



THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 176

SUMMER 2015

It's Time to Celebrate!

THE FIRST of our planned events to mark the Golden Anniversary of the Rye Protection Society campaign took place at the start of June exactly 50 years after Jack Scruton's appearance before the Joint Committee of the House of Commons and House of Lords. 'Celebrating the Rye' - an exhibition of photographs and well-researched accompanying text (thanks to Mary Woodman and her team) - was hosted by our friends at the Wycombe Environment Centre. Our Vice-President, Mrs Evelyn Roe, attended the official opening fifty years after her initial involvement in the campaign to Save the Rye. A star exhibit was an aerial photograph showing the proposed route of the A40 in 1965. Our President formally declared the exhibition open and the new Mayor, Cllr Hanif, accepted our invitation to say a few words. BBC 3-Counties Radio picked up on a related facebook post which gave Neil Timberlake and myself an exciting ten-minute opportunity to promote the Exhibition, the Society and the Town. Meanwhile the Bucks Free Press Nostalgia page has also been featuring the Rye, thanks to Mike Dewey who invited me to write a series of articles detailing the events of 1964-5, two of which have already appeared.



ON 9TH AUGUST, together with the Open Spaces Society we will be holding a Big Picnic on The Rye itself (from 12 noon until 4p.m.) We need two things to make the event a success: a good attendance and good weather! The aim is for it to be a relaxing afternoon, appreciating and enjoying 'the priceless possession' our predecessors fought so hard to protect 'for all time'. Beth Yorath has designed a flyer to help promote the event. Please use this to help to spread the word and be sure to invite all your friends and family to come! Remembering that The Rye once had a bandstand, we have invited the Chiltern Hills Brass Band to play at the start of the event, so come early to hear them! We have also invited The Tæppas Tump Morris Dancers to demonstrate their skills on what would have been the A40 had the plans of 1965 gone ahead. And for our younger participants, there will be a children's entertainer. Pann Mill and its grounds will be open.

In the meantime on 12th July we will still have our usual Pann Mill Open Day, and on 15th July we look forward to hearing Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society, talk about Open Spaces in this their 150th Anniversary year. I look forward to seeing you there.

Jackie Kay

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

Registered Charity No. 257897

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Annual General Meeting

SINCE WE CHANGED our accounting year a couple of years ago to coincide with the tax year, the timing of our AGM has been a bit of a challenge. To hold it in April would no longer allow enough time for the Treasurer to prepare the accounts; to hold it in May forces it into the busiest month of our year and to compete with the attractions of the Wycombe Arts Festival programme. This year, the trustees decided to hold two events in one evening; by bringing the AGM start forward to 7 p.m. it was possible to hold it on the same evening as our contribution to the Wycombe Arts Festival, a talk on The History of Gardens by Roger Askew, which was advertised to start at 8 p.m. This seemed like a good idea at the start of the year, but as the date approached, the time constraint pressures increased. The chosen date of 20th May was also the middle of one of the busiest weeks of the Civic calendar.

Quorum was achieved with about 10 minutes to spare making it possible to make a prompt start on the night. An eagle-eyed member spotted an error in the minutes which was swiftly corrected. With minutes approved and no matters arising it was on to the Chairman's account of the year. As last year, this was presented with slides to remind members of the events of the past year. The Trustees had renewed the Society's membership of Civic Voice, ANTAS (the Association of North Thames Amenity Societies), the Open Spaces Society, the Chiltern Society, and the Wycombe Arts Festival; but had cancelled its membership of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings following a steep increase in subscription. Individual and Affiliate membership had stayed level – there had been some individual members lost who were sadly missed, balanced by some new members joining. Many volunteer roles had been vacant for at least part of the year; but there was also some good news in that regard, with one new trustee co-opted during the year, three new members of the Planning group, and a gardening team now working regularly in Margaret's garden.

Changes to the plans for Wycombe Museum had led to David Snoxell not taking up the trusteeship of WHAT (the Wycombe Heritage and Arts Trust) as the work required was largely administrative rather than heritage-related.

In addition to the regular talks and Pann Mill Open Days, there had been many *Behind-the-Scenes* local visits, a coach outing to Whitchurch Silk Mill, and a guided tour of the Palace of Westminster, courtesy of our MP, Steve Baker (see opposite). The Society had taken a market stall on Civic Day to raise awareness – and also created a display for the Bucks Local History Network (BLHN) meeting in the Autumn.

The main work of the Society continued across five activity areas: Planning, Transport, Pann Mill, Heritage and the Environment. Much work was being undertaken in both Planning and Transport groups in relation to the release for development of the five Reserve sites. A pleasing result of work in the Heritage area was the restoration of the War Office railings on the Rye. The Society had also recently donated a

number of tools to the Revive the Wye partnership.

Looking towards the future, 2015 was already proving to be a busy year. In the run-up to Civic Day, the Society had launched a competition. The prize would be awarded on Civic Day at a 'Meet the High Wycombe Society' event in The Riverside to which all members were warmly invited. Members could also look forward to a number of events related to the Golden Anniversary of the Rye Protection Society's achievements: an exhibition, a talk and a Big Picnic.

