

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 164

SUMMER 2012



Ringing the Changes

There was a lot of jollity in Frogmoor on 19th May at the annual weighing-in of the Mayor. Our Chairman, Roger Lawson, was caught on the Editor's camera (left), while Society member Sally Scagell got a good view of the new Mayor on his first walkabout (right). The Medieval Fayre was a triumph for organisers HWBidCo who want to bring more people into the town centre to help restore its prosperity.



The Society's contribution to the day's events was relatively low-key. Mary Woodman bravely welcomed all-comers for a well-prepared tour of Medieval Wycombe, but there were few takers, with so many attractions competing for attention.

May is always a busy month for the Society, with our first Pann Mill Open Day and our Wycombe Arts Festival talk, closely following our April AGM. This year there was also an official re-opening of the Wycombe Rye Lido at the start of the month, at which Chris Woodman represented the Society. And a delegation from the Executive Committee also had a very positive meeting about Wycombe Museum with WDC's Head of Community, Elaine Jewell, and Museum Manager, Richard de Peyer. Encouraging work is going on to ensure public access to the Castle Mound remains if Castle Hill House is sold, and there are exciting ideas about a new public area beside the River Wye behind the proposed new museum site in Queen Victoria Road.

The AGM brought some changes to the Executive Committee: a new Vice-Chairman following Tony Fooks' retirement, and a new committee member. A change in stance, too, as Frances Presland presented a controversial proposal to register the Rye as an Historic Park (see Page 7).

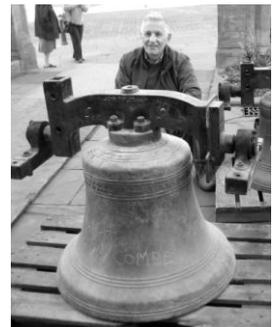
At the AGM, the Society was thanked for its help in saving the Wycombe Bell, a small slice of our heritage which many members felt motivated to preserve when in March it



appeared to be under threat. Society member, Christine Clark, was at All Saints to see the bell taken down from the tower(left) while two days later David Snoxell kept watch on the day most of the other bells were taken to Whitechapel(right).

A new peal of bells is scheduled to be installed in the Autumn. Then once again we will hear the ringing of the changes in High Wycombe.

Jackie Kay



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

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Planning This Quarter

WE APPEALED in the Spring *Newsletter* for more members of the Planning Group, and we think we have got one very well-qualified volunteer. But we would still like more, now that we have lost Jette Peddie and (except on special assignments) Tony Fooks. Please get in touch if *you* are willing to attend monthly evening meetings and do a bit more for the Society and the town. Here are the main issues that have occupied us over the past three months.

Bassetsbury Manor We were pleased to find when the formal planning application was made that the lurid blue blocks for additional small classrooms had been toned down, but surprised that the green roof for the school hall had gone – apparently at the insistence of WDC Planning Department! We submitted an objection on the grounds that the design of the hall was inconsistent with the Conservation Area guidance – it was too large, did not fit in because it failed to use traditional materials, and the traffic implications had not been resolved satisfactorily.

National Planning Policy Framework The Government eventually published the NPPF on 27th March, with much national publicity. The 20-odd Planning Policy Guidance Notes were simultaneously withdrawn. It was much improved on the first draft, thanks particularly to the input of CPRE and Tony Burton of Civic Voice, but no-one can tell yet what impact the Government's insistence that 'significant weight' be placed on economic growth will have. There is a 1-year transition period in which WDC will need to bring their Local Plan into line with the Framework. During that time, WDC must make sure they put together a coherent, locally-developed set of policies because, otherwise, the general provisions of the NPPF will apply. The Group will do all it can to ensure that WDC plug all the potential loopholes (though all the signs are that they are on to it!).

Town Centre Planning On 2nd May, WDC's Cabinet adopted two key documents. One was the draft Delivery and Site Allocations Document which sets out all the land allocations in the District and paves the way for the town centre Masterplan looking forward to the removal of the Abbey Way flyover and the opening up of the River Wye by 2026. (How many HW Society members will be around to celebrate that!) The other was a very encouraging Action Plan on the Public Realm which identifies short-term improvements that can be made in our town centre. We were glad to be involved in the many workshops that helped draw up that list. Much work is now needed to analyse and comment on both documents.

Daws Hill and Abbey Barn South The series of workshops and consultations on the future of RAF Daws Hill rumbles on, in a rather poorly organised way. There are two key issues. First, just how many dwellings should be permitted on

the Daws Hill site? Taylor Wimpey seem to be assuming a total of 550 dwellings – a huge number, corresponding to a density of around 30 per hectare which far exceeds the level in adjoining sites in this pleasant, and still sylvan, neighbourhood. The second is the impact on transport, particularly when the Sports Centre Redevelopment (where we still await the definitive planning application) and other changes in the Handy Cross area are considered. Nobody has yet come up with an effective cure but there are encouraging signs that Bucks County Council, our Transport Authority, is aware of the problem. Group members Tony Fooks and Andrew Taylor have spent a good deal of time attending and preparing for the many meetings/consultations, involving the Daws Hill Reference Group who are seeking to turn themselves into a Neighbourhood Planning Forum under the Localism Act.

