area", Andy Gunn had spoken about "Georgian Style" and Dr Catherine Grigg of Wycombe Museum had fascinated us with details of Windsor chairmaking in the Chilterns and Thames Valley. The Society had also hosted the AGM of the Association of North Thames Amenity Societies with facilities generously provided by Bucks New University.

The Hon. Treasurer, Nick Giles, noted a small increase in the general funds due to the diligence of the Membership Secretary, Sheila Fooks, in collecting subscriptions. Donations at meetings had dropped by £40 but the Quiz Night had made a profit of £190. Reclaim of Gift Aid from the Tax authorities was expected within a few weeks (see p.8).

Elections

After the meeting was assured by the Chairman that they were happy to continue in office, the President, Stuart King, and the Vice-Presidents, John Gore, Dick Hoare, Myra King and Kathleen Peatey, were unanimously confirmed. The Chairman, Roger Lawson, the Vice-Chairmen, Evelyn Roe and Tony Fooks, Hon. Secretary Frances Presland and Hon. Treasurer Nick Giles

were re-elected as Officers. Trevor Carter, Alan Furness, Margaret Simmons, Ron Sims, Roberta Wilson, Chris Woodman, Mary Woodman and Annie Woodward were elected/re-elected to the Executive Committee. There remained a few vacancies and the Chairman encouraged members who felt they had something to contribute to come forward.

Reports from the Groups

After the formal business, we had reports from the Society's Groups. This provided members with an opportunity to hear about, and perhaps think of participating in, the detailed activities of the Society, much of which goes on behind the scenes.

The Programme & Membership Group arranges all the activities of the Society and ensures they run smoothly. Mary Woodman reviewed these events – the quarterly meetings, shared-car outings to Broughton Castle and Ascott House, the Pann Mill Open Days and the Recruitment Day at the Chiltern Centre, when a questionnaire seeking views on the future of Frogmoor had been distributed. The new membership card lists meetings and outings for the coming year.

Frances Presland described the work of the Friends of the Rye Group. Her present concern was the Council's proposal for an Adventure Play Area for which Big Lottery funding had been obtained. She feared this could result in a further area being fenced off and excluded from general use. There were also concerns about

some of the proposals in a new Rye Management Plan on which there had been consultation. In the coming year the Group would search the covenants and other legal documents to determine the true limitations on what is permitted.

From the audience, Cllr Lesley Clarke (Leader of WDC) assured the meeting that proper consultation would take place and assured member Kathleen Peatey that decisions would be taken by Councillors, not officers.

For the Pann Mill Group, Alan Furness noted that last year's prayers for rain had been answered and there should be no problems milling flour on the coming open days. A 'Strategy for the Future' of Pann Mill had been prepared to assist negotiations with the Council. This included proposals for wheelchair access, toilets and improved visitor facilities. Mention was made of the sad death of Bill Page, a stalwart of the group, and this underlined the need for new members to join the Group and participate in the twice-monthly Sunday gatherings.

For Transport, Arnie Parr talked about traffic lights, noting a recent report suggesting that traffic often flows more freely without traffic lights. BCC policy, however, was "the more the merrier": there were at present 196 sets in the County with 95 more to come, many in High Wycombe. The Group had had ongoing discussions with BCC, with some progress being made. Then, in the absence of Elsa Woodward, Roger Lawson outlined other activities of the Group, reminding us of past successes and the ongoing campaign to reopen the Bourne End rail route. The logical next step was an engineering study to determine the feasibility and cost. Mr Lawson told the meeting that paying for such a study was beyond the Society's means but a local businessman was considering funding it.

On behalf of the Heritage Group, Frances Presland showed the presentation which the Group had prepared for the Bucks Local History Network on Fulling which was an important industry in the town in the twelfth century.

Finally, on Planning, Tony Fooks presented a slide show of some of the previous year's workload. These included the CompAir site (Bucks New University student residences and a new home for Amersham & Wycombe College), De La Rue site (where we disliked the 'barrack' style of dwellings proposed), University main site (debates on the metal cladding), Eden (which opened on time and on budget), Sainsbury's (where work was now starting and the skateboard park should be in place by the autumn) and the Sewage Works (where the river corridors would be greatly enhanced); also John North Halls, where plans were soon to appear, and the Gas Works Site and the Railway Station.

Trevor Carter

Chairman's Perspective: "It's nice to know when efforts are appreciated."

It was indeed gratifying that a large number of Society members attended the Annual General Meeting on the 4th April. It really is encouraging to feel that so many folk are prepared to turn out to give visible support to Society Officers and the Executive Committee.

