

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

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Icons of Wycombe

PANN MILL is an Icon of Wycombe — it's official!

This stylised image takes its place alongside similar depictions of a Wycombe Swan, the Red Lion, a Windsor Chair, the Millennium Clock, a de Havilland Mosquito and a Wycombe Wanderers' rosette in one of the latest artistic additions to our town; the footbridge across the railway at the top of Castle Place has been transformed, thanks to our friends at the Wycombe Arts Centre supported by Buckinghamshire Council, Network Rail and MyWycombe.com as part of the Opportunity Bucks programme.

By the time you are reading this, the chances are that the first Pann Mill Open Day of the year will already have happened. The normal rhythm of our Newsletter schedule has been unavoidably disrupted. News of the sudden death of our Chairman, Colin Hingston, was received with shock and sadness by all who knew him – and has left a vacancy it will be hard to fill. Our AGM in mid-June is fast approaching, and all members and supporters of the Society are urged to consider who they wish to represent them in the year ahead. If committees aren't your thing, then please think how else you can support our activities: our Treasurer is actively seeking someone to examine the accounts – if you're numerate with a few hours to spare in the near future, he'd like to hear from you; and Mary Woodman is constantly on the lookout for helpers to set up stalls at Pann Mill, as well as ideas to increase footfall in July.

Before that, on 24th May, the Charter Trustees will hold their Annual General Meeting in the Guildhall from which they are expected to emerge around 11.40am for the Annual Weighing of the Mayor, a quirky tradition, for which our town is well-known. I hope to see some of you there.

News that some Arts Council funding has been obtained to develop a "High Wycombe brand" led me to think again about the above icons: Are there other symbols that should be considered with this in mind? The centaur on top of the Guildhall or the Guildhall itself perhaps? A chair arch? The ruins of St John's Hospital or the frontage of the Royal Grammar School? The Wheatsheaf, whose fate again seems to be in the balance? And what about any of the Mayoral regalia or the tripod weighing apparatus?

Jackie Kay



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

Patron: Lord Carrington

Registered Charity No. 257897

Honorary Secretary: Steph Osborn, Pann Mill, London Road, High Wycombe HP11 1BJ. Tel: 07724 881440

The show must go on!

THERE WAS an awkward silence at the start of our last trustees' meeting, as none of us wanted to begin work without Colin. We had heard the news of his sudden death and now we had to face the reality of his absence in the room. A hole that none of us could fill. What would he have wanted us to do? I think he would have been the first to say: the show must go on!

And so it did! We embarked on a mixed agenda: making arrangements for the upcoming AGM; sharing what we knew about the planned future programme of events; allocating tasks usually undertaken by Colin to other trustees (at least in the short-term). We wondered who else's arms we might twist into volunteering as we assessed our readiness for the first Pann Mill Open Day of the year. We discussed an invitation received from a member of the Raffety family (which might be of particular interest to those who remember the Oak Room Windows project); we considered some proposals from Willie Reid for restoring plaques and creating new information boards; and we heard about progress on a project to create an American Trail in South Bucks in time for the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Expect to see or hear more of this soon!

Colin had already started to prepare some notes for this Newsletter in which he wanted to comment on changes he saw happening both within the Society and in the town centre. He recognised that the balance of work within the Society was changing for many reasons, both internal and external. Heritage interests were being well-served, but for a variety of reasons, there were diminishing opportunities to contribute collectively in other areas such as planning and transport. In this Newsletter we carry a tribute to Alan Furness, an experienced miller who died earlier this year. But Pann Mill will endure and indeed, keen-eyed readers may already have noted that it has recently become the official address of the Society.

What Colin could not have foreseen was that key Society members were about to sustain injuries that would limit their contributions for a while. Our Treasurer, Steve Strutt, was the first to suffer the pain and inconvenience of a severely broken ankle, with the associated frustrations of accessing local NHS services. Although he has

not allowed it to stop him from fulfilling his Treasurer's duties, he was unable to get to the Society's meetings where he would have managed the audio/visual facilities or perhaps acted as chairman for an evening. But others of us stepped up and the show went on!

Next it was the turn of our esteemed Newsletter Editor, Jackie Kay, who managed to fall over and break her wrist, again giving the NHS plenty of work to do. She now sports a bright yellow cast which is more comfortable than its predecessor, but it is difficult to type with just one hand and even harder to move images around on a page. She didn't let that stop her from reporting the uneven pavement to "Fix my Street" or voicing her concerns to the Editor of the Bucks Free Press about changes to the planning portal (see p3), but inevitably it has contributed to the delay of this edition of the Newsletter.

Both the above cases have drawn attention to the lack of A & E facilities in High Wycombe and the practical difficulties of travelling to and from Stoke Mandeville for ongoing appointments when unable to drive. Fortunately, there is a reasonable bus service by Redline so long as one can get to the bus station.

