

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY



newsletter



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Gryff Rhys Jones at
Canterbury. Photo: JK

Manifesto Time

AT THE CIVIC VOICE Convention held in Canterbury in October, Gryff Rhys Jones launched a Manifesto entitled 'Localism for Real' calling on the next government and civic societies, to counter a 'crisis in civic engagement' and get more people involved in 'Place Improvement'. Listening with me to his call for action was Society member Tony Fooks who has agreed to chair the Civic Voice Regional Advisory Committee next year in addition to his commitments to ANTAS (The Association of North Thames Amenity Societies).

It was interesting to share experiences of the effects of National Planning Policy with other delegates. As our own Planning Group will tell you, it is government-imposed methodology that has directly led to the unpopular decision to release all our Reserve Sites for development. There were also inspiring accounts of civic initiatives on conservation and heritage projects, not least in Canterbury itself.

Getting more people involved in support of the aims of our Society is a must, and helping us with that task, I'm delighted to say that we have appointed a new trustee: Brian Tranter, known to many of you already as the Chair of the Booker Common and Woods Society. We still need more people to join three of our established groups: Planning; Programme and Membership; and Pann Mill Restoration and to help in other ways. Is there a cheerful minutes secretary anywhere in the town?

Our first event in 2015 is a talk by former Town Clerk, Bill Reid, on Wednesday 21st January in our new venue, The Riverside (formerly the British Legion). I hope to see you there. The 2015 programme also includes a number of local *Behind-the-scenes* visits early in the year and a *SPECIAL* outing to the Palace of Westminster courtesy of our MP. Be sure to register your interest(s) to avoid disappointment.

There's just room for me to thank all members and supporters for your work in 2014, and to wish you a Happy Christmas and New Year. **Jackie Kay**



The CV manifesto makes the public realm a priority. Could cluttered High Streets become a thing of the past? What changes would you wish to see?

Photo: Malcolm Connell

Season's Greetings

...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, housing allocations, the reserve sites and the new Local Plan dominated the Group's work this quarter. We have seen good progress on the short-term implementation of the Master Plan and the so-called 'alternative route', and some very encouraging movement on the matter of uncovering our historic River Wye. We were delighted to welcome Andy Cole to join our Group, but continue to seek new members.

Local Plan and the Reserve Sites. Since the publication of the Autumn *Newsletter*, and after further consideration of all the data, the Group reluctantly decided it had no alternative but to accept WDC's argument that, if they did not willingly release the five reserve housing sites (Abbey Barn North and South, Terriers Farm, Gomm Valley & Ashwells, and Slate Meadow, Bourne End), the various developers would submit planning applications and, if refused, would win their appeals. The Council would then lose control over the conditions to be imposed on site layout, landscaping and infrastructure.

On 20th October WDC's Cabinet took the fateful decision and were greeted by cries of dismay from all around the District. In response to a properly constituted and supported request by Councillor Trevor Snaith and other LibDem, Labour and Independent Councillors, the decision was duly 'called in' for review by the Council's curiously named 'Improvement and Review Commission', who by a series of close votes on 12th November decided to ask WDC's Cabinet to think again. They met on Monday 17th November and confirmed their original decision.

Why do those involved not spell out that this is all a consequence of the Government promulgating a National Planning Policy Framework which moved the goalposts and effectively removed the decisions from Local Planning Authorities?

Meanwhile, we attended two excellent workshops run by the Planning Department. At one, officers sought to ensure they had identified all the crucial issues on how each of the five sites should be developed. At the second, we were given some quite detailed flow-charts which aimed to clarify how much further consultation and studies, for example on the vital issue of supporting infrastructure and roads, could be squeezed in before the developers lose patience with the process and slap in their applications. This, too, would have been highly relevant when Councillors protested that infrastructure matters should be resolved *before* the sites were released, but nobody saw fit to mention it.

M40 'Junction 3A' On 20th August WDC held a consultation meeting about a possible new limited-access Junction 3A (for eastbound traffic to leave and westbound traffic to join) a mile east of Handy Cross. WDC have their eye on land to the east of the Abbey Barn South reserve site which might be developed for modern

commercial premises. But the traffic implications are awful, with talk of a new road crossing Kings Mead. The Highways Agency, the authority for the M40, probably won't allow the junction but watch this space!

Town Centre and the MasterPlan We can now see the modest but welcome improvements (part of WDC's 'public realm programme') taking place in Pauls Row and St Mary Street. A recent BCC consultation about the new Westbourne Street/West Wycombe Road junction is also encouraging – it was we who successfully pressed BCC not to have traffic lights, even at this junction, on the 'alternative route' around the town centre. The wider and more important issue of how to invigorate the town centre has taken much of the Group's time. (See *opposite page*.)

And on 27th October, Jackie Kay attended a very encouraging presentation in the Guildhall on the prospects for opening up both the River Wye and the Hughenden Stream in the town centre.

The Rye Boathouse and Toilets On 16th September the High Wycombe Town Committee agreed to propose to WDC's Cabinet a £30,000 feasibility study for a new café and boathouse. Some members of the Group feel this would provide an opportunity for good, uplifting architecture, while others think the current café is modest and inconspicuous and that any replacement must stay strictly within the existing footprint. Could we have views from members, please?

