

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY



newsletter



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WINTER 2012

A Sobering End to the Year

IT IS SAD when a decision of far-reaching consequence for many people is made by a single vote cast. As chairman of the Regulatory and Appeals committee on 26th November, it fell to Cllr John Savage thus to deliver a near-fatal blow to the hopes of many (including our Transport group) for the preservation and eventual revival of the rail link to Bourne End. (Full account on page 3.) Watching him cast his vote in favour of the officers' recommendations, I wondered what the nineteenth-century Lord Denison (whose portrait hangs in Hughenden Manor) would have thought. As Speaker in the House of Commons, his "rule" for casting votes, often referenced by chairmen in diverse situations today, was aimed at ensuring that an assembled company wherever possible would be able to reverse "his" decision should they wish on reflection to do so. There was no such opportunity in this instance.

With the further news that one of our Vice-Presidents – Dick Hoare – has died (see page 5), this edition of the newsletter may be lacking in the expected level of festive cheer.

On a happier note, however, the Society was pleased to receive a formal invitation to nominate a trustee to serve on the body being set up to run Wycombe Museum when it transfers to Trust status. Our Treasurer, Paul Meek, has agreed to take up the challenge and we look forward to further developments in the New Year.

Sometimes delight comes from a completely unexpected source. The photograph shown here of the Shelburne centaur weather-vane on the cupola of the Guildhall with All Saints' in the background was among a few hundred "unwanted" photos rescued by an alert member of staff – Jill Shaw – in the Waste and Cleansing Department of WDC. Discovered during an office move, they have been donated to the Society, and received with thanks.



And A Cheerful Start to the New Year!

Our 2013 programme of events kicks off on 18th January with our quarterly meeting at The Gateway Lecture Theatre, Bucks New University. I recommend you all to come and hear Prof. Ruth Farwell, Vice-Chancellor of the University, who will give a talk entitled "Are Universities Assets to their Communities?" It promises to be a thought-provoking and enjoyable occasion.

Jackie Kay

Season's Greetings

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

Registered Charity No. 257897

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Planning This Quarter

ALTHOUGH THE GROUP continued to review the weekly lists of planning applications thoroughly, much effort this quarter went towards preparing for the forthcoming Public Examination into the Delivery and Site Allocations Plan. This followed news that the Examination would not be in the New Year as expected, but as soon as 18th to 21st December in the Council Chamber and open to anyone to attend.

DSAP and Town Centre Masterplan We had to get our skates on to prepare our evidence by the required submission date. We supported the Council on most aspects of the Masterplan with its ultimate aim of removing the Abbey Way flyover and disinterring the River Wye (more than a token length of it we hope). But we also sounded warnings against tall buildings in front of the Swan Theatre and stressed the importance of keeping north-south traffic flowing. We seem to have won the war against new forests of traffic lights and hope even to prevent a copse of them from sprouting up at the intended new junction of Westbourne Street with the West Wycombe Road. *(If anyone reading this has doubts that traffic lights grow on trees, see page 5 – Ed.)*

Bassetsbury Manor The planning application for conversion to a school was approved by the Planning Committee. We were unsuccessful in arguing for a more traditional design for the new school hall in sight of the Rye, but we know that our members do not all agree on the argument of “pastiche” (something made to match its immediate surroundings even though it is more modern) versus the modern approach. Judgement time will be when it is up and running, when factors like parking, dropping-off arrangements and the detailed finish will also affect public opinion. We did our best, and the future of the building, now in the control of someone who needs it and will use it, is assured.

Daws Hill The manoeuvrings over the development of RAF Daws Hill continue. The residents have established a Neighbourhood Forum under the Localism Act with powers to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan, but WDC has not accepted that RAF Daws Hill and the Handy Cross Sports Centre redevelopment site should be included in the area of the Plan, and the scene appears to be set for a costly (to Daws Hill residents and the Council alike) judicial review. Meanwhile, the RAF Daws Hill Development Brief is now finalised, and the number of houses to be built by Taylor Wimpey will be less than the 550 originally suggested. Some people have asked whether a Neighbourhood Forum is really the best way to influence things, rather than the traditional way of working through the Council in concert with local Councillors.

All Saints’ Church We were pleased to receive an invitation to a presentation at the Church on proposals to open up the west end to improve visibility from the town and incorporate a “mezzanine” (an extra floor at the level of a gallery) below the tower. The Group considered the proposals were being dealt with sensitively. *(See article on page 6 for further details).*

Government Statement on Planning, 6th September Secretary of State Mr Pickles and the DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) continue to take more bites at the cherry in trying to free up the construction industry from the perceived problems posed for them by the Planning System. They are evidently not satisfied with the results achieved by the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) which was softened through the representations of the likes of Civic Voice. The 6th September statement does not change very much – exhorting Planning Authorities to make full use of their powers to review the Green Belt, and making a temporary change to the rules on domestic extensions. If only the Government would realise that the Planning System achieves a sensible balance and that the construction industry will always argue for a free-for-all which relieves them of their costs.