Colin was remarkably upbeat about some of the upcoming changes to the town centre. We should all be aware that High Wycombe will be a very different place when some of the recently approved multi-storey developments come into being. We may worry about Thames Water not being able to cope with the additional volume of wastewater, and the additional strain being placed on the NHS by an increase in population, and the effects of increased traffic and demand for parking, but for Colin, the overriding vision was one of "opportunities to make Wycombe a more vibrant and inviting community". We need to hold on to that thought!

Malcolm Connell

160 years of Campaigning

ON THURSDAY 12th JUNE, following the High Wycombe Society's AGM, Kate Ashbrook, long-serving General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society, Britain's oldest conservation body, will give a talk entitled "160 years of campaigning for open spaces". The organisation's early battles saved commons in and around London from enclosure and encroachment, with victories at Hampstead Heath, Wimbledon Common and Epping Forest. In 1895 it helped found the National Trust. In 1965, it supported the Rye Protection Society's campaign to save The Rye in High Wycombe.

Steve Strutt

Planning Comments

THE COUNCIL'S Planning Portal is a valuable online resource providing access to current and historical planning applications, and thereby useful insights into decades of decision-making in our ever-changing town. It is easy for anyone to comment on live applications and, until recently, all such comments could be viewed along with the applications to which they related, past and present.

But sadly, following concerns about data protection, this feature has now been removed. In its place a simple count of the number of objections (and supporting comments) is now displayed. We are assured that comments can still be submitted as before and that they will be taken into account by decision-makers – but the loss of transparency is lamentable.

To illustrate this loss, consider for a moment the recent outline planning application for 20 Amersham Hill including plans to redevelop the site for up to 30 residential units. Whatever the merits of the case, it is only thanks to a letter from Marian Miller reproduced below, that I am able to see and share her concerns. Users of the portal can only see that there have been “5 objections”.



I have recently submitted an objection to the proposed demolition of the Old Registry building on Amersham Hill just above the Station.

The Old Registry was built by noted architect Arthur Vernon (1846-1926) and was his family home, then called Borshams. Vernon designed several buildings on the Council's local list. He was also a notable figure in the civic life of the town serving as mayor for three terms. This building is noted as one of interest in the appraisal for the Conservation Area. Apart from its architectural value, its historical value lies in its age, association with Vernon and his family, but also in its communal value as a former Register Office. (I was married there in 1981). The building is also a local landmark, prominent



*The Old Registry, soon to be demolished if plans go ahead.
Photo Chris Woodman*

in views across the valley. The Heritage Statement accompanying the application is woefully inadequate in assessing the significance of the building.

Marian Miller

Terriers Farm

BACK IN JULY 2021 a planning application was submitted for the Terriers Farm Reserve Site. This followed an extensive consultation process by the then Wycombe District Council involving representatives of local community organisations including The High Wycombe Society. Together we developed a “masterplan” to be used by developers to enable a suitable application to be submitted.

Concerns were raised over various aspects of the application and further consultations between the council and the developers resulted in some changes. The revised proposed development now entails the erection of 370 dwellings with associated parking, landscaping, open spaces, and sports facilities along with vehicular and pedestrian access. The 370 dwellings comprise: 39 one bed flats, 9 one bed houses, 20 two bed flats, 109 two bed houses, 107 three bed houses, 67 four bed houses and 19 five bed houses. Of these 178 (48%) dwellings are designated “Affordable”. The plan proposes 871 parking spaces, the sports pitches will have an allocation of 56 spaces along with 3 Mini-Bus bays as well as cycle parking provisions.

The area of housing planned within the northern part of the site contravenes the “masterplan” guidance created in 2021. One source of concern is the damage that will be caused by a proposed road cutting through woodland and leading to a new junction on the A404 Amersham Road. There are ongoing worries as to how this development will affect the road network as well as other infrastructure aspects. This application was discussed at the Strategic Sites committee meeting held in November and it was resolved that the Director of Planning and Environment should approve the application subject to the satisfactory completion of a Legal Agreement.

Andy Cole

If you want to know the way ...

AMONG THE MANY films rescued as part of the Society's "SOFA" project, and now made accessible via the YouTube channel of the Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSa), is a short film entitled: "If you want to know the way ..." Produced by Roland Sewell and Robert Mead, only 2 minutes in duration and intended to be shown before an intermission, it depicts a man wandering around High Wycombe asking people for directions; at the end of the film, his destination is revealed to be the Gents toilets, which at that time were at the northern end of Frogmoor.

