



THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 184

SUMMER 2017



On Swans, Anniversaries and a Growing Number of Friends

THERE IS something slightly incongruous about an institution with 'New' in its title celebrating its 125-year anniversary, but Bucks New University (BNU) claims to trace its roots back to the foundation of the Technical and Arts School in Frogmoor in 1891. The Clock Tower building by the viaduct in which that school first flourished, has since seen many diverse uses, and is surmounted by a weather vane in the shape of a swan with a globe beneath it; somehow, this escaped our round-up of "Swans about Town" exhibited earlier this year so is pictured here instead! A silhouette of Pann Mill is among the images included in a new commemorative mural in the underpass at BNU.

Commemorating anniversaries is a great way to focus attention on aspects of local heritage, as many WWI-centenary projects have recently demonstrated. In this newsletter, you will find an update on what some Society members have been doing in this connection thanks to WDC, BNU and the National Lottery – and also news of another significant centenary to be celebrated next year, that of the first granting to women of the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

Another fashion which seems to have found its moment is the formation of "Friends" groups. In our last edition, we reported on the fledgling "Friends of the Wye" group which supports the "Revive the Wye" partnership. This quarter we note the formation of a "Friends of Hughenden Park" which will function in a similar manner to the "Friends of the Rye and Holywell Mead". And in the latest Wycombe Museum booklet I notice that there is also now an opportunity to become a friend of the museum.

Perhaps the trend towards increasing numbers of friends owes something to social media, where some of us have been following the fortunes of a pair of swans and their seven cygnets on the Dyke. Pictured here is one of the newest residents on the Rye! As we approach a significant anniversary of the Society in 2018, we should also reflect on our role – as in today's parlance we shall have been "*Friends of High Wycombe for Fifty Years!*".

Jackie Kay



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

Registered Charity No. 257897

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

Planning This Quarter

THE SOCIETY's Planning Group continues to get through a wide range of business at its monthly meetings. In between, we attend meetings and presentations, sift through the weekly planning application lists and fire off letters of objection, support and/or suggestions for improvement to council officers. As always, we would welcome more members to help with this interesting work and contribute ideas to the group.

New Local Plan The latest date given for the publication of the next draft Local Plan is 'Summer 2017', i.e. imminent. This will be for statutory consultation followed by a Public Examination in the Autumn, where the Inspector will consider the draft alongside the comments by consultees including ourselves. Meanwhile there was a progress report at a well-run Stakeholders' Briefing on 15th March, where we heard that a Memorandum of Understanding had been signed with Aylesbury Vale District Council under which they will take 1,700 additional homes from Wycombe District's 'need' over the Plan period to 2033. This reflects the shortage of suitable land in Wycombe District, due to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Green Belt, compared to Aylesbury Vale which, as everybody knows, has huge tracts of flat, developable land! Meanwhile, the work of officers is not helped by changes in Government policy – even welcome ones, including what has been described as a strengthening of Green Belt policy, requiring development in the Green Belt only as a last resort, which means 'not if there's space in Aylesbury Vale'! At the Stakeholders' Briefing, the biggest noise was made by our friends at Princes Risborough who fear their ancient town will be swamped by new development. We can sympathise, but they must take their share and we expect it to be well-planned using 'new town' principles to provide additional community facilities in the newly built area.

Hughenden Quarter 'Upper Site' After our survey of the Hughenden Quarter developments in last Autumn's issue of the *Newsletter*, it may have seemed that few areas were left un-earmarked. But on 6th April, WDC staged an exhibition at Morrisons of their plans for the 'Upper Site', used a few years ago for a temporary Sainsburys. The proposal is for a seven-storey block of 62 flats, *all* of them 'affordable', i.e. intended for social housing associations. There would be a landscaped atrium garden and a rooftop amenity space. Alongside, there would be 12 low-cost start-up units, large enough for small furniture-makers. It seemed to the Group that this was imaginative and appropriate use of the remaining development space left over from CompAir/BroomWade.

Making the best use of land for housing The Group continues to be very concerned, however, about proposals which do not make the most of

housing opportunities. The new Baker Street Renewal Project foresees a new Aldi, a new car showroom and two ground-level car parks on a 1.6 hectare site. Surface car parks can be a terrible waste of space, or more precisely volume, because the opportunity is lost to build upwards. In our view, every new or revamped surface car park in the town should take the form of undercroft parking with housing on top. Every time this is not done, we increase the likelihood of development in the Green Belt. Since this involves not just WDC's planning policies but also their Property Department and social housing interests, we have written to the WDC Leader, Cllr Katrina Wood, and asked her what the District Council can do about it.