Business Improvement District Following the establishment of the “BID” we had a cordial meeting with the Town Centre Manager, Oliver O’Dell, and have resolved to cooperate with the BID management over policies to improve the town centre for the benefit of commerce and the town, and to notify our members of town centre events.

The Old Library People often ask us about the destiny of the old Library in Queen Victoria Road, now out of use and looking the worse for wear. We have had it drawn to our attention that the minutes of the WDC Town Committee for 26th June reported that the charitable Clare Foundation was in the process of acquiring the building from BCC and is developing plans to convert the ground floor for “multi-use event space” while the upper floor could become a “celebration space” for events such as weddings, together with offices and meeting rooms. Encouraging news indeed.

Chris Woodman

The End of the Line?

IT WAS NEVER going to be easy. On 17th October, in a remarkable display of unanimity and commonsense, the Councillors of WDC's Planning Committee decided that they wanted to refuse the latest application by Henry Homes to build 26 dwellings on the line of the old High Wycombe to Bourne End railway at Wycombe Lane in Wooburn Green. However, Council officers invoked a little-used (but often threatened) procedure to refer the decision to the Council's Regulatory & Appeals Committee because of possible financial implications.

The reason? A long history of Planning Inspectors' decisions had made it very likely that an appeal by Henry Homes against refusal would succeed, and indeed, that costs might be awarded against the Council. Ten years ago, there was a wayward pronouncement by an Inspector in a report on the Local Plan to 2011 that "sub-metre gauge railways have never been successful". The inquiry had heard no evidence on narrow gauge issues as our proposal was for a standard gauge ultra-light system. More recently, an appeal against a refusal of permission for development at the Henry Homes site was dismissed, but only for reasons of poor housing design. In dismissing the appeal, the Inspector had decided not to uphold adopted Local Plan Policy T10 which protected the line for future public transport use. Indeed, he awarded £25,000 costs against WDC for pursuing an "unreasonable" defence and said that it was not enough to have a policy for a project: there needed to be evidence that a project was actually being pursued.

Knowing this background, the Planning Committee realised that for their decision to survive an appeal, they must point to something that had changed since that appeal decision. They chose the new CrossRail project, which will terminate at Maidenhead but provide an onward link to Heathrow and would certainly attract passengers to a restored ultra-light railway service. There were many other things they could have chosen including the revolution in Government policy towards railways, their recognition of the merits of cheap, almost silent ultra-light rail, the release of the National Planning Policy Framework and the ever-increasing congestion on road links between High Wycombe and Maidenhead, but when the Committee's recommendation went to the R&A Committee, only CrossRail was mentioned. A striking feature of the Planning Committee's debate had been how keen our Councillors were for the line to be preserved, despite contrary advice from the officers. But Wycombe District Council is not entitled to have a transport policy. Responsibility by law lies with Bucks County Council, a crucial factor in

proceedings. Told of the CrossRail argument, BCC issued a clear statement that they would not support refusal of the application at appeal on transport grounds. No refusal would be upheld by an Inspector on transport grounds when the Transport Authority openly states such a position. Remarkably, even in the face of this, the R&A Committee seemed keen to turn the application down if they could. The eventual vote was 4 votes to accept and 4 votes to refuse. The Chairman cast his vote with the officers' recommendation as he is required to do, and the application was allowed.

The County Council have opposed the High Wycombe-Bourne End railway project for 20 years and, in the end, it was the County Council who finished it off, not the District Council.

Or did they? The line has already been built over in various places and diversions were known to be needed. These are easy for ultra-light vehicles, which are more like trams than trains.

A study by Aegis-Mobilité in 2009 confirmed that these were all feasible. So what difference does one more required diversion make? Well, sadly, quite a bit, because at the Wycombe Lane site, the diversion would be further up a steep hillside and more difficult in engineering terms, costly but not impossible.

The project is not dead, but we have only one more chance. In December, an Inspector will consider the Council's draft Delivery and Site Allocations Plan. We have proposed that protection for the project should be inserted in the Plan and at the Public Examination we shall try to persuade the Inspector of its merits. If we succeed, it will acquire an official standing. But we are unlikely to succeed on our own. So much depends on Bucks County Council, the Transport Authority, also being convinced. Are BCC councillors ready to press for this on behalf of Wycombe people? It would be good if they would. After all, they represent the same public as WDC councillors, and at least one district councillor who voted for refusal at the R&A Committee is also a senior county councillor.