The Treasurer presented the Society's accounts which showed the finances were in good shape. A major one-off expenditure had been for the development of a new website which was shown to members a year ago.

The Society President confirmed his willingness to remain as President and was invited to take charge of the meeting to appoint the Chairman. On hearing that there was only a single nomination, he called for a "unanimous vote of approval for the appointment of Jackie Kay to that role". Tony Hatton and Georgina Wightman were similarly re-elected to the roles Hon Secretary and Hon Treasurer respectively.

All except one of the trustees had indicated their willingness to continue in their roles and had been duly nominated before the start of the meeting. (Malcolm Connell, Nigel Phillips, David Snoxell, Brian Tranter, Neil Timberlake). An additional nomination had been received for Eileen Walters. All were duly elected.

There followed a presentation to Roger Lawson who was retiring from the board after service of 39 years, 27 of which had been in the role of Chairman. The Chairman invited the President to join with her in presenting to Roger a gavel and block made of Lignum Vitae with an engraved brass disk 'In Recognition of Long and Distinguished Service'. In his valediction, Roger urged the Society to seek out new younger members from diverse backgrounds.

There being no other business, the meeting was concluded in time for a brief refreshment break before the evening's talk (see p8).

Based on the AGM Minutes

The Call to Westminster

IN A DEPARTURE from our usual pattern of events, this year's programme included a Spring visit to the Palace of Westminster, courtesy of our MP, Steve Baker. The event was understandably oversubscribed necessitating a ballot for places and a waiting list for cancellations. Those of us who were lucky enough to make the trip were encouraged to take advantage of a Chiltern Railways offer for parties of four people travelling together. Without the natural social cohesion of a coach trip, the foursomes so formed helped provide travelling companionship. Taking the first off-peak train of the day meant the schedule for getting to Westminster was a little tight (which caused the organisers a bit of angst in advance) but it worked well.

Once through the airport-style security at our destination we assembled in Westminster Hall, the oldest part of the Palace, where we met our guide, John Gillan, an extremely amiable and knowledgeable man who had worked for much of his career in the Foreign Office. He knew his history, but he was equally at home talking about the architectural features of the building, parliamentary procedures and traditions, telling anecdotes from behind-the-scenes and answering a wide range of questions. He was also tuned in to the events of the day, adjusting his tour to ensure we got to see the rooms that were already being prepared for the President of Mexico who would be visiting later that day.

It is hard not to be overwhelmed by the sheer opulence of the decoration, the extent of gold coverage of the neo-gothic features, the army of statues of politicians from the past, the magnificent paintings of key scenes from our history and other features such as tiling and stained glass. It is understandable that the ever-increasing cost of maintenance is a continual worry.

Another lasting impression is of the crowds of people of all ages busily engaged in activity – school parties are now a regular feature of life at Westminster.



Most of our party extended our experience of the Palace by taking lunch in the Jubilee café within the grounds, where tables of four could be seen deliberating which return train to catch and what to do in the meantime (Chiltern Railways 2 for 1 offers being avidly studied at our table!); several decided to stay on and spend some time in the Strangers' gallery listening to the House of Commons in action, and at least one took advantage also of the opportunity to see the chamber of the House of Lords in session.

Our only slight disappointment was that our MP, Steve Baker, was unable to join us on the day, but our thanks to him for making it possible.

Jackie Kay



Pann Mill News

IN MAY we welcomed some newcomers to Pann Mill. Mayor (Cllr Khalil Ahmed), ably supported by his 'mini-mayoress', while Society member Tony Mealing beguiled young and old alike with his traditional Punch and Judy show.

Meanwhile Wycombe Environment Centre placed a large order for Pann Mill flour and is now a convenient outlet for those of you wanting to buy your flour in between Pann Mill Open Days. Frances Alexander and her team will be happy to sell you a bag for

£1.50. You can also replenish your supplies at the Rebellion Brewery, in Marlow Bottom, and Orchard View Farm Shop, Stockwell Lane, Little Meadle, near Monks Risborough. If you are in Marlow on a Friday you can purchase some artisan bread from Burgers that is made from Pann Mill flour. Have a look at their cakes while you are there and make sure that you make time to have one with tea (or coffee) as well. The specialist breads are also available from the Rebellion Brewery. Otherwise call in to the mill on the 1st or 3rd Sunday of the month between 10.00 a.m. and 12.00 noon.

Malcolm Connell



Planning This Quarter

THE GROUP has been busy this quarter. Work continues on the reserve sites, and Heather Morley's Town Centre Questionnaire has been issued and analysis of responses is in progress. Meanwhile, we booked to take part in the Council's annual Quality Counts! tour on 16th June and the Planning Forum two weeks later. Later in the year, we expect to be occupied by the first draft of the new Local Plan. We don't know what it will contain yet but measures to seek out and make better use of brownfield sites *ought* to feature prominently in this work.