So it's 'Delafield Heights' In the Winter *Newsletter*, we reported on proposals for new social housing blocks in the Chairborough Road area. We were delighted to be invited to a pre-application presentation to Councillors about the scheme on 26th April. In discussion afterwards with the presenters, we were reassured that vehicle access to the central open space (which could have led to misuse) will be denied. However, an interesting announcement was that, following consultation with local people, the new blocks would be called 'Delafield Heights'. Nobody seemed to know where the name came from, so we did some research. E M Delafield was an author of a popular series of books starting in 1930 with her largely autobiographical *Diary of an English Lady*, and in 1919 she had married one Paul Dashwood, OBE, third son of the 6th Baronet. So there is a local connection. Can anyone elaborate?

The High Street Readers may remember Planning Group member Heather Morley's article way back in 2014 about revitalising our High Street, followed by a questionnaire seeking your views. It has been a long process developing concrete proposals for change which could attract more shoppers into this historic part of the town. Key elements are to reconfigure the bus stops and relocate the taxi rank in order to open up the historic views and enable limited parking by shoppers. At the same time, signage, posters and other clutter all need to be minimised. As we go to press, the way is now clear for representatives of the Society to seek a meeting with elected councillors on WDC's Town Committee.

The Brunel Train Shed Our efforts to get the historic Grade 2-listed Train Shed in Crendon Street saved from dilapidation are at present stalled. There are rumours that when Deutsche Bahn (aka Chiltern Railways) purchased the building some 10 years ago to enable the renovation of their forecourt, they paid a price which went into their balance sheet, and accountants in suits are balking at the idea that its true capital value is now very little. We shall keep pressing.

Mad Squirrel (formerly Red Squirrel!) In April, we received – thanks to the good offices of High Wycombe BidCo (Business Improvement District Company) – an approach from Peter Wright of the Brewery Shop in Church Street opposite the main (west) entrance to All Saints' Church. Accordingly, members of the Planning Group made a gently-lubricated visit! This is an institution which sells and serves high-quality beers. Readers may remember that this shop was formerly occupied by Milletts and featured in the Summer 2016 edition of the Newsletter as one of six properties at that time being refurbished as part of a WDC regeneration initiative.



Across the road from the Mad Squirrel – an opportunity for outdoor enjoyment of refreshments?

Photo: Chris Woodman

Downstairs there is a wall-length display fridge and upstairs there is a drinking area (which can also be hired for events) with a huge plate-glass window giving a fabulous view over the churchyard. Mr Wright explained that he would like to establish, in the recessed area across the road, a 'well-managed area for the enjoyment of our craft beers and pizza'. The public seating which is there at present could be moved to another location and be replaced by the Brewery Shop's own tables and benches which would be removed at the end of every day. A licence would be required from Bucks CC (as for other pavement tables in the town). The Group's view was broadly positive – they felt the area would be enhanced and the right kind of people would be attracted. We look forward to seeing the planning application.

Oh, and Mad Squirrel is the name of the brewery and its shops because, we understand, 'Red Squirrel' was too mundane and widespread to be registered!



The ground-floor frontage of the Mad Squirrel

Photo: Chris Woodman

Interpretation Boards One of High Wycombe's problems is that – in the words of Planning Group member Heather Morley – despite its having a 'fantastic narrative', too few people actually know about it. So perhaps what is needed is a few more notice boards around the town to tell people their history. The Planning Group identified one appropriate spot some months ago in Pauls Row where the River Wye once passed under the road and the District Council installed some blue tarmac (now faded, alas. to a uniform grey) to mark the place. As reported in the Spring *Newsletter*, an information board has been designed for this location. There are other appropriate places where additional information could be given, for example, somewhere in the Hughenden Corridor, to mark the activities of BroomWade and Harrisons, and of course somewhere in Leigh Street to mark our town's furniture heritage. However, there seems to be an issue over 'advertising consent'. Almost any notice board or plaque, be it in a conservation area or anywhere else, and whether it is truly advertising a commercial concern or simply informing the public, seems, according to the relevant government Statutory Instrument, to require planning consent, and the charge laid down for such an application is enormous.

Our colleagues in other towns say they've never been asked, and it hasn't occurred to them to seek consent, while other local organisations say the charge has been waived. And we note that there are various installations around the place – e.g. various boards on the Rye, not to mention the large board in front of the Brunel Shed – for which planning consent has never been granted. It's all a bit of a muddle, but it would be a pity if opportunities to inform our residents were lost through what looks like red tape.

Chris Woodman

Friendly Signs in Hughenden Park

A NUMBER of information boards have recently been installed at strategic locations in Hughenden Park, thanks to a Wycombe District Council initiative to encourage more people to explore the park, which was once part of the Hughenden Manor estate. As the boards relate, the land was acquired by the town in accordance with Coningsby Disraeli's wishes not long after he died in 1936. It is hoped that the new boards will not only provide useful orientation for new visitors, but will also include some details of interest to more seasoned visitors.