Chris Woodman



Chiltern Railways getting ready for the revived line?. Photo: Malcolm Connell

Keeping the Traffic Moving

In an article on this subject in the Winter 2010 edition of the newsletter I mentioned the Bucks County Council plan to install a new traffic signal control system by March 2011 along the London Rd and up the Marlow Hill to improve the traffic flow along these routes. Now, almost two years later, the system has still to be installed so traffic flow along the London Rd is as bad as ever, but there has been an improvement up the Marlow Hill. Until recently motorists travelling up the A404 would be stopped at the signals abeam Daws Hill Lane and again at the next set of signals abeam School Close. Now these two sets of signals have been linked to improve the flow of traffic on this section of the A404. However, invariably vehicles are then stopped at the signals abeam the Sports Centre, and Bucks County Council has no plan to link in these signals to allow traffic to flow more easily to Handy Cross.

There are other areas where traffic flow through the linking of traffic signals has not achieved its desired effect because of the failure to link in other signals along the route. Typical is the linking of the High St/Crendon St signals with the signals abeam Castle St. While a recent adjustment has improved the traffic flow through these signals the failure to link in the pedestrian crossing signals on Amersham Hill just above the Station frequently stops traffic at this point. It is very frustrating for motorists to be stopped on a red light at this crossing, particularly when the pedestrians have already crossed during a gap in the traffic. The latest pedestrian signals are designed to respond to traffic flow as well as being able to monitor pedestrian movements and will keep traffic flowing when there are no pedestrians waiting to cross. For some years now we have been pressing for these new pedestrian signals to be linked with traffic control signals along all major routes and to install the latest technology to prevent traffic being stopped unnecessarily.

Other signals causing considerable delays to traffic are those at the Desborough Ave/Oxford Rd crossing. The change to the phasing of these signals nine months ago has caused excessive delays to traffic along the A40 with very long traffic queues in both directions particularly at peak periods. The long-term problem at this junction was that vehicles descending The Pastures prevented traffic turning out of Desborough Ave onto the A40 towards the Town Centre. We suggested a simple solution of a 10-second gap in the phasing when The Pastures traffic is stopped but the Desborough Ave traffic is still allowed to move. Instead Bucks County Council installed an extra 2 phases in these signals with separate phases for traffic in each direction. When questioned as to why the phasing was changed, which has extended traffic delays on all the roads, the response was 'road safety'. Bucks County Council has been asked

to provide figures for accidents at this junction both before and after this change, but so far these figures have not been given.

There are other junctions which could be improved by either changing the phasing of signals or removing them altogether. The signals on Gordon Rd are totally redundant and their removal is well overdue. The signals at the junction of Hamilton Rd and Amersham Rd are unnecessary as are the signals at the junction of Arnison Ave and Amersham Rd; both sets should be replaced with mini roundabouts. The signals at the Oxford Rd end of Bellfield Rd are badly phased and need to include a filter light to allow traffic to turn into Bellfield Rd when traffic is leaving Bellfield Rd.

It really is remarkable that Bucks County Council is going to the considerable expense and trouble to install a costly control and monitoring system along the London Rd when a series of roundabouts at all junctions from Wycombe Marsh to Rayners Ave would solve the problems along this busy route. Traffic flows very easily around the roundabouts at the bottom of Gordon Rd and Hatters Lane so why do we need traffic signals, 6 sets in all, at all other junctions? Compared with roundabouts traffic signals cause traffic to stop and start, day and night, regardless of the volume of traffic in other directions. Just think of the time wasted, the petrol used and the added pollution resulting from vehicles stopped unnecessarily at red signals when there is no crossing traffic. When you next drive along London Rd look at the visual blight of this whole series of traffic signals and just imagine how much better the 'street scene' would be if they were replaced with roundabouts, particularly if they could be replaced with roundabouts as aesthetically appealing as the Dreams Roundabout at Loudwater.

Arnie Parr

Keeping the traffic confused

Arnie Parr raises some interesting points and the Transport Group are obviously trying to get improvements made on many local roads. I am not sure that I personally agree with some of the points; I find that the lights at the Hamilton Road – Amersham Road junction work very well and are certainly a benefit in rush hour and when the school is emptying. The triggering seems to work well and I have rarely had to wait unnecessarily. The junction of The Pastures – Desborough Ave. – West Wycombe Road was always very dangerous and caused much frustration with cars in the wrong lanes, even if there were not enough serious accidents to impact the statistics. The new system, although it took some getting used to, does not now cause excessive delay as the longest queues get the longest green light period. It is now only a few idiots who do not look at



the road signs or the lights who cause trouble. And therein lies a problem. The lights have been installed and are probably there to stay but the road and route markings around them could often be improved.