Local Plan and the Reserve Sites Our representatives on the Reserve Sites Liaison Groups (for Terriers Farm, Gomm Valley/Ashwells and Abbey Barn North/South) report that work is slowly inching forwards. We were rather taken aback when WDC announced that the first draft of each planning brief – the main mission of each Group – would be produced by the developers themselves. 'Foxes and chicken coops' came to mind, but the Council were able to convince us that this would not prevent them ensuring the final products would be satisfactory and meet the Groups' wishes.

Meanwhile, central Government (represented by Mr Pickles at that time) appeared to change track and began to take helpful decisions on planning appeals, upholding local authorities' right to defend the green belt and special landscape features. Perhaps the adjournment debate secured by Steve Baker MP some months ago had influenced opinion.

But none of this, in the Group's view, would prevent successful appeals if our reserve sites were withdrawn, as they have been in Local Plans (and most recently the Core Strategy) for decades. So the Group continues to work for the best possible Planning Briefs to ensure that developments take place sympathetically.

Enforcement – the Halfway House and Bassetsbury Manor Significant improvements are being made to the Halfway House site — where an ugly building was erected that was not in conformity with the planning permission — under pressure from WDC, which was in turn under some pressure from ourselves and others. The final result will be far from perfect, but a great deal better than the eyesore that has blighted London Road for the last several years.

We are hopeful about the outstanding planning application for Bassetsbury Manor, where the Environment Agency has weighed in usefully to preserve the environs of the River Wye within the site.

High Wycombe Town Centre After much careful consideration, the Group and Trustees endorsed the questionnaire produced by member Heather Morley. Heather's aim is to get more economic activity into the High Street by making it easier to visit by people who tend to be described these days (by all political parties) as 'aspirational'!

Marlow High Street for example buzzes with activity and spending power, and Amersham High Street has been transformed in the past few years. Is it practical for High Wycombe to follow suit and, if so, what needs to be done? It's a big and important topic. Thank you to all who have already completed Heather's questionnaire; many of you also added useful narrative explanations to your replies. We shall review and analyse your responses carefully.

Elsewhere in the Town Centre, an unattractive application to develop the Liberal Club building on Queen Victoria Road was refused as prejudicial to the Council's policies for the Swan Frontage area and out of keeping with the Town Centre Conservation Area.

The 'Alternative Route' Meanwhile, we note that work on the 'alternative route' around the Town Centre has now begun, with the construction of the Westbourne Street Link to join up Westbourne Street to the A40. We are pleased that the joint BCC/WDC press notice describes this as 'essential in bringing regeneration to the Town Centre', though we also note that the work includes the 'reconstruction' of the A40 between Desborough Avenue and Bellfield Road. Oh dear, nobody thought to point out to BCC that this was a heaven-sent opportunity to get rid of those unwanted traffic lights at the end of Bellfield Road which have caused intermittent delays since they replaced the roundabout that served the junction so well before! Traffic lights make welcome work for the contractors who advise they are required and in this case there was also an irresistible opportunity to get the developers of the nearby sites (Sainsbury and Eden) to pay for them under a seductive 'Section 106 agreement'.

The Brunel Train Shed We are delighted that things at last seem to be moving on this historic building which nobody noticed for many years when it was a tyre depot but which was unexpectedly listed as Grade II by English Heritage in 2000.

Chiltern Railways are getting round to thinking about restoring it for retail and other use which will be extremely convenient for rail travellers but may also help to boost economic activity at this end of the town. Leader of the Transport Group, Nigel Phillips, was happy to represent the Society at a recent meeting to discuss the possibilities.

Terriers House If you drive up Amersham Road through Terriers, just after the second roundabout you can see a majestic Queen Anne building nestling in the trees. This is the Grade II-listed Terriers House, and behind it is an office block, now disused. In April, developers Jansens held an exhibition of two options for developing the site behind for housing. Their preferred option had been to convert the larger office block into 18 flats, supplemented by 8 new-build dwellings at the rear of the site. The District Council, to their credit, didn't much like the proposal to convert the office block and suggested Jansens consider knocking it down and providing more new homes. The exhibition suggested this second proposal could provide 23 'bespoke' homes. The Group considered the options and sided firmly with WDC. And we took the opportunity to point out that the Queen Anne building contains within its interior some remains of a mediaeval farmhouse – a matter of which Historic England (formerly English Heritage) will no doubt be aware.

Community Assets Community Assets are buildings such as pubs which local people value but which have a depressing tendency to be closed and replaced by flats. Yes, we need the new dwellings, but these buildings often performed a social and/or cultural function – the Nag's Head in London Road was one such place in Wycombe, having hosted a series of famous popular music groups and stars in earlier years. Several years ago the Government instituted a procedure for designating such buildings as 'community assets' which gave local people the opportunity to bid to buy such properties. More recently designation as a community asset has become a 'material consideration' in determining planning applications relating to such buildings.

