



THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 177

AUTUMN 2015

Welcome Upheaval?

AS BUCKS NEW UNIVERSITY welcomes its next influx of students, the High Wycombe Society is hoping to play a small part with a stand at the Freshers' Fair, an event which aims to help students discover the range of opportunities open to them in their new home. In November there will also be an opportunity for Society members to visit BNU on a *Behind-the-Scenes* tour to gain more insight into the Wycombe Student experience. We have been thinking hard about how best to engage young people in our interests and activities to good effect.

It's not an easy time to introduce any newcomer to our town. Wherever one turns, there are signs of upheaval. Wycombe Museum, usually a good place to recommend people to go for some orientation, is closed for refurbishment, while scaffolding also shrouds our town hall. The first sight which greets those arriving by train is the sorrowful one of a rather inadequate temporary bridge, while it is hard to find an area of our town where traffic flows as intended. Progress or not? Only time will tell.

In the meantime our events programme offers some respite. In October we will welcome Sheila Viner from the Mills Archive Trust to give a talk on the Mills of High Wycombe, a key subject in our town's heritage of special interest to many of our members. In December, I also hope that many of you will join me at the Riverside for a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie. We already have news that this venue will not be available on our usual meeting night in the New Year. More upheaval on the horizon!

Jackie Kay



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

Registered Charity No. 257897

Honorary Secretary: Tony Hatton, 41 Bassetsbury Lane, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP11 1QZ. Tel: (01494) 445071

Planning This Quarter

ONCE MORE, the Group has been busy, despite the summer holidays. The reserve sites liaison groups have been meeting sporadically, making gradual progress. There was an interesting exhibition about development of the Gas Works site on the line of the Alternative Route around the town centre, and another one on a Verco site in Sands. The Society Chairman was invited to what proved to be a most interesting meeting with the new owner of Uplands near Four Ashes. (see p4) Several of us were delighted to attend Wycombe District Council's hardy perennial Quality Counts! tour which was revealing about what makes for *bad* housing developments! And we welcomed Janet Tully as a new member of the Group. Janet has been a Society member since 1973 and has recently been sharpening her teeth on the work of the Gomm Valley & Ashwells Reserve Site Liaison Group.

The Alternative Route and the Gas Works Site

The County Council continue their work on the Alternative Route around the town centre with the breakthrough from Westbourne Street to West Wycombe Road. Commendably, the disruption to Wycombe's traffic is mainly at night and we look forward to seeing how the new junction looks, and works. (Mercifully, it will be traffic-light-free, unlike the new junction of the Hughenden Quarter Spine Road with Hughenden Avenue where BCC have allowed themselves to be persuaded by "independent" consultants – who of course make their living out of "fixing" traffic problems – that new lights are unavoidable.)

Meanwhile, Inland Homes staged an exhibition of their ideas for the development of the Gas Works site where the new route passes from Queen Alexandra Road to Lily's Walk and Desborough Road. The new tree-lined link road would be at the western edge and there would be no fewer than 240 new dwellings plus 1500m² of commercial space. The site (which the developers are calling Lily's Walk) would have a mixture of 3-storey and (on the northern side facing the Eden Centre) 6-storey buildings, with some underground parking. It will be good to see more people living near the town centre but the design and the arrangements to care for the leafy open spaces in the long term will need careful attention.

Terriers House In the Summer *Newsletter* we showed the developers Jansens' two options for developing the area behind the listed Terriers House, and expressed a clear preference for the WDC-instigated option which would knock down the existing office blocks and build new houses rather than fit them into the old buildings. True to this remit, Jansens have now submitted two, parallel planning applications. We have re-expressed our preference for the "new" option.

Verco Site Verco submitted a planning application for some of their land over in Sands, following up their exhibition in March 2014. The Planning Group feels the development of this brownfield site to provide 79 new dwellings is sensible and the kind of development we should be supporting. However, our affiliated Sands Residents' Association feels that the parking

provision is inadequate, that perhaps 79 dwellings are too many to cram onto such a site away from the town centre, and that local residences would be overlooked.

Town Centre Issues We were gratified by the many responses to Planning Group member Heather Morley's questionnaire about reviving the High Street. We have analysed the findings but, due to the holiday period, have not yet had a chance to discuss their implications.

Separately, the Group have pursued the issue of a revived policy for shop fronts. Many years ago, WDC produced an 8-page illustrated booklet on shop fronts and signs in conservation areas, and much of its text survives in the current Local Plan policy HE12. There are tough words but the emphasis is on preserving the ancient fabric. This now needs to be revisited in the context of the forthcoming New Local Plan, perhaps to widen its scope to include colours, scripts, advertising signage and appearance more generally.

