

THE
HIGH WYCOMBE
SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 194

WINTER 2019

Seasonal Surprises



THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS are on, the festive season is upon us, and we have HWBidCo to thank for injecting a little fun into our Town Centre. The much-maligned granite balls by the Little Market House have been transformed to masquerade as giant Christmas puddings, a change which seems to have met with universal approval; and the recently launched “cheeky elf-trail”, is engaging youngsters’ attention, whilst adults are parting with their money in December. And HWBidCo say they have more surprises planned for seasonal shoppers.

By the time you read this, I hope that many of you will have enjoyed the Society’s get-together at Wycombe Museum. Readers wanting to indulge in a little light heritage from their armchairs are invited to visit the Society’s website and download a new guide to the High Street (soon also to be available at Wycombe library). Those who like puzzles will find more amusement on the centre pages of this Newsletter, which bring you seasonal challenges from Algernon and Clarsach.

This edition of the Newsletter is bursting at the seams with contributions across a wide range of topics. Members of our Planning Group have been particularly busy trying to keep abreast of all the changes happening in our town as well as those on the horizon. I’ve had to defer some “breaking news” and regular project updates until the Spring.

A cloud of uncertainty currently surrounds how we will support a future events programme. A shortage of volunteers to undertake the roles formerly carried out by our Programme and Membership group has prevented us from compiling and issuing a programme for the start of 2020 in the usual manner. Rest assured we have a lot of ideas and some tentative arrangements for Spring and Summer events, but we would very much like to hear from members who could maybe help us bring our ideas to fruition (or who have ideas of their own).

Jackie Kay

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

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Planning Matters

THERE HAS BEEN MUCH to occupy your Planning Group's attention lately: major developments which affect the town centre both now and in the future; changes coming to fruition in the Desborough area; and hopeful progress towards regeneration of the Station area. Following the adoption of the new Local Plan reported in the last *Newsletter*, the Council has set to filling in some of the gaps with new Supplementary Planning Documents. What may, or may not, turn out to be the last "Quality Counts! Tour" has taken place, rewarding for all the participants, as always (see p.12). Preservation of the town's heritage still occupies a major part of our work, and we continue to do what we can to ensure that the vast new housing developments hitherto known as the "Reserve Sites" are good places in which to live, and good for our town – although the transport implications are, and always will be, daunting. Meanwhile, Suffield Hill has opened to a mixed reception from early users.

Suffield Hill The long-awaited new road, which completes the western end of the alternative route as envisaged in the Local Plan, is now open to traffic. The new route is engineered as shared space, with low kerbs and little signage. From the west the route starts at the Westbourne Street roundabout in Oxford Rd (now called West Wycombe Rd on the lampposts), bears left at the junction with Desborough Rd past the end of Bridge Street in an open mini plaza (a bit like a roundabout), and now continues up the new Suffield Hill where it joins Queen Alexandra Road and past the hospital to the "magic roundabout" system.

Some words of caution: if you want to turn into Suffield Road from Suffield Hill it is very steep, and the visibility is poor. Also coming from Lily's walk or westbound from the Eden car park, you can now only go up the new hill; it is not possible to go west to Desborough Road or West Wycombe Road. This has taken some motorists by surprise, resulting in a lot of three-point turns on the new road.



Suffield Hill viewed from the junction with Suffield Road

Town Centre

On 21st October WDC's Cabinet took its equally long-awaited decision on whether to de-culvert the River Wye along Oxford Road between Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer. A number of Society members were in the public gallery to watch and hear proceedings. On the face of it, the Cabinet's response to the recommendations of the River Wye Task & Finish Group, presented

with great commitment by Cllr Hugh McCarthy, was disappointing. Although they agreed that the "feasibility of remaking the river" was established, they accepted Cllr David Johncock's advice (as Planning Portfolio Holder) that he could not recommend the project at present because the economic case was not yet convincing. But two other items were before the Cabinet that evening. One was a comprehensive Regeneration Strategy for the whole of Wycombe District, prepared by Inner Circle Consulting, containing a large set of proposals and a wish-list for High Wycombe Town Centre, which was very positive about the need to open up the River in the town centre. The other item was about the Town Centre Masterplan and Public Realm Improvements. Together these two items convinced the Cabinet to make funding available forthwith for detailed costing of public realm improvements including the Oxford Road stretch of the River Wye. And one very clear statement was that Oxford Road should not be remodelled in the style of the other recent town centre improvements if that were to prejudice de-culverting (which it certainly would!).

Underlying the whole debate was the knowledge that WDC will cease to exist after the local government elections on 7th May 2020. The contributions made to the debate by non-Cabinet members were extraordinarily positive about the River Wye, but it was frustrating that they could not dictate to the incoming Buckinghamshire Council. So most of the conclusions of the Cabinet had to take the form of recommendations to the new Council. Informally, we have been encouraged to be optimistic – the indications are that the new Buckinghamshire Council will be favourably inclined towards the Regeneration Strategy and that de-culverting will take place, including the Oxford Road stretch.

Indeed, we were left with the thought that, important though the River Wye is to the future of the town centre, the Regeneration Strategy and the Public Realm exercise have many more aspects which deserve our attention.

Ottakers becomes Waterstones becomes A. N Other Bar! Occupying a prominent position in

Queen's Square sits a store that we have surely all visited. For a long time it was a bookshop of note in the town, but for the last few years it has lain derelict, a symptom of the town's retail failings. WDC has recently acquired the building, and intends to invest in making it a modern, striking building to contain two separate cafés on the ground floor, and offices on the first floor above. In mid-November, WDC gave itself planning permission to go ahead with the project. The Planning Group broadly welcomes this renovation, and sincerely hopes that it will bring about some rejuvenation of the area, but wasn't thrilled with the perforated metal screen cladding, and particularly the shutters that will be used at night to deter rough sleepers and other nocturnal visitors.

Heritage The Group's intrepid resident conservation architect – Tony Mealing – has been delving into the history of one of our town centre's less conspicuous buildings at 3 Cornmarket. He only intended to get a haircut there, but fortunately he took his camera with him. (See p5.) And former Planning Group Chairman, Andrew Taylor, home from his recent travels, has been making good progress on the design for an Interpretation Board in Church Street, drawing attention to the site of the former Black Boy pub, now used as an outdoor seating area for clients of the Mad Squirrel. Expect to hear more about this in 2020.