Civic Voice has for some time been urging Civic Societies to register appropriate buildings as Assets of Community Value. Local buildings that have already been formally accepted as such include John Wood Scout Centre on Keep

Hill Road and three buildings in Downley: the Downley Donkey, The Bricklayers Arms and the Le De Spencer Arms. The Bucks Free Press also recently reported on the case of The Happy Wanderer Pub on Arnison Avenue. It remains to be seen what impact such designations will have on developments.



Two options for developing the Terriers House site: Both retain the historic house and adjacent lodge. Option A above retains the rather ugly 1960s office blocks refurbished as blocks of flats. Option B below (preferred) replaces them with housing. Illustrations courtesy of Jansens.



Daws Hill The lamentable traffic situation around Handy Cross continues. When planning applications for the new Sports Centre and RAF Daws Hill (now called 'Pine Trees') were up for consideration a couple of years ago, the Daws Hill Neighbourhood Forum, with our backing, pushed the Transport Authority, Bucks County Council, hard to find solutions. Alas, it is quite clear that there is no 'silver bullet' for this area. 'Solutions' such as widening Abbey Barn Lane and pushing a new road across Kingsmead are much worse than the problem. And while we can see the point of keeping pressure on BCC to think about the issues, we recently decided not

to back a DGNF objection to a new classroom at St Michaels RC School. It seemed to the Group that stopping a school providing for its pupils would be to get our priorities wrong!

ANTAS or, in full, the Association of North Thames Amenity Societies, brings together the High Wycombe Society and 30 sister organisations, mainly in Bucks and Herts, twice a year to share experiences and hear a visiting speaker. Planning policy and practice form the major part of this. When the Association was originally formed, in 1994, it also aimed to give a united response to Government consultations. That activity has dropped off in recent years with the demise of the Government's regional presence and the growing influence of Civic Voice but many Societies consider that ANTAS remains a useful talking shop. Every organisation needs a committee to run it and currently there is a shortage of volunteers. I attended a meeting of the ANTAS Executive by invitation in May to consider options for its future. (See also p10 for Eileen Walters' report on the Spring meeting).

Chris Woodman

Commemorating World War One

TWO MOVING EVENTS came together in High Wycombe on Tuesday 19th May to remember the local men who died in the First World War – the official opening of the New War Office Gates on the Rye by Lord Carrington and afterwards a service of commemoration in All Saints' Parish Church.

The Gates are a replica of the War Office Gates which the third Lord Carrington acquired in 1908 for a drive entrance to his residence, Daws Hill Lodge. The new gates, restored railings and lamp posts are a considerable enhancement to this lovely corner of the Rye and a fitting contribution to the town's WW1 commemorations.

This had been a joint project between Wycombe Abbey which raised the funds, Wycombe District Council which erected an information board on the history of the Gates and the High Wycombe Society which kept up the pressure, produced the text and photos and helped bring

everything together. Despite threatening clouds the ceremony took place in front of the Gates. The Headmistress addressed a small crowd of Wycombe worthies, which included Frances Alexander, who as mayor in 1994 started a campaign for the restoration of the historic railings, Members of Wycombe District Council, Charter Trustees, the Mayor and Lord Lieutenant.

The Headmistress announced that the Gates were a memorial to Viscount Wendover, who was mortally wounded at the second battle of Ypres and died exactly one hundred years ago on 19th May. In his reply Lord Carrington noted his family's continuing links with Wycombe and congratulated the School on their impressive new gates. Lord Carrington cut the ribbon and the party proceeded to the Abbey for tea. Afterwards town councillors formed a civic procession from the Abbey to All Saints as the church bells rang out.

The service, which had been conceived as a contribution to Wycombe's WW1 commemorations, remembered the 500 Wycombe men who did not return from the Great War, including nine who are remembered in plaques, pews and stained glass windows and for whom citations were read in front of their memorials. Lord Carrington laid flowers

at the Wendover memorial. Candles were lit by the Chairman of WDC, Cllr Lesley Clarke in front of the sanctuary reredos screen, carved in 1922 and inscribed 'Remember the men of High Wycombe who died for their country, 1914-18'; by Roy Page, Headmaster of the RGS, for four old boys which included

Frederick Youens VC; by the Bishop of Buckingham, in front of the Shaw Window for the three sons of The Rev. E D Shaw, first Bishop of Buckingham, Vicar of All Saints' from 1895-1911; and by Church Warden Janet Billington for Capt. Gregson-Ellis.

The age range of the nine men was 20 to 32. One was married (Gregson-Ellis) and one (Wendover) baptised in All Saints. They had all volunteered early in the war and joined seven different regiments, two with the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. All but Viscount Wendover, who is interred in the Carrington vault at Moulsoe, were either buried in France or Belgium or their bodies were not recovered though they are all remembered on the great WWI memorials of the battlefields. It was an inspiring service reminding us that All Saints remains the parish church for all the people of High Wycombe.