New Star & Garter Home for the Broom Wade site Plans for the 'Hughenden Corridor' are taking shape nicely. As previously reported there will be a new BCC Day Opportunities Centre (with new County offices on top) at the Jewsons end, then an ExtraCare home for 260 residents and now, alongside the 7-storey students' flats, a new Royal Star & Garter home for ex-servicemen and their families.

But, while everyone is in favour of the Star & Garter charity, there is concern that this proposal is the latest case in a series of lost opportunities for larger scale development on brown-field sites which could perhaps have included high-rise housing even (including affordable housing), easing pressure on the reserve sites situation. Brown-field sites are in short supply but there are still a number of open air car parks!

Chris Woodman

Towards a Better Town Centre

WHY DID YOU join The High Wycombe Society? Almost certainly it was because you live in or near the town, and you love it. Maybe also because you feel strongly that some great parts of its history and heritage are being threatened. Well that's the case for me too!

Did you know that five of the UK's top ten wealthiest towns lie within 20 miles? (Beaconsfield, Marlow, Henley, Windsor and Ascot). Ditto some of the wealthiest UK villages (Bray, Gerrards Cross, the Chalfonts, Cookham, Penn and Stoke Poges). Fast commuter trains, leading grammar and independent schools, excellent motorway connections and stunning countryside surely make High Wycombe a social magnet – especially as house prices here are lower than the average for the surrounding area. So why is it listed in the recent UK 'Crap Towns' survey?

I think it starts with the town centre. What would our illustrious forefathers make of the High Street in its current incarnation? Tattoo parlours, pound shops, pawn merchants and bus exhaust fumes have replaced the family greengrocers, butchers and well-heeled travellers in their carriages. Vacant shops and street clutter add a woebegone feel to the place. Night time feels at once threatening to the older resident, and boring to the younger one. Eden has done a great job of bringing high street pizzazz to the town, but even there one finds empty units looking for a tenant.



The wrong end of the High Street: cluttered and woebegone?
Photo: Andrew Taylor

Can it be saved?

I do believe it can. If we plan the town with different zones to appeal to different people, we can make it really good for those people. In just the same way that household brands are designed and marketed for specific segments of the market, then these town zones can be made much more appealing.

The High Street could be a pricier, more upmarket area to attract wealthier shoppers and diners from High Wycombe and the more affluent areas – bringing jobs and prosperity for Wycombe workers. Imagine enjoying a glass of chilled Chablis on a summer's evening, with soft

jazz playing in the background. You parked your car with ease on the street, beside the restaurant. There are no bus fumes or idling taxis to spoil the atmosphere or clog up the road.

Frogmoor and The Chilterns Centre could offer a 'diverse and everyday' vibe – for townsfolk on a budget - including over 9,000 BNU students, young families, teenagers, and the like. Think street cafés, festivals, nightlife and FUN! You can access this area with a ready supply of buses and taxis, or perhaps leave your bike in the cycle rack. Dare I say it, but this is the natural home for the Charter Market with today's stalls offering value clothing and mobile phone unlocking. There's a heady mix of different music, delicious food aromas and the sound of laughter and enjoyment well into the night.

Eden already does a fantastic job of bringing the UK High Street 'names' to the town. With a more defined marketing strategy for the other areas, I am sure that Eden will become busier as new shoppers are brought into the town.

Other improvements such as: steadily and imaginatively uncovering the Wye; diverting the traffic away from, and eventually downgrading, the flyover; improving the Paul's Row/St Mary's Street area; filling the vacant landmark buildings (Brunel shed, Old Library); making the best of green spaces; and so on, will also improve matters.

You know, Wycombe is far more interesting than its wealthier neighbours. Can Gerrards Cross or Beaconsfield boast any of our narrative gems: an ancient river that spawned lace-making, paper milling and Pann Mill's flour; a medieval street pattern with a church dating back 1000 years; bodgers that paved the way for a world-leading chair-making industry; schools that today attract students from all corners of the globe; a leading art and design university; an ethnically diverse and enriching population? Let's celebrate all of this and build on it.

So, above all, we must keep our peckers up! High Wycombe's architecture is actually beautiful, if you know where to look, as is so much else in the town. Let's talk it up, not denigrate it any more. We joined this Society because we love Wycombe, so let's get out there and share it!

Heather Morley

Heather has recently been provoking debate within the Planning Group, but what do you think? We're keen to hear our readers' views on what should be done within the town.

Behind-the-scenes

Mosque Visit

TWENTY TWO MEMBERS of the Society had a most interesting visit to the Jubilee Street Mosque in early November. Zafar Iqbal, chairman of the Wycombe Islamic Mission and Mosque Trust welcomed us with the Islamic greeting "Salaam alaikum" meaning "Peace be unto you" and explained that all visitors are asked to remove their shoes because worshippers sit on the floor (which is beautifully carpeted throughout) and touch their foreheads to the ground during prayers. The holy Koran is never placed on the floor, special book rests being available, and worshippers have to clean themselves before praying.

The foundation stone of the Mosque was laid on 28th June 1981. It was the only Mosque in High Wycombe until 1996 when one was created in Totteridge Road, and now there are six in the area. Mecca is south-east from High Wycombe so the Mehrab (see picture) is placed opposite the entrance door to show worshippers which way to face. For free prayer one can be anywhere in the hall but for Imam-led prayers rows are filled up from the front and not until that is full is the second row started, and no gaps are left. When the building opened only one or two rows filled up, but now for Friday prayers both upper and lower halls can be full to overflowing.