John Lewis The WDC Planning Committee on 23rd May approved John Lewis' application to be allowed to sell clothes, shoes and fashion accessories. This restriction was originally imposed to protect the town centre from out-of-town competition. It is arguable that Eden has rendered that condition out-of-date, but it has remained controversial within the Planning Group.

Next Home & Garden store Meanwhile, the Group took a further look at the proposals from Next for a store on Cressex Island and concluded that their brave design will not fit in at all with existing developments in the area, and resolved to submit an objection.

Hughenden Spine Road Readers may remember our concern last year that our Planning and Transport Authorities seemed determined to make the new spine road required to service new development at the BroomWade and DeLaRue sites into a 'link road' to the back end of Downley. A revised application now recognises that 'rat-running' is not to be encouraged along these new roads, but there is still an utterly unnecessary proposal for yet more traffic lights at the new junction with Hughenden Avenue. The fearless Arnie Parr of our Transport Group is on the task!

Metro Bank Yes, we all gulped (and one angry member contacted us) when we saw the bright red and blue signage of the new Metro Bank at the end of White Hart Street. But cooler heads suggested that anything that is new tends to

stand out and perhaps we would get used to it. Opinions will be welcome. The wider question is, do we want a subdued, 'classic' High Street and Town Centre, or would livening up our High Street area help those businesses thrive and draw more people in to the older end of our

town? Which matters more? It's a big issue, related to the Public Realm exercise mentioned above.

Chris Woodman

Quality Counts! 2012

WE IN WYCOMBE District are truly fortunate to have a District Council which genuinely believes in the value of informed 'stakeholders' to comment on planning policy and its execution. The finest manifestation of this approach is the annual Quality Counts! tour: each May, a coach-full of Councillors, representatives of amenity groups, developers, architects and even a few 'ordinary' people sets off to visit recent developments in the District, and sometimes further afield, to consider what has turned out well, what is less satisfactory, and to learn lessons for planning policy. This year on 29th March we visited two sites in Bracknell and two in High Wycombe. The topic was "Major Housing Developments: Design and Layout Issues". If that sounds boring, well it wasn't. There really are big decisions to be taken about layout on major new housing sites, which have a substantial impact on ambience and amenity.

Our first stop was at **Jennett's Park**, Bracknell. Although this is being built by four developers (Redrow, Persimmon, Charles Church and Taylor Wimpey) there is a unifying feature, in that the layout was designed to get car parking away from the roads. So, whereas in a traditional layout the street blocks would have parking in front of the housing, making for wide spaces in the public realm, here the parking was put either under the buildings or in the centres of the blocks. This made for



Parking at Jennett's Park was either within the street blocks (above) or beneath the dwellings (below).



And the streets and pavements themselves were rather cramped (below).



rather narrow streets with the frontages right up to narrow pavements. It was an interesting approach but, in your writer's view, it was unsuccessful. It is difficult to articulate why: perhaps we have simply grown accustomed to traditional streets with room for car parking in front, and to (small) back gardens well-separated from vehicles. As for the buildings themselves, they were varied – some boxlike and others seemingly more spacious.



The Parks, Bracknell: traditional wide streets and plenty of mature trees.

At our other stop in Bracknell, **The Parks**, a George Wimpey site, we saw something completely different: a former RAF Staff College site, with sports facilities and many mature trees, and building which retained the traditional street pattern. The buildings themselves seemed blander than those at Jennett's Park, but the environment made up for that.

And then, after a pleasant lunch at Marlow (for which participants were, rightly, charged) we came back to High Wycombe, to **Wycombe Marsh** (now called *Wye Dene*). This site has a great deal going for it, with both the River Wye and the Back Stream passing through the site, each being a major landscape feature. Readers of the *Newsletter* should pay the site a visit some time. It is a big development, still far from complete. Phase 1 at the east end included the Retail Park and associated industrial units. Some participants on the tour

had been disappointed with that but were more impressed with the development at the western end. This incorporates more attractive and varied architecture and, of course, the River, which is now undergoing some imaginative treatment.



Phase 2 of the Wycombe Marsh site is more exciting and varied than Phase 1 beside the Retail Park.

Finally, and least encouraging, we came to the former **Wellesbourne School/Bucks New University site**, now named *Kingshill Grange*. This is another Taylor Wimpey project and its design had been compromised from the start by the requirement to squeeze as many dwellings as possible on to the site so as to maximise the sale price for BNU who needed funds to build the Gateway Building and other developments. Also, WDC's requirement for 'strategic open space' was met by neighbouring green belt land and was effectively off-site. The development was originally refused by WDC but allowed by an Inspector on appeal. It

features a central street with high density flats beside it and lower density housing around the periphery of the site. This contrasted with the



The Wellesbourne BNU site, now Kingshill Grange, has a dominant, runway-like main street, and a high density of dwellings per hectare.