David Snoxell



Lord Carrington prepares to cut the tape, aided by the new Town Clerk, Mr Paul Deacon, while the Mayor of High Wycombe looks on.

Christ Church Memories

David Snoxell's article in our Spring newsletter prompted member Stan Cole to get in touch with his memories of Christ Church, the church on Crendon Street which was demolished in 1966. He told us that he was a member of the congregation from 1952 until its closure, and he recalled the succession of vicars and fellow members of the congregation. Mr Cole delivered the parish newsletters and confirmed that the parish was so small that the task could be accomplished in 15 minutes or so. Many readers will know Stan Cole's son, Andy, a member of the Planning Group who was baptized at Christ Church.

A Waste of Space

WHAT'S THE HOTTEST topic we've faced in High Wycombe in the last year? In terms of housing there's no contest: the release of the reserve sites. From all corners we hear the same cry: we should be using up brownfield sites before we start on greenfield. But are there any?

In the Planning Group, we've been discussing this. We feel we should have suggestions for Wycombe District Council as to where they might locate pockets, or even swathes, of new developments. We can't reverse the decision to use the reserve sites, but with timely input from us, we might take the pressure off developing them immediately.

So, where are the opportunities?

The biggest sites run westwards between the West Wycombe Road and Desborough Road. Large surface car parks in and around George Street could be developed with higher density housing developments that we believe are appropriate for the town centre location. If the area was opened up to the River Wye that runs immediately south of the main road, it could be transformed from the edgy night-time wasteland it currently resembles.

Similar opportunities are situated heading west into the area around Leigh Road, Green Street and Hughenden Avenue. Also Kitchener Road, where previously industrious workshops now lie redundant.

What about the large gardens that back onto the long line of semi-detached dwellings along the south side of Hughenden Road? If those long gardens were acquired by WDC they could become an attractive terrace looking out over the newly rediscovered Hughenden Stream.

Lastly, and most innovatively, we ask whether the large surface car park servicing Morrisons could be built over? Who owns the car park – Morrisons or another party?

With such pressure on space that beautiful meadows are regrettably being carved up for new housing, should we not be more imaginative about building on the brownfield sites that exist in our town? Above all, let's not repeat the mistakes such as building a large surface car park for the use of Lidl, when more intensive use of that space could have eased our undoubted housing crisis.

We would welcome comments and suggestions, with a view to making a constructive approach to WDC later in the Summer.

Heather Morley

Saving Open Spaces

THIS SUMMER, the Open Spaces Society is joining with us in celebrating the achievement of our predecessor organisation – the Rye Protection Society – in saving the Rye from development. As we go to press, we are also looking forward to hearing Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society give a talk on 15th July. 'Catching the Rye' is just one episode which features in her new book which traces the history of the Open Spaces Society over 150 years.

In that time the Open Spaces Society has been through several transformations. It began in 1865 as 'The Commons Society'; evolved into the 'Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society' in 1899; and only added 'Open Spaces' to its title in 1927, becoming at that stage the 'Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society' or COSFPS.

It was in this guise that the Society was instrumental and influential in assisting the Rye Protection Society back in 1964-5. Mr W H Williams from COSFPS gave evidence at the Joint Committee of the House of Commons and House of Lords at which Jack Scruton presented the case for defending the Rye.

In 1982, the Society name was shortened to the more familiar 'Open Spaces Society' we know today.

The Open Spaces Society has adopted a mix of methods to champion its cause over the years: from direct action to drafting legislation; from court actions to social media use.

Kate's book takes the reader on a gentle educative journey from Berkhamsted Common, scene of direct action in its early days, and Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire where in 1880 the Society persuaded the City of London Corporation to buy the land and protect it, through to much more modern global endeavours to help communities worldwide preserve their common resources including such iconic landscapes as the slopes of Mount Fuji in Japan.

Kate's book is available from the Open Spaces Society, price £5. Highly Recommended!

Jackie Kay

Wycombe Arts Festival

A History of Gardens

ROGER ASKEW is a guide at the Savill garden in Great Windsor Park. His talk to the Society following the AGM on 20th May was a whistle-stop tour of gardens through the ages spread across Britain and occasionally flitting across Europe to illustrate a point. Whether by accident or design, its timing coincided with the Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show.

Roger began by showing us a number of medieval manuscript representations of gardens, moving gradually through time to the introduction of parterres in the seventeenth century. A key factor enabling livestock to be kept out of larger gardens was the development of the HaHa boundary. He traced the development of the English Landscape movement of the eighteenth century, and explored the taste for garden rooms in the nineteenth century, and 'painting with flowers' which typified the twentieth century. Our attention was drawn to key features which had a

bearing on garden development with examples drawn from famous and not-so-famous gardens. He introduced us also to many of the major players who had left their legacies in the gardens they had helped shape: names such as Capability Brown and Sir Humphrey Repton, both of whom left their mark on local parks; and others such as Gertrude Jekyll who worked with Lutyens to design hundreds of gardens. He played tribute also to those who had travelled widely to acquire new species of plants.