There are five Pillars of Islam, the first being belief in God and his Prophets, and the second observance of the daily prayer routine. There is a board giving the times of day Muslims should pray - 6.30am, 1.15pm, 3pm, 4.33pm on the day we visited (related to the time of sunset) and 7pm. The length of session varies: four units, consisting of two free prayer and two with the Imam leading, in the early morning up to seventeen units in the final session. Muslims are expected to go to the Mosque to pray if at all possible, or take advantage of any special prayer room if at work. If they cannot manage the exact times, there is a specified time band in which prayers can be said. Women are not expected to attend the Mosque for prayer, but pray at home at the appointed times if family duties allow. If they attend the Mosque they do not mix with the men but follow the Imam via closed circuit TV in another hall.

The third Pillar is Fasting for a month each year, a period determined by the lunar calendar, when no food or drink is taken during the hours of

daylight and Muslims strive particularly to live a good life. The fourth Pillar is the Haj, and all Muslims are expected to make the pilgrimage to Mecca once in their life, providing they can afford it. They must not borrow money to do so, and must ensure their family can manage in their absence.

The fifth Pillar is Charity, which should begin with one's immediate family circle, then one's neighbours, then one's community and then the wider world. During Ramadan this year over £2,000 was donated to the local NHS.

Education is very important because the Koran should be read in the original Arabic and classes

are held in the Mosque Monday to Friday, 4.30 - 6.15 and 6.30 - 8.30pm. Children can attend from six years of age and by the age of fourteen are expected to fulfil the prayer and fasting obligations.

Mr Iqbal answered our many questions then took us upstairs to see the library and the dome, a fibreglass structure of twelve panels with elaborately decorated passages from the Koran at the lower end of each panel. There can be six classes going on at once under the dome, and there were many interesting educational posters on the walls which we should have liked to read. Time was pressing, however, so we thanked Mr Iqbal for such an interesting visit and for increasing our

knowledge and understanding of Islam and its adherents. Mr Iqbal expressed the hope that Society members would come into the town on Sunday 18th January when there will be a procession to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet, starting at the Mosque and proceeding to the High Street.

Prudence Meek



*Above: the Mehrab indicating the direction to Mecca
Below: Mr Iqbal drawing attention to passages from the Koran.*
Photos: Paul Meek



THE IRON DUKE

DID YOU KNOW that High Wycombe was once the end of the line?

The original railway station, opened in 1854, was the terminus of The Wycombe Railway, a broad gauge (seven feet and a quarter inch) branch from Maidenhead through Cookham, Bourne End, Wooburn Green and Loudwater. A new through station was built on the present station site when the line was extended to Princes Risborough and Thame in 1862, and later to Oxford with a branch from Risborough to Aylesbury. This second High Wycombe station was itself rebuilt when the town eventually achieved mainline status in 1905/6.

Through all those changes, the original station building has survived: the Brunel Railway Shed, now adorned with the wonderful hand-painted mural by local artist Dan Wilson. The painting was completed over a three-week period in June this year after winning a competition promoted by HWBIDCo., our local business improvement district company. Other designs focussed on the beauties of the Chiltern countryside and the chair industry. The project has been a partnership of Chiltern Railways, Chiltern Rangers CIC and the artist.

In 'trompe d'oeil' style, (French for 'deceive the eye'), the painting depicts the old station in its early Victorian heyday, but with a contemporary twist: a young woman, complete with mobile phone, peeks into the scene across the intervening 160 years. Indeed, the painting draws us all to look into the shed where we see Brunel himself beside the locomotive *Iron Duke*, at rest and simmering away at the platform.

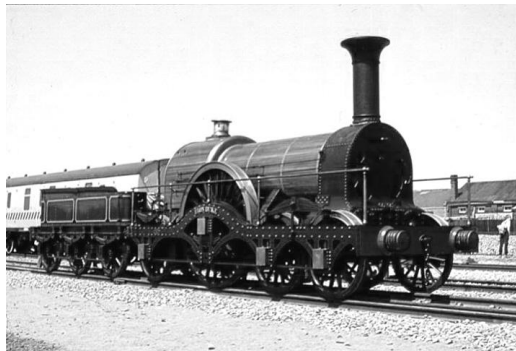
So, what about this engine which now commands such a prominent place in our townscape? *Iron Duke* was built in 1847, one of the first of a class of locomotives which came to be known as the Iron Duke class, designed by Daniel Gooch, the Locomotive Superintendent of the Great Western Railway. It appeared at the Crystal Palace in the 1851 Great Exhibition. A top speed of 70mph was claimed, which must have been extremely draughty for the footplatemen who had very little protection. These engines were, in their heyday, the premier locomotives on the main line, and some of them lasted until the mid-1880s, not long before the broad gauge was finally abolished in 1892. *Iron Duke*, however, was scrapped in 1871.

It seems unlikely that *Iron Duke* would have regularly appeared on the Wycombe line which was, frankly, a meandering branch, 'single track and cheaply built' (according to Rex Christiansen in Volume 13 of 'A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain'). Maybe it hauled some Paddington-Oxford trains which were sometimes routed this way rather than via Reading. Neither, incidentally, does there seem to be any special link between Wycombe and the Duke of Wellington himself. The pub 'The Iron Duke', which stood until recently on the corner of Totteridge Road and Duke Street near the station, was probably one of thousands of taverns and inns across the country named after him.