However, let us be thankful that we do not yet have to contend with a set of lights such as in the photo. Yes, they are real traffic lights but thankfully are not for controlling traffic. Actually they are a sculpture by the French artist Pierre Vivant who said "The sculpture imitates the natural landscape of the adjacent London Plane Trees, while the changing pattern of the lights reveals and reflects the never ending rhythm of the surrounding domestic, financial and commercial activities." The Traffic Light Tree was installed at Westferry Circus in London's Docklands in 1999 but was removed in 2011 for road improvements. It will hopefully be reinstalled somewhere else in the area next year.

Malcolm Connell

Dick Hoare

Longstanding members of the Society were saddened to learn of the death of Dick Hoare, one of the founding members of the High Wycombe Society and a long-serving Vice-President. Member Margaret Simmons knew him personally and had this to say:

Nearly 30 years ago I came to High Wycombe knowing nothing of its history. I joined, and helped form, the High Wycombe Morning WI that met in Crendon Hall, and I found Pann Mill on my way there. Living in sheltered accommodation, I had no garden. Pann Mill cried out for some tender loving care and so it was that I met the Pann Mill team and Dick Hoare in particular. He was not the easiest person to get along with: he didn't suffer fools gladly, but he was VERY encouraging and kindly, helping me as he helped so many other people. The days were long in the garden and, as you know, facilities not of the best. I was very grateful for his tea-making and the use of his loo, and his many stories of the fast-vanishing past. He helped me as he helped many others, telling me how he met Jack Scruton and Jim

Cottrell, Vic Day and Derek Woods in the Coach and Horses in Easton Street, when it was proposed that a road should be built across the Rye. If it hadn't been for those meetings, then The Rye Protection Society and all that followed from it including the High Wycombe Society would never have happened.

Dick's health deteriorated gradually and he became housebound. After a bad fall he was taken to Stoke Mandeville Hospital and his son, Alec, persuaded him to sell up and move to Oswestry to be near him and his family. Dick was sadly missed, and when Alec rang to say that Dick had died, how I wished I had made the effort to go there to see him. He was a VERY good friend to me – this is my farewell message: wherever you are, Dick, you are sadly missed and we wish you well.

Margaret Simmons

Dick Hoare's funeral was held on 21st September in Wrexham. Formal condolences were sent to his family on behalf of the Society.

All Change at All Saints

WHEN JOHN PARKER commissioned an elaborate font cover in memory of his wife Emily who had died in 1881, there must have been some people in the congregation at All Saints' church who lamented the loss of the view of the then quite newly-restored west window from inside the church. The extravagant gothic-style carving, which can be hoisted out of the way when the font is required to function for baptisms, was a far cry from the austere Crendon Lane congregational tastes of John Parker's father (also John Parker) who had died only a year before his daughter-in-law.

130 years on and there are plans to move not just the cover, but the font itself from its current location in the west end to a more accessible position on the northern side of the main body of the church. The intent is also to lower the font to make it a more practical height for the priest conducting baptisms.



The elaborate font cover obscures the view of the West window from inside the church.

Photo: Malcolm Connell

Viewing the Plans

An invitation was received by the Planning Group to a joint presentation given by the Development Project Leader and an Architect working on the overall development plans (of which the moving of the font is but a very small part) to members of the Diocesan Advisory Committee and representatives of other organisations including the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. I was pleased to accompany Chris Watson to this meeting.

Already familiar with the results of 'Phase 1' of the west end development which was completed in 2010 and included kitchen and toilet facilities, we were eager to learn about

the proposed 'Phase 2' which would include the introduction of a mezzanine level - (some would say re-introduction as in former times there was an organ loft at that height).

Urgent work is needed to conserve and restore the fabric of the south porch which is currently used as the main entrance. The plan is for the west end doors to become the main entrance. To form an effective weather barrier enabling the outer doors to be open all day the plans include wood-framed glass interior doors.

Work will be carried out in stages as and when funds permit. A first stage may include a small mezzanine level with some storage space accessible only from above through an existing doorway from the tower. In the longer term, a staircase would access the mezzanine from the ground floor and it would be extended on both sides of the church. Of special interest to the Society was the suggestion of a display space for the "Wycombe bell" on the mezzanine level.

Viewing the New Bells

The long-awaited new bells arrived on October 10th. Many Society members visited the church to view them on that day.