Quality Counts! Tour 16th June Four members of the Group attended this year's tour which visited four recent housing sites in South Oxfordshire. They were a very mixed bag. The main lessons seemed to be the dangers of monotony and scale. There was a delightful small site near Crowmarsh where the quality and consistency of the architecture made for a pleasant intimacy. A development at Cholsey capitalised on the spaciousness and controlled scale of a former mental hospital (although incorporating an incongruous gated development at one end). A site at Chinnor seemed rather untidy, not making the most of its attractive setting below the Chiltern scarp and adjoining the heritage railway, but had a pleasant variety of designs and layouts. The final site near Didcot was devastating – huge, monotonous and impersonal. (We won't mention the names of any developers!)

Uplands The high point of the quarter for me was to meet the new Italian owner of Uplands whose commitment to making the best of this interesting, newly-listed building was a breath of fresh air (see p.4).

Chris Woodman

So, what do you think of it so far?

WHILE THE EDITOR wasn't looking I had the notion that I would stir up some thoughts. Am I the only person with doubts about the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan? Is there really a comprehensive plan involved? Needless to say, the views I am about to express are my own and not necessarily those of the Society, any of its groups, its trustees or its members.

So, have you looked at the plans? And can you explain the logic behind them? Some of the stated aims are to "improve public spaces, provide a better pedestrian landscape, promote new opportunities for economic growth and make changes to traffic circulation". These are laudable aims but a problem with encouraging economic growth is that one needs people. Providing better areas for the public is great but what then is the point in diverting traffic around the back of the town down small roads that will not encourage drivers to stop and make use of those facilities even if they are aware that they are there? At least the Abbey Way flyover allows people to see that there is a town and a main car park is conveniently situated at one end. The flyover does not divide the town in two; the town works perfectly well underneath it.

Furthermore it allowed the town that nearly died of traffic to come back to life and reducing the capacity of that road will not help it stay alive.

One project within the main plan that has been completed is around Paul's Row. This is now a flat area with road and pavement delineated by different coloured surfaces and rows of brass studs. Yes, drivers do go slowly in the area because they have no idea where they are supposed to be and while they are trying to find their place they are not seeing the large number of pedestrians who are wandering round thus causing general aggravation and near misses. Another stated aim is to reopen the River Wye where possible. It would have been quite possible here and would have been historically meaningful. However, what did we get - a blue line on the road to tell us where the river is below ground. Great!

For the last several months the A40 West Wycombe Road has been an area of devastation

where the Westbourne Street junction is being built. I frequently walk through this area and it is interesting to see the work taking place. Initially the signs said that the work would be complete

by the end of July. This was never a realistic estimate and at least the signs now say November. Perhaps, though, this is simply to get drivers used to the congestion that happens now and is going to continue. A lot of the work involves reconfiguring the West Wycombe Road/Oxford Road to single carriageway from the Pastures to Bellfield Road. While this is happening the road is restricted to single carriageway and traffic is often at a standstill both ways and I cannot see the diversion down Westbourne Street improving things much as a lot of the traffic wants to turn up Bellfield Road or go into town. Furthermore the cost of this work is

quoted as £2,000,000; I wonder how much road could have been resurfaced or how many potholes could have been made good instead.

Because a building blocks the natural alignment of Westbourne Street there has to be a wonderful kink to allow it to join with Oxford Road, not to mention the 4 feet difference in height. The one sensible thing done at the junction is to install a new culvert that can be used to change the alignment and height of the River Wye should re-opening of the river ever happen. Since the plans already show a nice green area and wider footpath that actually align with the new culvert, but no river, I'm not holding my breath!

Ah well, time to unlock the door and let the Editor out of the cupboard again!

Malcolm Connell



*Above: devastation on the A40;
Below and on front page: the new Westbourne Road*



A New Future for Uplands

IN THE AUTUMN 2014 edition of the *Newsletter* we celebrated the fact that Uplands, that striking building near Four Ashes which was most recently used as a conference centre by De Vere, had been listed Grade II by English Heritage following an expert application by the Chiltern Society, led by Marian Miller, which the High Wycombe Society was happy to support.

A previous tasteless application by Redrow Homes to knock the building down and scatter 16 'executive homes' around the site had been predictably refused by Wycombe District Council as being incompatible with the Green Belt, but without the listing, it would still be open to an owner to demolish the building without having to notify the Planning Authority or anyone else.