The availability, or sadly, lack of availability of public toilets in High Wycombe is an ongoing concern to many local people. Some time ago, the High Wycombe Community Board made it a priority to address and so the "Community Toilet Scheme" was born. The idea, familiar to travellers in some parts of Europe, is to involve businesses (i.e. restaurants, pubs, coffee shops and larger local stores) and where possible get their agreement to provide access to toilets on their premises for customers and non-customers alike. The scheme is progressing albeit slowly. McDonalds in the High Street are already on board offering their facilities without the need to purchase anything.

Bucks Council are planning to launch a one-year trial of the scheme "soon". If it goes ahead, participating establishments will have welcoming notices displayed such as "Use our loo" or "We're in the Community Toilet Scheme" and town maps showing their whereabouts will be on noticeboards in Car Parks and prominent locations in the town.

Similar schemes operate in other parts of the country. They have not been universally successful, but the Council hopes to learn from their experiences and adopt a best practice model. Some schemes provide grants to participating businesses. Figures of £300 up to £1,000 have been mentioned but this depends on funding being available.

So far there is no precedent in Bucks, but people in Marlow are thinking along similar lines.

What's in it for participating businesses? – Extra publicity and maybe some funding.

What are the risks? – Possible anti-social behaviour increasing in the establishments.

What stage is it all at right now? – finalising a list of businesses to approach and then finding volunteers to visit and talk with them to see if they will participate.

None of the above negates the complaints that there are no public toilets in the town centre, but there is no appetite within the Council to provide such facilities anymore. To be fair, this applies to many towns and cities across the country – including London.

Despite protestations from various people there is no prospect of Bucks Council restoring any of their existing public toilets to use. They have all been closed for some time now due to vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour resulting in frequent unacceptable expenditure on

repairs and cleaning.

One small glimmer of relief is that the Bus Station toilets are to be kept open for longer with the eventual aim of 24-hour operation. This is particularly important for users of the "Flightline" 102 service which operates through the night.

Compiled from notes left by Colin Hingston



Above and below: Two designs of publicity material under consideration for the Community Toilet Scheme



Coming Shortly...

COLIN HAD many ideas for the Society's future programme of events. One of his last actions was to persuade John Leighfield, affectionately known in local history circles as "the map man", to "put High Wycombe on the map". Colin had heard John speak at Hedgerley, was impressed by his research, and was determined that he should come to Wycombe. From all accounts, his planned talk on the afternoon of 11th October promises to be a highlight in the Autumn calendar. Also on Colin's radar were opportunities arising in the wake of the "SOFA" project where he felt the Society "could do more" to promote awareness and use of the rescued films. As we go to press, it is too soon to share details of what that might entail. All we can say is that the Autumn programme will be published in the Summer Newsletter and will carry details of other events "Coming Shortly".

JK

The Good and the Ugly

IN THE WINTER edition of the Newsletter, we drew attention to the ugly corrugated iron panels obscuring the South Porch of All Saints church in High Wycombe. Sadly, they are likely to remain for a long time, pending the availability of funds needed to restore the porch. But at the top end of the graveyard a solution has been found to another longstanding problem: the installation of a sturdy wooden gate will hopefully prevent unauthorised vehicles being parked on the graves.



The Good: a sturdy gate to deter unauthorised access.

Photo: D Snoxell



The Ugly: corrugated iron shrouds the South porch

Photo: D Snoxell

Vigilant regular visitors may have noticed some other minor changes inside the church: two historical pictures of the church and churchyard, one by W J Stamps (gifted by the artist to the vicar who retired in 1950) and another by local artist, Mary Giles, are on display at the west end near the kitchen, not far from the Society's copy of William Hannan's painting of the Cornmarket. And in the North Chapel, attached to the railings in front of the Shelburne memorial, thanks to David Snoxell, there is a new fact sheet about William Petty, the second Earl of Shelburne. The mid-eighteenth-century memorial commemorates his great uncle, Henry, the first Earl of Shelburne to live at Loakes Manor, and is sadly also in need of costly specialist cleaning.

Paternal Film Connections

THE RECENT RELEASE of High Wycombe Film Society (HWFS) films on YouTube has prompted several people to contact the High Wycombe Society. We were particularly pleased to hear from Simon Rose, who introduced himself as "the toddler" who appeared in "Paper Boat", his father Tony Rose's award-winning film. Simon has early memories of his father's filming activities and a miscellany of ephemera such as shooting scripts and photographs from the early days of the HWFS (including the photo of his father reproduced below). We also heard from Tim Smithson, son of John Smithson, whose yearly documentaries of the History of High Wycombe were a core part of his much-loved annual film shows. Tim was able to identify the mystery couple getting married in one of the films as his parents. He also sent this note of encouragement:



Thank you for the recent copy of the High Wycombe Society newsletter.