Progress on developments in the **Desborough Road Area** has provoked some lively discussions. The “punchy” visual impact of Desbox is not universally appreciated, but functionally it seems to be a success in providing accommodation and outlets for “vibrant people”. A similar approach is planned for units at Bellfield Road. Group member Robert Hutton went to take a closer look and has also been keeping a close eye on developments at Birch House. (See pp 6-7.)

The Brunel Shed and the Eastern Quarter

For some time now the Group has been concerned about the physical state of the I K Brunel-designed “train shed” (or “railway station building” in 1840s parlance) in the modern station forecourt. This building was unappreciated for many years but then Grade 2-listed in 2000 at the instigation of David Lane of the Broad-Gauge Society. Historic England's listing refers to its roof as a “classic example of a widespan all-timber roof with eleven large queen post trusses” and “a continuous roof light down the centre”. Tony Mealing has recently turned up a wonderful historic photograph of one of Brunel's broad-gauge locomotives at the station and the building's appearance was enhanced a few years ago by Decreate's splendid mural on the Amersham Hill end. Wycombe District Council recently completed its

compulsory purchase and we hope they will now attend to its protection against the elements. The Group has been encouraged by the vision in the Regeneration Strategy of developing the Station into “a compact, multi-mode transport interchange incorporating an enhanced space for bus stops, electric bike hire and electric car charging.” “More than just a transient zone, it will be a place for commerce and socialising – transforming the gateway to the town experience.” Fine words, indeed, but the Group is hopeful.

Update on the Reserve Housing Sites

The Group's work on the four reserve housing sites affecting High Wycombe continues. Most recently, Tony Hatton has succeeded Andrew Taylor as the Society's representative on the Abbey Barn Liaison Group which has switched attention from Abbey Barn South, now being marketed as Abbey Barn Park, to the smaller site at the foot of the hill known as Abbey Barn North (ABN). This is a sensitive site with important wildlife interests to be respected. The “Development Brief” (dated March 2019 but only recently shared with the liaison group), gives necessary parameters for any developer's application for Planning Permission. It shows 130-140 dwellings to be built on the presently undeveloped area between Deangarden Rise and the former dry ski slope, known locally, as “the daisy field”. Only about half of the site would be developed, for environmental reasons (including the important view from across the valley), and, further, there would be wildlife corridors within the developed part. This would prevent the normal boundary structures, so probably making the dwellings unsuitable for families but nevertheless, in the council's opinion, very marketable. Abbey Barn Lane, connecting High Wycombe and Flackwell Heath, is to be realigned, to replace the present narrow bridge over the former Bourne End railway with a wider one, the new section to be just within the site, to include the only vehicular access to the site and to end with a new roundabout at Kingsmead Road.

A New Supplementary Planning Document – **the Householder Planning and Design Guidance document** has recently been open for public consultation. The guide is intended to help householders when considering extending and altering their homes and gives succinct information about planning considerations. It makes the point that every house contributes to the character of its neighbourhood. Sadly, looking about some areas of our town, the need for such a guide is all too apparent.

Planning Group

Confessions of a Trustee

WHEN DID YOU last look at the Society's website? A Trustee of the High Wycombe Society (who wishes to remain anonymous) recently admitted that he "generally ignored" advice to visit the website for further information and said that he thought that he was "probably not alone" in doing so. He was "pleasantly surprised" therefore to discover a "wealth of information" he had not realised was there.

Six years ago, the Society invested a significant sum in redesigning its website. One of the new features was a means of adding "news posts" – typically short bulletins with an accompanying image, although the feature could be used for more substantial contributions. Links to the most recent news posts appear on the far left of the Society's Home Page, and a complete record of past news posts is also accessible via the "Latest News" page.

Over the past few years "news posts" have been used on an irregular basis for various purposes: supplementing Newsletter articles with links to online material; supporting activities such as our de-culverting campaign; and occasionally releasing completely new material. So, if you haven't looked at it, you, too, might be "pleasantly surprised" to discover what is there!

Try looking for an item entitled "Fake News" – you'll need to go to the "Latest News" page and scroll down a bit – and you'll find a transcript from the Society archives of a copy of a Civil War

propaganda pamphlet about the phantom battle on the Rye; or select "New Activity Trails" to download a copy of Jean James' leaflets which featured in the recent Autumn Newsletter.

The latest addition to our online offerings is a 2019 Christmas present from the Editor, to be found under the heading "High Street Chatter". It's a new online edition of a 20-page booklet originally produced by the Bucks Free Press over a hundred years ago, but substantially re-arranged and illustrated for a modern readership. The booklet in its turn was based on a series of talks delivered to groups of young people by Charles Raffety in the early twentieth century in which he reminisced about his Victorian childhood in High Wycombe. The illustrations are mostly drawn from the SWOP (Sharing Wycombe's Old Photographs) archive. Please download and enjoy!

Jackie Kay

Return to Heathrow

BACK IN June 2018 the bus service to Heathrow Airport from High Wycombe was withdrawn by Carousel Buses because too few people were using it. However, some 18 months later (from 29th December 2019) an hourly daily service is being reinstated by Carousel Buses with financial support from Heathrow Airport. Route 102 will serve Beaconsfield "New Town" thus making a longer journey. The A40 trip which once took 60 minutes will now have a scheduled duration varying between 77 and 108 minutes depending on the time of day.

Coach-type vehicles with underfloor luggage compartments will be used and will serve all stops, unlike the Green Line service of yesteryear which had fewer stops, a running time of 52 minutes and used the M40 between Beaconsfield and Uxbridge. How will adults with children in a buggy fare when using this new service for short local journeys? The driver will, presumably, have to leave his cab to put the buggy in the luggage compartment. And will the vehicles, with their steps, be accessible for those with disabilities, shopping etc?

During the late evening and night there will still be a service BUT only between Beaconsfield and Heathrow Airport. The section of route between Beaconsfield and High Wycombe will not be served. Late buses do not easily connect with trains between Beaconsfield and High Wycombe and the bus service continues when the train no longer operates. I can foresee these overnight journeys carrying plenty of fresh air.

This matter is to be pursued with Heathrow Airport who are funding the service as the Beaconsfield to High Wycombe section is where most of its potential customers live. Buses operate through the night from Central London to Uxbridge, and after the last train has departed any night-time traveller could have the opportunity to catch a bus to Uxbridge and then transfer to this service, if only it continued to Wycombe.