The listing documents make interesting reading. Uplands was a country house of 1858/59 attributed to E B Lamb (who also gothicised Hughenden Manor for Disraeli) but in 1982-86 it was the subject of additions and amendments by Edward Cullinan, with landscaping by Georgina Livingston, under contract to the Cooperative Building Society (later to the Nationwide) who wanted a conference centre for their corporate purposes. English Heritage's listing stated that Cullinan's work was a:

"radical yet sensitive enlargement of a Victorian country house, in a refined contemporary idiom that makes calculated use of Palladian motifs and greatly enhances the significance of the original building".

The listing continued:

"the strong overall plan, with its quadrangles, cloisters and staircases, evokes collegiate or monastic archetypes whilst providing an extremely lucid functional layout".

That was the background when, on 1st July, our Society Chairman was approached by a representative of PR consultants Weber Shandwick offering a meeting and explaining, 'I work with a developer who has recently acquired the Uplands site and we are currently discussing ways in which we can bring forward a sustainable development on-site that respects and preserves its heritage.' Slightly sceptical, I notified our colleagues in the Chiltern Society and the meeting took place at Uplands on 9th July. The *eminence grise* behind the initiative proved to be a charming Italian, Fiorenzo Stocco, who has lived in the UK for two years and explained that he specialises in buying up historic properties around the world. He aimed to 'enhance and contribute', and he had bought Uplands 'because I like it'. He had engaged a specialist heritage architect Nick Bridges, from Ettwein Bridges, with whom he seemed to enjoy considerable rapport.

It emerged that Mr Bridges had already done a great deal of detailed work on the scheme which,

in short, was to retain the entire listed building and convert it to dwellings. There was no intention to create any other significant buildings at all, around the site. The dwellings would be varied because of the great variety of the existing buildings and quadrangles. Mr Bridges had already prepared a detailed brochure illustrating his intentions and, as he showed us around the site, it was obvious that he knew the building, and his plans, intimately.



Above: the varied facades of some of the buildings which comprise Uplands today; Below, a glimpse behind the facade at the double staircase feature.



There had already been pre-application planning discussions with Wycombe District Council as Planning Authority and some small issues had emerged over the location of the access road and parking. Overall, however, the information imparted was encouraging beyond anything we could have hoped for, given the situation less than 2 years ago when it seemed that Uplands might be lost and its parkland grievously violated. As we go to press, a public exhibition is scheduled for 17th-18th September and the full planning application is expected to follow around the end of October.

Chris Woodman

A Tale of Two Churches

IN THE SUMMER *Newsletter*, in an article entitled 'Wycombe's Unfinished Edifice', I mentioned the 'Church Extension in Wycombe' at the turn of the twentieth century. The burgeoning population in Newlands, which provided impetus for the provision of the St John's building, was not the only concern at this time. Another rapidly developing area judged to have inadequate pastoral provision for its new residents lay just to the North of the railway line to the East of the station and was known at that time as 'North Town'. A particular concern was that it was too far for smaller children to walk from this new housing area to the Parish Church. Perhaps with this in mind, a parcel of land with a frontage onto Gordon Road had been given to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners specifically to be used for a Sunday school.

Reader David Snoxell has found a number of relevant details in the All Saints' archives. A 'Church Extension Fund' was established in 1896 with a large 'General Committee' under the chairmanship of Lord Carrington. Its purpose was to raise funds for the building of St Andrew's Church School, Gordon Road and St John's New Church, aka St John's Newland, both of which had begun as 'Mission Churches' of the Parish Church. By 1905 the Fund had paid £1,657 towards St Andrew's school and £7,533 towards St John's church. Both eventually became separate parishes. In 1925 the population of St John's parish had reached 10,000.

High Wycombe residents today will associate the parish of St Andrew's with a large modern church at the junction of Hatters Lane and Windrush Avenue, but the foundation stone for the first building at that site was not laid until 1960. This church was a replacement for one in Gordon Road. It cost in the region of £20,000 to build, and was dedicated in 1961, the whole congregation transferring to it from Gordon Road. The new church incorporated a number of features from the old one: three stained glass windows including the figures of St Andrew and St George, a war memorial tablet and the font.

The building left behind, which was sold and stripped the next day, had started out as 'St Andrew's School and Mission room' with a grand opening in 1898. The red-brick building was designed by Alfred Mardon Mowbray, a Gothic Revival architect based in Oxford. It

accommodated 140 infants on the ground floor and 80 boys and 80 girls on the first floor. The building was 'placed' at the northern end of the site to leave space for the provision of a 'permanent church and parsonage' at a later date - ambitious plans which, like the tower of St John's, were never to materialise. A 1925 map clearly shows, however, a plain rectangular building on the land in front of the school which had by then become 'the church'.