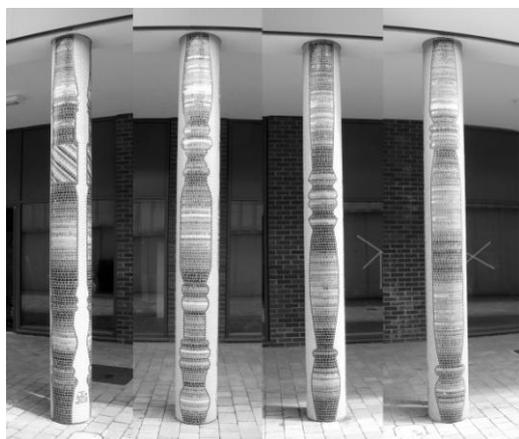
layout on other sites visited which featured sinuous streets and avoided the "Airport Runway" syndrome (which I remarked upon in the 2001 QCT event – yes, so long ago! – when we visited the former G-Plan site, now *Princes Gate*).

So the conclusions from the day were a mixed bag. I think there is much to be said for traditional street layouts, avoiding huge straight spaces; and putting all the parking in the centres of blocks seems an unsuccessful gimmick. But above all, housing density is a crucial determinant of whether a site will be successful... Those people thinking about RAF Daws Hill, please bear that in mind!

Chris Woodman

It may not be the Parthenon but ...

AT LAST – we have something which says this is High Wycombe!



An attractive new feature in the town is always welcome, and I would like to draw your attention to the row of four splendid mosaic columns outside the new Travelodge.

Commissioned by the hotel developers, the columns were created by local artist Jenny Earnshaw, who works from a studio in Leigh Street. They feature colourful mosaics of giant

chair legs, thus reflecting Wycombe's chairmaking heritage. To see the pillars, walk from White Hart Street into Eden, just looking to your right.

Photos by Malcolm Connell



Of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but I do believe these mosaics will soon be a favourite feature in what I fear is becoming an otherwise soulless town centre.

Denise Lindsay

The AGM

50 MEMBERS of the Society attended the AGM on 13th April 2012. The business began with the **Hon. Secretary's report** which summarised the year's general events. There were talks on King Zog by Neil Rees, on the Changing Wildlife of the Chilterns by John Tyler, and on Milling and Baking by Stan Cauvain. There was also an exhibition entitled 'Wycombe Pioneers of Progress – A Centenary Celebration', the publication of an associated book and a reflective presentation in October by members of the project team.

The biennial New Members' Cheese and Wine Party took place in June; and the Society hosted a Special Meeting on "The Future of High Wycombe Town Centre" in September. The Forum for Affiliated Groups and Members (FAGAM) held three meetings during 2011, but attendances were poor and it was decided to hold only two meetings during 2012.

A modest charge of £2 had been introduced for non-members at meetings (other than the AGM).

In Paul Meek's absence, the **Hon Treasurer's report** was read by Chris Woodman. The Society's finances were in good health.

It is proposed to change the Society's financial year to be closer to the standard tax year which will make it easier to claim Gift Aid. The Gift Aid forms will also need to be redone next year to comply with a change in the declaration, which now states that donors must confirm that they pay enough tax to cover all their charitable donations.

The Oak Room Windows Project accounted for increases both in sales income and in printing costs, the current deficit being almost entirely covered by the remaining stock of books. The Treasurer noted that this was a very successful project.

Appointment of the President and Vice Presidents

Roger Lawson asked members to confirm that the President Stuart King and the four Vice-Presidents John Gore, Dick Hoare, Myra King and Kathleen Peatey should continue in office for the year. This was approved unanimously.

Election of Officers and Executive Committee Members

The Chairman of the Society, Roger Lawson, was re-elected and Jackie Kay was elected as Vice-Chairman, having been co-opted onto the Executive Committee earlier in the year. Tony Fooks retired as Vice-Chairman and also as a member of the Executive Committee. Hon. Secretary Frances Presland and Hon. Treasurer Paul Meek were re-elected.

Roberta Wilson retired as a member of the Executive Committee. The re-elected Executive Committee Members were Trevor Carter, Alan Furness, Evelyn Roe, Margaret Simmons, Ron Sims, Chris Woodman, Mary Woodman and Elsa Woodward. Chris Watson was elected as a new

Executive Committee member.

It was agreed that Alison Adamson should be reappointed as the Independent Examiner.

Neglected areas within High Wycombe

A question from the floor during 'Any Other Business' noted that at the 2011 AGM it was agreed that the Hon. Sec. should write to WDC about the state of several aspects of High Wycombe which led to it being described as a "tatty town". The Chairman stated that a letter was not sent, as the issues were addressed by other means. The observations of the state of the Millennium clock in White Hart Street were resolved within days of the AGM when it was repainted and the issue of plants in hanging baskets that had been allowed to die through lack of water was unlikely to occur again as they were now going to be looked after by the Town Centre Partnership. The other issues were likely to be addressed through the Wycombe District Council's public realm exercise.

The Parish Church bells

David Snoxell thanked the Society for its efforts in helping to save the 'Wycombe Bell'. It was hoped that the problems of siting the bell within the church and funding its scrap cost would be resolved by the time the new bells came to the church in October.