I appreciated the front page and have since looked at the Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSa) YouTube site, where I am delighted to see what has been digitised. I know my dad would have approved that his efforts over the years to preserve the history of the town have now been made available for all to see for the future. The films are essentially future proofed. I have sent links to some of the films to other groups namely the Army Apprentice Group.

Once again, many thanks!

Tim Smithson



Portrait of Tony Rose "editing" from HWFS ephemera reproduced with permission.

Colin Hingston (1947-2025)

I AM NOT SURE when I first became aware of Colin, likely it was some church event over thirty years ago where he would have been playing the harmonica. He was always the slightly eccentric character, ever the entertainer with terrible jokes and a self-deprecating humour. We moved around in the same space, our paths occasionally crossing as our children grew up. It was not until the last few years, through our joint work for the High Wycombe Society, that I spent much time with him and saw him more clearly.



Colin always had a deep passion for people, especially for youth development, for creating a sense of community and for entertaining people. Over the years I saw him involved in church youth groups, as a Trustee of East Side Youth Centre (ESYC), Lighthouse (a Christian week-long holiday club for children) and

Wycombe Youth for Christ (WYFC). He would spot a need and quickly become involved in addressing it. I only recently learned about his interest in local history, which developed after he retired, just like mine did.

Colin often took on more roles than it was practical to handle together. For many years he was therefore on the look-out for people to follow him in taking on work, as he stepped up to meet another new need. That is how I came to be Treasurer of the High Wycombe Society; I offered my services if that would free Colin up to take on the vacant Chairman's role. He jumped at my offer. But when the Secretarial role fell vacant, Colin also undertook the role of Acting Secretary until that role could be filled.

Through my work in the Society, I became aware of Colin's far broader involvement in the local community as a Trustee of the Wrights Meadow Centre and in the town as a member of the High Wycombe Community Board.

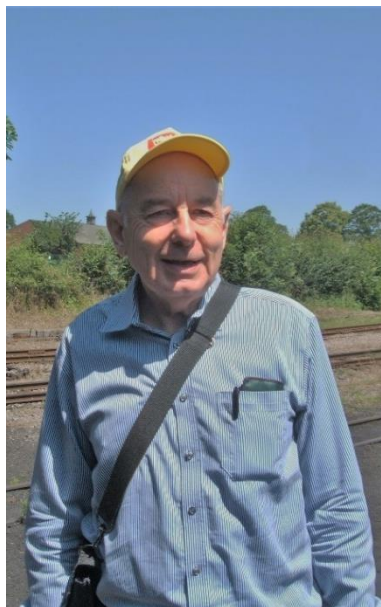
In a recent communication intended for this Newsletter, Colin enthused about a "Creativity and Sustainability" event held at the Wrights Meadow Centre at which Dan Wilson, best known for his murals and workshops, had presented on past and planned creations which brighten up parts of the town (including the Pann Mill shed). From his familiar station behind the bar, serving teas and coffees, Colin had supported both this event and the "Community Action Day" on 19th February which he said was well attended.

Alongside his other commitments Colin enjoyed organising legendary coach trips primarily for the Instron Retirement Club. Spare places on the coaches were often offered to High Wycombe Society members and eagerly taken up.

Latterly, Colin was looking to reduce his time commitments and slow down in his retirement so he could spend more time with Geraldine, his wife. Sadly, this was not to be.

Colin will be greatly missed by his family, the wider community, the many organisations he helped lead and the town. An unsung hero, always working in the background, the way he preferred it.

Steve Strutt



Dressed for and entering into the spirit of every occasion ...

Left: On a coach-trip to Leighton Buzzard in 2019, one of Colin's legendary coach-trips.

Right: At the Wright's Meadow Centre - commemorating VE day in 2020.



Alan Furness (1938-2025)

- A Quiet Engineer

AROUND TWENTY YEARS AGO, John, a long-time member of the Pann Mill team, came to a work morning accompanied by a friend whom he introduced as Alan “a sort of brother-father”, since John’s son had married Alan’s daughter. Alan was very interested in the technicalities of the mill and, having recently retired, was rapidly recruited and welcomed into the team.

What a find Alan was! He had a wide skill set having spent some years in the Navy, been a lecturer in electrical engineering and worked in the engineering departments of several large companies. He was also great at quietly organising projects. Without his keen involvement we would probably still be complaining about a heap of steel plates in the store rather than admiring a set of new buckets on the water wheel. Many times, he would say “I’ll just get that done” and would fix a wonky wheel on something, paint a window frame or order more flour bags for open days. All those jobs that we knew needed to be done, but Alan got on and did them. Many will remember Alan and his wife Pat who spent many hours bagging and selling flour at mill open days.

Another project that had been on the board for some time was to mechanise a sluice board in the river to divert water to the mill and Alan took this on. He prepared the drawings and procured

the necessary metalwork, and we had it as work to do as soon as the weather improved and the



water level subsided. Regrettably, however, Alan died before the job could be completed so we will finish the work in his memory during the spring.