We hope they all left better informed about our Society's purpose and the work of our specialist Groups (Planning and Transport, to name but two). Group Leaders gave brief and informative presentations that were well-received. Another welcome sign of endorsement by members of the Society's aims and work is the readiness with which annual subscriptions are renewed promptly on the due date, and these are often generously supplemented by donations.

One such donation has been drawn to my attention by our Membership Secretary. Sheila Fooks has passed me a charming enclosure note from Mrs Pat Gerrard, a Wycombe-born resident and well-established member, who stated that our Newsletter kept her informed of events, and expressed her appreciation to all those who contributed to our publication.

Yes, it is nice to know when past efforts are appreciated: telling us so is an encouragement to continue with more of the same (or better!).

So thanks to all of you attending the AGM – and thanks to Mrs Gerrard for her kind words.

Roger Lawson

Oh, the Sun!

Pann Mill Open Day in May was blessed with one of the brightest days this year. The steady stream of visitors throughout the day kept the millers and stall holders busy and provided a good source of revenue. Flour sold as fast as it could be bagged.

New this year was a "Guess the Weight of the Sack" competition with two sacks of grain provided by the millers, one for adults, one for children. At the end of the afternoon these were weighed on some antique sack scales – some nifty work with the calculator being needed to convert the lbs into kgs. After the Chairman chose a ticket out of a hat to resolve a tie, a visitor from Portsmouth collected the adult first prize (36 kg, spot-on), while the junior prize went to a youngster, Christopher, with an estimate of 15kg (actual weight 14.6kg).

A big thank you to all those who helped on the day and beforehand. We hope you enjoyed the hour or two you gave. Can you bring a friend next time? In fact, the more the merrier! Let Ann Simone know if you can help on 01494 448773. The next Pann Mill Open Day is on 13 July, with a display of members' crafts.

Programme and Membership Group

Transport

The Latest from Aylesbury...

Several months ago, on 29 February indeed, some of us attended BCC's annual Wycombe Transport Symposium, held this year at Adams Park. There was not space to include our Chairman's report on this in our Spring issue, but it is still topical because of interesting follow-up correspondence between the County Council and our Transport Group.—Ed.

This event provided the opportunity for the six invited representatives of the Society's Transport and Planning Groups to hear, for the first time, the County Council's vision and practical plans for road maintenance, public transport and traffic lights, and roads policy, as summarised by Jim Stevens, the recently appointed successor to Garrett Emmerson in the post of Head of Transportation in BCC.

To this delegate, Mr Stevens appeared to have a practical application to the many problems and challenges facing BCC. Much of what he said was offering future solutions which we can only hope will be implemented successfully, after taking note of the views which were expressed by the attendees during the electronic voting procedure on key issues.

Anne James, Strategic Service Manager at BCC, and Anuradha Fitzwalter, Group Manager, Transport Policy and Performance, gave presentations on local Wycombe issues with particular reference to their Area Action Plans, intended to relieve road congestion and improve the Environment – and local bus services!

The afternoon session incorporated projections by WDC's Jerry Unsworth, Head of Planning and Sustainability, on "Shaping High Wycombe", with long term planning strategies set out in the context of the Local Development Framework. All of this was detailed and heady stuff: one can only hope that the practical future outcomes match the scale of the challenges that are apparent – and considerable!

The workshops gave all delegates a welcome opportunity to "post" their views and recommendations on to topics sheets, covering the diverse range of highways and transport tissues discussed during the day. The "sticky notes", completed by the delegates, deserved the analysis and practical conclusions that BCC and WDC intimated would be drawn, and included in future transport planning.

As for your Society's representative, present on that day, it will be "business as usual"; i.e. monitoring the plans and policies as they evolve, and attempting (as always) to initiate and conduct sensible and relevant dialogue with the two local authorities.

Roger Lawson

Following the symposium, the six members of the Transport Group, led by Elsa Woodward, sent a detailed response to the event to the organisers, BCC. The Group felt the event had been well-organised, with plenty of opportunities to learn and to exchange views, but:

- the programme made no reference to climate change, despite burgeoning evidence of its detrimental effects, and policy guidance recently issued by the Government.
- there seemed to be no recognition of the need to make public transport sufficiently attractive to users to make the "modal shift" – i.e. to leave their cars at home and switch to less damaging forms of transport.
- public transport could be made more attractive to users, and less damaging to the environment, if "Demand Responsive Transport" were more vigorously developed.
- an ultra-light rail solution following the line of the disused High Wycombe to Bourne End railway line could link the Thames Valley to High Wycombe by public transport.