The Pann Mill Gardeners together gave the Vote of Thanks.

Margaret's Garden

WE HAVE STILL been very lucky with the weather and only missed a couple of gardening sessions.

The aconites and snowdrops were beautiful and enticed visitors into the garden. Daffodils followed along with the hellebores in various colours. Also forget-me-nots and violets.

Margaret always deadheaded the aconites - no mean task but worth it to find what is coming up underneath. I don't think we will manage to dead head every single one.

We are visited by ducks, drakes and moorhens and also seem to have a resident robin who sits very close to us.

If you look near the steps by the mill you will find a little patch of fritillary.

We still have plenty of space for any unwanted plants you may have - thanks.

Irene, Julie, Dave and Wendy

The Other Pann Mill Garden

LONG BEFORE MARGARET started to weave her magic on the brownfield site that was once occupied by the old Pann Mill building, there was a small rectangular garden just to the East of Pann Mill called 'Pann Mill Garden', on the London Road side of the River Wye. Approximately 30m long by 10m wide, it was sandwiched between the Pann Mill bridge to its West and the site of The Hermitage to its East. Confirmation of this fact (if confirmation were needed) is to be found on a plan of the area dating from 1950, which was presented to the Society by Mike Overall on the occasion of the opening of our 'Celebrating the Rye' exhibition.

The plan was drawn up to show the proposed layout of new public gardens on the site of the soon-to-be-demolished Hermitage Cottage on the London Road. These more formal gardens appear to have been known for some time when they were first created as the 'Rye Gardens'. Those of you who attended the above exhibition will have seen a photograph of the Hermitage shortly before its demolition. Mike also shared with us a related estimate by the Borough Engineer and Surveyor, Mr J A Parkinson, for the demolition of the cottage and associated groundwork for preparation of the new gardens. Contemporary photographs seem to confirm

that the layout of flower beds, paths and benches went ahead as planned, but I have to say that I am puzzled by the specification of a stone retaining wall approximately 400 ft long with concrete base. The adjacent 'Pann Mill garden' appears initially to have been relatively plain in comparison. Both gardens are now combined and tend to appear on maps together labelled 'Pann Mill gardens' which sometimes causes confusion with Margaret's garden. The memorial to those who fought in Burma in WWII is included within the combined formal gardens.

Jackie Kay

Wycombe's Unfinished Edifice



Image courtesy of the Internet Archive



View of St John's church from West End Road in 2015



The Iron Church of St John stands in front of the new permanent church as viewed from Desborough Road.

Photo courtesy of High Wycombe library
SWOP ref.:RHW 12439

'discomforts of worshipping in an iron building had been keenly felt by ministers and congregation alike both in summer and in winter'. Its capacity was also slightly more realistically stated as accommodating 280 persons, still rather more than Health and Safety rules would permit today, I think. In the meantime some adjoining Sunday school buildings had already been built but they were not adequate to meet the demand. The iron church building remained in situ for many more years as an extra meeting hall. In fact it was only in 1934, when sufficient funds were raised for further auxiliary buildings that it was finally removed.

In 1963, a new porch was added to the 'permanent' building at its North West corner complete with a flight of steps. This now forms the main entrance to the building which, since deconsecration, has become the home for the Arts4Everyone organisation.

AS WE ALL know, architects' artistic impressions sometimes set false expectations of the final appearance of planned building work. Take the picture on the left as an example. It was first published in 1901 in the *Academy Architecture and Architectural Review*. I bought a copy on ebay earlier this year - (the image is also available online at <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/caroe/2.html> but I didn't know that at the time). It shows the design by William D Caroe of a new church to be built in High Wycombe with a saddle-back tower. Do you recognize it? The Bishop of Oxford laid the foundation stone that year. It would be dedicated to St John.

The same picture also appeared in the *Bucks Free Press* in February 1903, the month in which the 'permanent' church of St John in Desborough Road actually opened, but it was noted that there were insufficient funds at that time to build the tower, and the nave had also been cut short with a 'temporary lean-to' providing additional accommodation, an arrangement that survives to this day. It takes a bit of imagination, walking down West End Road, to see the architect's original vision. Many of the features of Caroe's design can clearly be identified but the absence of a tower and the brutal 'temporary' measures taken in 1903 to enable the building to be used (pending further funding becoming available) still blight its appearance.

The even more 'temporary' iron church which the new building was intended to 'supplant' can also be seen in the foreground of a photograph taken in 1903 from the Desborough Road side. It was common practice in Victorian times to erect temporary 'iron churches' or 'tin tabernacles' as they were sometimes known, while funds were raised for more permanent structures. In areas where the population was growing fast, the demand for church provision was high.

The St John's iron church had already been used in Wells, Norfolk, when it was acquired for use as part of the scheme for 'Church Extension in High Wycombe' in response to a burgeoning population.