Above: St Andrew's Church School in Gordon Road with the laundry building beyond. Space in the foreground for a church and parsonage!

*Photo Courtesy of High Wycombe library
SWOP ref.RHW:12436:*

Below: St Andrew's Church, Hatters lane shortly after its dedication in 1961.

*Photo Courtesy of the Bucks Free Press
SWOP ref. BFP:33055:*



more permanent solution in 1984 and was completed and dedicated in 1986. At a cost reported to be in excess of £700,000, the church now includes separate areas for worship and community activities including a 'lounge' and 'hard-wearing hall'.

Remarkably the building also includes the foundation stone and a time capsule from the Gordon Road building. These were lost for decades under the industrial development of the old 'North Town' but rediscovered in the rubble of a factory there in 1984.

Jackie Kay

Civic Day 2015

SATURDAY 20th JUNE 2015 was a day to remember for Mrs Sarah Priestley. Her entry to our Civic Day Competition was selected by the judges to win the prize, an engraved map of Buckinghamshire and a High Street shopping voucher. We invited her to receive her prize from the Mayor of High Wycombe, Cllr Hanif, at the “Meet the High Wycombe Society” event on Civic Day.

Like many entrants, Sarah attributed the reason she liked High Wycombe to the presence of trees, their ‘beautiful elegance’ and the ‘serenity’ that their presence can bring to a day. Her magic wand would give High Wycombe a stronger identity based on its traditional manufacture of furniture, perhaps even having a festival like Hay or Aberystwyth.



We also identified two runners up in the competition. Beth Yorath would use her magic wand to transform the Brunel Shed to include a large indoor market selling fine foods and fancy goods; while Denise Lindsay would like to see a montage of photos of High Wycombe’s past somewhere in Eden.

An analysis of all the competition entries has been compiled and is being studied by the trustees and by our planning group. In the meantime we would like to thank all who entered for sharing their ideas; all who helped create publicity, distribute and collect entries and create the online version; and also my fellow judges, Peter Cartwright and Jacqueline Roberts, who made the task most enjoyable. I hope to have the opportunity to work with them again.

Brian Tranter

150 years of the Open Spaces Society

KATE ASHBROOK, General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society, was our guest speaker on Wednesday 15th July. Kate opened by telling us that the following Sunday (July 19th) would mark the exact 150th anniversary of the forming of what was then known as the Commons Preservation Society, one of the founders being the MP for Reading who later became Lord Eversley.

The backdrop to the society’s formation was the decline in the traditional use of common land. Landowners seeking a return on such land sought to enclose it or to release it for building projects, (sound familiar?), including use by the new-fangled railways, leaving much less open space free for the public to access.

An Act of Parliament in 1866 made sure that the surviving commons in London remained unenclosed. Interested parties of the day included the Duke of Westminster and Mr W.H.Smith.

When Octavia Hill suggested forming ‘The Commons and Gardens Trust for accepting, holding and purchasing open spaces for the people in town and country’ it was the society’s solicitor, Robert Hunter who said “Why not just call it the National Trust?” The rest as they say is history! The Open Spaces Society still has an appointee on the National Trust council.

Meanwhile ‘The Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society,’ better known to us today as the Open Spaces Society, has fought many legal battles over the years and has succeeded in getting several Acts of Parliament passed helping to get land which was once inaccessible to the public opened up for rambling. They were

also a valued ally in our own Battle for the Rye, 50 years ago which set a precedent for others.

The fight goes on from their small HQ in Henley, where the current concern includes rights of way. Many public paths are not yet recorded on the definitive maps which will be closed to historic claims on 1st January 2026, when many paths could be lost.

Village greens can be registered now if proof can be provided of their use over the past 20 years, but not if they are threatened with development. Kate mentioned that Pimms Grove is registered.

She also told us of a pioneering project at Burnham Beeches, where the cattle that regularly graze the land wear collars with sensors that pick up a signal from an underground cable near the roadside which then emit a beep and this deters the cattle from straying too close to the road, thus keeping cattle and cars safely and unobtrusively apart.

More information can be obtained from two special publications released by the Open Spaces Society to mark the anniversary. These are, *Saving Open Spaces*, and *Common Land*, costing £5 each or both for £8 from O.S.S., 25a Bell St., Henley on Thames RG9 2BA.

Eileen Walters

The 'Big 50' Picnic!



The Monty Fool

Photo: Jackie Kay

We debated at length whether we should have a wet weather plan but thought that if it was wet, people just wouldn't come. In the event we needn't have worried. The sun shone; and people arrived, an estimated three or four hundred of them during the afternoon, all intent on having a good time.