In due course, the Group received a carefully-worded reply from Anne James at BCC. She said the Climate Change "agenda" is very important and is being addressed through "congestion reduction and sustainable transport measures". She went on to point out that there had been "very significant" increases in public transport use in the County (although the Group wondered how much of that was down to free bus passes for the over-60s). The two DRT "pilot exercises" had been unsuccessful, she said. And she insisted there was no economic case for pursuing "light rail" to Bourne End – even to the extent of commissioning any kind of feasibility study.

As we go to press, the Group is preparing a further response. On the Bourne End link in particular, they believe there has been a failure at County Hall to grasp the big cost difference between "light rail" – like the enormously expensive Sheffield super-tram – and "ultra-light rail" with much simpler, lighter vehicles, requiring much less track engineering and using efficient on-board power systems and no overhead power supply. Indeed, the Group is aware that a local entrepreneur has recently initiated a feasibility study into this possibility from a top firm of transport consultants.

Approaches to Wycombe Abbey and Daws Hill Lodge between 1750 and 1930

Wycombe Abbey (known before 1800 as Loakes Mansion or Manor) has played an important part in the changing landscape of High Wycombe. The number and style of the entrances and driveways to the Abbey and Daws Hill Lodge evolved, as fashion and finance dictated, in the period 1750-1930. This article aims to describe those changes. Some of it is based on conjecture. I would be grateful for any corrections or further evidence that readers may have.

Loakes (sometimes spelt without the 'e') was bought by the Earl of Shelburne in 1700. Between 1754 and 1768 the two succeeding earls remodelled and extended the house and grounds to create a park with two entrances. The main entrance was on the High Street where the gardens, in front of the (now old) Library, now are. The service entrance was on St Mary's Street. A set of handsome wrought-iron gates was made for each entrance. Today they are probably those at the entrance to All Saints Churchyard and on the north side of the courtyard to Daws Hill House (which are much more florid than the Churchyard Gates).

I have found only one reference to the gates. In a letter to William, Earl of Shelburne, dated 8 October 1762, Samuel Auld, his agent noted:

"The Iron Gates is up and much esteem'd by our neighbours as being a great ornament to the Town. I have regulated the ground near the Gates. The rest I leave to Mr Brown." [This was 'Capability' Brown, who landscaped the grounds.]

To enlarge his park, William persuaded the Common Council of the town in 1762 to allow him to move the old Maidenhead road, which ran where the Dyke now is, to north of the Rye (now the London Road). In 1764 he obtained a 999-year lease on Horsenden Lane (now Queen Victoria Road) for one shilling a year, to provide a carriageway from the High Street to the house. This drive passed through two burgage plots over a triple-arched bridge (replaced by Victoria Bridge) across the Wye, curving round the west end of the Dyke and up to the north front of the house. William also diverted the old Marlow Road, which ran down the valley along the east side of Loakes and joined with Horsenden Lane, to the west of his property and park, so that it connected with St Mary's Street. Thus grounds of some 308 acres, uninterrupted by rights of way, were created.



One set of iron gates from Wycombe Abbey now adorns the entrance to All Saints Churchyard.



The stone pillars at the entrance to Daws Hill House came from the St. Mary's Street entrance to Wycombe Abbey.

The gates at the entrance to the Churchyard are said to be those from the St Mary's Street entrance and given by the Earl in 1770. This assertion first appears in Vol VII (p.270) of *Buckinghamshire Archaeological Records*. But to my mind it seems unlikely that only eight

years after the gates were installed the Earl would have them removed. It is more likely that they were moved after the sale of Loakes in 1798. Lord Carrington, who bought Loakes from the Earl (by then Marquis of Lansdowne), had the House transformed in the Gothic style by James Wyatt in 1803-4. It was renamed Wycombe Abbey. In keeping with this style the High Street gates were replaced by two castellated lodges and

impressive wooden doors below a battlemented gateway surmounted by the Carrington crest. The St Mary's Street entrance was replaced by stone pillars, with coronets above the light globes on top of the pillars, and plain iron railings and gates between the pillars. Thus the redundant gates went to the Churchyard and the other set were re-erected a century later on the north side of Daws Hill courtyard

when it was remodelled. Probably Lord Carrington kept the best pair and gave the plainer set to the Church. Victoria, one of the 3rd Lord Carrington's daughters, wrote that the Shelburne gates on the High Street 'were removed by my great-grandfather because his ten daughters used to converse through them with the officers of the Bucks Militia stationed at Loakes Hill - most improper of them! So he built two castellated lodges and two very solid and impregnable wooden doors to take their place.' Wyatt also built a side entrance with castellated lodge and coach house leading to the stables. This is situated at the bottom of Marlow Hill.