Once purchased, Mr R D Vernon had the contract to remove it and reassemble it on its new site 'between West End Road and Water Lane'. It opened in 1883, and at that time it was described as 'neat and comfortable' with its own porch and bell turret, offering accommodation on plain open benches for '365 sittings'. It was 75ft by 25ft in size. Many of the fittings would later be transferred to the permanent structure.

At the time of its 'supplanting' by the unfinished but permanent edifice in 1903, it was said that the

Apathy, No Time, Aging, Short-sightedness...

THESE ARE problems that all members of ANTAS (the Association of North Thames Amenity Societies) have been facing. Curiosity got the better of me when I found that there were still places available to go to the spring meeting on 25th April and I decided to see for myself what it was all about. We arrived at the venue in Potters Bar, to be greeted by like-minded people of a similar age group to myself offering coffee and Danish pastries - a good start to the day!

The meeting began with routine business: acceptance of minutes from the last meeting; a chairman's report, treasurer's update, etc. It seemed that a lack of support from member societies was felt by the committee, which begged the question 'is ANTAS a necessary or wanted organisation?'

There was an excellent talk by guest speaker Charles Champion of JTP architects who have been consultants to and designers of a number of development projects both in the UK and abroad. He showed the value of community involvement at the initial planning stage and how, with consultation at every stage, a development can be designed to meet both local requirements and fulfil what the local people desire aesthetically, so minimising any undesirable impact on an existing community.

Our own Tony Fooks then introduced Freddie Gick of Civic Voice who spoke about various local and national issues and encouraged members to keep ANTAS as the local intermediary.

The last part of the meeting comprised reports from those member societies attending, some with success stories to tell, one or two even reporting a growth in their membership, but most finding it difficult to get new younger members. Many also faced similar problems to us here in High Wycombe: the impact of too

much or inappropriate housing; the loss of green belt land; transport and other infrastructure shortcomings, with some also having to shoulder the burden of HS2.

After the meeting we enjoyed an excellent lunch and a chance to mingle informally. I was told that the High Wycombe Society is thought of as being one of the more successful societies. This was very reassuring as I know how difficult we are finding it to get new active members, especially younger people.

We need to overcome **Apathy** where it exists; to recognise that people who work or have family commitments, rightly or wrongly think they have **No Time**; we want to support our **Aging** committee members in their search for successors; but most of all we need to counter **Short-sightedness**. We need to convince people that if they care about their environment they can get together with others and CAN make a difference.

ANTAS seems to me to be a worthy organisation that can help individual member societies learn from the example of others who have tried things before. By giving support where needed, being of a smaller size than Civic Voice and dealing with our local area, it is a valuable tool and we should keep it.

Eileen Walters

The Run-Up to Civic Day



LAST YEAR we manned a market stall on Civic Day, but most of the passers-by had never heard of it! This year our enterprising Programme and Membership team decided to run a competition in advance to raise awareness, the prize to be awarded on the day itself. This was a new venture for the Society. Would anybody enter? We couldn't be sure, but we thought it was worth trying.

Entry forms were printed and distributed to various locations in and about town along with boxes for completed entries. Meanwhile our webmaster, Malcolm Connell, looked into the best way of enabling people to enter online.

The idea was to keep it simple and fun to enter, open to Society members and non-members alike. People were asked to say not only why they liked High Wycombe but also what they would change if given a suitable magic wand. Entries would be judged on various criteria including practicality and originality.

A panel of judges was set up chaired by Trustee, Brian Tranter, who co-opted

longstanding Society member Peter Cartwright, and organiser of the Wycombe Community Festival, Jacqueline Roberts, to assist him with the task.

Nearly 100 people entered the competition, from which the judges selected both an overall winner and a couple of runners-up. More details will be shared later in the year. In the meantime as we go to print we are delighted that the Mayor, Cllr Hanif, accepted our invitation to present the prize to the overall winner at our function on Civic Day itself.

Jackie Kay

Wycombe Wanderers Football Club

ON TUESDAY 21st APRIL some 17 Society members visited Adams Park, the home of Wycombe Wanderers. We were shown round by Mr Harold Lunnon, a sprightly 85-year-old volunteer. He explained that the club was founded in 1884 as North Town Wanderers but changed its name to Wycombe Wanderers in 1887. The club's original home was Loakes Park; but when this land was required for an extension to the hospital, the current site was developed in time for the 1990/91 season, and was named Adams Park in honour of Frank Adams, who had purchased the freehold of Loakes Park and donated it to the club in 1945. The original gates from Loakes Park were moved to Adams Park. The club also has a training ground at Booker which comprises 4 full-size pitches, a huge equipment room and associated facilities. It is in use 5 days a week.

Harold Lunnon gave us a full tour of the stadium including the Executive Area containing 20 boxes which cost about £14,000 p.a. to hire. The main sponsor is Beechdean Dairies. The stadium has a capacity of just over 10,000 but is limited to 9,800 by Health & Safety considerations. A team of 30 volunteers wash every seat each year.