A Special Viewing of the new bells for one night only

Photo: Tony Murphy

The bells carry inscriptions according to the wishes of their sponsors. The largest bell is dedicated to Bishop Wulfstan who consecrated the first church on the site of All Saints' over 900 years ago.

Viewing the Wycombe Bell

David Snoxell has prepared an information panel about the "Wycombe bell" which was Bell No.3 of the old peal of bells. It has been retained for exhibition because of its historical significance and is inscribed "The Gift of the Earl of Wycomb eldest son of the Marquis of Lansdown". John Henry (1765-1809), Viscount Fitz-Maurice and then Earl of Wycombe, was MP for High Wycombe from 1786-1802 and subsequently 2nd Marquis of Lansdowne. He donated the bell in 1788.

Its current home is beside the Carlini statue of Lady Sophia and her two sons in the South (Lady) Chapel. This is particularly appropriate as the above-mentioned donor of the bell, John, is the older of the two children in the statue. His younger brother, William Granville Petty, depicted as an infant in arms, died in 1778. Their father, the Earl of Shelburne (1737-1805) commissioned the statue during John's childhood. It was erected in 1775, a few years before the Earl became Prime Minister in 1783/1784 and before he became the first Marquis of Lansdowne.



The Wycombe Bell in its current home beside the Carlini statue.
Photo: David Snoxell

The Wycombe bell was one of two 'Petty' bells donated in 1788; the other was donated by John's half-brother Henry (1780-1863) who later became the 3rd Marquis. Henry's bell (No.4) has been sold to St Augustine's in Kilburn.

The gift of the bells in 1788 followed in a long tradition of Shelburne benefaction towards the church and town. (*There is a reason why the weather vane on the Guildhall is the Shelburne Centaur – see picture on page 1.*)

The brand new peal of bells rang out for the first time in High Wycombe on 11th November

2012 – a highly successful end to a lengthy and complex project.

Will the Wycombe bell ever toll again? It seems unlikely. When originally hung in the tower, the bell was suspended from its headstock by metal loops (or cannons) at the top of the bell. When it was removed from the bell tower the cannons were sawn off.

The Mayor's chair, desk and kneeler

David Snoxell has also prepared an information panel relating the interesting history of the Mayor's chair, desk and kneeler.



The Mayor's chair, desk and kneeler are kept on the North side of the church.
Photo: Malcolm Connell

The original Mayor's seat was fixed to the pillar of the south transept. It was redesigned in 1728. The desk and kneeler are eighteenth century but the current Mayor's chair dates from 1878. A silver plate below the seat reads:

*Presented to Lord and Lady Carrington
by the chair manufacturers of High
Wycombe on the occasion of their
marriage on 10 July 1878.*

They were married in the Chapel Royal, St James's Palace. The chair was kept at Wycombe Abbey. It may have been brought to All Saints' after Lord Carrington (created Marquess of Lincolnshire in 1912) died, and his home, Daws Hill Lodge, was sold to Wycombe Abbey School in 1929.

Jackie Kay
(with a lot of input from David Snoxell)

Home of the Men (and Women) in Scarlet

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE circulated to e-mail addressee members of the Society an offer from High Wycombe Probus Club (for retired professionals) to take up vacant seats on their planned coach outing to the Royal Hospital Chelsea on the 17th September. And so it was that a number of Society members enrolled and boarded the coach on the day.

King Charles II established the Hospital in 1692, having concluded that the nation had a duty to care for soldiers who had risked all in battle, and now deserved support in old age. The Hospital has fine historic buildings set out in splendid estate gardens down by the Thames and is home to army pensioners; men (and women since 2009) who are proud to wear the scarlet uniform when representing the Hospital at ceremonial events. Disembarking upon arrival the visitors were divided into two parties to enjoy guided tours, each led by a Pensioner who had extensive knowledge of the Hospital's history and traditions, and regaled us with facts and stories with good humour to enhance our experience.

The most noteworthy buildings were the Great Hall where the Pensioners' lunches (only) are served daily, and the Anglican Chapel. The external architecture and internal features were most impressive. They stand either side of the Hospital main entrance archway used only for VIP occasions by dignitaries. The splendid curved ceiling of the Chapel encourages a hallowed atmosphere for worship and choral singing, whereas the Great Hall

resonates with voices and "noises off".

The Pensioners' living accommodation is in two wings, each four storeys high, comprising 'Long Wards' encompassing individual 'berths' (bedrooms) with shared bathrooms. These are gradually being transformed into 'en suite study bedrooms' by an ongoing modernisation scheme.