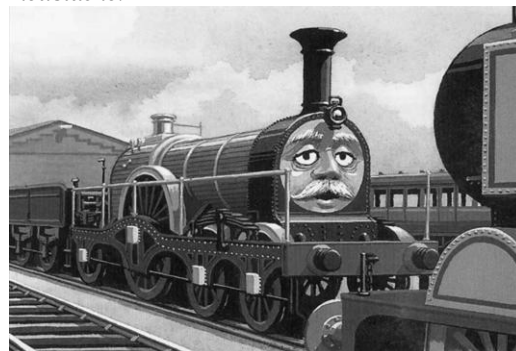
Our *Iron Duke* mural is not the only reminder of the original locomotive. A working replica was built in 1985 for the 150th anniversary of the Great Western Railway. It currently resides at Didcot, the headquarters of the Great Western Society, and has a stretch of broad gauge track, but is currently out of service.

Iron Duke also figures in the well-known *Thomas the Tank Engine* stories where Gooch's handsome locomotive has wonderful whiskery eyebrows and sports a walrus moustache. One somehow imagines that the Duke of Wellington would have approved.

The artist Dan Wilson says that the mural is much more than a picture on a wall. He's right: this striking scene stands witness to an important aspect of Wycombe's development in the past. It is to be hoped that it will help to regenerate the immediate area and inspire new uses for the historic Brunel Railway Shed for the 21st century.



Above: The Iron Duke replica at Didcot
– Photo Rob Dickinson
Below: Sporting whiskery eyebrows and a walrus moustache!



Welcome Home Well Done

THESE WORDS APPEAR in the stained glass window half-way up the stairs in the Guildhall in High Wycombe, installed in 1923. Around that time Cllr Peace donated a panelled Oak Door at the entrance to the building and Charles Raffety paid to restore the inscription on the outside of the building. In celebration, flags flew on flagpoles which Charles Raffety had previously donated.

The stained glass window shows a white-robed figure of peace welcoming home a weary soldier from the Great War and adorning him with a laurel wreath. There is much symbolism. The draped flags behind the soldier are the white ensign (of the Navy) and the red ensign (of the Mercantile Marine). The Admiralty badge is to be found at the base of a column; and rose, thistle, shamrock and leek designs are interspersed with the French fleur-de-lys. Some doves also represent peace.

The Royal Arms are to be found at the top of the window. The Town Corporation Arms and the Town motto "Industria Ditat" appear below the picture.

The main inscription reads:

In grateful remembrance of the patriotic services
Of the five thousand men of Wycombe who fought
In the Great War 1914-1918 and were spared to return.

A small plaque beside the window records that Charles Raffety donated the window when he was aged 83. Charles Raffety had previously commissioned stained glass work from the designer, Arthur Dix, including the 'Wycombe Window' depicting 'Progress' in the Oak Room at the Town Hall. The Guildhall memorial window was probably designed by artists working in Arthur Dix's studio after the artist's death.

On either side of the picture are a number of badges representing various regiments to which local men were assigned.

On the left (from top to bottom) these are:

The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (the badge with the "strung bugle")

The Hampshire Regiment (with the Hampshire Rose)

The Royal Field Artillery (with the gun carriage)

The Kings Royal Rifles

The Royal Warwickshire Regiment (with the Indian Black Buck Antelope)

And The Red Cross



*The World War I Memorial Window in the Guildhall, High Wycombe.
Photo: John Steedman*

On the right (from top to bottom): the badges represent:

The Bucks Territorials (with the Buckinghamshire Swan)

Royal Bucks Hussars (officer's badge also with swan)

The Royal Berkshire Regiment (with the China Dragon)

The Royal Fusiliers (with a stylised flaming grenade)

The Gloucestershire Regiment (with the sphinx)

And the Army Service Corps (before it acquired the "Royal" in its title)

Wycombe is lucky to have this rare memorial to those who fought and survived, an important part of our local heritage, contrasting with the very many memorials to those who died in the conflict.

Jackie Kay

Behind-the-scenes

A Gift of a Gavel

FUTURE CHAIRMEN OF the High Wycombe Society have a new means of keeping order! On our recent Society visit to the Masonic Centre in Beaconsfield, I took receipt of an unusual gift in the form of a palm gavel. Discreetly displayed inside is the Masonic symbol, familiar to all who arrive at High Wycombe Station, as it is the Freemasons who maintain the gardens where the station approach joins Amersham Hill. With a past reputation for secrecy, they have recently adopted a more open approach and are proud of their contributions to charity work and local communities.

The Masonic Centre in Beaconsfield is known to many as "The Old School", as the building used to be a National School. Built in 1872 by William Child to a design by Henry Woodyer, at one time it catered for 240 pupils: 70 boys, 70 girls, and 100 infants. It survived a number of reorganisations becoming a primary school for a long time until eventual closure in 1957. It has a new lease of life as the Masonic Centre.

The group visit on Wednesday 17th September was part of the High Wycombe Society's programme of "Behind-the-Scenes visits" arranged by Mary Woodman. We were warmly welcomed by Brother Bill of the Penn & Tylers Green lodge, one of the 17 local lodges which make use of the centre on different days of the week/month. There are 120 lodges in Buckinghamshire.