What will be the fare? As at 14th November this has not been disclosed but a day return to Uxbridge is now £7.50 on a Carousel bus and this compares unfavourably with Arriva's £4.60 day return between High Wycombe and Reading.

Connectivity between High Wycombe and the Thames Valley/Heathrow by public transport remains a big issue for the Transport Group to pursue.

Peter Cartwright

No. 3, The Cornmarket

ON THE FACE of it, No.3 the Cornmarket in High Wycombe is an unprepossessing building, a typical Victorian brick two-storey town building, with no particularly unusual external features. But subject it to a little light investigation work, and a different story soon emerges. Today the building is used as a “Gentlemen’s hair-dressers”, but in its past it has been an insurance office, a butcher’s shop, and before that it was part of the old “Shambles”.

Just step inside and look at the wealth of exposed timber framing. Here in full view is the oak frame of a building which was at one time jettied, meaning that upper floors had larger areas than the ground floor footprint which determined the ground rent to be paid. A wealth of clues point to the building originating in the early to mid-1500’s or possibly even earlier.

Firstly there is staining on the underside of the old first floor joists where a support beam ran to support the floor joists, and where the party wall framing was notched over the ground floor external wall head rail. A closer look at the centre cross beam, the one that runs front to back, reveals stud wall slots that once framed the party wall between two dwellings or shops. In what remains of the old gable wall end frame there is a Dovetail slot (see below). This held the external wall head rail for the ground floor framing; the dovetail was there to tie the framing together and prevent the end walls spreading. This is a much older construction detail from when buildings did not rely on nails or metal fixings, so is the building even older



An unprepossessing exterior? No. 3 is on the right.

than the mid 1500’s? There is even some red ochre paint from a much older external decoration scheme.

The stud slots show that this was not a brick building at all but all timber framed, the side and party wall stud voids being infilled with lime plaster and hazel lathings.

The old back wall is now an internal wall but behind it is an older

light well; this was the medieval side passage to the back of the property. Behind that there is a Victorian light well complete with windows, now roofed over. However, enough remains to show where the old rear wall was, and again the slots for the lime and timber stud external wall are visible. (See below.)

Down in the basement, most of the old timbers have been replaced over the years, but enough remains, together with the brick floor and a Barrel Shelf, to give an idea as to the original use. There is some later timber brick and box stud framing but the jointing shows that this was inserted later in the building’s life, probably in the early 1700’s.

Tony Mealing



Tell-tale features to an expert eye:

Left: a dovetail slot in what remains of the old gable end frame.

Right: stud slots for the old lime and timber stud external wall.



Desborough Area

There are two big new developments affecting the Desborough Area – the first of these, Desbox, is nearing completion and the other, at Birch House, Leigh Street is well underway.

DesBox, situated in the Baker Street regeneration area of Desborough in the town centre, has accommodated some of the relocated artists from Leigh Street since that site's sale to a developer a while back. It is surrounded by the new Aldi, various offices and a car park currently under construction for the displaced one on Desborough Road that is due to be built on.

Most of the site works have now finished, bar road works to the south boundary, which appear to be nearly complete.

Some readers may be familiar with BoxPark in East London's Shoreditch or Stack in Newcastle which offer temporary or 'meanwhile' sites to generate local footfall and interest in a previously under-represented area. You can read more about the increase of this type of retail on the Business pages of the BBC News website.

It could be agreed that the Desborough area is long overdue for regeneration after suffering from antisocial behaviour and an undesirable feel to the place. Hopefully, with the new improvements in infrastructure and injection of capital, DesBox can provide an alternative shopping experience to the town centre and act as a draw for other similar businesses.

DesBox has already been running in its current



Dark grey with a punchy red logo – a striking appearance but not to everyone's taste.

form for about six months or so.

There's no better way to know what's going on than to visit the site and see at first-hand what it's all about!

Set over three levels, painted in dark grey with a punchy red logo, it is certainly striking in appearance.

Most prominent of all is the coffee shop branded Tone, situated on the corner. It offers an outside seating area,

surrounded appropriately by beech trees. There is a gallery too. Their Twitter handle is @tonecoffeeshop. There is also a barber: The Barber Box, a home interior design service: Mella Design, a vintage bike shop and a candle maker: Chiltern Candle Co. Other businesses on the levels above include an architect, a personal training studio and more. DesBox is a part of the wider regeneration of the area which includes: improvements to the public realm alongside the river adjacent to Aldi; tree planting; and a resin bond pebble pavement more akin to those to be found in Kensington Palace Gardens than we are accustomed to seeing in Wycombe.

Further housing is due to be built on the site of Collins House, on the corner of Bridge Street and Desborough Road, which should hopefully bring inward investment and increase the vibrancy and desirability of the area.



The new Tone coffee shop, a prominent feature on one corner, complete with outdoor seating area surrounded by beech trees. A welcome addition to the street scene in warmer weather.



October 2019



2020?

Birch House, Leigh Street

The second development of interest in the Desborough area at the moment is Birch House in Leigh Street. It is in the process of undergoing a significant renaissance, having been in a state of neglect for many years. Teetering on the edge of being beyond repair, its purchase by MCR Property Group saved the building. After a lengthy planning process, permission was granted for two hundred and twenty-eight studio, one- and two-bedroom properties.

When I visited, the rear of the site was being cleared of its final buildings. According to a worker on the site, there was a delay due to mobile phone equipment needing to be removed first. Branded as “The Old Works”, the rear of the site will comprise new-build properties reached by stairs, due to the steepness of the site.

Several properties in Leigh Street were demolished to make way for additional homes to the west of the site. Whilst this was regrettable, it could be argued that it was all in pursuit of a greater good.

Work on Birch House is underway, with the cleaning of the brickwork, installation of south-facing windows in the roof and the removal of obsolete pipe work. Crittal-style windows will be reintroduced, along with a slate roof. Groundworks continue, to create a car park and foundations for the multi-storey buildings.

The impasse between the developer and Wycombe District Council over fly tipping appears to have been resolved. The walkway from Green Street and Desborough Avenue will remain in place.

Paradigm, the owner of the vacant site on the opposite side of Leigh Street, has received planning permission for the construction of a further eighty-two homes.