This concluded the official business of the 2012 AGM.

Presentation to Tony Fooks

The Chairman thanked Tony Fooks who was retiring both from his role as Vice Chairman and as an Executive Committee member and presented him with a gift of a pen from the Executive Committee. The accompanying card portrayed a picture of Venice with a small canal entering a culvert just past a footbridge, echoing our own River Wye, the deculverting of which is dear to many Society members' hearts.

The evening continued with Group reports for: Planning, Transport, Programme and Membership, Friends of the Rye, Pann Mill Restoration; and was rounded off with a brief look back at the Heritage Projects of 2011.

Editorial note: In the accounts that follow, space has not permitted complete coverage of these reports – they have been edited to avoid duplication with other articles.

Planning

Tony Fooks outlined a busy year for the planning group, not just interpreting planning applications, but also assessing and contributing during the consultation period to the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). He spoke of representing both the Society and ANTAS (Association of North Thames Amenity Societies) at public hearings for the South East Plan, which has now been revoked leaving Wycombe District Council to establish its own housing needs figures. A member of the planning group is a member of the team considering housing numbers and locations.

He highlighted the success of the Society's Special Public Meeting on "The Future of High Wycombe Town Centre". Attended by 100 members of our Society and the public, it helped form the Society's response to the consultation for the new Town Centre Masterplan. Tony was optimistic about the preservation and improvements to the historic areas of the town and said that much of what the Society had hoped for was coming to fruition.

He spoke of challenges posed by particular development proposals, including traffic flow requirements for the New Sports Centre; and complex issues for the Daws Hill site where residents have formed a neighbourhood planning forum to influence plans.

Tony explained how the group had built up a very satisfactory relationship with Council Officers and developers and indeed that Wycombe District Council frequently referred developers to the Society.

Transport

Elsa Woodward described the important role of transport within the economy and its significant environmental effects. Rail journeys are more numerous now than at any time since the 1920s. A town's railway connections are becoming very important and light rail is an even more flexible option which Hertfordshire County Council have recently taken up after receiving a £76 million award to open 3.5 miles of track between Watford Junction and Croxley Station. The award was part of a £600 million allocation for local transport and to our Transport Group's knowledge Bucks County Council did not apply for any of it.

In the local press there have been recent articles on High Wycombe's struggling economy. Wycombe is only ten miles north of the Great West Main Line which has become so busy that there are now plans to electrify it so that it can take more trains. It would be a great advantage to Wycombe if it had access to the line. This would be possible if the line between High Wycombe and Maidenhead were to be reopened and would have the added advantage of removing a lot of traffic congestion. The

integrity of the track is threatened with a planning application for houses. The transport group will continue to campaign to preserve the line.

Note: Elsa also spoke about Demand Responsive Transport – see article 'Cutting Car Journeys' on next page.

Arnie Parr has made the study of traffic lights and their phasing in High Wycombe his speciality. Unfortunately attempts to work with the relevant Bucks CC officials have not led to the hoped-for improvements in traffic-signal phasing. There have been software difficulties with the traffic-light phasing and it is hoped these problems will soon be resolved.

Friends of the Rye – see article on next page.

Programme and Membership

Mary Woodman reminded members of the coach trip to Brooklands Museum and the visit to the Mayor's Parlour to see the Regalia and meet the Mayor. The group also took part in the Wycombe African & Caribbean Community Forum event in July.

Activities planned for the coming year include: a guided walk in July "On the Trail of the Suffragettes in Wycombe" which will be led by Colin Cartwright; and at the October Quarterly meeting Peter Lerner will be giving a talk on "Townscape and Urban Design- Art and Common Sense".

Mary noted that the High Wycombe Society had developed a good relationship with Bucks New University and was pleased that Professor Ruth Farwell would give the January Quarterly Meeting talk "Are Universities Assets to their Communities?" Members' outings this year will be a visit to Basildon Park and a visit to Banbury and Hook Norton Brewery.

Did you know? The High Wycombe Society now has a page on Facebook. Still embryonic, it's been set up by Tony Murphy. Mary urged members at the AGM to visit the page and click on 'like' to raise its profile.

The Pann Mill Group

Alan Furness reviewed recently completed projects including the viewing bridge which is now in use. He reflected on three good Open Days, thanking all those involved. In addition, there had been school visits and a U3A Chiltern walking group had also stopped at Pann Mill.

Projects for this year include obtaining a winch to lift the sluice gates and an improvement to the stairs. Plans for a new building to replace the current shed will require funds to be raised and Alan appealed for anyone with appropriate experience to get in touch.

Frances Presland

An Historic Proposal for the Rye

SINCE THE ADVENT of permitted powers (first introduced in the 'Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995'), many changes to our Public Open Spaces, including the Rye, have not needed approval via the planning system. There was no requirement for the Environment Agency, for example, to notify the public in advance of the recent introduction of extremely unsightly frames for reed beds that appeared in the dyke. The Rye is a very special place and deserves to be protected.