A third approach to Wycombe Abbey was constructed by the first Lord Carrington to provide access from the East on to the London Road, thus obviating the need to pass through the town when going by carriage to or from

London. A carriageway (now Chestnut Avenue) from a lodge on the London Road ran through Carrington lands across Bassetsbury Lane towards Keep Hill and turned right by another lodge into Wycombe Abbey Park (interrupted today by the 1960s Warren Wood housing estate). The drive continued west towards the Abbey, and down an avenue of limes curving north before arriving at the north front of the house. It must have made an imposing approach to the house, with glimpses through the woodland of the waterfall, dyke and lake and the lime avenue and sweeping lawns sloping down to the castellated east front. The site of the London Road lodge is now occupied by Speedy Hire, and a new house (Keep Hill Lodge) has recently been built on the site of the single storey stucco lodge.

When the railway arrived in Wycombe in 1854, the High Street entrance, a few minutes from the station, became the principal entrance. In an article on English Homes in *The Illustrated London News* of 5 October 1895, the writer comments on Wycombe Abbey:

'Nearly parallel with the lake there runs eastward an avenue of limes, down which passes the drive to a lodge, in pre-railway days the main entrance to Wycombe Abbey. Now, however, as High Wycombe Station is not five minutes walk from the gateway in the street, Lord Carrington and his friends naturally do not take a drive round two sides of the park to get home; and as it has chanced, they gain this effect of sudden contrast from the town without, to the country within.'

Following the sale of the Abbey in 1896 to the Girl's Education Company (Wycombe Abbey School), Lord Carrington converted Daws Hill farmhouse, at the top of the valley, into a splendid country mansion, fit for royalty whom he entertained. The family moved into Daws Hill Lodge (later called House) in 1901. As he continued to own most of the estate (only 30 acres surrounding the Abbey were sold to the school) it was relatively easy to reconfigure the landscape and approaches around his new house. So in 1901 the Rupert Gates (Rupert is a Carrington family name) on the High Street were moved half-way up Marlow Hill, to create a new entrance and driveway to Daws Hill. The drive follows the contours from the west to the east side of this valley, rising through Rookery Wood to reach Daws Hill Lodge on the plateau. The three stone pillars and railings at the St Mary's Street entrance were also moved to the entrance on Daws Hill Lane, where they are today.



The Rupert Gates, originally forming the entrance to Wycombe Abbey from the High Street, now stand half-way up Marlow Hill.

Earl Carrington, as he became in 1895, gave the drive from the High Street and some land on either side, back to the town, for the erection of a town hall and other public buildings. In 1901 he built a new bridge across the Wye which he gave in memory of Queen Victoria's reign. The drive was named Queen Victoria Road. As it curved westwards to meet St Mary's Street, this Abbey entrance was incorporated into the new road scheme. From Queen Victoria Road a third approach to Daws Hill was then created. It skirted round the Abbey grounds (by then a school) and passed over a new dam across the Dyke up the hill to the Lodge. In 1908 Lord Carrington bought the eighteenth century wrought iron gates to the War Office in Pall Mall, which had moved to a new building (on the site of Carrington House) in Whitehall, and erected them as an entrance to Daws Hill Park, as it became known. When, in 1923, Lord Carrington, by then Marquess of Lincolnshire, gave three and a half acres of Rye Mead and the Dyke to the town, the gates were moved 25 metres to the other side of the Dyke. Sadly, the 'War Office Gates', as they were called, were melted down in the Second World War. All that remains are the iron railings and wrought iron posts on either side of two dreary wooden doors. The Marquess died in 1928 and Wycombe Abbey School bought Daws Hill and most of the 200 acres of land.

In 1953 the four-acre fruit and vegetable garden of Wycombe Abbey, which was reached by a tunnel under St Mary's Street, was given up for the building of Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education (now Buckinghamshire New University). The 1896 sale catalogue for the Abbey refers to handsome wrought iron gates at the end of the garden. Perhaps these were the Shelburne gates from the High Street which were later moved to Daws Hill Lodge. The last destructive changes to the town aspect of Wycombe Abbey came in 1967 when a large area of land, formerly the rose garden and some of the lake, were compulsorily purchased from the Abbey to create the four-lane Abbey Way and traffic islands. Traffic now speeds past the rather undistinguished 1960s entrance to the Abbey which peeps across a stretch of desolate tarmac towards Queen Victoria Road.