We knew that Alan had been ill a while ago but thought that he had beaten the problem, so it was with great shock and sadness then that we learned of his passing just after last Christmas. We of the mill team miss his company, his expertise, his enthusiasm and his knowledge; he is a great loss to us and our regular volunteer activities in maintaining and operating

Pann Mill. Most of all though we wish to express once again our heartfelt sympathy and best wishes to his wife Pat and his family.

Malcolm Connell
(on behalf of the millers)

Walk-ins Welcome

LIKE MOST BARBERS the Millers are happy to have walk-in visitors. You never know, they may decide to stay and become valuable members of the team. The latest person that we welcomed this way was a nice young lady who came to a work morning and offered some help. Having recently lost an active team member this sounded great, but we did wonder what she had in mind.

Melanie, for that was her name, then made a wonderful offer. She said that she was a web developer and had looked at our web site, which we had to admit was a bit tired and old fashioned, and offered to modernise it. Since the main High Wycombe Society web site, www.highwycombesociety.org.uk, had been very nicely updated a few months ago by its new manager, Steve Strutt, this sounded very interesting. However, my first reaction was ...

“Yeah, right, how much?”

“Oh, no charge. It will be a donation to support the mill.”

Hugging strangers is frowned on today so, as the present Pann Mill web site manager, I made do with an enthusiastic “Thank you and yes please”.

Melanie has now delivered a superb new web site for us that can be found at the usual address www.pannmill.org.uk. Do have a look. Our only problem now is that we need to keep it up to date and add further content, but we are certainly not complaining. Huge thanks to a wonderful walk-in.

MC

Amy Johnson of Wooburn Green

THE AVIATRIX, Amy Johnson, achieved international fame when, in 1930, she flew solo in a single engine, second hand, de Havilland Gipsy Moth biplane from England to Australia. Her aeroplane is now in the Science Museum. But did you know that for the last few months of her life in 1940, she lodged with a local family in Wooburn Green? I have been researching her local connections and am appealing for more information. This article summarises what I've managed to find out to date.

Amy had lived in Buckinghamshire previously in the thirties, firstly at "Dragontail Cottage" in Haddenham, and later at "Monks Staithe", a Tudor Cottage next to the church in Princes Risborough, where there is a plaque to commemorate her stay.



"Monks Staithe" – Amy's address in Princes Risborough
Photo: By No Swan So Fine - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=138584925>

Amy became friends with John and Alice Hofer who lived at North Croft, Wooburn Green and she had shares in their company "Screw Machine Products", based at the site of Lower Glory Mill. It is thought that this company was still in business until the early sixties.

Before the war, Amy would visit the Hofer family by flying to "Bourne End Airfield" (now known as Cock Marsh). The airfield was a popular place for aviators who could stay at the adjacent Quarry Hotel; it burnt down in the late thirties and has since been replaced by the Bounty Public House.



Quarry Hotel 1930-35 Photo: Courtesy of Wycombe Museum SWOP ref MHW:29062

At the outbreak of war Amy joined the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), an organisation based at White Waltham airfield (near Maidenhead) responsible for ferrying military aeroplanes from the factories to service bases around the country.

Unhappy with her accommodation, which by then was at Hatfield, Amy was invited to lodge with the Hofer family at North Croft, Wooburn Green. Whilst there, she entrusted the Hofers with the care of her St. Bernard dog and their home was a haven where she could relax after a day's flying. This was her last residence before she sadly lost her life on 5th January 1941.

She had been flying an Airspeed Oxford twin-engine trainer from Blackpool (Squires Gate) airfield to Oxford (Kidlington) airfield, when it crashed into the Thames Estuary. Her body was never found but the aeroplane was identified from parts of the wreckage and some of Amy's personal belongings.

The aeroplane was seen to crash into the estuary by Lieutenant Commander Walter Fletcher, who was on board HMS Haslemere. Fletcher dived in to try to save the parachutist - he would not have known who it was - but failed and subsequently lost his own life after contracting pneumonia from the freezing water. By sheer coincidence Fletcher had lived in Monks Risborough when Amy was living in Princes Risborough, and they had known each other at the time.

Dancer and Hearne manufactured parts for the Airspeed Oxford in High Wycombe, so it may just be that some of these parts were in Amy's aeroplane.

There have been many differing theories about her disappearance, exactly what happened and why such an experienced aviator with extensive navigational experience lost her life in these circumstances, but none has been conclusive.

After Amy's death, her parents, Will and Ciss, stayed with the Hofer family. The following Sunday, they were joined at North Croft by Mrs McLaren, a good friend of John and Alice Hofer. Together they raised a toast to Amy.