In the Robing Room we studied some of the regalia including Masonic aprons which, in case you've ever wondered, are worn outside men's jackets in England, but inside men's jackets in Scotland! We were taken to the Dining Rooms which were conveniently partitioned to allow small and large gatherings, and finally we were shown the "Temple", a beautiful room in which the trimmings of ceremonial events were much in evidence. Wood panels around the room record the names of the Masters of each of the lodges who use the temple. Ornate seats are

provided for the most senior masons with roles to perform, and a rather less comfortable position by the door is reserved for the more junior "Guard". Beautiful embroidered and quilted hangings give the room a warm feel. It was surprising to find that the black and white "tiled" floor was actually a carpet!



A Palm Gavel presented to the High Wycombe Society. Photo: Jackie Kay

Brother Bill fielded questions from us on many topics including the need for religious belief to become a mason. He confirmed that all masons are united in belief in a "supreme being" but that they were not exclusively Christian. The exclusion of women was another topic raised. There are now some female Freemasons, but not in Bill's lodge. The Queen's

portrait hangs on a wall, but she has no position within the Freemasons, whereas her father held the most senior title. A small organ in the gallery prompted one of our group to ask about the use of music. Singing is a regular activity but exactly what is sung beyond "God Save the Queen" remained a mystery.

Returning to the room in which we were first welcomed, conversation continued over a welcome cup of tea and cake contributed by Mary Woodman, and many of us were pleased to donate to one of the current Masonic causes: to provide teddy bears for children in hospital.

Jackie Kay

A Belgian Inquiry

WE RECENTLY HEARD from René Van der Straeten, a Belgian historian who is collecting photographs of graves of Belgian soldiers who died during the Great War. To date he has 20,600 pictures from all over Europe out of an estimated total of 43,000 Belgian casualties. Thanks to the web he had discovered that one such casualty was buried in High Wycombe and wondered if we could take a picture of the tombstone.

Society member Sally Scagell already had photos to offer, as Jozef



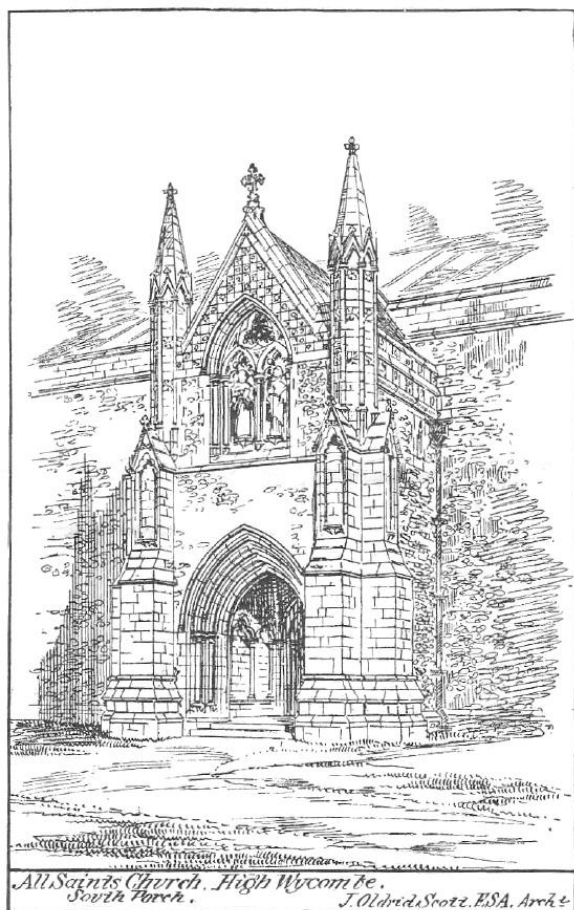
Buttenaere had featured in John Hampden School's WWI research project. Born in Menen, Belgium, on 19th July, 1884, he died on or about 6th October, 1917 and is buried in High Wycombe Cemetery. High Wycombe was home to a number of Belgian refugees during the Great War. René was very appreciative, commenting that in Belgium despite having the highest concentration of military cemeteries in the world per capita, WWI was not a subject discussed in the schools.

Jackie Kay

The Sad State of the South Porch

WE TEND TO FORGET, probably because it is a church, that All Saints is the most historic and ancient of High Wycombe's buildings, the first church on the site dating back to the late eleventh century. For at least 900 years the parish church has been central to the development of the town. Much of the town's history can be found there. The Borough and its inhabitants were always involved with the re-building and restoration of the church throughout its history. It remains a Grade I building of enormous importance. This key part of our heritage is in need of restoration.

The last major restoration of the interior of the church, to which the townspeople and local commerce contributed generously, was carried out by Edmund Street for £6000 between 1874 and 1877. Lord Carrington chaired the Restoration Committee. Street told the first meeting that "In my opinion High Wycombe church is quite the finest parish church in Buckinghamshire and one of the finest in the Diocese of Oxford". In 1887-9, John Oldrid Scott, son of the famous architect Sir George Gilbert Scott, restored much of the exterior of the church for the sum of £1,600.



A few years later, in 1893, Scott completely remodelled the exterior of the South porch for a further sum of £630. The following year, at a cost of £160 to his widow, statues of the four evangelists were placed in the niches on the front of the porch in memory of Edward Wheeler, a leading parishioner.

The interior of the South Porch is late thirteenth century. It is regarded as an

important feature of the Early English church. In a letter to parishioners, launching a Restoration Committee for the South Porch 120 years ago, the Vicar commented on "the south porch which is at the present time in a sad and unsightly state... there is no doubt that the Early English porch is one of the most interesting and will be one of the most beautiful features of our Parish Church". The same can be said of the current state of the porch.