But let us leave Wycombe Abbey in its heyday. The 1895 *Illustrated London News* again: standing at the High Street entrance the writer invites us to 'open one of the great doors and pass through, and walk for a minute along a path between winding trees, and the house faces you across a tiny lake, and already all

sight and sound of town have passed away. Wycombe Abbey stands in a park, which spreads away eastward and southward, open to the hills. Here is no sight of street or people; the great gardens lie to the right, and the stable court before you; perhaps among the trees behind is here and there a glimpse of the high garden wall; but the long narrow lake, the

trees that border it, the avenue of limes across the water to your left, the stretch of greensward and the beech covered hill – these and the fresh air blowing through them, tell only of the woodlands and a life remote from any town.'

David Snoxell

Gift Aid Scheme – Success!

At the 2007 AGM, I announced that application had been made to HM Revenue and Customs for a refund of tax under the Gift Aid Scheme. Correspondence with HMRC has taken some time but the Society has now received a refund of £955.25 for the period 2000-6. A further claim for the years 2007-8 is now being prepared.

This is an ideal time to remind members of the importance to the Society of joining the Gift Aid Scheme. Provided you are an individual (not a Group) and are sure you are a UK taxpayer (*and who isn't?—Ed.*), all that is required is the completion of a simple one-off declaration which is included with your subscription renewal. The Society will do the rest. There is nothing more for you to do and you are very unlikely to hear from HMRC. Despite the recent reduction in the basic rate of taxation, transitional relief announced by the Government means that relief will continue at 22% for the next three years.

Gift Aid declarations are available from the Membership Secretary, Sheila Fooks (01494 526580).

Nick Giles

Who paid for those trees?

In our Editorial in the Spring issue, we contrasted the readiness of the County Council, when asked, to chop down a roadside tree – even in a Conservation Area – with the fact that only a few streets away, they had been willing to plant new roadside trees in response to a request from a supportive councillor. County Councillor Val Letheren (for it was she!) has told us that the cost of these new trees came not from the sponsorship of local residents but from her “personal pot” that Councillors (both County and District) can allocate to worthy causes in their divisions/wards. Bravo!

Volunteers still needed!



The Pann Mill team still needs more helpers one morning a month (or even just on Open Days). Since the last appeal, they have been pleased to welcome Raymond Chamberlin into the team, but more are needed. You can be hunky, intelligent, or simply happy to muck along with the rest of the team – you're wanted! Call Alan Furness on 01494 563071.

Honorary Treasurer – Vacancy

Nick Giles, the Society's Treasurer for the past 22 years, will be retiring at the Annual General Meeting in April 2009 and the Society is seeking a replacement to commence work on 1st March 2009 for the start of the next financial year.

The Treasurer's role is an honorary position and, along with the Chairman and Hon. Secretary, the Treasurer is one of the senior officers of the Society.

The work is not particularly onerous and would suit a numerate retired person.

The bank accounts are held in High Wycombe and the Treasurer is expected to attend the monthly meetings of the Executive Committee which take place in the evenings in the Wycombe locality and therefore some means of transport is required.

The position entails the recording of all financial transactions and reconciliation with the bank statements. A monthly report of income and expenditure is required for Executive Committee meetings and each April an annual income and expenditure report must be submitted for approval by the Annual General Meeting. The Treasurer is responsible for settling bills when received, issuing cheques (with a second signature by another authorised Committee member) and giving general financial advice to the Executive Committee.

The Society has recently adopted the Gift Aid Scheme and the Treasurer is responsible for submitting the annual reclaim to HM Revenue & Customs.

The Society's income continues to grow as a result of the Gift Aid Scheme and regular events at Pann Mill. The Executive Committee is looking for someone who can safeguard and invest the Society's income, to ensure that its environmental work in High Wycombe can continue in the years to come.

This is an important post that must be filled. If you feel you can spare the relatively small amount of time needed for it, please contact Nick Giles on 01296 395518 for more details, or alternatively speak with our Chairman, Roger Lawson, on 01494 528047.

The History Of The Royal Military College

BACK IN October last year a few of us High Wycombe Society members made our way to the Liston Hall in Marlow for a meeting of the Marlow Society. The speaker was the eminent military historian and author, Professor Ian Beckett, and his subject was the History of the Royal Military College and Academy. We knew, of course, that the RMC had been founded in High Wycombe and the RMA in Marlow, but we were keen to learn more of the detailed history from an acknowledged expert.