Mike Dewey has contacted a grandson of the Hofers and we are hoping to find out more of the family background. I am also currently awaiting further information from the RAF Museum Archives at Hendon.

Dave Scott

Planning Matters

WHILE PLANNING GROUP activity has been at a bit of a low ebb recently, we've reduced the frequency of our meetings, but we're still keeping a watchful eye on proposed and in-progress changes in our town centre. The big news in February was that planning consent was given to **Dandara** for their proposals to redevelop the Chilterns Centre. Their application includes a public realm scheme for Frogmoor. We had minor concerns about gabbling on one elevation but broadly are delighted this has been approved after nearly 18 months of deliberation by Buckinghamshire Council. Now let's get it built, please!

Meanwhile ...

It's Full Steam Ahead at the Brunel Shed!

Following planning permission granted last year for changes to roof fenestration, work is progressing at the Brunel Shed, both inside and out. Internal finishes include wood panelling with industrial black balustrades providing a nod to its past usage.

Marlow Film Studios A four-week public inquiry was held on the top floor of Albert House, behind the council offices in Queen Victoria Road. Heard by independent planning inspector, Katie McDonald, many voices represented the arguments for and against the proposed development by investors Dido, comprising local businessmen with links to the film industry.

They were strongly supported by film and TV professionals as well as analysts who sought to prove that the UK film industry is buoyant and needs more studio space. In opposition officers from Buckinghamshire Council and Marlow residents argued that the UK film industry does not need further facilities, and that this green belt land is vitally important for nature and wellbeing, situated as it is between the river Thames and the dual carriageway A404.

The planning inspector's conclusions will be presented to Secretary of State, Angela Rayner who will announce her final decision at a later date of her choosing.

Marlow Hill flats development There is an application to replace a house towards the bottom of Marlow Hill with 19 flats, which we consider to be awful (on the grounds of over development and traffic pressures). We also wonder if Wycombe Abbey School should have concerns about privacy for their students.

The former Pheasant pub, on the London Road at its corner with Gordon Road, has been boarded up for a long time, its fate dependent on the outcome of planning applications to redevelop the corner site. Back in 2023, the Society objected to the first application which was for a block of nine flats. The application was refused; and an appeal against the refusal was dismissed by a Planning Inspector.

In her grounds for dismissal, the inspector drew attention to the prominent "gateway" location, the limited scale of nearby buildings and the spacious character of the area. The proposed three storey building was judged to be in stark contrast to its surroundings, liable to dominate the corner and harm the general character of the area.

A new application for the site has, however, recently met with success. Surprisingly, the application was still for a three-storey development with nine flats, so we felt that the inspector's points had not been adequately addressed, and the building would still dominate the corner; but the planning officer

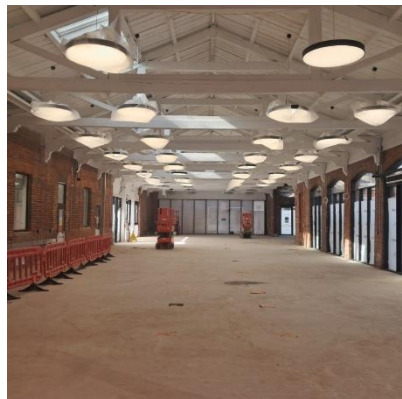
considered that the re-design was sufficient to allow the development to proceed.

The White Hart Street telephone kiosk saga.

Once upon a time there were four telephone kiosks in White Hart Street. They were subject to anti-social behaviour. BT asked to replace them with a BT Street Hub, as hubs have been introduced to overcome such problems nationwide. But the council refused the application because the Conservation Officer objected to the Hub's precise location. The council has since granted an application for the Hub, despite repeated objection, but two kiosks remain. The Planning Officer's Report states that "Although it is not an ideal solution to have two BT telephone boxes in close proximity to a new hub, BT have not agreed to remove the kiosks." Can you see why we sometimes get extremely frustrated?

If you would like to help the Planning Group in their worthwhile work, do please volunteer and come along to the next meeting, on Monday 28th July at 7.30pm at the Quakers Meeting House on the corner of London and Stuart Roads. The chairman is Tony Hatton, at tahatton@gmail.com, so please email him if you'd like to come along and have a taste of what we do.

Planning Group



A sneak preview of work in progress inside the Brunel Shed – a promising attraction for locals and visitors alike.