Each board covers aspects of local history as well as observable flora and fauna. Did you know, for example, that Broom and Wade manufactured tanks during the second world war and would have road-tested them along the Hughenden Road? Or that some of the giant trees near the entrance from the Hughenden Road, may have been planted by Benjamin Disraeli himself? Known in this country as the Wellingtonias, the four *Sequoiadendron giganteum* would be more at home in California, where the oldest and tallest specimens exceed 300 feet in height. The Hughenden park ones are still in their youth. In Victorian times, it became fashionable to plant them in stately homes as status symbols.



WDC plans to achieve Green Flag status for Hughenden Park and, as part of that effort, is setting up a Friends of Hughenden Park group which will function in a similar manner to the Friends of the Rye and Holywell Mead. The first meeting will be in the Autumn. They are currently appealing for ideas.

One idea which was originally mooted in the Hughenden Park plan, and which I hope will materialise, is to develop a Tree Trail. In the meantime, I challenge visitors to the park to make their own estimates of the heights of the welcoming Wellingtonias!

Jackie Kay

It's a local lottery

ARE WE a 'good cause'? And if so, should we apply to become a beneficiary of the local lottery? The organisers would like us to do so. The ways in which charities (and other not-for-profit concerns) obtain income are continually evolving – and increasingly, relying on membership subscriptions seems to be regarded as outdated. In May, Eileen Walters and I attended a formal launch meeting of the Wycombe Lotto, an innovative move by Wycombe District Council to help local causes raise funds. Aylesbury Vale District Council have already pioneered a similar scheme.

The concept has much in its favour, but is not without its critics. Most of us can remember a time when the local council had significant funds to distribute by way of grants for worthy projects. As funds have become increasingly scarce, determining which beneficiaries should receive support has become a difficult process. An advantage of a lottery scheme is that the ticket-purchasers themselves can direct how their money is used.

Lottery schemes are highly regulated with good reason, but in a scheme of this nature, the burden of running the lottery and conforming to relevant legislation, falls to the local authority whereas approved good causes just receive an income stream.

Would-be ticket-purchasers can find full details on the Wycombe Lotto website, and approved good causes will have linked web pages tailored to include their logo.

The odds of winning something are significantly greater than in the National Lottery, but the maximum prize is set at £25,000. Broadly speaking, 20% of the ticket price goes towards the prize money, 20% towards administration of the scheme – and 60% towards good causes; ticket purchasers can also specify if they wish this amount to be divided so 50% of the ticket price goes to a specific approved good cause of their choice and 10% to general good causes.

So what is there not to like? Critics point to the fact that lotteries encourage gambling addictions. For some charities, this is a particularly relevant concern among their supporters.

The High Wycombe Society trustees will be weighing up the merits of the scheme and would like to hear from any supporters who have views on the subject.

Jackie Kay

Lights, Camera, Action!

IT WILL NOT have escaped many readers' notice that we are currently living through the centenary of World War I. In 2015 the Society drew attention to the centenary of the loss of Viscount Wendover who was mortally wounded at Ypres; and in the near future, focus will turn to Frederick Youens, former pupil of the Royal Grammar school, who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions one hundred years ago. Local history groups and schools in the area have undertaken many projects resulting in a much better understanding of the contributions made by many local people to the Great War. In the meantime, several members of the Society have been involved in an exciting project about the war on the home front which, if all goes according to plan, will result in the 'launch of an app' in the near future.

The project, initiated by WDC and ably co-ordinated by Elizabeth Charleston, received some funding from the Heritage Lottery, and has involved two groups of students from Bucks New University, a number of professionals as well as a number of enthusiastic local volunteers.

Pictured here on filming day, looking every bit the Edwardian lady in her finery but obsessed with the need to raise funds for the Red Cross, is Society member, Sally Scagell. On the far right, looking equally at home in his tailor's suit and prospering from the increase in trade due to the local wartime demand for officers' uniforms, is Malcolm Connell, better known to us as a Pann Miller. Between them is the professional actor, Liam Burton whose soldier's uniform

unfortunately did not extend to including any army boots, while on the far left is fellow actor, Matt Dye, whose role as a factory worker helped to tell another part of our town's story.



Needless to say, I was there, too, hidden behind the camera at the back of the studio, learning how scripts are used and edited in real-time when things don't go quite according to plan!

It's been an interesting experience taking part in the project, and one which I hope will have a lasting

legacy both for the Society and the town.

Look out for further news in the months ahead!