The home team's dressing room attractively laid out ready for the next match. The away team's facilities are relatively Spartan. Photo courtesy of the Author.

There are 52 CCTV cameras on site which are constantly monitored on match days to minimise the risk of disturbances; in 2012 Wycombe Wanderers was awarded the Football League Family Excellence Award.

Managing a stadium requires significant regular expenditure on maintenance. The pitch is currently a Desso hybrid mixture of real and plastic grass, it has the benefit of under-soil heating provided by 21 miles of water pipes laid on a bed of sand 12 inches thick covered with topsoil. Since this was



primarily required for rugby there is a plan to re-lay it this year with real grass only at a cost of £¾m. There is also a plan to renew the floodlights at a cost of about £½ m.

We were interested to hear that Wycombe Wanderers secured a place in the Guinness Book of Records for scoring 2 goals within 9 seconds during a football match. The scorers were Jamie Bates and Jermaine McSpornan on 23rd September in the year 2000 in a match against Peterborough United. The final score was: Wycombe 2 : Peterborough 0.

Our Guide asked us to speculate on how this could have been achieved before confirming that the goals were scored either side of the half-time break without the opposing team touching the ball. In theory, it could be broken some day.

Our thanks to Eileen Walters for organising yet another excellent visit.

***A Wycombe Wonderer [sic]
(see below)***

Wycombe Wonderers

I have it on good authority that on Friday 17th April, shortly before the above visit, a team calling themselves the Wycombe Wonderers[sic], comprising eight members of the High Wycombe Society, entered the South Bucks Hospice Quiz where they took first place. The same team with one substitution, rebranding themselves as Hi-Society also entered and won a quiz on 5th June. The author of the above article requested that I refrain from printing his name.

The Editor

Taking LiberTeas

SEVERAL MEMBERS of the Society attended an event at All Saints' church on 14th June, thanks to an email notification. Part of the 'LiberTeas' celebration of the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, the event coincided with a celebratory peal of bells. Inside the church, Laurence Smy from The European Atlantic Movement introduced in turn: Society member David Snoxell, who spoke about the history of rights 'From Magna Carta to the UN Human Rights Covenants'; and Edward McKeon from Amnesty International who spoke about 'Human Rights in the UK in 2015'. In true British tradition, we all then adjourned for tea!

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr & Mrs N Brookes
Mrs Sue Bowles
Mr D Thomas
Ms M Moreland-Chapman
Mr D Griffiths
Mrs Sue Smart

Volunteers and Ideas Wanted

A big 'Thank You' to all our regular volunteers and supporters without whom none of our events would be successful!

As highlighted in our last edition we still need more of you to sustain our programme! If you think you might be able to help with any of our events or activities, (or you know someone who you think could be interested), whether on a regular basis or as a one-off, please tell us!

We need to improve the effectiveness of our publicity too, so ideas please! And we're at the planning stage in the 2016 programme so please share your thoughts on what you want the Society to be doing next year.



The Tæppas Tump Morris Dancers, who will be performing at our Big Picnic, take their name from a Saxon chieftain whose burial mound is in the grounds of Taplow Court.

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 2015**

You can also get in touch with the Editorial Team via the Society's facebook page.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

2015	
Sunday 12 th July Pann Mill 11.00 – 5.00 pm.	2 nd Pann Mill Open Day of the Year.
Wednesday 15 th July The Riverside, 7.30 p.m.	Talk: "150 years of the Open Spaces Society", Speaker: Kate Ashbrook See p7 for related article.
Saturday 25 th July	Wycombe Community Festival – SV2G's annual event on the Rye which includes the traditional Caribbean carnival procession.
Sunday 9 th August The Rye, 12 noon – 4.00 pm	The BIG Picnic – A Celebration of the achievements of the Rye Protection Society (see Front page and separate flyer).
Sunday 13 th September Pann Mill, 11.00 – 5.00 pm.	3 rd Pann Mill Open Day of the Year (Heritage Open Days weekend).
Thursday 24 th September BNU, 10.00 – 4.00 pm.	BNU Freshers' fair. As mentioned at the AGM, the Society has applied to take part in this event. Volunteer helpers may be needed.
Saturday 26 th September Aylesbury, 10.00 – 4.15 pm.	This year's BLHN conference theme is 'Buckinghamshire Towns' – further details available from Bucks Archaeological Society.
Tuesday, 6 th October	<i>Behind the Scenes-SPECIAL</i> A look at Marylebone Station – for some of those who booked to go on the June tour but could not be accommodated.
Wednesday 21 st October The Riverside, 7.30 pm.	Talk: Mills of High Wycombe, Speaker: Sheila Viner, Mills Archive Trust
Tuesday 3 rd November 10.30 a.m.	<i>Behind the Scenes</i> visit to Bucks New University. Contact programme@highwycombesociety.org.uk or phone Eileen on HW449902 to book a place.
Saturday 12 th December The Riverside, 1pm-3pm	Members' Gathering for mince pies and mulled wine.