The Porch seems to be in need of restoration every 80-100 years or so. Prior to the 1893 restoration, it had been condemned in 1826 and restored in the 1830s. Deterioration was again evident in the 1990s. There were surveys and reports in 1998, 2009 (photographic), 2013, and this year a geophysical survey and architectural report. A lack of funds and work elsewhere in the church (the re-ordering of the West End, new kitchen and toilets in 2010) were the main reasons for lack of progress, combined with varying views as to the cause of the problem and its solution.



Sign of the times. The perceived need to restrict vehicles driving at speed inside the porch may cause a smile, but the clear damage to the fabric of building behind is worrying.

Photo: David Snoxell

There are a number of untested theories, ranging from a water course flowing under the porch (as discovered by a water-diviner), an impermeable area of embedded clay, waterlogged drainage, to an underground mystery structure abutting the south wall. Whatever the reason the erosion caused by rising damp is evident for all to see. It has been getting steadily worse over the last few years and is now in urgent need of attention.

The Church has accepted the latest report and recommendations of its architect. There will be two phases – investigatory and remedial. The work is likely to cost in excess of £180,000, not counting the cost of surveys/reports and archaeological watching briefs so far. Permission was sought in August from the Consistory Court of the Diocese to carry out the following works: “Investigations into the cause of the damage to the stonework; relaying of the floor and drainage work to alleviate the problems in the south porch; monitoring the effects of this work over a period of 18 months”. It is hoped to start the investigatory phase in the Spring.

Faculties have also been applied for in respect of the further development of the West End, restoration of the outer doors, a glass screen so that the doors can be kept open, and moving the font to the North aisle in front of the unused north door. So stand by for a renewal of the one million pound appeal launched in 2012. How nice it would be if we could match the speed and success of the nineteenth century appeals when the town was much less affluent.

David Snoxell

Whitchurch Silk Mill and Sandham

ON A BRIGHT Saturday morning (23rd August) many High Wycombe Society members boarded a coach for Hampshire. After a straightforward and pleasant journey we arrived at the first of our planned destinations, Whitchurch Silk Mill, to see myriads of ducks and swans on the clear waters of the River Test. The Mill we had come to see was built in 1817 on land called Frog Island in the centre of the country town of Whitchurch.

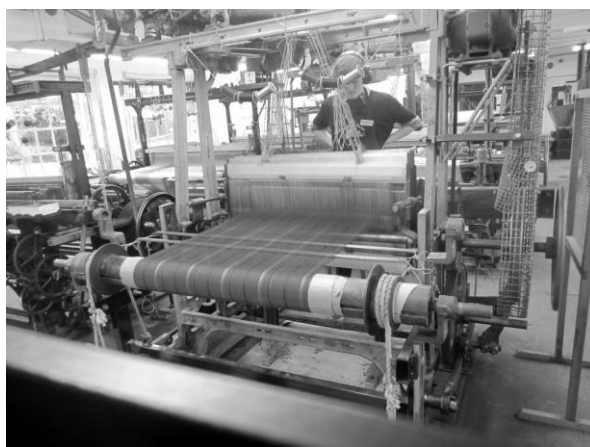
We were divided into two groups and given an interesting tour of the building, discovering en route how silk is spun and then woven. I even found out that the silk comes from the cocoon not the silk worm itself. We saw how the silk was wound onto spools which were then fitted on the old looms and the threads woven into fine material with amazing colours and designs. The whole process from cocoon to cloth takes several weeks demanding prolonged

concentration from the operators. Typically 7000 threads are on the warp beam and each must be individually threaded through a “leash” in sequence and then threaded through each “dent” of the “reed”. Only when this is done can the process of weaving begin, and even then the average production is only between five and eight metres in a day. You could buy some of the products in the shop for a price!

Outside there were lovely grounds and over a wooden bridge there was a view of the waterwheel which drove the machines before electricity.

After a welcome drink and a look round the shop, we had a lovely lunch at the home of a society member’s daughter who lives nearby.

We were made very welcome, admired the beautiful house and garden and especially enjoyed the food.



The loom in operation

Photo: Sheila Fooks

On leaving Whitchurch, it was a short journey to Sandham Memorial Chapel in Burghclere. Named after Henry Willoughby Sandham who died at the end of the First World War, it is a Grade I listed 1920s building containing world-famous visionary paintings by Stanley Spencer.

These are large scale murals which took six years to complete and were designed to honour the “forgotten dead” of the First World War who were not represented on any official memorials. The artist drew on his own experiences of the war in which he had served as an orderly in the Royal Army Medical Corps in Bristol and Macedonia before transferring to the infantry. The paintings were very moving and thought-provoking especially as we were able to sit quietly and just look and think. We wandered around the garden of reflection enjoying the peaceful setting and we returned home after a lovely day.

Many thanks go to Eileen Walters for planning and arranging the day’s events.

Sheila Fooks

Quarterly Meeting

Wycombe's Wharf?

JULIAN HUNT's illustrated talk on 3rd October was entitled: Wycombe's Wharf - The Story of Marlow, "A Town of Very Great Embarkation on the Thames" (Daniel Defoe). This turned out to be a fascinating talk on the history of Marlow from its early beginnings, but there was little mention of the connection with High Wycombe. One might have been forgiven for thinking one was at a meeting of the Marlow Archaeological Society; there were even people in the audience who had come in response to publicity placed in Marlow library. The listener was left to deduce that Marlow had been the entrepôt for Wycombe, transporting goods to and from London via barges on the Thames.