These two large scale developments, together with the previously mentioned DesBox development, are all part of the regeneration along Desborough Road, which will hopefully be a change for good. Watch this space!

Robert Hutton



Views of the building site with scaffolding



Algernon's Challenge No.2

LAST YEAR our local football team, Wycombe Wanderers, celebrated promotion to the third tier of English football, and the Newsletter marked their success with a quiz about the towns and cities that the team's supporters might visit on their travels.

As this edition goes to press, the Wanderers are sitting comfortably at the top of their League – the highest position they have reached in their 132-year history. So, let's enjoy their wonderful achievement with another challenge. From the clues below you are once again invited to identify the home towns and cities of some of the teams that will be coming to High Wycombe this season.

1. The location of a Grade 1 Listed urban Park.
2. The place where Jesus College was founded in the Fifteenth Century, built to rival the Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge.

3. Where the legendary lozenges, Fisherman's Friends, are made.

4. The place that is making preparations to be City of Culture, 2021.

5. The home of John Gretton, Olympic Gold Medallist, Member of Parliament, and Brewery Chairman.

6. Where you can see the world's first iron framed building, now Grade 1 Listed.

7. The town described as "Bland, rigid, sterile and totally boring" by the President of the Royal Town Planning Institute, no less.

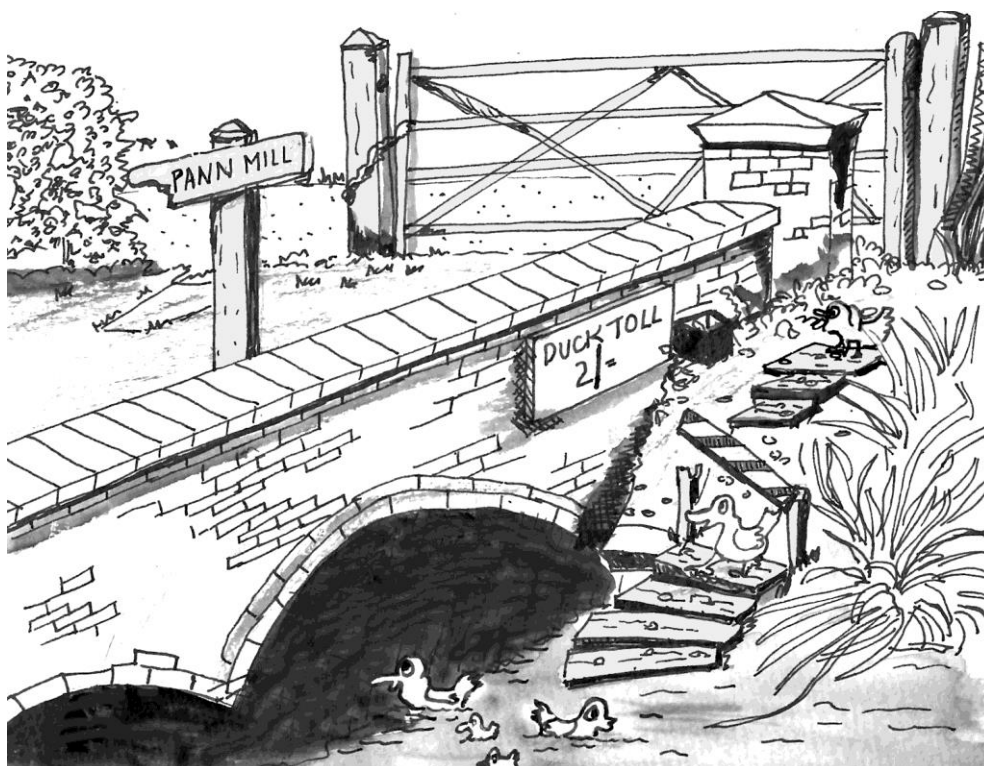
Answers on p16

Ducks on The Rye

FOR LOCAL HISTORIANS, struggling to read and understand committee meeting minutes written over a hundred years ago can be a dry and academic exercise with many puzzles. But it does have its lighter moments. When I was researching the chequered history of Wycombe's Almshouses for the Society's display at the Bucks Local History Network (BLHN) conference, I tried to make sense of the surviving "Repairing Subcommittee" minutes. The Royal Grammar School and Almshouse foundation had responsibility for maintenance of The Rye, an anomaly that persisted until 1923 when the land was ceremoniously handed "back" to the town. Amid the serious reports of "dilapidations" and unsatisfactory living conditions, I was delighted when I came across the following entry, dated 7th March 1895: The committee inspected the gangway leading to the Rye stream near the Pann Mill bridge and it was resolved that the agent be instructed to place a board and post sloping towards the water to allow ducks to go in and out at a cost of about 2/-.

Cartoonist **Jacqui Hogan** readily accepted my challenge to illustrate the above unintentional source of amusement.