Photo: Robert Hutton

An unexpected discovery – Edmund J Niemann

TRAWLING THROUGH an old volume of County Fire Insurance records recently, I was surprised and delighted to see an entry (ref. 244953), dated 29th September 1845, relating to a policy taken out by the artist: Edmund J Niemann. It gave his address as “Minden Cottage Cores End Wooburn near Beaconsfield Bucks”, a property said to be “in his own tenure”, and it listed the following items to be insured for valuation purposes:

<i>Household furniture bedding linen glass crockery etc</i>	£90
<i>Prints and books</i>	£40
<i>Frames and glasses to ditto</i>	£10
<i>Casts</i>	£ 5
<i>Canvases Colors &c (stock in trade)</i>	£10
<i>Paintings and frames</i>	£45

Total £200

The building in which the artist's possessions were kept was said to be “of Wood with a perfect brick chimney”, with a note to say that “the cottage stands alone and there is a mill stream close by and a good pump”. The insurance premium was set at 14s 9d.

Readers who attended the Society's talk in the Autumn on the history of Wooburn Green, may remember that the speaker, Simon Coles, recommended a book entitled “Theirs were but human hearts” by Brian Branchley Wheals. In it I found confirmation that Niemann lived for a while in Cores End in a cottage named after his birthplace of Minden.

Returning to the volume of fire insurance policies, I found a marginal note of greater interest for those of us who like to delve into High Wycombe's history. It was headed

“memorandum” and signed by J Harman, the local insurance agent, (quite probably the same J Harman as published a number of Niemann's paintings as engravings):

“The within mentioned property is removed to his Dwelling House (Brick and Tile) situate on Mount Pleasant Oxford Road High Wycombe Bucks (standing alone) and this insurance is continued at the future annual payment of premium 5/6 instead of as within stated.”

A “Brick and Tile” property was a much better fire risk than the wooden cottage had been.

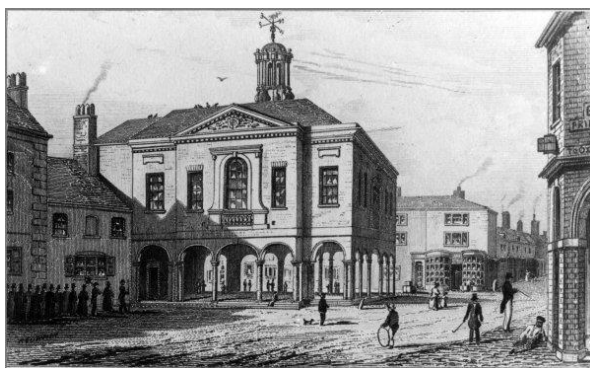
“Mount Pleasant” was the name given to the slope immediately opposite Ash Mill i.e. on the Oxford Road opposite what is today the end of Westbourne Street. It is clearly marked on a town map in 1875 and there was a substantial

detached property there with various associated outbuildings. Whether it ever lived up to its name is questionable. By 1875 it was hemmed in by a large chair factory immediately to the West and the railway line to the North.

Earlier censuses show the address “Mount Pleasant” applied to about a dozen properties in the vicinity. An advert in the South Bucks Free

Press on 25th February 1859 spells out that the “Mount Pleasant estate” comprises a dwelling house and eight cottages, two of which had been combined to form the Carrington Arms pub.

Edmund J Niemann was a prolific artist. Among his works is an oil painting of the High Street in High Wycombe, which is on permanent display at Wycombe Museum, thought to date from



A street view including the Guildhall and mayoral procession by E J Niemann, engraved by Newman and Barclay and published by J Harman (who was also Niemann's insurance agent). Photo: courtesy of Wycombe Museum SWOP ref: MHW:08615

c1845 when he was understood to be resident in High Wycombe. Another view of the Guildhall end of the High Street, seen here, was engraved and published by J Harman. Niemann did not stay living in Wycombe long enough to be included on any of the local censuses, but the above memo specifying his address prompted me to question why I had not previously found him on the Parish Tithe map in 1849. Alfred Lane's property on the North side of the Oxford Road is clearly shown, but the scribe who recorded the apportionment (ref 816A) for a house, garden and premises, was presumably not familiar with German names. The occupier is given the name: “NEAMAN”.

Jackie Kay

Petty Trivia

THE THIRD EDITION of High Wycombe Life magazine (HWLife), freely distributed to all households in High Wycombe earlier this year, contained an article highlighting our town's past connection to William Petty, the second Earl of Shelburne, and his role while Prime Minister in securing the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which brought an end to the American War of Independence. If you are a regular reader of this Newsletter, then you will already be acquainted with the Earl of Shelburne's career including his subsequent elevation to the title of Marquis of Lansdowne.

But have you ever wondered how many towns in North America bear the name of "Shelburne" and why? The above article drew my attention to the fact that there are five such towns, all named after the second Earl of Shelburne:

- Shelburne Vermont was founded in 1763 when Shelburne was President of the Board of Trade.
- Shelburne Massachusetts claims to have had the name from 1768 (possibly in recognition of Shelburne's role as Southern Secretary, but I've not found any explanation in any sources I've looked at.)
- Shelburne New Hampshire claims to have had the name from 1769 although it was not incorporated until 1820 at which time they voted to "keep the name".
- Shelburne Nova Scotia is the one most clearly named as a direct result of Shelburne's role as Prime Minister – it is famous as the centre of the "Shelburne riots" which featured in a film called "The Skin we're in". If you want a better understanding of just how untidily the war ended, then I recommend Simon Schama's very powerful and insightful book: "Rough Crossings".