The story began in the 1790s when the British Army, commanded by the Duke of York (of nursery rhyme fame), fought a disastrous military campaign in Flanders against the French revolutionary forces. It was an early example of the 'lions led by donkeys' syndrome. The Duke came to the conclusion that the French were led by better trained officers, many, including Napoleon Bonaparte, having risen from the ranks. He looked around for ideas and was most impressed by a proposal made by a cavalry officer in his circle, Lt.-Col. John Gaspard Le Marchant, a native of Guernsey, to establish colleges for senior and junior officers respectively. So in 1798 the Duke gave Le Marchant the go-ahead. General William Harcourt was appointed Governor of the new establishment, with Le Marchant as his Lieutenant-Governor.

Initially, Le Marchant agreed a course of instruction for staff officers with General François Jarry, a French general who had defected to Britain earlier in the 1790s, and opened what was to be called the Royal Military College in The Antelope Inn (now The Bakers Oven) in the High Street, High Wycombe, next door to The Red Lion (now Woolworths) in May 1799. Jarry gave his lectures in French. About 30 cadets per year underwent instruction, at a cost of 30 guineas (£31.50) per student. It was generally agreed that the presence of the cadets added to the gaiety of the town, and a theatre flourished in St Mary Street, although the conduct of a few students upset the locals. Some officers trained in Wycombe were criticised as being impractical, but many soon proved their worth in the campaigns against Napoleon.

Next, a school for junior officers, the Royal Military Academy, was opened in May 1802 at Remnantz, a large house with extensive grounds in West Street, Marlow. Le Marchant had proposed four departments: (1) 13-15 year-old boys (2) 16-18 year-olds (3) sons of NCOs and privates, and (4) existing junior officers chosen for staff duties. However, the Government of the day was not enlightened

enough to consider giving commissions to the sons of other ranks so item (3) was dropped. Initially there were only 16 cadets, but the number ultimately rose to some 400, with up to 100 lecturers and support staff. The training regime was harsh, leading to some unrest amongst the cadets, and a future baronet was actually sent down for dabbling in Jacobinism. Successful students received a free commission, but those who did not finish the course could apparently buy a commission anyway!



Remnantz, Marlow, today.

The establishments at High Wycombe and Marlow were only ever intended to be temporary. Construction of a permanent establishment at Sandhurst took years longer than planned due to land purchase wheel-dealing on the part of the Government and incompetence on the part of the building contractor. Eventually both establishments moved from Bucks in 1813: the college initially to Farnham, Surrey; and the academy to Sandhurst, Berks, where it has remained up to the present day.



The Bakers Oven, on the site of the former Antelope Public House, in High Wycombe High Street.

In 1811, before the moves took place, Le Marchant was promoted to the rank of Major-General and posted to Spain to serve in the Peninsular War under Wellington. Sadly he was killed in a cavalry charge at the Battle of Salamanca in 1812.

While serving in High Wycombe, Le Marchant lived with his family in a house in Church Street on the site of what is now the entrance to the Chilterns Shopping Centre. Wycombe District Council have erected one of their heritage plaques there to commemorate the fact, and a similar plaque was unveiled on The Bakers Oven premises in May 1999 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the foundation of the Royal Military College there. A third plaque is to be found at the entrance to Remnantz in Marlow to mark the foundation of the Royal Military Academy there.

The professor gave us a wide-ranging and highly interesting talk, and we are grateful to the Marlow Society for organising the evening.

John Gore

Obituary

Pauline Cauvain

PAULINE CAUVAIN, née Stephens, passed away peacefully at home on 22 April following several months of ill-health and treatment for heart and lung problems. Pauline and Stanley, her husband of 39 years, were loyal Society members for many years, becoming our own experts in local archaeology. They advised on exhibitions, gave talks and in 1993 conducted an extensive dig at Pann Mill, where remains of a 14th century mill were revealed. Some of the artefacts unearthed are in the County and High Wycombe Museums, and others are displayed inside the Mill. I remember seeing Pauline at work there, kneeling in a tent with a little trowel, full of excitement and anticipation. The painstaking work was no trouble to her – she was in her element.

Together with other Society members, I attended Pauline's funeral in Penn. Stanley bravely gave an illuminating and poignant tribute.

Pauline was born in Mickfield in 1931, attended Priory Road and Hatters Lane Schools, and lived and worked entirely in High Wycombe. Stanley's cycling led to their meeting, as he needed a shed to house his two cycles. Pauline's parents obliged. Both were cyclists so, after their wedding, to the surprise of guests, they changed into cycling gear in the vestry to pedal off together to the reception, Pauline still wearing her veil. The younger Pauline had taken up motorcycling. On one occasion, as she stood in a ladies' toilet queue resplendent in her leathers, another lady also waiting asked if she was in the right place, pointing out the location of the gents'!