Jackie Kay



Suffrage Pioneers
1918 - 2018

From Suffrage to Citizenship

THE WOMEN's Local Government Society (WLGS) is calling for nominations of local 'Suffrage Pioneers' as part of a project which aims to encourage greater civic engagement at all levels of government in the twenty-first century. The intention is to recognise the efforts and achievements of 100 people (both men and women) nationally who advanced the cause of women's suffrage 100 years ago. While some campaigners became household names, many pioneers' stories remain untold. A major milestone in the suffrage movement was the Qualification of Women (County and Borough Councils) Act of 1907; it ensured that women could be candidates for all councils. The WLGS was revived in 2007 to celebrate its centenary

and to further the cause of engaging more women in government.

The history of women's participation in local government is confusing. When County Councils were first formed in 1889 there were women candidates, two of whom were successfully elected, but it soon became apparent that this had not been intended and they met with legal challenges. Legislation in 1894 closed this opportunity for women altogether while opening others. For the first time, women were accepted as Poor Law Guardians, for example.

Women ratepayers gradually gained experience of elected office as members of school boards and as Poor Law Guardians. They were

accepted as candidates on Parish Councils and on Urban and Rural District Councils, but not on County and Borough Councils until 1907.

In High Wycombe, an early female pioneer member of the Borough Council was Frances Dove whose eleventh-hour rejection as mayor in 1908 became national and international news at the time. It has been suggested that the High Wycombe Society should nominate Frances Dove in the above project, a suggestion that we are likely to take forward.

From information supplied by Lesley Clarke

What can you do with a Medlar?

THIS QUESTION was posed in the Winter 2016 *Newsletter* so I thought it about time to offer an answer. The common medlar is an ornamental tree with the botanical name *Mespilus germanica* and it has attractive flowers in late spring. It is self-fertile and the fruits develop in October/November and look like large fat green rose hips. At this stage, they are half ripe and may be picked and used to make jelly although they cannot otherwise be eaten until they have been 'bletted'. There is a small medlar tree in Margaret's Garden. Oh, and it's not an apple as suggested even though the plant can be treated like one and they can sometimes taste similar. It is closer to a rose. Bletting is the process of storing the fruit in a cool place for 2-3 weeks until it turns brown and feels soft but is not actually rotten. At this stage, the flesh may be eaten raw although it is very tart. The fruits can be left on the tree to soften. Medlars are often available from farm shops and will usually be half ripe.

To make good jelly, which goes well with cold cooked meat and used to be common around Christmas time, you should use part-bletted or a mix of bletted and non-bletted fruit.



Recipe for Medlar Jelly

This jewel-like jelly goes with much of the Christmas season's offerings. Use semi-bletted fruit (or an equal mix of fruit that's bletted and not) to get plenty of flavour and enough pectin for a good set. Don't mash the simmering fruit or squeeze through the muslin or the jelly will go cloudy.

Ingredients

- 1kg (2 lbs) medlars, halved
- Juice of half a lemon
- 500g (1 lb) caster sugar, approx. see Method.
- 1 vanilla pod, split along its length (not essential).

Method

Put the medlars in a large pan with the lemon juice and just enough water to cover. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for an hour. Strain overnight through a jelly bag or muslin into a bowl.

Put a saucer into the freezer and kilner type jars in a low oven to warm. Measure the juice and pour into a clean pan. For each 500ml (1 pt) of juice, add 375g (15 oz) of caster sugar. Add the vanilla pod and warm gently, stirring until the sugar has dissolved. Turn up the heat and boil, without stirring, for five minutes. Test the jelly for the setting point by dribbling a little jelly on to a chilled saucer, leaving it for a minute and then pushing it with your finger. If it wrinkles, it's done. Allow another few minutes' boiling if the setting point hasn't been reached and test again. Repeat if necessary.

Pour into sterilised, warm jars and seal. The jelly will keep, sealed, in a cool, dark place, for at least 12 months. Sieved pulp can be used to make chutney or put on the compost heap.

Malcolm Connell

Petty Matters

THOSE OF YOU who attended my talk to the Society in March may remember that I mentioned the extraordinary life of Sir William Petty whose portrait in the form of a medallion is to be found in All Saints church on the front of the memorial to his son, Henry Petty, the first Earl of Shelburne (of the first creation) who bought Loakes Manor at the start of the eighteenth century. I also drew attention to the crest on the Petty coat of arms which is a beehive, unlike the more familiar centaur which adorns our guildhall; the centaur was used by Henry's nephew, John, (the first Earl of Shelburne of the second creation) who was born John Fitzmaurice, but obliged to change his name on receipt of his inheritance from Henry. The Petty motto used by Henry *Ut Apes Geometriam* was also supplanted by the Fitzmaurice motto: *Virtute non Verbis* which appears on our Guildhall and is still used by the Lansdowne family today.