English Heritage maintains a register of Historic Parks (first set up in 1983). *Registering* a park provides a measure of protection in a similar manner to *listing* a building or *scheduling* an ancient monument. It is thought possible that the Rye would qualify for registration. Members attending the AGM were asked to consider what this might entail. The advantages of increased

status and a welcome return to a need for changes to go through the planning system were weighed against the singular difficulty posed by the word 'park'. The High Wycombe Society has previously felt that it was inappropriate for our premier Public Open Space ever to be called a 'park', and as expected some people expressed this view. But it was also noted that it is already increasingly referred to as a 'park' and it may be time to change our stance on this issue. Another question arose as to what costs the Society would have to bear if the Rye was to become an historic park.

In a vote, the membership approved a proposal for further research into the possibility of registering the Rye with English Heritage as an Historic Park.

Frances Presland

Cutting Car Journeys

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ago (1987), the big transport problem was traffic congestion. At that time nobody had heard of global warming or saving energy etc., so the 'obvious' response was simply a massive road building programme. But the big new roads and junctions caused huge damage and opposition, and although they were intended to clear the congestion they soon filled up with more heavy traffic, often creating new traffic bottlenecks.

In 1992 the first Earth Summit was held in Rio and introduced the ideas of global warming, sustainability, renewable energy etc., and this prompted a different approach to tackling traffic congestion. Planning Policy Guidance PPG 13 (Transport) published in March 1994, called for measures to reduce the number and length of motorised journeys, in order to cut congestion and save fuel. That was the beginning of a transport debate which continues to this day, seeking sustainable modes of transport and raising the status of railways.

In 2010 there were more rail journeys in the UK than at any time since the 1920s, suggesting that since PPG 13 there had been a useful switch from road to rail, which uses energy more efficiently, but at about the same time, a Bucks County Council study found that 25% of the County's total carbon footprint was due to cars, mostly on journeys of 2 – 25 miles.

For these short journeys, door-to-door transport by car is so convenient it is difficult to imagine how any alternative could be widely acceptable, but observation of traffic along any fairly busy road in Wycombe reveals many empty seats - in cars, taxis and buses - so it seemed possible that small groups of the

passing vehicles with empty seats could contain occupants travelling to similar destinations. Perhaps two or more of such travellers might instead share a single vehicle to go exactly where they each wanted? But how could journeys suitable for such sharing be easily identified? - and then be provided with a reliable vehicle and driver?

'Private hire' operations require pre-booking by phone or in person, so all of a firm's bookings are received in a central office where they can be assessed for possible convenient sharing. An innovative private hire business in Wycombe uses technology it originally developed simply to handle large numbers of bookings quickly and easily, to identify groups of two or more bookings that could share a hired vehicle, with benefit to the passengers and the environment - cutting congestion and carbon emissions. Initial studies indicate that passengers are pleased to take up an opportunity to share, which also offers the advantage of not having to find a parking place. There is continuous easy contact between the vehicles and the central office, offering a measure of reassurance to drivers and passengers.

Elsa Woodward

The latest nomination in our search for 20th Century Wycombe Worthies (bringing the total to 5 so far) was a pioneer in the Aviation industry:

GEORGE HOLT THOMAS 1870-1929

ON 3RD OCTOBER 1934, C. Grey wrote in *The Aeroplane*: 'The name of George Holt Thomas deserves to be remembered as the founder of Brooklands Aerodrome, the founder of Hendon Aerodrome, the founder of the greatest aircraft manufacturing group we have yet seen and as the founder of British Air Transport.'

Born into a printing and publishing family, Holt Thomas had himself founded the *Bystander* newspaper and *Empire Illustrated* magazine before turning his interests to aviation in 1906.

He arranged early aviation meetings and, as Grey has stated, was influential in the founding of Hendon and of Brooklands, both essential to the birth of aviation in the United Kingdom. He pressed the government to make use of aviation for military purpose, leading to the formation on 28th February 1911 of the 'Air Battalion of the Royal Engineers.'

Having obtained a licence to manufacture the 'Farman' aeroplane, but unable to find any company interested in building it, he founded his own company, 'The Aircraft Manufacturing Company Ltd.' (usually abbreviated to AIRCO) at Hendon in 1912.

In 1914, he employed Geoffrey de Havilland as his Chief Designer. Between 1914 and 1919, he built up a huge organisation that built aeroplanes, aero-engines, propellers, airships and flying boats. By 1919, it was advertised as the 'largest aircraft manufacturing organisation in the world'. It employed over 4000 at Hendon and even built a housing estate, Roe Green Village, to house its own workforce. A total of over 7000 were employed at all his companies and they built around 10,700 aeroplanes.

The AIRCO D.H.4 was one of the outstanding aeroplanes of World War I and was one of the first British designed aeroplanes for which a licence to manufacture overseas was granted, over 4,800 being built in the United States.

Locally, he was the main driving force in setting up 'Wycombe Aircraft Constructors' and also had a factory in Wycombe, 'The Integral Propeller Company', manufacturing aeroplane propellers. He was offered, but declined a knighthood in 1918.

When he closed AIRCO in 1920, he provided substantial and significant assistance to Geoffrey de Havilland to set up the De Havilland Aircraft Company.