Pauline worked at Booker Airfield, Rye Mill Garage and Wycombe Marsh Paper Mill, spending the last 25 years as an export shipping manager at Agropharm, Tylers Green. She loved her work, only giving up this January due to ill health. One of Pauline's early pastimes was dancing, with Stanley trying to keep up with his two left feet! A memorable evening was once spent dancing to Joe Loss and his orchestra in London at the Institute of Freight Forwarders Annual Dinner.

Over the years, Pauline developed a great interest in the town, its history and archaeology and its future. She was a school governor at Beechview School for eight years. For many years she was part of the Society's Heritage Group, also serving on the Town Centre Forum. Her views on the town were passionate and resolute.

Other hobbies included music, poetry, gardening and wildlife. She and I enjoyed several outings to local amateur operatic productions. Having trodden the boards a little in her youth, Pauline was always appreciative of amateur efforts made on stage. We also shared an interest in cats – mine were moggies, but Pauline's were Persians!

She somehow managed to train her cats not to chase garden birds. I regret not paying more attention to the method of this notable achievement.

Pauline was a loyal and generous friend, also enjoying life as an aunt and great aunt. Her funeral service was held in Holy Trinity Church, Penn. In the Lady Chapel, some of the original Penn tiles from the 15th century could be seen. Pauline was instrumental in identifying some of these tiles and their manufacturing sites and, along with research on the British Museum collections, this was to advance the knowledge of tile-making in South Bucks.



Pauline is laid to rest in Cock Lane Cemetery, Tylers Green, overlooking where she was married and worked with Stanley on archaeological sites: an appropriate place of repose for a lady who so loved the town of High Wycombe.

Annie Woodward

We are grateful to Stanley Cauvain for making the photograph of Pauline available for publication. –Ed.

Bill Page

At Pann Mill Open Day on 11 May, a brief but fitting ceremony took place when a plaque to the late Bill Page was unveiled by his widow, Valerie.

The plaque was affixed to a beautiful wooden cogwheel, so appropriate in the light of Bill's skill with, and understanding of, mill machinery. It can be seen inside the mill building.



Arts Festival Meeting

John Hampden – The Patriot

Nowadays we tend to take our democratic rights for granted and feel free to treat our elected political leaders with contempt. But, as Roy Bailey of the John Hampden Society reminded those of us who attended his talk at the Guildhall on 30th May, “It wasn’t always so.” Back in the seventeenth century successive kings were confident of their God-given right to rule and felt little obligation to consider the wishes of the people. Parliamentary representatives who stood their ground were held in high esteem. Amongst their number arguably no-one was held in greater regard than John Hampden.

Researching John Hampden’s life has been a lifelong endeavour for Roy Bailey who first heard about him in a Children’s Hour programme at the age of nine. Ensuring that his place in history is widely recognised remains the *raison-d’etre* of the John Hampden Society he helped to found.

Roy treated us to a very clear biography of his hero, from his birth in 1595 (not 1594 as often cited) through to his untimely death in 1643. It was appropriately illustrated throughout with slides of the various locations, starting with the ancestral family home of Great Hampden, the school he attended in Thame, and the church in which he was married at Pyrton. Following a typical career path for a gentleman of the times, he studied at Magdalen College, Oxford and then focussed on the law at the Middle Temple, before he entered parliament, representing the borough of Grampound in Cornwall in the first instance and later Wendover. He was happily married to Elizabeth who bore him 9 children.

Meanwhile, however, Charles I was pursuing a number of unpopular policies, interfering in politics, religion and economics, and dealing with any opposition in a ruthless manner. Events culminated in the dissolution of parliament and imprisonment of Sir John Eliot in the Tower where he died. In need of funds and not wishing to reassemble parliament, Charles revived the ancient tax of Ship Money and extended it to all inland counties. John Hampden refused to pay and the resulting



court case made him famous. Although the King won, it was a Pyrrhic victory.

When the so-called “Long Parliament” was called, John Hampden was one of its most prominent members. They achieved a lot in a short time: they abolished the Star Chamber; they imprisoned the judges who had found against John Hampden; they impeached the Earl of Strafford for planning to bring an Irish army to support the King; and they composed the Grand Remonstrance laying out the perceived misdeeds of Charles I’s reign. The King in turn attempted (but failed) to arrest five members of parliament including John Hampden.

Control of the militia, however, would not be conceded by the King. The Civil War formally began when the Royal Standard was raised in Nottingham. John Hampden formed the “Greencoats” regiment to fight for parliament and, although not present at the start of the battle of Edgehill, arrived in time to repulse Prince Rupert’s cavalry. In June 1643 he again crossed paths with Prince Rupert who had set off with Royalist troops from Oxford heading for Chinnor. A battle was fought at Chalgrove in which John Hampden was fatally wounded. He died a few days later in Thame.