The reason for the celebration, the Golden anniversary of the achievements of the Rye Protection Society in the Saving of the Rye, was the focus of exhibitions in Pann Mill grounds.

The Open Spaces Society and the Chiltern Society both hosted gazebos with details of their work, while our displays included not only our recent photographic exhibition about the Rye but also a delightful poem by Eileen Walters, a 'special edition' of this *Newsletter*, a provocative quiz and a themed wordsearch all prepared specifically for the occasion. Much interest was also generated by the display of the Society's timeline originally compiled by Ann Simone for the Society's 40th anniversary.

We were delighted to welcome back to High Wycombe many past members of the Society



Valere Trillow, granddaughter of Derek Woods
Photo: Jackie Kay

and also descendants of some of the original Rye Protection Society campaigners. One of the largest groups some of whom had travelled from as far as Leeds was made up of the descendants of Derek Woods. The family get-together was organised by High Wycombe resident, Valerie Trillow (pictured).

FOR YOUNGER PARTICIPANTS he was the star of the show – the towering figure of The Monty Fool on stilts with his infectious smile helping to ensure a good time was had by families at our Big Picnic on Sunday 9th August, an event jointly hosted by ourselves and the Open Spaces Society. Children and adults alike were drawn to his circus skills workshop where under his masterful eye, they practised juggling and rode around on the circus bikes provided.

After the event, facebook was awash with photos of smiling faces and I was amused to be asked– “Where did you get your musicians from?” More accustomed to accompanying the Taeppas Tump Morris dancers, the four-man band came to the rescue when our plan for a Brass Band to play at the start of the event fell through. Already booked for the afternoon, they delighted groups by serenading them over their picnic lunches.

As organisers, we knew that the biggest risk we faced was the weather.



The Musicians from Taeppas Tump

Photo: Chris Woodman

Society members added to the range of optional after-lunch activities. Member, Prudence Meek, took a large group of people on her much-acclaimed “Water Trail”, while for those feeling in need of deeper relaxation, Amanda Green, led an introductory Yoga session towards the close of the afternoon. Throughout the afternoon the mill was open to visitors and the millers were kept busy.

Our thanks to Eileen Walters and all she co-opted into making the afternoon a success. Beth Yorath produced some great publicity material. It was a new venture for us and at times the administration was a bit daunting but Sarah Brion and Andy Sherwood from WDC were very supportive. We were delighted to learn that the St John's Ambulance team had little to do!

We have kept the “Big 50” banner which we think will be needed again at our Society's Golden Anniversary in three years' time!

Jackie Kay



The Chiltern Line

ARMCHAIR RAILWAY ENTHUSIASTS will derive much pleasure from a newly published book entitled 'The Chiltern Line'. The compilation of over 200 photographs is a delight in itself and the captions help draw attention to features of interest making it easy to dip in to and out of the book.

Author Bill Simpson acknowledges the help received from several members of the High Wycombe Society during his research. When I met Bill last year he was keen to explore the impact the railway had on the town's economy not just the layout of the station. He wanted to understand what goods had travelled by train in the past, but he was also acutely conscious of the limited space he could spare for any narratives.

In picture-led books it is quite often the case that layout issues constrain the volume of writing. There are stories left untold for want of an appropriate illustration. The realisation that there were once private sidings for use by companies in Wycombe prompted Bill to research the part the railway played in

supporting the local furniture industry and in contributing to the success of Broom and Wade. It is pleasing to see that he found room for much of this information in the final publication.

High Wycombe Society members who visited Marylebone recently (see opposite) may also be particularly interested in the coverage of that station.

Unfortunately there is a price to pay for picture-rich books. This one retails at £18.95. It's published by Lamplight publications ISBN ref. 978 1 899246 59 5.

Jackie Kay

Rail Transport News

THE STAGE IS still set for the commencement of service on the new line to Bicester Village and Oxford Parkway in October, extending to Oxford station in the New Year.

Works at High Wycombe station are in progress to extend the length of the northbound platform to accommodate longer trains. The Southbound platform has already been extended. These



The temporary footbridge at High Wycombe Station.

. Photo: Jackie Kay

works involve closing the subway and replacing it with lifts and a bridge that will lead directly to and from the carpark. At the moment a temporary bridge is in situ.

We have had a meeting with Chiltern Rail and Network Rail to discuss the Brunel train shed, which is still awaiting development. Chiltern Railways owns it, but they do not have funds to redevelop it, although plans exist to make an extremely attractive retail and mixed-use building. Network Rail has a division to make commercial use of Rail property, and this is seen as the most likely outcome. However with the Government rowing back on rail investment this may be scuppered; we wait with interest.