Gloucestershire Aircraft Company (later Gloster Aircraft) was set up by Holt Thomas as a sub-contractor to build AIRCO aeroplanes. Westland Aircraft Company became an

established aircraft manufacturer as a sub-contractor building the AIRCO DH9A.

Holt Thomas was a remarkable visionary in that he realised there would be a demand for civil air transport at the end of hostilities, and on 5th October 1916 he founded his own airline 'Aircraft Transport & Travel' (commonly abbreviated to A.T.&T.). On 25th August 1919, a DH4A of A.T.&T. operated the world's first regular International Air Service with a flight from Hounslow Heath to Paris.

In 1920 he wrote possibly the first book on civil passenger and mail flying, *Aerial Transport*, highlighting the potential for flying operations throughout the British Empire.

A.T.&T. ceased operations and was acquired by Daimler Airways. However, Holt Thomas was later influential in the formation of Imperial Airways, ultimately leading to the current British Airways.

He called together the European Airlines for a meeting at The Hague, leading to the formation of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

He was a founder member of the Society of British Aircraft Constructors (SBAC) and a founder member of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

In parallel with his interests in aviation he took up dairy farming and in 1920, one of his British Friesian cattle created a British record milk yield of 10.5 gallons in 24 hours. He was President of the British Friesian Cattle Society and a member of the British Dairy Farmers Association, The National Milk Publicity Council, the National Institute for Research in Dairying and the Central Council for Milk recording.

He died in 1929 at Cimiez in France. His legacy lives on in North Dean in the form of the village hall and two surviving bungalows that he provided. These are believed to have formerly been buildings at nearby R.A.F. Halton.

In conclusion, George Holt Thomas can be said to have been influential in the birth of aviation in the United Kingdom, the founding of the great aviation companies of De Havilland, Gloster and Westland and the founding of British Airways.

Ian Simmons and I are researching his life with the long-term ambition to produce a book on the subject. We both strongly believe he has never received the recognition he deserves.

David Scott

Send us your Mugshots!

THE SPRING Newsletter featured a photograph of a Pann Mill mug amid spring flowers in the mill garden. The picture drew a number of compliments, not for its technical quality so much as its setting. So we thought that we would run a small competition and invite readers to submit more photographs of Pann Mill mugs in interesting or attractive settings. We cannot run to much of a prize but the winner will have the joy of seeing their work featured in the Autumn edition of the Newsletter. And others will go on our web site.

Entries should be sent to the Editor as detailed on the back page EITHER as prints (approx postcard size) OR electronically as they come from the camera or resized as necessary.

If you do not yet have a mug to use then pop along to a quarterly meeting or a Pann Mill Open Day and you can buy one for the very reasonable sum of £3.00. If you have forgotten

what they look like then here is one seen contemplating the mill waterwheel.



Photo: Malcolm Connell

The small print (there's always some!).

You will retain copyright of your photos but entry implies a licence to publish in the Newsletter in print and electronic format and on the Society web and Facebook pages if appropriate. You may edit your photos for aesthetic purposes but blatant image processing is discouraged. (e.g. a mug on top of Machu Picchu may get commended for effort but isn't quite what we had in mind ... unless, of course, you choose to take a Pann Mill mug with you to Machu Picchu!).

Events, Events!

As you will be aware, Jackie Kay is our new Editor, and she has also taken on the role of Vice Chairman of the Society. This, combined with work commitments, she says, leaves her without the time to be Programme Secretary, a job that she has discharged with enthusiasm and efficiency over these past 5 years. So, we need a new Programme Secretary.

Could you take on this role? It is not especially time-consuming. There are three Quarterly Talks to organise (speakers and room bookings) and another for the Wycombe Arts Festival. And it is not a lonely job – the Programme Secretary is a member of the friendly Programme & Membership Group, which meets in one of our homes every couple of months, with refreshments!

If *you* want to know more or are willing to help out, please get in touch with Jackie Kay on 01494 534876 (JackieHKay@aol.com) or with me on 01494 528106 (mary@thewoodmans.plus.com).

Mary Woodman

Sunshine and 40 volunteers!

That was Pann Mill Open Day on 13th May, a splendid day with many visitors attracted by the Arts Festival publicity and keen to be out on a sunny day. Over 40 members of the High Wycombe Society lent a hand to ensure our Showpiece was a success again.

There was a modest display of Jubilee bunting at the refreshment stall and a Jubilee quiz for children to complete.

Would you like to be a part of it in July and/or September? Don't be shy – pick up the phone and talk to Mary Woodman on HW 528106 if you would like to help behind the scenes or on a stall, or consider baking a cake.

Ann Simone

A well-earned reward

On 28th May 2012 Margaret Simmons, stalwart of the Pann Mill Group, was given an award by the Booker Common and Woods Protection Society in recognition of her outstanding voluntary work in creating and maintaining the Pann Mill Gardens over the last 25 years. The award was presented by Rita Luxton, BCWPS Chairman.