Events which followed would bring to greater prominence his cousin, Oliver Cromwell; but the principles for which he would continue fighting had already been mapped out.

Jackie Kay

Like Naming a Cat Fido! A Personal View (see p.1–Ed.)

Eden, a name in such a context to give you that sinking feeling. Like naming a cat Fido!

Sadly, it is too late now. What a unique opportunity this town with its landscape had in this day and age as all other developments offer the same soulless experience. River, trees, park: what an example they could have set. I wonder if we could have had the components of Eden attractively landscaped, not locked up in an imposing edifice that does not complement our valley and does not appear to facilitate any potential restoration. I don’t know much about how the River Wye came to be culverted but Eden seems a continuum, an unsubtle development in the history of the town. So, it seems there has been no progress of ideas in all those years.

Graham Thorne

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr and Mrs W S Glover of Downley
Mr S Lakovic and Ms Jean Sutherland of Rowan Ave HW

Obituary

We regret to announce the death of:

Mrs Pauline Cauvain

We extend our condolences to Stanley Cauvain and members of their family (*see p.10*).

Bill Page's Photographs

In the Winter 2007/2008 issue of the *Newsletter*, we recorded with regret the death of Bill Page, a keen and expert member of the Pann Mill team. John Mumford, in his comments, noted that Bill had been a keen and accomplished 35mm photographer.

And so it was. At the May 2008 Pann Mill Open Day, we were approached by his widow, Valerie Page, who very generously offered to donate to the Society Bill's extensive collection of photographs and postcards of High Wycombe that he had gathered together over many years. The only condition was that she had the photographs in her car, and could we take them that very day?

This was an extraordinarily generous offer, and we jumped to accept. The photographs now form part of the Society's extensive collection, joining those which have already been scanned and archived as part of High Wycombe Library's SWOP project before being returned to us. Discussions are in hand with the SWOP team with a view to adding Bill's collection to those

already catalogued under SWOP. This is the best way to ensure that his work is preserved for the benefit of present and future Wycombe people and historians.

The Chairman has written to Valerie Page on behalf of the Society to thank her for this most generous gesture. (*See also p.10.*)

Members' Crafts and Hobbies

This year, the opportunity will arise on 13 July for those gifted Members to show their wares.

It is good to have some new activities each time, so please, don't be shy, get in touch with me (01494 448773) and see if you can have space at this Pann Mill Open Day.

Ann Simone

Thanks...

... to all those studious and hard-working members who have contributed copy for this issue. Material for the Autumn 2008 issue should reach me at 29 Maybrook Gardens High Wycombe HP13 6PJ (01494 528106) by **20 August**, please.

Chris Woodman (Hon Editor)

Local Studies Centre

High Wycombe Library's "Local Studies Centre" is what was once called the Reference Library! Our member, Chris Featherstone, who is in charge of the Studies Centre, asks all members to note that, now that the new Library has opened, the address is 5 Eden Place, Eden, High Wycombe, HP11 2DH, and the Local Studies phone number is 01494 475900, email hwlocalstudies@buckscc.gov.uk.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Put these dates in your diary **now!!!**

2008

Friday 27th June, from 7.00pm,
HW Cricket Club, London Road

Sunday 13th July
11.00am-5.00pm

Friday 25th July
7.30pm, Guildhall

Sunday 10th August

Saturday 16th August
8.00am-noon, Little Market House

Sunday 14th September

SOCIETY'S 40TH BIRTHDAY PARTY. TICKETS ARE STILL AVAILABLE AS WE GO TO PRESS – PHONE 01494 448773!

Pann Mill Open Day. Bric-a-brac, teas & cakes, sale of flour (water level permitting), crafts by Society members (*see above*). Also Water Trail at 2.30pm, start and finish at Pann Mill.

Quarterly Meeting: From Source to Tap. Speaker: Jennifer Burrows, Thames Water.

Shared car visit to the Mosquito Museum, De Havilland Heritage Centre, London Colney (*contact Angela Rees on 01494 533562*).

Charity Market Stall (*goods needed to sell, and/or volunteer helpers – please contact Barbara Pathé on 01494 442908*).

Pann Mill open for National Heritage Weekend. Bric-a-brac, teas & cakes, sale of flour (water level permitting), children's activities. Visits to Thames Water Pumping Station. Also Water Trail at 2.30pm, start and finish at Pann Mill.