Since my talk, I have come across a delightful explanation of the Petty coat of arms penned by Sir William Petty himself. I appealed via social media for help in translating his Latin, and before long I had a response, thanks to Society member Frances Alexander who knew a man who knew a lady who could help.

So here for the record is Sir William Petty's original poem:

*Coeruleus candour color mea acuta decoret,
Non atrum aut fulvum, nec cruir horrificet.
Stellam ut spectate vis, positoque timore quiescit,
Sic mens quae spectat sola quieti Deum.
Mella ut apes condunt sic scire Geometra quaerit;
Utile quaerere apum est, scire geometriae.
Sedulus ergo ut apes feci geometriam ut inde
Utile cum dulci scire et habere queam.
At ni peram ut apes quae per geometriam habebam
Heu! "Vos non vobis mellificatis apes."*

And here is the delightful translation, kindly provided by Hilary Murphy:

*May a sparkling blue colour decorate my shields, not black or gold,
nor may blood (red) cause dread.
As a bird looks upon a star, and, laying aside its fear rests, so
does the still and solitary mind look upon God.
As bees store up honey, so the Geometer seeks to know:
It is for bees to seek and for Geometry to know what is useful.
Hence, like the bees, I have created a geometric form that I may
thus be able to know and own the useful together with the beautiful.
But if I, like the bees, lose what I had through geometry,
Alas! 'You bees do not make honey for yourselves!'*

Hilary, who read Classics at Oxford and has spent most of her working life teaching Latin and Greek, also recognised that the final line of William Petty's poem was lifted from a commentary on Virgil's *Georgics* by Aelius Donatus in the 4th Century AD.

She further commented that the device on the blue (azure) 'bend' diagonally bisecting the shield is a compass needle pointing towards the Pole Star.

At the time of my talk I was not aware that I would later find the Petty coat of arms, complete with beehive crest, faithfully reproduced in stained glass in the chapel at Bowood House, and since then, my attention has also been drawn to a number of heraldic plaques in the 'Big School' at Wycombe Abbey. I have been corresponding with the archivist at Wycombe Abbey to try to establish for certain if these are hatchments or later gothic-style decoration. Several display the Fitzmaurice centaur and others include the Petty motto. They are worthy of further study.

According to Lorna Flint's book on the history of Wycombe Abbey school, the hall which acquired the familiar name of 'Big School' was originally constructed around 1890 as a playroom for the first four daughters of the third Lord Carrington (who subsequently became the Marquess of Lincolnshire). It is therefore puzzling to find heraldic material relating to the Shelburnes and Fitzmaurices in its decoration.

Since my talk, many people have asked me about the research it contained. Of the many resources I used, two very informative articles by David Snoxell have appeared in previous editions of this *Newsletter* (Spring and Autumn 2007). They provide an excellent overview of the contributions made locally and to the politics of the day by the three successive holders of the title Earl of Shelburne who owned Loakes Manor. These central characters in the Shelburne narrative were:

- 1st Earl (1st Creation 1719)– Henry (1675-1751) who bought Loakes Manor in 1700, aged 25
 - 1st Earl (2nd Creation 1753) – John (1706-1761) who came to Loakes Manor in 1751, aged 45
 - 2nd Earl (2nd Creation) – William (1737-1805) who inherited Loakes Manor in 1761, aged 24.
- William became Prime Minister (1782-3) and 1st Marquis of Lansdowne (1784) before retiring to Bowood in 1798. William's elder son was known as Earl Wycombe for much of his life.

Jackie Kay

Henry Keene's contribution to the Shelburne legacy

WHEN JOHN FITZMAURICE inherited the Wycombe estates (which included the Manors of Loakes and Temple Wycombe) from his uncle, Henry Petty, 1st Earl of Shelburne, he was soon more involved locally than his uncle had ever been. He was elected a burgess in 1751, and an alderman and MP in 1754. His achievements owed much to his employment of the architect, Henry Keene.

Ashford, in his *History of High Wycombe* explained "The Noble Alderman not only joined the Common Council in its meetings from time to time but presented it with a Gildhall (sic) in which to hold them. It is evident that the old one had been considered inadequate, and the Common Council had been in the habit of opening its meetings there and rapidly adjourning for the main business to the greater comfort of the Swan or the Catherine Wheel. Lord Shelburne's Gildhall still stands facing up the broad High Street towards London, a graceful classical version of the more typical half-timbered market-house on oak stilts which it had replaced. In the Gildhall Keene designed a building which fulfilled the needs of the Corporation and its corn market in an elegant and aristocratic manner worthy of its donor's rank."