Malcolm Connell

Saving the 'Wycombe Bell'

THE TOWER of All Saints parish church is being strengthened and the opportunity has been taken to replace the wooden bell-frame and peal of 13 bells by 14 new ones. The project is costing about £375,000 of which about £40,000 remains to be raised. On 29th March most of the old bells were taken to Whitechapel foundry - five were sold and seven have been melted down to make new bells.

After three centuries of ringing out to the people of Wycombe the 1711 and the 1756 bells were 'recycled', as the current euphemism has it. Twelve bells were previously re-hung in 1909 and some were recast. The thirteenth bell was only added in 1963.

The two Petty bells (No. 3 and 4) of 1788 were saved. No 4 was sold to St Augustine's in Kilburn, and No. 3 (the 'Wycombe' bell) has been retained at the church, thanks to the intervention of the High Wycombe Society and coverage in the Bucks Free Press, pending a decision on where to display it. The funds have been raised to do this, including the meltdown value of £3000. A proposal is to incorporate it in the design of the base of the tower or on the proposed mezzanine floor above. This is part of the wider restoration and redevelopment of the church, an appeal for which is to be launched on 15th June.

In 1788 the two treble bells were given by John, Earl of Wycombe and later 2nd Marquis of Lansdowne (1765-1809) and his half brother Henry, the 3rd Marquis (1780-1863). They were the sons of the Earl of Shelburne (1737-1805) who was Prime Minister in 1782-1783 and subsequently first Marquis of Lansdowne. These bells, which are part of the heritage of the town, as much as they are of the church, are of significant local historical importance and, because of their political associations, national historical importance too.

John is the older boy depicted in the Carlini statue of Lady Sophia and her two sons which was erected by their father in 1775 in the South (Lady) Chapel facing the magnificent Shelburne monument in the North Chapel. John was named after his grandfather, a great benefactor to the church and High Wycombe. His architect Henry Keene designed the parapet and pinnacles of the Tower in 1755, the glazed doors below and the Shelburne Pew,

now in Wycombe Abbey, and also the Guildhall. So the gift of the bells in 1788 followed in a tradition of Shelburne benefaction towards the church and town.

The Petty bells were cast by John Bryant of Hertford, assisted by George Harman (1750-1814) and W. Ball whose names are inscribed on the bells. Harman was a well known cooper in Wycombe. He is thought to have invented a chiming machine around 1786 and first installed his chimes in Watford. In 1788 he produced a finer set of chimes for Christchurch Spitalfields. The Marquis of Lansdowne commissioned Harman in 1790 to provide a set for High Wycombe which remained intact until 1876 when a new clock and chimes were installed at a cost of £500, defrayed by public subscription. The carillon tunes were played every three hours until the ringing of bells was banned in 1939. In 1794 Harman perfected a set of elaborate chimes for St Giles Cripplegate, described in the *Curiosities of London* by John Timbs in 1855 as 'the finest in London'. Harman was buried at All Saints on 3rd September 1814. His son, also George, was commemorated in the Progress Window of the Town Hall (see *Wycombe Pioneers of Progress* published 2011 by the Society).

The No. 4 bell, which has gone to Kilburn, is inscribed 'The Gift of Lord Henry Petty, Second Son of the Marquis of Lansdown' and the No. 3 bell 'The Gift of the Earl of Wycomb eldest son of the Marquis of Lansdown'. John, the Earl of Wycombe, was MP for Wycombe from 1786 to 1802. Henry was MP for Calne from 1803 and succeeded Pitt as Chancellor of the Exchequer (1806-7) at age 25 in the Ministry of All the Talents. He became one of the most powerful Whig statesmen of his day serving in several cabinets as Home Secretary and Lord President until 1852.

David Snoxell

Four stages in the 'Recycling' Process



Dusting

Photo C Clark



Queuing

Photo J Kay



Sorting

Photo D Snoxell



Dispatching

Photo D Snoxell



The No. 3 Bell

Photo C Woodman

Quarterly Meeting

Miss Dove, our local 'Suffragette'?

Student at Girton College, Cambridge, founder and headmistress of Wycombe Abbey School, first woman member of Wycombe Council, first woman to be nominated as mayor of Wycombe, there can be no doubting Miss Frances Dove's personal belief in women's rights. However it was another aspect of this belief to which Colin Cartwright drew our attention at a meeting at the Guildhall on May 11th.

Some of us learned a new word during the evening. 'Suffragists', of whom Miss Dove was one, were non-violent, non-militant campaigners for women's right to vote; not for them the stone-throwing or arson of their suffragette sisters. Miss Dove preferred to stand up for the cause by organising meetings at Wycombe Abbey and speaking at others. She was appointed President of the Women's Suffrage Movement in 1912.

Frances Dove had the satisfaction of seeing the vote granted to some women in 1918 and to all women, on the same basis as men, in 1928, the year in which she was created a Dame Commander of the British Empire. She must also have been gratified to watch as ex-pupils of Wycombe Abbey began to follow career paths that could have been no more than a dream to any but the most determined women of her generation. Dame Frances Dove continued to

promote the interests of women. In 1933, she commissioned a window for All Saints Church. Designed and executed by women (Caroline Townshend and Joan Howson), the window illustrates the contribution of women over the past 1000 years.