Nigel Phillips

National Trust Day Passes

FOLLOWING OUR RENEWAL of Civic Voice membership we are pleased to advise all members of the High Wycombe Society that they can claim a free National Trust Day Pass by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Civic Voice offices at 60 Duke Street, Liverpool L1 5AA. Further information about this offer can be obtained from Gill Roxborough (gill.roxborough@civicvoice.org.uk) or by phoning 0151 707 4319.

You will find there is a lot of small print on the

passes when they arrive which restricts when and where they can be used. They seem to have tightened this up compared with previous years. West Wycombe Park and Cliveden are now two of the local properties specifically excluded from the offer. Also, the passes cannot be used on Bank Holidays. But there are still plenty of options. We would be interested to hear of members using their day passes to visit new places.

Jackie Kay

Behind the Scenes

Visit to Marylebone Station

ON 16th JANUARY a number of Society members travelled to Marylebone where we were welcomed by Chad Collins, Chiltern Railways' Head of Stations for a *Behind the Scenes* look at the operations. Chiltern Railways had kindly provided an assortment of drinks and snacks (care of M&S) in the Company's board room. Chad outlined the commercial background to the company's history from the original 1996 franchise, through Adrian Shooter's management buyout, to its later evolution into an overseas 'region' of Deutsche Bahn and now Arriva after Deutsche Bahn bought further UK travel companies.

Ironically Chiltern Railways attributes part of its success to the local growth driven by the opening of the M40, and Wycombe is about to get longer platforms and trains as part of this. But the company is constantly looking for wider opportunities as well and the line to Oxford Parkway opens in October. An interesting aside - Oxford is the only town in England where there are currently more bus than rail journeys to London. There may be further plans for Oxford if things go well; a pop-up station in Cowley Science Park has already been tried. However with Marylebone being at pretty much full capacity Cross Rail probably offers more potential for passenger growth, and options like an interchange at Greenford are under consideration.

A common theme was the use of innovation to recover from a previous generation's lack of foresight about transport needs. As an example platforms 5 and 6 have added much needed capacity at Marylebone, but can't be any nearer to the front of the station as the land needed was sold to a bank years ago.

Chad handed over to Donald Wilson, a former Station Master at Marylebone, who talked us through the station's history, showing a rare 1899 scrapbook from the celebratory opening dinner. Three thousand local residents had to be rehoused to make way for the station and the cost of building them all new homes almost bankrupted the company; however the site at Marylebone was critical as the railway was primarily a freight line back then and having the Regent's Canal right next door was essential for the coal-shipping business.

Marylebone has a very long frontage as ten

platforms were originally planned, but only four were built at first with a road for cabs in the middle; the tunnels and bridges along the line were built to larger continental standards as there were once plans to run all the way to Dover and a channel tunnel. In the event Marylebone was always the quietest London terminus and by the 1980s was in such decline

that there was a serious proposal to convert it into a bus station and run buses along the track to Denham. Fortunately traveller numbers improved after the Capitalcard came in and then Chiltern took over and began the line's recovery.

Donald then took us on a physical tour of the station to show the different architectural layers. Because the ground floor rooms are full of control equipment the newer shops at Marylebone were all built as add-ons to the front of the older buildings, though of course in the same architectural style to conserve the station's overall look. Chiltern is unusual in running Marylebone itself and so

gets a percentage of the turnover from all the new shops and even the cash machines. Our tour ended with a visit to the Landmark Hotel opposite the station. This originally housed a seven-hundred bed hotel, then railway offices and is now a luxury hotel which still features stained glass windows celebrating the Great Central Railway (not to mention the impressive glass atrium over what is now their main restaurant).

In summary, it was a fascinating two hours and many thanks to Chiltern for hosting our group.

Peter Sadd



Inside the Landmark Hotel, Donald drew attention to the GCR insignia in the stained glass windows

Where have all the brownfields gone?

UNDER CAR PARKS, every one? In an article in the Summer Edition, Heather Morley, a member of the Society's Planning Group, tried to find some brownfield sites which might be candidates for future development in our town. It was a provocative article with some particularly controversial suggestions in the Hughenden Road area. Long-standing Society member, Ann Simone, responded with a Letter to The Editor:

"A Waste of Space"?

Perhaps you needed a half-page article to fill your space? Perhaps Heather Morley is just being controversial? Does the Planning Group know this "housing" suggestion is being promoted?