Jackie Kay



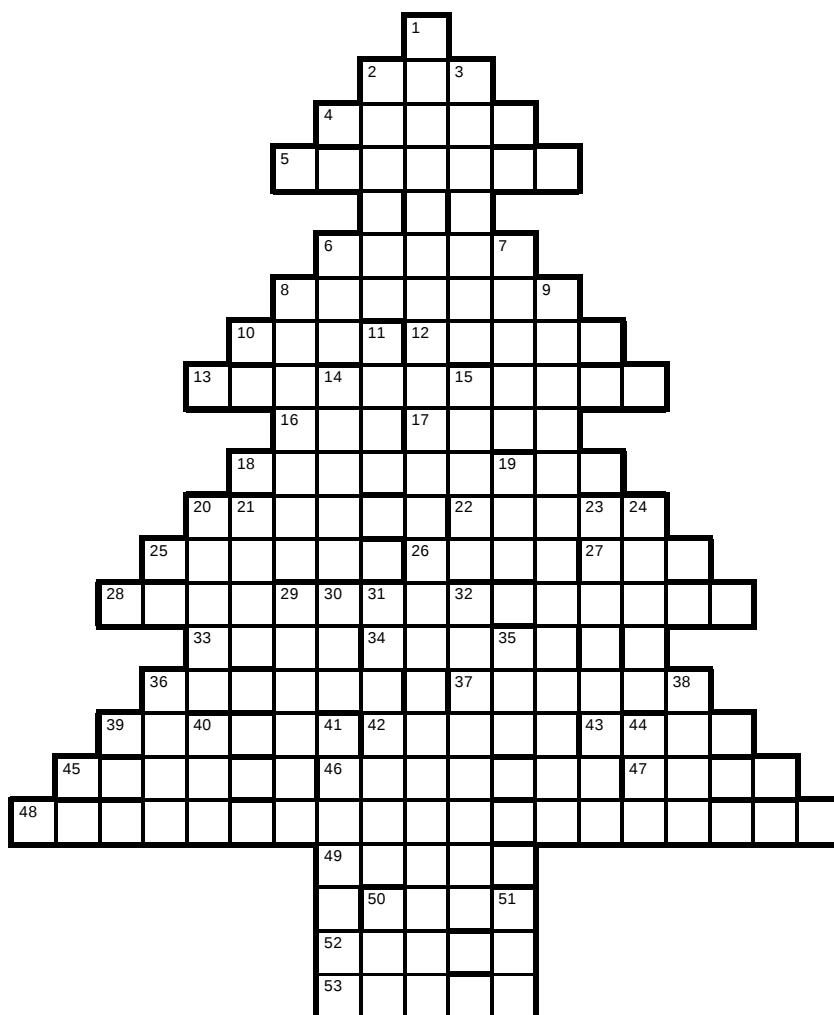
Clarsach's Christmas Challenge

Across

- 2 Lout stole bread's crust (3)
- 4 Sailor returns to pack of cards (5)
- 5 Stop and start for weekly event on the Rye (4,3)
- 6 Say meat in Surrey town (5)
- 8 Rome fed stew for liberty (7)
- 10 Zestful spirit - or sleeping? (4)
- 12 Prophet, upright reveals an angry state (3,2)
- 13 Listen for this song on Christmas Eve? (6,5)
- 16 Final act for coin stamp (3)
- 17 Starting to relax and lazily lounge to slow music (4)
- 18 Indicator storage in control cabin (6-3)
- 20 Non-automated book - often ignored? (6)
- 22 Improved security after change from fares (5)
- 25 Church official near the edge? (6)
- 26 Red ark hidden in this? The reverse (4)
- 27 Short fast car overwhelmed by Spring tide? (3)
- 28 Re-arrange starlight schism to illuminate the season (9,6)
- 33 Assess note following Egyptian God (4)
- 34 Joint students club (5)
- 36 Ancient Anatolian hidden by lovely Diana (6)
- 37 Chain of Roman Doctrine (6)
- 39 Car for a carnival? (6)
- 42 God appears when IT replaces bishop in Derry (5)
- 43 Sacred boundaries lost in this area (4)
- 45 Pattern made by fitting together small pieces (6)
- 46 Common duck stored in informal larder? (7)
- 47 Decorates Christmas cake with frosting? (4)
- 48 Chronicle shop moves about in this educational establishment (13,6)
- 49 Repeated examination (5)
- 50 Waiting area for artistes (4)
- 52 Travel independently while paddling this? (5)
- 53 Theatre sponsor with divine message (5)

Down

- 1 Listen to performance of this well-known carol (4,3,6,6,4)
- 2 Equipment giving a trireme its power? (6)
- 3 New Boer fad outlawed (7)
- 6 Sea eagle (3)
- 7 Find overnight accommodation in remote landscape (5)



- 8 Discovering a verdict (7)
- 9 Wings number about floury kilt men (4,2,7)
- 11 Highland valley (4)
- 14 EU gig reverses in lively dance (5)
- 15 Light wood often used for modelling (5)
- 19 Sandbank where drinks are served? (3)
- 20 Cheerful and lively (5)
- 21 Operatic solo (4)
- 23 Humpty Dumpty or other intellectuals? (8)
- 24 Abbreviated title for members of the Privy Council (2,3)
- 29 Embroider this pain after running (6)
- 30 Afternoon meal (3)
- 31 Banal arrangement of husbandmen missing BHS (7)
- 32 Mediterranean inhabitant prepared in silica (8)
- 35 Grain from topless coat (3)
- 36 Couples starting libellous speech display an impediment (4)
- 38 Mischievous in vaulted entrance (4)
- 40 Lending this ensures you pay attention (3)
- 41 A cream I whipped for the States (7)
- 44 Army Top Dog? (3)
- 50 Pale, short wannabee (3)
- 51 Come together for hair dressing? (3)

Pann Mill Surprises

NO TWO Pann Mill Open Days are ever quite the same. And as anyone who has ever served on the Programme and Membership committee will be aware, that's partly due to planning, but partly also thanks to luck on the day. At the heart of the organisation for many years now, Eileen Walters has overseen the allocation of stalls and been responsible for many initiatives. In September 2019, she took the bold decision to replace the regular bric-a-brac and book stalls with a model train layout, with Society member Keith Floyd offering the chance to "Have a go" at running the train for a modest sum. A steady flow of willing participants of all ages took turns to control the trains, while on the neighbouring Society stall, visitors were able to see a preview of the Society's exhibition material for the Bucks Local History Network conference.



A very welcome visitor, The Mayor of High Wycombe, dropped in on his way to support an independent fundraising treasure hunt event in aid of his charities.



Other surprise visitors were members of the band "My Mate Dave": Aly Rainey, Matt and Clair Moon and Kelly Simpson, who entertained all-comers with a number of songs including one especially fitting for the occasion: The Ballad of Pann Mill (see opposite). We hope they come again.

A Letter from Eileen

FOR A NUMBER of years I have been an active member of the Society's Programme and Membership group, in recent times acquiring the role of leader of that Group and using the title of "Event Co-ordinator" (or "Event Manager"). As many of you will already know, I have however now moved away from High Wycombe and I have found it increasingly difficult to keep my finger on the pulse of the society from a distance, so have decided to stand down from the position.

The Group has overseen the running of the three open days each year at Pann Mill, the talks and gatherings at The Riverside and special events, most memorably "The Big Picnic" on The Rye in 2015 and the 50th Anniversary celebrations at Wycombe Abbey in 2018. We have also organised various coach trips, and I have been happy to play a part in helping with those.