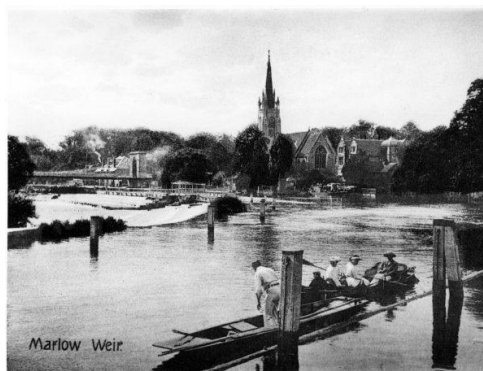
The talk began with a slide of Jeffery's exquisitely detailed 1770 map of Buckinghamshire which shows the mills, locks, wharfs and turnpikes in the area.

For those with a penchant for Anglo-Saxon holdings (woodland, agriculture, swine and eels) the 1086 Domesday Book (or the 'Great Survey'), land redistribution under the Normans, development of burgess plots and ownership of land up to the nineteenth century this was a fascinating talk. Marlow was at the time of Domesday a prosperous settlement of 15 hides, 26 ploughs, woodland for a thousand swine, water for a thousand eels and a mill. Total value £25. I was particularly interested to learn that Odo, the Bishop of Bayeux (William the Conqueror's half brother) was endowed with the estates round Little Marlow which had been owned by Queen Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor. Odo is of course depicted in the Bayeux tapestry which he probably commissioned with a 'made in England' tag on it.

The talk continued with an account of the rotten borough of Great Marlow and the great families that controlled, 'bought' and 'sold' the town. It concluded with the statement that Marlow was indeed Wycombe's Wharf, but one was left wondering what the evidence for this was. It was during the Q & A, however, that it was established that the river was used to

transport Windsor chairs, bricks and church bells to and from the Wharfs at Marlow (St Peter's), Spade Oak and Hedsor, the remainder of the journeys being by cart.

David Snoxell



Marlow Weir circa 1907

Photo courtesy of Wycombe Museum
SWOP ref: MHW: 01870

P.S. Shortly after the above meeting Tony Mealing whose ancestors needed to use a wharf to transport their goods to London sent in his reflections on how the discussion went.

"Marlow Hill is long and straight like Cryer's Hill and Hamilton Road. These are roads built for mechanical progress: traction engines, cars and later lorries. A horse-drawn wagon could

not do it. Steep hills for horse-drawn transport zigzag, mainly to lessen the hauled load, and if the wagons run away there is not so far to go! So, say you are moving one or two wagons each with, say, a ton of "stuff", so you have four horses harnessed together. You would not go up a hill but look for the flat route, the old Valley road. To get a load from Wycombe to the Thames you would need to go up the old (back) road to Bourne End and either turn right (back on yourself) to Marlow which is not logical as you would be paying the weir tolls, or left to Hedsor or Maidenhead avoiding the toll and having an easier flat journey. Bricks, Chairs, corn, Flax (Flackwell Heath) Wool (Wycombe was at one time a big wool town) or paper. So it's Hedsor or Maidenhead!"

Tony Mealing

Margaret's Garden – Update

We have continued to be very lucky with the weather on Tuesday mornings. Most of the time in the garden now is taken up with tidying up and clearing leaves which will produce compost for the garden.

Thank you to Pat and Alan for their help. Also, a special thank you to the people who answered the call for spare plants - very much appreciated. We have also had a sack of daffodil bulbs donated - the garden should look amazing in the Spring. As we were putting in

the bulbs we were continually digging up Mag's winter aconites so they were very carefully replanted.

During the half term week we had lots of interest from people walking by who came in to look at the garden - we really enjoy talking to them especially the children. Please come and visit us on a Tuesday morning.

Julie, Wendy, Irene and Dave

BROOMWADE BRITISH MADE

A HISTORY of Broom & Wade Ltd, from its establishment in 1898 to its final closure in 2006, will shortly be available in a single volume. Authors Peter Tozer and Ernie Ford have spent many years studying a wide range of archives and ephemera to obtain and share insight into this former High Wycombe company. The narrative, which begins with the background of Harry Skeet Broom, Jethro Thomas Wade and their associates, is illustrated with plans of the two engineering sites – the Desborough Ironworks at Lindsay Avenue, and the Bellfield Works at Hughenden Avenue; and drawings of the paraffin engine lorries that the company produced in its early years.

The company grew into a global force in the pneumatic tools and air compressor manufacturing industry under the constant and life-long guidance of Harry Broom. When he died, it had technical, manufacturing, and sales strengths, with considerable financial reserves. The first of many significant changes occurred ten years later in 1968, when Broomwade (as it was popularly known), merged with Holman Bros. Ltd of Camborne, Cornwall, to become CompAir Ltd.

The CompAir group expanded and had good profits, until a global recession hit and it was sold to become part of a medium-sized

conglomerate. Sold on again, it became a case of conglomerate consuming conglomerate, each time Broomwade becoming an even smaller fish in a big technology pond, so that by 2003, when the production ceased at The Bellfield Works, it was just a minnow.