John first appointed Henry Keene as his architect to enlarge Loakes Manor House. He commissioned a new east facing frontage which was a three-storied classical rectangular building, now hidden by the remodelling in gothic style, carried out by the first Lord Carrington fifty years later. He then commissioned the building of the new Guildhall which bears the somewhat ungracious inscription in stone, 'Erected in the year of our Lord 1757 at the expense of John Earl of Shelburne in memory of which the Corporation caused this to be written'.

Keene was asked in 1756 to complete the tower of All Saints Parish Church with cornice, battlements and pinnacles. He designed the Shelburne Pew (a sort of loggia with windows since moved to Wycombe Abbey) which was ostentatiously positioned across the chancel arch to remind the Corporation, congregation and clergy of the pre-eminence of the Shelburne family. He also designed the gothic glazed double doors which last year were moved from the below the Tower to the chancel where they form a splendid if somewhat incongruous entrance from the Lady Chapel.

John's munificence towards town and church was not entirely altruistic. He was rewarded with a seat in Parliament (1754-60) and the Rector obliged over the positioning of the massive Shelburne Monument which blocked a window in the North Chapel. As with the Pew, the Monument projected the power and influence of the Shelburne family.

In 1754, John bought the Bowood estate in Wiltshire where he employed Keene to build stables and complete the House with a grand

portico on the south front. The Bowood archives contain an account for the work at Wycombe between 1755 and 1759: for making thirty journeys to the town to supervise the builders Keene charged £45; for designing the additions to the church £23.17s; for the Guildhall £83.13s and for the House 'after consultation with Lord and Lady Shelburne' £76.5s.

Born in 1726, Keene was appointed Surveyor to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey at the age of 20 and Surveyor of the Fabric six years later. He worked on the chapel of Hartlebury Castle (palace of the Bishop of Worcester), in the late 1740s; Trinity College Dublin, 1752-59; built the octagonal church at Hartwell, 1753-55; and in Oxford designed buildings for Balliol, Magdalen, University, Christ Church and Worcester Colleges, the Radcliffe Infirmary and Radcliffe Observatory between 1766-76.

As mentioned in the Autumn 2014 edition of this *Newsletter*, Keene was depicted in a 'conversation piece' painted by Robert Pyle in 1760 – a photograph of this featured in a *Country Life* article in March 1945, although the original painting had been destroyed by fire in 1940. It showed 14 of Keene's craftsmen (his clerk, sculptor, masons, carpenters and plasterer) gathered in what looks like the Guildhall. One is pointing to what may be an architectural plan while Keene looks on.

A booklet dated 1839 entitled "The Hall of the Chancellor's" reveals that the painting was a present for Keene. An 1824 letter from Thomas Gayfere, son of one of the sitters, identifies them all by name and says that Keene, "when he had any plan for execution, always invited his various artificers to dine with him, and after dinner when the wine and punch with pipes and tobacco were placed on the table introduced his plan and invited observations". It is unlikely that the artist painted the scene in the Guildhall, but he probably had access to plans of it for use in his composition. The *Country Life* article quotes Fred Skull claiming that 'in all probability' Lord Shelburne is the gentleman seated at the end of the table. We now know that this is very unlikely as Gayfere identified him as Mr Chapman, the mason!

John died at Bowood in May 1761, aged 55. In a decade he had accomplished several important architectural projects for which he and Henry Keene should both be remembered.

David Snoxell

On the Bassett trail to Bowood and Beyond

SHEPHERDED ONTO the coach by Eileen at each of two pick-up points, on Saturday 29th April, a coachload of Society members and friends set off at the appointed time to join the M4. After an hour or so we left the motorway and were soon passing through Royal Wootton Bassett where local shops went by the name of Bassett Bakery, Bassett Bikes etc. I wondered if the kennels went by the name of Bassett Hounds! A slight confusion over signage caused the coach driver to miss the entrance to the Bowood Estates which resulted in a small detour to turn the coach round in a road which said it led to Wycombe Close, the small roads round there all relating to some part of the Lansdowne ancestry. On arrival at our destination, we were cheerfully welcomed, ushered into the restaurant for coffee, and efficiently divided into two groups to tour the house. Each group was allotted a friendly duo of guides to show us around.

Bowood is the home of the Marquis and Marchioness of Lansdowne and is set in a 2,000-acre park. The estate and unfinished house were originally purchased in 1754 by John, the 1st Earl of Shelburne (of the 2nd creation) who employed architect Henry Keene to complete the building.

And just as he did at Loakes Manor, John's son, the 2nd Earl (who became the First Marquis of Lansdowne) employed Capability Brown to landscape the estate and garden incorporating a lake, cascade and grotto.