I would like to thank all those who have helped in many and varied ways, from making tea at meetings, baking cakes for the mill open days, organising rotas for stalls at the mill, liaising with Wycombe District Council for the "Big

Picnic" and with Wycombe Abbey for the Golden anniversary event, volunteers who have given their time to help run various stalls and all the members who have supported the events. It has made my life easier and I have enjoyed taking part and got great satisfaction from seeing others enjoy the events too.

Sadly membership of the Group has dwindled through illness, death and relocation of members, so the running of the programme of events is likely to be difficult to maintain in the way it has been done up to now.

If anyone feels that they could do something to help with organising meetings or events, please let the Editor know. The trustees will continue to oversee the programme, but I am sure they would appreciate any help they can get. I hope to be able to come along to some of the events in the future, particularly the mill open days so I look forward to seeing you there*.

Eileen Walters

[*We look forward to seeing you there too! – Ed]

The Ballad of Pann Mill

As performed by My Mate Dave

CHORUS

*Pann Mill she lies waiting
Her wheels and cogs rusting
'gainst the wall that her Fathers built so long ago
Hidden from view, with an iron board or two
The Wye River runs past where it used to flow through (x2)*

*Her wheels they stopped turning, her walls were struck down
To build a wide roadway for lorries & cars
A grave by the river, forgotten untended
Memories only remain for me now
Pann Mill she lies waiting ...*

*A thousand years past saw King William the Conqueror
Sent his boys out to find out what he'd won
Pann Mill she was listed in 1086
'mongst the buildings and assets of Wicumun Toun
Pann Mill she lies waiting ...*

*But Wycombe remembered to save all the pieces
They built her a wooden house all of her own,
Thrice yearly the Wye River flows at her Breast again
Turning the wheel, grinding flour from the grain*

FINAL CHORUS

*She worked through the ages, her wheels & cogs grinding
The water flowed at her breast so long ago
Grain turns to flour for exchange at the Pepper Pot
Bread for the good folk of Old Wycombe Toun
Pann Mill she lies waiting ...*

*Pann Mill she lies waiting her Wheels & cogs oiled
'gainst the wall that her Fathers built so long ago
Hidden from view with a hedgerow or two
The Wye River runs past, but it also flows through (x2)*

Fall and Rise

FROM CONVERSATIONS with other people of a similar age, I know I'm not alone in believing that "retirement" is not necessarily the end of working life, and indeed many people don't want it to be the end. For me, back in 2015, I had the opportunity to take up a part-time (one day per week) position as Finance Administrator for a small charity. Having spent 45 years in commercial finance, I thought my experience would be of real benefit and I was God's gift to them. After all, how difficult could it be? Answer – very difficult. I found the world of charity finance quite different from the commercial world. Requesting payment from companies to whom goods or services have been supplied is one thing. Asking for money for no material return is something else.

I'm sure many Society members are old enough to remember the original "Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin" on TV. It was revived more recently with Martin Clunes in the lead role. If "I didn't get where I am today by knowing what I'm doing!" is not a quote from that series, it jolly well should have been, and I felt that way on several occasions during the last 4 years – and still do sometimes! However, starting again on what is turning out to be a whole new career has been exciting and invigorating as well as challenging and sometimes scary. That's what led me to take up the role of Treasurer for the High Wycombe Society in 2018 when I had some time spare. That too has been a new and different experience, but every time I step outside my comfort zone I find my comfort zone gets bigger!

Looking around at meetings, I'm pretty sure there are others in a similar position to me, just itching to get involved in doing something rather than watching those insurance for funerals ads on TV. So come on, introduce yourselves to me or one of the other trustees. The Society needs a Membership Secretary and at least one Events Organiser among other positions such as Chairman! Don't worry that you don't know what to do. I didn't either but I learnt. There will be help available from the Trustees. There must be someone out of our 2-300 members (we don't know exactly because we don't have a Membership Secretary) with the ability to work with a spreadsheet or two and happy to contact members by phone or E-mail. There must be someone who will enjoy arranging events.

Come on, rise up before we all fall!

Colin Hingston

The Last Quality Counts! Tour?

ON 3rd SEPTEMBER Wycombe District Council Planning & Sustainability Department held their annual Quality Counts! Tour. Time will show whether this was the last such tour. We have no idea how much planning will actually take place in High Wycombe when the new Buckinghamshire Council, to be elected on 7th May 2020, takes over the reins and “Wycombe District” ceases to exist. Inevitably, the guide/questionnaire for the day – excellent as always – which P&S officers produced for this year’s tour contained some looking back. Quality Counts! tours, so named, began in 2002 but the first “quality tour” took place a year earlier. In 2001, under the then Director, Chris Swanwick, we visited sites as far away as central London and Bishops Stortford. In those days it was free to participants, and a jolly good day out!

The Quality Counts! tours have always been about exchanging ideas and opinions, and learning. This year’s booklet listed eight policy areas where the QC! tours have been able to influence planning policies and their execution, and no fewer than 28 learning points. So these have not just been “jollies”, consuming residents’ and planning officers’ time, but have been an important part of producing planning policies that are thoughtful and responsive to local concerns. They’re still a jolly good day out even with the current charge of £20 including lunch, and open (until the coach is full) to any resident, builder, planning agent or councillor who gets to hear about it.

So this year we visited no fewer than 12 sites in High Wycombe, Marlow, Saunderton and Princes Risborough, eight of them general housing sites where we were encouraged to think about “place-making”, three being for elderly people – a real, and important, growth area – and the other being a modern industrial area.

Our first call was to **Wye Dene** (once “the sewage works site”!) where we noted the wonderful work done to incorporate the Back Stream into the landscape. A very high-quality development, with good materials and layout, but is there really enough variety? Is it slightly monotonous without surprises?



Dolphin Court – Who knew this was there?

Then it was a brief call to the interesting **Dolphin Court**, beyond the Rye in Kingsmead Road, a mature site which makes excellent use of the slope on which it lies, with well-kept green spaces and a good sense of community.

Next we moved on to **Glory Park**, straddling the River Wye on the site of the former Glory Mill in Wooburn. This was far from homogenous, using a variety of design concepts in different areas, and full of surprises. It makes excellent use of the River Wye and its Mill Stream.

Our first call in Marlow was to **Brooke**

Furmstone Place, an older site for older people showing how well it could be done in the old days, in a non-institutional style. It is a homely low-rise development of flats around an intimate central courtyard, where the residents compete to maintain beautiful floral balconies.