And finally,

- Shelburne Ontario - According to a historical plaque it was not founded until the 1840s. It is said to be named "after Shelburne Nova Scotia".

The HWLife article also included an interesting illustration of Lord Shelburne in his later life.

In 1791, the artist Jean-Laurent Mosnier was commissioned to paint a portrait of the Marquis, wearing his uniform as a General with a garter ribbon, and holding a letter addressed to His Excellency Lt General Baron de Schlieffen, Governor of Wesel. The painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1793 and sent from there to the addressee of the letter whose full name was Martin Ernst von Schlieffen. He was a German general, politician, writer and garden architect, so he had much in common with Shelburne. He also became a Baron in the Kingdom of Westphalia. The portrait remained in the de Schlieffen family for many generations before being sold at auction. Through a series

of sales, it has since made its way back to the descendants of the first Marquis of Lansdowne.



Above: 1791 Portrait of the Marquis of Lansdowne by Jean-Laurent Mosnier
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Below: detail from above portrait



The gifting of portraits was not unusual in the eighteenth century. I was amused to discover online that there is a painting of George Washington known as "the Lansdowne Portrait" to distinguish it from a number of replicas and so-called because it was originally presented to the Marquis of Lansdowne. It is a life-size portrait, painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1796, the final year of George Washington's Presidency. It remained in Britain for much of its life, but through a series of sales, in the first of which it was logically called "the Washington", it has since made its way back across the Atlantic, where it now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC.

Jackie Kay

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Juliet Davis
Ellen Trille
Mike Morgan
April and Graham Stone
Jill Greenfield
Julie Wilkinson
Bernard Foot
Stuart Rooksby

Obituaries

We regret to inform members of the deaths of:

Colin Hingston (see p6)
Elsa Woodward (tributes in next edition)

John Hampden - Rebel or Patriot?

A talk by Dr Beth Rogers

14th May 2025 at 7.30 pm

Trinity URC (United Reformed Church)

How did a modest gentleman from Wycombe rise to challenge and change politics in the English-speaking world across three centuries? Why does John Hampden personify popular opposition to King Charles I's arbitrary taxes in the mid-17th century? From hard-working MP to brave Colonel in the Civil War, his name resonated after his death in British and American history.

Dr Beth Rogers is the Chair of the John Hampden Society, with a passion for history and several textbooks to her credit; her creative writing has featured in anthologies and on BBC local radio.

Talks and events in our programme are open to the public and are FREE to attend unless otherwise noted. Updated programme details can be found on the Society's website.



Society members pay an annual subscription which covers the cost of communications including this Newsletter. Enquiries about membership should be sent to membership@highwycombesociety.org.uk

Polite Reminder - Membership Renewals

Subscriptions for 2025-6 were due on 6th April. These remain set at £8 for adults; £4 retired persons; or £12 family membership. The Society's bank account details are as follows:

The High Wycombe Society
Sort code 23-05-80 (Metro Bank)
Account No. 42783986

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 June 2025** (Note this is later than the normal schedule, but earlier contributions are always welcome.)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

2025	
Sunday 11 th May 11-5 Pann Mill	Pann Mill Open Day to coincide with The National Mills weekend.
Wednesday 14 th May 7.30 pm Trinity URC	"John Hampden – Rebel or Patriot?" A talk by Dr. Beth Rogers, Chair of the John Hampden Society (see above)
Saturday 24 th May	The Annual Weighing of the Mayor – a town tradition deserving of support!
Thursday 12 th June 7.30 pm Trinity URC	AGM followed by "160 years of campaigning for open spaces", a talk by Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society. (See p2)
Sunday 22 nd June 1-2 pm Wycombe Museum	"Histories and Mysteries of Castle Hill House" – a talk by Keith Spencer at Wycombe Museum (see Wycombe Museum publicity for further details)
Sunday 13 th July 11-5 Pann Mill	Pann Mill Open Day.
Sunday 14 th September 11-5 Pann Mill	Pann Mill Open Day, our contribution to "Heritage Open Days 2025".
Saturday 4 th October University of Buckingham	Bucks Local History Network Conference "Fire! Fire! Bucks on Fire!" The High Wycombe Society will have a stand at this event, and Jackie Kay will be sharing her latest research in one of the talks.
Saturday 11 th October 2.30pm Trinity URC	A talk by John Leighfield on "Putting High Wycombe on the map" (see p4)