Inside the house, there were many items relating to its first eighteenth-century occupants (as well as their ancestors and descendants), including a bust of Henry Petty by the same sculptors as the Henry Petty memorial in All Saints church in Wycombe. A portrait of the Earl of Wycombe (who became the second Marquis) also took pride of place above the fireplace in one of the rooms. Interesting archive material including a diary of Sophia (first wife of the second Earl of Shelburne) was displayed in exhibition cases. The guides were keen to supplement their knowledge with details we could tell them of their Wycombe connections.

The house contains an extensive library as well as many paintings, tapestries and sculptures acquired by various generations of the Lansdowne family. Of particular note: Queen

Victoria's wedding chair is here as is Napoleon's death mask.

On the way round, being from north of the border, I was intrigued to discover that there was mention of a Scottish estate which was owned by the marquis. However, our guides couldn't tell me where it was. After lunch, I decided to buy a guidebook before walking round the rooms again and helpfully this provided a clue that the Scottish estate was in Perthshire.

As I grew up in Perthshire I was determined to find out exactly where, and on completing my tour I asked the shop assistant if she knew where it was. Again no luck. My eyes then fell upon a larger book for sale on the development of Bowood and so I had a clandestine look through this.

I was flabbergasted to discover that the estate and house in question was Meikleour House near Blairgowrie where I was born in 1949. During the Second World War part of the house had been requisitioned as a hospital.

So, little did I realise when I started leading walking tours round Wycombe last year, which, of course, take in the time of the First Marquis of Lansdowne at Loakes Manor, that my beginning also had a connection with the family. It's a small world.

Willie Reid



*Above: Our group being shepherded into Bowood House
Photo: Lorna Cassidy*

Below: NOT Bowood House but Meikleour House near Blairgowrie in County Perth which proved to be of particular personal interest.



St George's Day

IT SEEMS a long time ago now, but the triumphant unveiling of a newly restored Red Lion by our MP, Steve Baker and our Mayor, Cllr Zia Ahmed, in the High Street on St George's day, was a fitting final milestone in a project in which the High Wycombe Society has been pleased to play its part.

When it comes to news coverage, quarterly publications can rarely hope to compete with weekly newspapers so it is hoped that interested readers saw the eight-page Bucks Free Press supplement produced at the time. It was good to see members and friends in the High Street, many of whom also accepted a general invitation to migrate up to Wycombe Museum to celebrate afterwards.

While everything seemed to come together well on the day, it was a different story in the run-up to the event as the logistical arrangements for delivering the lion to the High Street fell through a few days in advance of the unveiling. With less than thirty hours to go before the appointed time for the unveiling, amid the early morning setting up of the Saturday market stalls, there were few people around to witness the lion being gently lifted into position.



Gently does it!

Photo: Jackie Kay

Margaret's Garden

AFTER THE EARLY spring flowers in the garden came the tulips and the hellebores. The winter aconites and daffodils have all gone over and provide us with plenty of work clearing them so other flowers can get a chance to come through. We really could do with an extra pair of hands (or two) on a Tuesday morning so if anyone feels inclined please come along. It is a very special place to spend a couple of hours.

The fig tree and medlars are forming fruit again and the roses are budding up. (See page 6 for more information about medlars.)

We had a donation of some purple water irises from Stan Armstrong which are much appreciated. They took some lifting into place but it was well worth the effort as they came into bloom a couple of weeks later.

Dave, Wendy, Irene and Julie

Where did the weeds go?

MAINTAINING THE BALANCE between the clear water channels needed to use the boats on the Dyke and the natural habitat required to give shelter to fish and protection of nesting sites for waterfowl



such as coots and their chicks, is a difficult task. When the decision is taken to clear the weeds, this machine makes light of what would otherwise be arduous activity. I happened upon this scene as I was walking past the boat house one afternoon just as the driver (or should I say pilot?) was completing his afternoon's task. ***JK***

From Rock and Roll to Rocking Chair

ON THE EVENING OF Friday 26th May members and non-members alike gathered at The Riverside to hear local musician John (Dusty) Dunsterville tell us about his long and varied career in music.

Not only did he take us back to his childhood, introducing us to his family by means of nostalgic slides and carry us along with his increasing interest in music, but he also serenaded us with excerpts of the songs and tunes which had been significant in his career, many of which prompted the audience to join in. We also discovered that partner and Society member Jane Dunsterville is a dab hand at playing the maracas!

We gained new insights into past goings-on at the Nag's Head, and learned how Townfield House had once been a regular music venue as well as the Town Hall which held weekly dances and hosted many of the top groups of the day.

John had toured America with Rick Wakeman, had played with Lonnie Donnegan and Val Doonican among others, so had experience of all kinds of audiences and venues to share.

He now runs "Dusty's" blues club on alternate Wednesday evenings at the Holmer Green sports and social club.