I thought using back gardens (and knocking down a nice property for access) had been abandoned long ago.

Lidl, Morrisons etc could not function without parking - that's what big supermarkets are all about!

Unfortunately, car parks are a necessity of modern life. One of my suggestions which I entered into the Civic Day competition was for more high-rise or underground parking places. Would that be less controversial?

Ann Simone

With Ann's permission, I shared her letter with Heather and her fellow Planning Group members who knew of the article prior to its publication.

It seems everyone (even the government) agrees with the principle of using Brownfield sites in preference to Greenfield ones, but there are still widely differing views on what sites should be developed and how.

Many surface car parks represent previously missed opportunities to make better use of space along the lines of Ann's suggestions.

So the question remains, where do we find the brownfield sites so often alluded to as preferable to digging up beautiful meadows? Heather, the Planning Group, and WDC would all welcome your suggestions.

And the Editor still has 12 pages to fill in the next Edition!

JK

Margaret's Garden

We have struggled a little in the garden over the past couple of months due to vandals who have trampled over the flowers and cut down branches from or mutilated the trees and shrubs. After being very upset we decided to just clear up after them and carry on. We are not going to let them get the better of us.

Just as we were clearing up a gentleman came in and told us how much he enjoys walking round the garden and how peaceful it is.

It has been very dry but the flowers keep on coming and there have been some beautiful roses around the garden. Every week there seems to be a different plant flowering - especially lilies which are beautiful.

We are hoping for a little more rain but not on a Tuesday morning. Please call in and see us if you are passing - we love the right sort of visitors.

Irene, Julie, Dave and Wendy

Vote of No Thanks!

In July the trustees discussed briefly the long-observed practice of giving a formal vote of thanks to guest speakers at our public meetings. It has become increasingly difficult to find volunteers who enjoy this task so it was agreed we should move with the times and dispense with the practice. Spontaneous expressions of appreciation will still be very much in order.

Wycombe Pioneers of Progress

In 2011 we published a book - now it's time to make the movie! Well, not quite. Member, David Jarman, is an active participant in Bourne End Video Makers. Thanks to his introduction, they are now keen to produce a series of video versions of the Wycombe Pioneers. If you would be interested in helping with this project, please make sure Jackie knows, especially if you were involved in the initial writing of the book in 2011.

High Wycombe Through Time

Have you ever wondered why it seems there are books on almost every town in the county in the 'Through Time' series by Amberley Publishing, but there is no High Wycombe title? The publishers have been seeking an author/photographer to address this. If you are a keen photographer with an interest in local history and would like to know more please either get in touch with Jackie or, if you prefer, contact Amberley Publishing directly for more information of what it involves.

First Aid - opportunity

Would you be interested in training (free of charge) to administer first aid, or do you know someone who would? Could you/they commit to coming to our three Pann Mill Open Days each year? If so, please let our Hon Secretary know.

Sandys' Talks

THIS TIME LAST YEAR, Civic Voice instigated an annual lecture in honour of Duncan Sandys' contribution to the civic movement. Founder of the Civic Trust in 1956, Duncan Sandys' parliamentary career included the introduction of the Clean Air Act in 1954 and his name is intimately associated with the introduction of Green Belts in 1955.

The first Sandys' lecture was appropriately given by his daughter, Laura Sandys, who at that time was MP for South Thanet and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Civic Societies.

On Saturday 17th October there is a local opportunity to hear Laura Sandys speak again as she has been invited to the AGM of ANTAS (the Association for North Thames Amenity Societies) which will be hosted by the Amersham Society in the Old Guildhall.

As previously reported, the future of ANTAS lies in the balance. The formal business part of the AGM will consider a proposed new constitution outlining a reduced role for ANTAS going

forward, but if an insufficient number of volunteers can be found then it is possible that steps will need to be taken to wind up the association.

In the meantime, this year's Sandys' lecture hosted by Civic Voice will take place up in London on 12th October when the speaker will be Simon Thurley, former Chief Executive of English Heritage.

Readers interested in attending either event should contact our Hon Secretary to register their interest.

Jackie Kay

Charity Past and Present

AT THE CLARE Charity Day on Saturday 11th July, I represented the High Wycombe Society and provided guided tours of the Clare Charity Centre building. Although the Centre is in Saunderton, not High Wycombe, I had accepted the rather surprising invitation to do so because the site played a significant role in the history of High Wycombe as the location of the Wycombe Union Workhouse.

Very little remains of the workhouse (although if you know exactly where to look there is a fragment of wall still to be seen) – it was mostly demolished prior to the erection of the current building for Ortho Pharmaceuticals Ltd between 1955 and 1958.