The 'Dove Window' will feature on the Suffragette Trail which Colin Cartwright will lead on July 22nd.

Roberta Wilson



Speaker Colin Cartwright with Frances Alexander - one of several female mayors in more enlightened times.

Photo: Tony Murphy

High Wycombe is not the only town to have a 'Dove Window' in its church. Dame Frances Dove's niece, Mrs Coxhead, commissioned the same artists to create a window in Holy Trinity church in Leamington. David Snoxell recently contributed details of 'our' Dove window to a Wikipedia article on Caroline Townshend.

BLHN 2012

This year's BLHN (Bucks Local History Network) conference will be held at Dr Challoner's Girls High School in Little Chalfont on 29th September 2012. The theme is "Women in Buckinghamshire". Price for the day: £10 (or £16 with lunch). As in previous years there will be 7 half-hour lectures.

It is a good opportunity to raise the profile of the Society and, assuming that there will be stalls as in previous years, I propose that we should put on a mini-display, perhaps featuring Hannah Ball and Miss Dove.

If you plan to attend, please let me know if you are willing to help with our stall.

Jackie Kay

The High Wycombe Society was pleased to receive a donation from Naphill Neighbours following a talk given by Jackie Kay on the Wycombe Pioneers; and also one from a group of Wesleyan Ladies following a talk given by Christine Clark on Hannah Ball.

Our "Monster" Town

The Draft Report for the Historic Towns Project for High Wycombe is now on the BCC website for consultation. It is quite a tome at 174 pages. David Green who led the project would welcome feedback. "High Wycombe was a bit of a monster", he confessed to me. His own modest verdict is that his report "only scratches the surface".

Researching and compiling the report was undertaken by the Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service as part of a national programme funded by English Heritage. Its stated purpose is to inform and advise the planning process. To read the report go to:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/archaeology/Historic_Towns.page (and click on High Wycombe).

Including many thought-provoking maps and collations of data, of particular interest is a recommendation to make part of the Rye a scheduled ancient monument.

Jackie Kay

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr Colin Cartwright
Mr Brian Pearce
Mr Peter Perdoni
Mr & Mrs Taras Tymofijiw

Obituaries

We regret to inform members of the deaths of:

Mr D. O. Salmon
Ms Sally Coverdale

A little late for Spring cleaning?

Not at all After a very successful Open Day we are short of quality bric-a-brac. Decorative objects, collectables and 'retro' items will all find a home with our customers. Donations can be brought to the next Open Day on July 15th or can be collected. Telephone Mary Woodman on HW 528106.

Following the success of our raffle of Ben Cook's limited edition print of Pann Mill in Winter, we are delighted to announce that Ben Cook has donated another print – this one of Pann Mill in Summer to be used to raise more funds for the Society.

Guildhall – Update

We have received formal notification that from 1st September 2012, the Guildhall will no longer be managed by the Council's Halls Service but will be operated by the Council's Major Projects and Property Executive team.

Sorry – to any members who were misled - we published 22nd April in good faith as the planned date for the Beating of the Bounds but it was moved to 13th May. Sadly those of us at Pann Mill couldn't go although we did catch a glimpse in the morning.

Hook Norton Brewery – 16th August 2012



Photo: Fin Fahey (Creative Commons license)

This year's planned coach outing is to Banbury and Hook Norton – **BOOK NOW!** - We will leave High Wycombe Park and Ride at 9.30am and return around 5.00pm. The morning will be in Banbury where you can visit the famous Cross, the Museum or Art Gallery, the restored canal or the new shopping centre. It will also be market day. After lunch we will go to the village of Hook Norton to tour one of the finest Victorian tower breweries in the country. Unfortunately there are a lot of stairs so the tour is not recommended for those of limited mobility but there is a good visitor centre and other attractions to be seen. The cost depends on the number going but is expected to be around £19.00 with a reduction for those not taking the full brewery tour.

Further details from Eileen Walters on 01494 449902

Contributions Please.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue of the Newsletter. Please send material for the next edition addressed to me, Jackie Kay, as The Editor at 19 Hepplewhite Close, High Wycombe, Bucks HP13 6BZ (Tel: 01494 534876), or preferably by email to:

newslettereditor@highwycombesociety.org.uk

All contributions to the next edition must be received by **20th August 2012**.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

2012	
Sunday, 24 th June	Members' Shared Car Outing to Basildon Park. (Contact: Ann Simone)
Friday, 6 th July The Guildhall, 7.30 pm.	Quarterly Meeting: The History of High Wycombe – 2000-2100 Speaker: Mark Brown, Transition Towns High Wycombe.
Sunday, 15 th July	Pann Mill Open Day. Clear out your bric-a-brac; bake a cake; or just come along to enjoy.
Friday, 22 nd July, 2 p.m.	Suffragettes' Walk led by Colin Cartwright. Starting at Wycombe Abbey School at 2 p.m. A short tour of part of the school followed by an energetic walk finishing at the church. Tickets and further information from Ann Simone on 01494-448773.
Thursday, 16 th August	Outing to Banbury and Hook Norton Brewery (see advert above).