Altogether it was an enjoyable and light-hearted evening, despite the heat, a slight departure from our usual format, but a very fitting Society contribution to the Wycombe Arts Festival.

Eileen Walters

Footpaths – Find them or lose them

FOLLOWING THE earlier newsletter items about changes to the law regarding public rights of way, we have now obtained a copy of the definitive map for High Wycombe. Many of you will have seen it at our meeting on the 24th March.

The map currently records 24 bridleways and over 100 footpaths in the unparished area of town. All are individually numbered with their starting and finishing grid co-ordinates. Some are so short that they are hardly visible on the map, while others run for much longer distances.

I've spotted a few anomalies – paths which I thought were public rights of way, but which are not recorded as such on the map. There may be others which are missing as well.

If you are free during the week and would like to join me in walking some of the footpaths, to confirm the map is accurate and that the paths exist and are open, please contact me so I can add you to my list of eager walkers. All walks will finish at a coffee shop if we can find one!

I can be reached via e-mail at Val.Hinkins@btinternet.com (preferred) or by telephone on 01494 534754. Please leave a message if I am not there.

Val Hinkins

A Centenary Celebration

SOCIETY MEMBER, Mrs Lily Simons, recently had a special reason to celebrate. A party of family and friends gathered for the occasion. In a photo taken by a neighbour, Marie Rollison, she can be seen wearing her birthday badge of honour, having attained 100 years.

According to our records, Mrs Simons was living in Flackwell Heath when she joined the High Wycombe Society back in 1974. In fact she had lived in Flackwell Heath since the 1950s until a recent move to Chorleywood.

Our thanks to Society Member, Sally Scagell, who provided the news for this publication. Sally's webpages detailing local history of Flackwell Heath include some reminiscences contributed by Mrs Simons.



Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr and Mrs C Baker
Mr J Hoggett
Ms S Longman
Mr A Murphy
Mr R J Phoenix
Mr E Silvester
Mr R Watkins
Mrs T West
Mr R Westmoreland
Ms S White

An Autumn Austin Treat

Do you have local friends or family who are interested in cars and motoring? Perhaps you share some nostalgia for the British Motor industry in times gone by? If so, why not invite them to join you on the evening of 20th October to hear Julian Hunt talk about Herbert Austin and his contribution to the motor industry? Many of us in the High Wycombe Society know Julian and, in his own words, “when you’re invited back to an organisation, you know you must have done something right!” It’s a bit of a departure from the usual scope of his subject-matter, but we can be assured of a well-researched and cheerfully-presented evening’s entertainment. Let’s welcome him back!

Walking Wycombe with Willie

From tentative beginnings a year ago, Willie Reid has established himself as a guide to our town, opening many people’s eyes to the heritage around them. If you haven’t yet been on one of his walks please note that they are highly recommended by those of us who have! The distance covered is approx. 2.5 miles and each walk lasts approx. 2.5 hours. There’s no need to book, just turn up.

The walks for the rest of 2017 are on:

Saturday 8th July,

Saturday 12th August,

Saturday 16th September and

Saturday 14 October.

All start at the museum in Priory Avenue at 10.15 am. So, there’s just time to visit the café there before departure! Willie invites participants who wish to do so to make a donation to Street Kids Direct.

Contributions Please.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue of the Newsletter. Please send material for the next edition addressed to me, Jackie Kay, as The Editor at 19 Hepplewhite Close, High Wycombe, Bucks HP13 6BZ (Tel: 01494 534876), or preferably by email to:

newslettereditor@highwycombesociety.org.uk

All contributions to the next edition must be received by **20th August 2017**.

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!!!**

2017	
Sunday 9th July 11 am to 5 pm	Pann Mill Open Day
17 th – 21 st July River Thames	Swan-Upping takes place this week. A reminder for anyone wishing to follow up on our meeting earlier this year to contrive to be by an appropriate section of the Thames to witness proceedings!
Monday 14th August 10.30 am at Halton	Visit to Bucks County Museum Trust at Halton – An opportunity to see the collection of Francis Colmer paintings and other items relating to our town which are not often on display. To register your interest for this event, please contact Eileen on 01494 449902 or via programme@highwycombesociety.org.uk
Sunday 10th September 11 am to 5 pm	Pann Mill Open Day
Saturday 30 th September The Oculus, Aylesbury 10.am – 4.15 pm	BLHN – The Bucks Local History Network annual event – takes as its theme this year: Buckinghamshire Land and People. As in previous years, the High Wycombe plans to contribute a small display. Would-be participants can download a form from the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society’s website. Please let Jackie know if you want to be included in any shared car arrangements.
Friday 20 th October The Riverside 7.30 pm	Talk entitled: “Lord Austin of Longbridge – Giant of the British Motor Industry” to be given by Julian Hunt (see above)