We moved on to the perhaps more controversial **Peel Lodge**, a conversion of the old police station not far from central Marlow on the road to Lane End. The façade still has an impressive, and massive, presence about it, and there is a nice little garden around the back but there is car parking unpleasantly close to some ground-floor flats.



Peel Lodge – aptly named to respect its past

Also in Marlow, we dropped in at Michael Shanly Homes’ impressive new **Courtyard** site on the prominent corner where the Bourne End road turns up towards Lane End. Shanly’s have made a really good job of the street scene (Spittal Street) and the interior is lovely too, both the flats and the communal areas, but at quite a price – this is Marlow, after all!

Finally in Marlow, there was **Portlands**, a site that our Marlow Society friends have kept their beady eyes on for many years! Amazingly, in the centre of Marlow, this has a park-like feel to it, with many old trees kept, although perhaps some were too close to the new buildings (or perhaps that should be vice versa). One sensed that our planning officer friends were not 100% happy with it, and we met a local resident who was displeased about the parking arrangements.

But overall, a success, without a doubt, and of course pricey, because this is Marlow!



Spittal Street frontage to the new Courtyard in Marlow

And then for something completely different! **West Yard** in Saunderton is just a stone's throw from the railway station, in the AONB and on the site of former derelict farm buildings. There was considerable negotiation with the developers, Dandara, to ensure it complied with AONB and Green Belt policy (development itself of the site was not in question because it was already developed) but the final result is a real triumph. The development makes excellent use of the slope of the site and the designs are varied, with more than a nod to the former farming use.



Something completely different – West Yard Saunderton

Finally it was to Princes Risborough where our first call was to **Whiteleaf**, a large housing development by W E Black, whose excellent work elsewhere had been visited on an earlier QC!

tour. Alas, in my humble view here they have been less successful. With the site overwhelmed by a huge featureless open space, and dominated also by its roads, an attempt has been made to vary the housing designs but with limited success and the result is large-scale monotony. It was an object lesson in what we have noticed on previous QC! tours, that pleasant large sites are far more difficult to create than smaller ones.

And so we moved on to **Kite Park**, the modern home of Ercol and now of several other employers. The Ercol building itself remains elegant and of its age (an architectural award in 2003). There is an attractive tree-lined boulevard, now with a range of modern factories ("employment units") on the far side, including iLecsis who make metal enclosures! Their building was pleasant enough but others alongside it featured large corrugated doors/blinds. That's industry, I suppose. But the trees and the boulevard did help! And I did enjoy inspecting, here and elsewhere, the charging points for electric cars.



Eaves Court – a caring environment

On to the finishing stretch now – two recent housing developments for elderly people on the outskirts of Risborough: **Eaves Court**, by Anchor Housing (which, because of the previous use of the site, is restricted by planning condition to residents who have some kind of care requirement) and **Chiltern Court**, by the rapidly growing firm, Churchill Retirement Living. Both sites have plenty of green spaces within them and Chiltern Court adjoins a public park, which can be admired by residents on that side, but the other aspect is over an extensive parking area.

And with that it was on to the coach back to High Wycombe. A really excellent and instructive day, thank you WDC.

But will there be another?

Chris Woodman

David Jarman

We are saddened to report that David Jarman, long-serving member of the Society's Transport Group, died on the 22nd October after a short illness. As chairman of the Group, I have been asked to say a few words about him. We will all miss his help and enthusiasm greatly as will others who knew him through groups such as the CPRE and U3A. The esteem in which he was held was demonstrated at his funeral, which was very well attended.

Nigel Phillips

CWGC – what does it do?

THERE WAS a minor change to our advertised event in October, as Peter Hewlett-Smith OBE stood in for our previously booked speaker to give a talk about the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Introducing him on the evening, Malcolm Connell outlined his impressive military career, which began before some of us were born, and in which he had acquired the rank of Colonel before his retirement. Malcolm then touched on some of his later activities, which had included training and becoming ordained as a priest, giving him another perspective on the work of the Commission. It was immediately apparent that Peter would draw on extensive experience of world-wide travel, detailed knowledge of features of many CWGC sites, and poignant memories of events to deliver his talk.

The evening was enhanced by well-prepared illustrative slides and contributions from people in the audience, who were encouraged to add their own observations and experiences. During the evening it emerged that Peter is a volunteer guide who leads tours of the cemetery at Brookwood, near Woking. Our Treasurer, Colin Hingston has since been in touch with him to arrange a group visit for those interested in following up the talk in this way. (See p16 for further details.)



*A view of
Brookwood
Cemetery near
Woking*

Woodlanders Lives and Landscapes

NEWS IS spreading fast about a number of new local heritage projects which form part of the Chilterns Conservation Board Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership. A National Heritage Lottery funded 5-year scheme has ambitious aims to transform people's connection with the wildlife and cultural heritage of the Central Chilterns through no fewer than 18 interweaving projects around the themes of heritage, landscape and community.

High Wycombe Society President, Stuart King, has been engaged as the project consultant for one of these projects: 'Woodlanders Lives and Landscapes', which is being carried out in partnership with Bucks New University. Volunteers will investigate the past lives of people working in the domestic and rural industries of the Chilterns. While much is already known about the production of chairs, woodware, lace, straw plait and beaded cloth for the fashion industry, this project focuses on the people who made their livings in these woodland and home-based industries – including the daily lives of the women and children. There are many opportunities for volunteers to undertake family history and archive research, collect oral histories, write local stories or give talks and tours, so interested readers are requested to get in touch

with Helena Chance Helena.chance@bucks.ac.uk
Tel: 01494 522141 Ext 4105.

Other projects already launched within the scheme include 'Routes to the Past' which is taking a look at the historic routeways of the Chilterns and 'The Mystery of Grim's Ditch' which includes targeted archaeological research to find out more about this pre-historic feature of the landscape. Readers interested in either of these projects are invited to contact Sam Johansen at the Chilterns Conservation Board sjohansen@chilternsaonb.org.

Two more projects on the horizon for next year are likely to be of particular interest to High Wycombe Society members: 'People and Mills of the River Wye' and 'Cherry Talk' an oral history project capturing the history of orchards in the Chilterns. **Helena Chance**

Huge Historical Scrap Book

IN 2018 an outsize scrapbook was found in an attic in Bledlow Manor House, home of Lord Carrington. It was compiled by his forebear, the Marquess of Lincolnshire (1843-1928); other family scrapbooks have survived but none of this size or scope of content. The scrapbook is huge – 1 metre by 68 cms – and the cover was badly water-stained. However, its 104 leaves, although dirty and frayed at the edges, were otherwise undamaged.