The visitors do not have access to the Long Wards but the Hospital museum includes a typical berth layout amongst its historic displays. The overall impression of the Hospital gained from the tours was that the facilities in these heritage buildings, incorporating shops, bars, cafes, allotments and a modern infirmary, provide a unique and beneficial lifestyle for pensioners who have given up their army pensions but benefit enormously from being there.

Our thanks were expressed to Joanna Nugent, Probus Visits Organiser and a Society member for such a rewarding visit.

Roger Lawson

PANN MILL 2012

While many of us will remember 2012 as the year we didn't have a summer, or the year of the Olympics and Paralympics, the Society was once again fortunate that our three Pann Mill Open Days were blessed with sunshine - and water. There was a real "buzz": visitors were enthusiastic, the gazebos looked good with a variety of exhibits on show, and the refreshments stall was very busy.



The Mayor, Cllr Chauhdry Shafique, was among those who came to visit the Society's "show-case" – Pann Mill – on our Open Day in September. Photo: Chris Woodman

I consider Pann Mill to be the Society's show case, and the publicity side showing who we are, and what we do. To see the wheel turning and see the queue waiting to purchase the flour, always brightens up an outing to "The Mill".

The events need many helpers, some visible, others who have helped by producing cakes for sale, donating items for the bric-a-brac stall, books by the box-load, plants for sale, and lots of phoning round to fill the rosters on the day. Thank you to everyone who help make these days so special. Like to participate? Give Mary Woodman a ring, or talk to our Group when we meet on other occasions.

Ann Simone
Programme and Membership Group

Quarterly Meeting

Townscape and Urban Design – Art and Common Sense?

THE OCTOBER QUARTERLY meeting was held in a lecture theatre in the newest building of the Bucks New University. It was given by Peter Lerner who is a planner, latterly from local authority but now in private practice. A local man, he made it clear at the outset that he wouldn't be commenting on local matters due to family connections, which didn't stop some of the audience pushing their luck. A nice gentleman, he was careful not to upset local authority officers, other planners, architects or double glazing manufacturers.

His illustrations, both verbal and visual, concentrated on places where he had worked - mainly Oxford and St Albans. He pointed out factors which affected people's perception of streetscape, not necessarily individual buildings, about which he was singularly un-judgemental, but features which individuals notice at street level. He expressed the view that people don't always notice things above eye level and frequently don't care, which I found to be an interesting thought. He extended that thought into comments about obtrusive notices and other items of street furniture: a hang-up of mine I must say. At least we don't have the proliferation of overhead cables which disfigure so many French towns and villages.

He and I have both worked in Oxford so I was interested in his views on the modern buildings which are inserted within old colleges: Christchurch and St Antony's come to mind. He was relaxed about that and seemed to accept that fashion must move on. He thought that we needed happy 'surprises' and, if necessary, to be prepared to make mistakes. That provoked one of the few comments from the audience about the danger of creating bland townscapes. That led me to think conservation societies can be a dead hand in that respect, which can discourage enterprising design, though I am sure that our own Society wouldn't do that.

Peter Lerner mentioned some of the rules which embryonic urban designers are encouraged to

learn, namely, to observe commonality of materials, respect for height, and the need to mirror the local vernacular. He showed us pictures of Broadway seen by most of us as the ultimate Cotswold village where it is difficult to imagine a building which differs from its neighbours. I share this view in general but can't see why modern buildings are acceptable in Oxford but not in Broadway.

I think that we all like the aspects of old villages and towns which are derived from variation: the important building in the right place, the neat bend in the road which closes the view, but these places have grown organically over many years and to try to replicate the features that define them would be, in my view, wrong. I don't think that our speaker was trying to suggest that, but it would be easy to reach that conclusion.

To reach my conclusion, I think that it was a great pity that the meeting was not better attended. The subject should have created more interest and generated more discussion. It certainly gave me much to think about. I am aware that I have been a little provocative in this article so it may get a response which would have been more appropriate at the meeting itself. I do hope that Mr Lerner isn't put off by the response so that the Society may feel able to invite him again after a suitable interval.

Colin Kennedy

Our Reading Correspondent

In our Autumn Edition we asked if anyone had a projector we could use for our Quarterly meetings. We were delighted to hear from member Hazel Langford who wanted to donate a projector to the Society. Accordingly, Mary Woodman and I arranged to meet Hazel who now lives in Reading but was very happy to make the journey to High Wycombe to visit old haunts. We were in turn pleased to be asked to sign a copy of Wycombe Pioneers of Progress and to learn that Hazel is distantly related to a number of the pioneers. She has since been exploring some of the sites in Reading

associated with James George Tatem's final years. Society member David Jarman has now taken charge of the projector and will be its regular custodian. He has confirmed that it is all in working order. Our thanks to Hazel for a generous contribution. It is available for use by Society members giving talks on behalf of the Society. David has suggested that it would be good to have a second volunteer able to act as custodian when David is away or unable to attend meetings. If you feel this is something you could do, please get in touch.