My guided tours included a potted history of the workhouse, the current building, and past occupants of both. Over one hundred visitors took the opportunity to hear about the past, view the grounds from the Board Room, and to see the inner courtyard garden, a relatively recent addition.

Prior to giving the tours, I had carried out research both at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies where the Poor Law Guardians' minute books provide a wealth of material on the management of the workhouse, and at Wycombe District Council offices where it was possible to view relevant historical planning applications on microfiche, thanks to Penelope Tollitt and her team who helped provide useful references to get the research started.

Jackie Kay

Wycombe Arts Festival

One of the regular highlights of The High Wycombe Society programme has been our annual contribution to the Wycombe Arts Festival. In less austere times the programme was heavily subsidised by Wycombe District Council. Nowadays it is reliant on income from ticket sales, organisation fees and patronage. The fee which organisations such as The High Wycombe Society pay goes towards publicity in the form of the brochure (and its website). If you wish to see the Wycombe Arts Festival continue to flourish you might be interested in becoming an individual patron.

The person to contact if so is Janet Roake (01494 535497 janetr69@gmail.com). It costs £24 for an annual subscription.

On the Buses

In July Arriva buses appealed for names of local heroes for their brand new fleet of 5 new single-deck low emission buses. The names will each appear on the outside of a bus and on a commemorative plaque inside the vehicle.

The results are out and three of the five people to be honoured are members of the High Wycombe Society: Congratulations to Frances Alexander, Peter Cartwright and Ricki Akhter Hussain. They form an unlikely quintet when joined by Benjamin Disraeli and Gareth Ainsworth, manager of Wycombe Wanderers!

The Deputy Editor has drawn to my attention that some local buses are now offering free WiFi – for use in interminable traffic jams?. (see p3)

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Sarah Priestley
Dawn Williams
Louisa Shimell

Obituaries

We regret to inform members of the death of:

Audrey Neal

Mills of High Wycombe

Sheila Viner's illustrated talk on 21st October will refer to the watermills that used to exist on the River Wye and show us where they were sited. Some of those mills have histories stretching back to the Domesday Book and beyond but few remains can still be found. Fortunately there now exists the Mills Archive where Sheila is a researcher and where a lot of information on these mills is preserved. The Mills Archive was established in 2002 and is now one of the world's great collections. It has rescued a huge number of documents and images that might otherwise have been destroyed. The collections show the rich and diverse crafts, buildings, machinery, equipment and people involved with mills in the UK and are free to use.

Wycombe Sound Radio

STOP PRESS – Wycombe Sound Radio will be back for a 28-day period starting on 19th November, the day the Christmas lights are turned on. We hope, as in the past 2 years, that there will be an opportunity to air High Wycombe Society views.

Views of Wycombe

Did you know that some of the best views of High Wycombe can be had from within the university buildings? We can't promise exactly what our guide will want to show us on our tour of BNU in November but it certainly won't all be lecture rooms and libraries.

Civic Voice AGM 2015

The Civic Voice AGM and Convention will be held in Bristol this year on 23rd to 24th October. The first day will include a programme of walks and visits around Bristol, including an opportunity to visit the world famous Clifton Suspension Bridge. On Friday night the civic reception and dinner on Bristol's quayside will include the presentation of Civic Day awards. Saturday morning will begin with the AGM followed by workshops, presentations and networking opportunities.

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 November 2015**.

Please note: earlier contributions are always welcome!

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	
Saturday 26 th September Aylesbury, 10.00-4.15 pm	BLHN 2015 conference on Buckinghamshire Towns. (Further details on the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society website).
Saturday 17 th October Amersham	ANTAS AGM and an opportunity to hear Laura Sandys speak (see p11 for further details)
Wednesday 21 st October The Riverside, 7.30 pm.	High Wycombe Society Talk: Mills of High Wycombe, Speaker: Sheila Viner, Mills Archive Trust (see above)
Friday 23 rd October- Saturday 24 th October	Civic Voice AGM and Annual Convention (see above)
Tuesday 3 rd November 10.30 am.	<i>Behind the Scenes</i> visit to Bucks New University. There are still places available on this. Contact programme@highwycombesociety.org.uk or phone Eileen on HW 449902 to reserve your place.
Saturday 12 th December The Riverside, 1-3pm	Pre-Christmas Event. Take a break from Christmas shopping to attend our Members' Gathering. Get into the festive spirit with mince pies and mulled wine.
Friday 22 nd January The Riverside, 7.30 pm	Our first talk of the New Year is likely to be on this date – details to be announced in the Winter newsletter.