The book with an estimated 300 pages, with black and white, and colour illustrations, will be available priced at £20 direct from:-

Peter Tozer,

25 Greenacre Drive, Walmer, Deal, Kent. CT14 7UQ. Tel No: 01304 239 334.

Email: tozer@thway.org.uk for further details.

West Richardson Street

AN UNUSUAL portrayal of our town is to be found in 'West Richardson Street', a recently-published novel by Saqib Deshmukh. If you like your reading to give you a warm and cosy feeling then this is very definitely not one for you! The author uses his experiences as a youth worker, to bring insight into disaffection and anger in communities.

His characters are drawn from marginalised elements of society, their ambitions constrained by their circumstances. They have a streetwise acceptance of drug dealing and prostitution in their midst. In contrast, there are only glimpses of more affluent and settled lifestyles.

There are fleeting glimpses, too, of episodes in our local history when people have struggled against injustice. The reader is left to ponder on the lasting effects of such events on communities. Completing the cast is an unseen assassin holding extreme fascist views.

I was interested to learn that the author drew inspiration from photos in the SWOP collection. There is a great 10-minute promotional video which I have shared on our Society's facebook page. On his own website under a heading 'Broken Content', Saqib freely admits that his novel has a number of loose ends, which he promises will be picked up in its sequels; these are already in the pipeline with working titles of 'Lily's Walk' and 'World's End'. West Richardson Street is available on Amazon. £5 including postage and packing.

Jackie Kay

Our New Website

HAVE YOU LOOKED at our Society website recently? If not, you may be in for a bit of a surprise! The changes first announced at our AGM have now been implemented and we went "live" a month ago. The Programme for 2015 will be up shortly and we can now add to the content on a regular basis. Would-be new members can join the Society and pay their subscriptions via Paypal. If you have news or other material which you think should be added, please contact me in my capacity as webmaster preferably via email: webmaster@highwycombesociety.org.uk.

Malcolm Connell

The Civic Voice Community Design Award

CIVIC VOICE has invited us to make nominations for a new award. It could be for a new building, or perhaps a refurbishment of a historic one, or even a public realm scheme such as street works, or park improvements. They say that the judges will look at the quality of design and construction, appropriateness, community participation and engagement, and contribution to promoting pride of place. Can you think of any worthy local candidates for this award?

Jackie Kay

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Ms K Lips & Mr Paul Stringer

Mrs P Pigeon

Mr P A Marshall

Mr B Murphy

Fancy a lunch and a chat?

The High Wycombe Society lunch club meets on the third Tuesday of each month. For further details contact Ann Simone on HW 448773.

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 2015**

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

2015	
Wednesday 21 st January The Riverside, 7.30 p.m.	Talk: 'The Life of a Town Clerk', speaker Bill Reid (who recently retired as Town Clerk for High Wycombe). Join us for this first event in our new venue*: the Riverside (previously the British Legion).
Friday 13 th February South Bucks Hospice Amersham Hill	<i>Behind the Scenes</i> Tour of South Bucks Hospice – Places are limited – please register your interest with Eileen on HW 449902. If oversubscribed a second tour will be arranged at a later date.
Tuesday 3 rd March Westminster (Travel by Train)	<i>Behind the Scenes SPECIAL</i> Tour of the Houses of Parliament, courtesy of Steve Baker M.P. followed by a visit to the nearby Jewel Tower – Please register your interest by 31st January with Eileen on HW 449902. You will need photo ID on the day. If oversubscribed, a draw will be held. Please tell Eileen when registering if you have a rail card with any benefits you would be willing to share with fellow travellers.
Saturday 21 st March The Riverside, 7.30 p.m.	Quiz Night. Building on the success of last year's event, quizmaster Billy Gallacher will be returning to the Society. Tickets will be £12.
Tuesday 21 st April	<i>Behind the Scenes</i> visit to Adams Park. Please register interest with Eileen
Sunday 10 th May Pann Mill, 11.00-5.00 p.m.	1 st Pann Mill Open Day of the Year (National Mills Day)
Wednesday 20 th May The Riverside, 7.00 p.m. Please note earlier time.	AGM followed by our contribution to the Wycombe Arts Festival. Talk: 'The History of Gardens', Speaker: Roger Askew.
Tuesday 16 th June Late afternoon/evening	<i>Behind the Scenes-SPECIAL</i> A look at Marylebone Station
Saturday 20 th June The Riverside DAYTIME	Civic Day "Meet the High Wycombe Society" event. Volunteers will be needed to host this event to promote the Society.
Sunday 12 th July (TBC) Pann Mill 11.00 – 5.00 p.m.	2 nd Pann Mill Open Day of the Year
Wednesday 15 th July The Riverside, 7.30 p.m.	Talk: "150 years of the Open Spaces Society", Speaker: Kate Ashbrook
Sunday 9 th August The Rye	The BIG Picnic – A Celebration of the achievements of the Rye Protection Society.
Sunday 13 th September Pann Mill 11.00-5.00 p.m.	3 rd Pann Mill Open Day of the Year (Heritage Open Days weekend)
Wednesday 21 st October The Riverside, 7.30 p.m.	Talk: Mills of High Wycombe, Speaker: Sheila Viner, Mills Archive Trust
Further <i>Behind the Scenes</i> events may be arranged during the year.	

*Please HELP our Programme & Membership Team! – in our new venue, we need a few able-bodied volunteers to come along a bit early to events to lend a hand in setting out the chairs.

Many hands make light work!