Banging on the drum

IT HAS BEEN pointed out to us that in the last Newsletter we used an abbreviation without explaining what it meant. Indeed we used SV2G no fewer than six times in various places and plead guilty as charged.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 2nd Generation (SV2G) is a local voluntary organisation that was established in 2003 to develop awareness of the African and Caribbean heritage in the community in and around High Wycombe, which has the largest Vincentian population in the UK. St Vincent and the Grenadines are a small chain of islands within the Windward Islands which lie where the Caribbean meets the Atlantic.



Traditional carnival costumes are a highlight of the SV2G event.

SV2G raises awareness of African and Caribbean culture mainly through the arts, and the group organises the Wycombe Community Festival, which has been running for six years and is funded by Wycombe District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council. The High Wycombe Society had a stall at the 2012 event and Pann Mill was also opened for the day. A highlight of the event each year is

the parade featuring traditional Caribbean carnival costumes, and preparation for next year is already under way. SV2G even held an introductory Carnival Workshop in October so that anyone could learn what is involved in creating those glorious head dresses.

However, a major involvement of SV2G is the School of Steelpan. They have established the Wycombe Steel Orchestra as a performance group and a programme of

workshops and training in the art of steelpan. Of course, the modern steel drum is somewhat different from the original cut down oil drums that I enjoyed listening to many years ago and the skill of the young people who performed at the Community Festival was marvellous.

Malcolm Connell

Our Future Programme depends on You!

TAKING A STALL at the above SV2G Wycombe Community Festival event was not a planned part of our programme but an experiment that went well. A few weeks later a number of members attended the annual BLHN (another acronym I am obliged to spell out as the "Bucks Local History Network") where we put on a small Wycombe-related exhibition. Our participation at both events was arranged with minimal expenditure and effort and, although our Hon Treasurer is liable to point out that neither was actually profitable in financial terms, both events were enjoyable for all involved and helped raise the profile of the Society, important measures of success. In my view we should be doing more such things, many more. I meet far too many people in High Wycombe who have lived here for a long time and never heard of the Society or what it does.

If we are going to find time to react to new event opportunities then we need more people to volunteer and get involved. In our Summer edition, we advertised for a Programme Secretary to take over the role I happily undertook for five years prior to becoming your Vice Chairman and Newsletter Editor. The role is not particularly onerous in itself but it is essential for the smooth running of our regular programme of talks and it remains vacant. Our publicity officer has also sadly indicated that he will be standing down at the next AGM. If you think you could help with either role, please contact Mary Woodman (on 01494 528106) or me (on 01494 534876).

An interesting recent development from a programme perspective is to be found in the newly released business plan of "HWBidCo" the BID (Business Improvement District) Company

which has been operative since October. An abridged version of the plan can be accessed on their website. In a section headed "Improving the Offer of the Town", it sets out its plan for the Annual Events Calendar for High Wycombe. We can expect to hear more in due course about three major annual events in 2013: Wycombe Edge (in May), Wycombe Harvest (in August) and Wycombe Christmas (in November).

There is also a section devoted to changing perceptions of our town. As we go to press, the first episode of the ITV drama "The Town" has just aired and initial reviews are positive. The fictional town of "Renton" with its remarkable resemblance to High Wycombe must be good news for our town. HWBidCo is inviting your comments on facebook.

Jackie Kay

Nostalgic Slices of Our Heritage

ARCHIVE MATERIAL in its many forms has never before been so readily available to those in search of a little nostalgia. Three new publications featuring Wycombe, (two books and one calendar), have been brought to our attention this quarter. Each features a carefully chosen selection of material, sliced up and packaged in an easily digestible form for the consumer.

The first is a volume in the True Crime History genre. Published by The History Press, formally launched on 1st December and retailing at £14.99, Jonathan Oates' 'Buckinghamshire Murders' is a well-presented volume covering fourteen dark episodes in Buckinghamshire's history. Arranged in chronological order from 1822 through to 1937, it is a fascinating collation of material drawn primarily from press reports, but fleshed out with reference to genealogical resources such as census returns and military records. Chapter 14 is of particular relevance to those with an interest in High Wycombe's history.



The Hour Glass Pub in Sands as it appears in a newly published book 'Buckinghamshire Murders'.

Photo taken by the author: Jonathan Oates in 2011, provided courtesy of The History Press.