Each page is filled with cuttings, prints, posters and original documents relating to Buckinghamshire (particularly High Wycombe) and the Carington family. Its arrangement is erratic and its contents very wide ranging. Roughly categorised the material covers: Wycombe Parliamentary Elections c1800-1900 (posters, addresses to voters, expenses, letters, newspaper cuttings); around 200 eighteenth and nineteenth century engravings of views of Buckinghamshire; personal papers of members of the Carington family; and 19th century petitions, letters, bills, newspaper cuttings etc relating to local, mainly Wycombe, affairs.

In my role as archivist for Carington Estates I have individually listed the contents, and the conservator at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies has cleaned each of the leaves and placed them into individual Melinex® sleeves to guard against any further deterioration. Sadly the broken and stained condition of the covers and binding necessitated their removal and the sleeves are now stored in acid-free boxes. They

will be kept securely with other records of Carington Estates.

Lord Carrington is aware how interesting the material could be to a wider audience and is giving serious consideration to digitisation of the content, the only realistic means of providing wider access, owing to the size and nature of the original.

It is not difficult to see the appeal of these documents, many of which are (unusually for archives) very visual. The documents about High Wycombe elections

in the 19th century have simply not survived elsewhere and while many of the printed views of Buckinghamshire places may be known, rarely have so many been brought together in one place. It is easy to see how local schools might be interested in using images of these records as well as local and academic historians.

Following the digitisation, the end-product - small hard drives with accompanying listing of each item – would be placed in the first instance in the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies and Wycombe library.

Sarah Charlton

Walking Wycombe with Willie

Over the past four years, many readers will have joined me for one of my guided walks in aid of the Charity "Street Kids Direct". (www.streetkidsdirect.org.uk). During that time I have kept a note of the number of participants and donations received so I thought I would share some statistics.

Number of walkers – **587**; Number of school children **270**; Number of 'virtual walkers' **132**; Number of dogs on walks **4**; TOTAL raised over four years: **£2,775**.

To date I have established three different walks: 'Walking Wycombe with Willie' covering the central area of the town; one hour school walks going from Pann Mill to Frogmoor; and 'Road, Rail, River and Riots' which is a circular walk starting/finishing at Wycombe Lido and reaching Kingsmead.

As I have discovered more about Wycombe's amazing history the main walk is now far too long. So in 2020 I am going to break it in two and add a bit more from the area around the Eden Centre through Desborough Rd/Ave to Oxford Road. Then both walks will be approx. 2 hours.

In 2019 I led one walk per month from March through October. In 2020, there will be fewer walks but all will be featured in the Wycombe Arts Festival in May or during the Chiltern Walking Festival in October. I also hope to increase the number of "virtual walkers" by setting up power-point presentations indoors for clubs, societies, care homes etc.

Willie Reid

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mrs Angela Hill

Ms Carolyn Kendall

Mrs Cherry Lane

Obituaries

We regret to inform members of the deaths of:

Mr David Jarman

Wycombe Wildlife Group Event

On Monday 20th January 2020 as part of their regular Winter Programme, Wycombe Wildlife Group (WWG) are hosting a talk by Richard Bradbury (from the Chiltern Society) who is the Editor of Chiltern News magazine. Regular meetings of WWG begin with a roundup of local wildlife sightings led by one of their members. Members of the High Wycombe Society are welcome to join them on the evening. Admission is £3 including refreshments.

WWG have a "bad weather policy". In the event of snow, before venturing out, please check with our Hon Secretary on HW 445071 if the meeting is going ahead. We will also aim to have up to date information on our website.

Downley Local History Group Event

A newly formed local history organisation is joining with the Downley Common Preservation Society on Saturday, 29th February 2020 to host a talk entitled '**Downley Common, its Origin and Survival within the Parish of West Wycombe**' to be given by local historian Dr Frances Kerner. Tickets for the event, at Downley War Memorial Hall at 7:30 pm, cost £2 per person and are

available in advance from the organisation's treasurer, Mike Morgan, who can be contacted on 01494 514252 or email: mikegmorgan65@gmail.com.

Downley Common has been an integral part of the village since its oldest dwellings, such as St Davids, Vale Cottage and Blacksmiths Cottage, began to cluster around its edge. Whilst a number of properties near the common still have the original Commoners' Rights of Estover (gathering dead wood) and Pasturage, nowadays Downley Common plays host to a variety of activities from football to fairs, from Downley Day to walking across the common and further into the woods just to enjoy the surrounding countryside. Although many commons have survived in the Chilterns, this is not always the case, and there is no doubt that we in Downley are fortunate to have such a treasure today on our immediate doorstep.

Answers to Algernon's Challenge (on p8):

1) Birkenhead (Tranmere Rovers); 2) Rotherham; 3) Fleetwood; 4) Coventry; 5) Burton-on-Trent; 6) Shrewsbury (Ditherington Flax Mill); 7) Milton Keynes.

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 2020**

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!!!**

2020	
20th January 7.45 pm Trinity United Reformed Church	Wycombe Wildlife Group are hosting a talk entitled "Why I love the Chilterns" to be given by Richard Bradbury of the Chiltern Society. Admission charge £3 payable on the door. (see above for further info)
29th February 7.30 pm Downley War Memorial Hall	Joint Meeting of Downley Local History Group and Downley Common Preservation Society – a talk by Dr Frances Kerner on "Downley Common, its origin and Survival in the Parish of West Wycombe" (Tickets are £2 obtainable in advance – see above for details).
Thursday 23rd April Brookwood Cemetery	Group Outing in shared cars to include a tour of the military cemetery at Brookwood (near Woking) to be led by Peter Hewlett-Smith OBE of the Commonwealth Graves Commission. This follows his talk to the Society in the Autumn (see p14). Email our Treasurer, Colin Hingston, for further details – colinehingston@aol.com .
Sunday 10th May	National Mills Weekend – Pann Mill Open Day
Sunday 12th July	Pann Mill Open Day
Sunday 13th September	Pann Mill Open Day – (part of the National Heritage Open Week)