A crime scene in 1937, The Hour Glass Pub in Sands has seen some changes in its clientele during its trading history. In recent times its proximity to the Wycombe Wanderers' football ground has been perhaps the most significant factor, enabling it to welcome many a visiting football fan on match days. But Jonathan Oates takes the reader back to soon after it was built, when it relied solely on regular business from local residents. A singularly gruesome incident occurred here in 1937. If you want to know more then buy the book!

Also out in good time for Christmas was Volume 2 of Society member Mike Dewey's 'Bucks in Time' series, published by The Bucks Free Press. Four new selections of photographs from the magnificent SWOP collection cover: Royal Visits, Civic Life, Sporting Events and Industry. These are accompanied by a narrative drawing attention to interesting details from contemporary press

accounts. The publication was formally launched at Wycombe Museum. I picked my copy up at Wycombe Library where I was informed that Friends of High Wycombe library would benefit from my purchase. With a cover price of £7.99 this will surely be a popular stocking-filler.

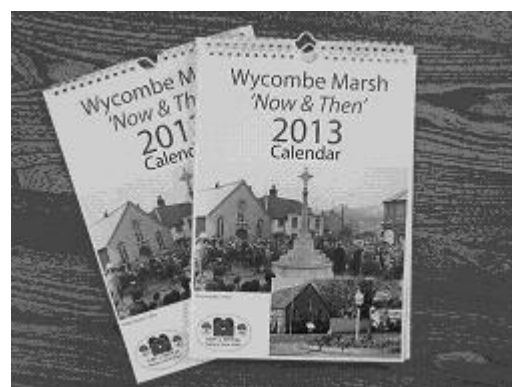


Author Mike Dewey, Bucks Free Press Editor Steve Cohen and Museum Manager Richard De Peyer at the launch of Bucks in Time 2 on 7th November.

Photo: Ray Highnam

Finally, keen-eyed visitors at our Pann Mill Open Day in September may have noticed an additional item on sale at the publications stall: a calendar produced in aid of Heart of Rye Mead Community Association. The calendar features "now" and "then" photographs of East Wycombe and is on sale in local shops for just £4.99. I will personally want to keep my copy open at February where there's a great picture from the SWOP collection of the construction of the railway across the Micklefield Road.

Jackie Kay



Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Richard Locke

Obituaries

We regret to inform members of the deaths of:

Dick Hoare (see p5)

Norman Howard

Raffle

At the September Pann Mill Open Day, Ben Cook, a regular stallholder whose cards of local scenes are particularly popular, donated one of his limited edition prints to the Society. The print is of Pann Mill in summer. The intention is to raffle the print in aid of the High Wycombe Society at one of our Quarterly Meetings. Earlier this year, members may remember that Jacky Murphy was the lucky winner of one of his prints of "Pann Mill in Winter". Our thanks go to Ben Cook for his support.

FREE Good garden compost.

Ann Simone could deliver one supermarket bag, or come and "dig-your-own" from her garden. Contact Ann on 01494 448773.

Mugs and Mugshots

This picture of a Pann Mill mug far from the comfort of its home was sent in by Eileen Walters.



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 February 2013**.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

2013	
Friday, 18 th January The Gateway Lecture Theatre, Bucks New University 7.30 pm.	Quarterly Meeting: Are Universities Assets to their Communities?. Speaker: Prof. Ruth Farwell, Vice Chancellor of Bucks New University
Friday, 12 th April The Guildhall (to be confirmed) 7.30 pm.	Annual General Meeting and Reports of Group Activities. Following feedback from last year's meeting the exact format of the evening is under review.
Friday, 3 rd May All Saints' church 7.30 pm.	Quarterly Meeting: Nine centuries of Heritage – a history of All Saints' church. Speaker: David Snoxell. The evening will include time to look around the church.
Friday, 5 th July The Guildhall (to be confirmed) 7.30 pm.	Quarterly Meeting: Wycombe's Green and Pleasant Land. Speaker: Roger Wilding, Wycombe Wildlife Group.
Sunday, 12 th May Sunday, 21 st July (TBC) Sunday, 15 th September	Pann Mill Open Days – Note: the July date is planned to coincide with the Wycombe Half Marathon event.
Saturday, 5 th October Coach Outing to Whitechapel Foundry	Eileen Walters says "Reserve your places now! " and she means it! Following interest shown in the new peal of bells at High Wycombe Parish Church, Eileen is organising a coach trip to Whitechapel foundry. The guided tour of the foundry has had to be booked a year in advance. There will be a limited number of places available. So please contact Eileen for further details on 01494 449902 if you want further details or know that you wish to go.