

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

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Signs of the Times

A COUNTDOWN HAS begun. The “Last Ever Wycombe District Council meeting” takes place on 23rd March and the new Buckinghamshire Council comes into being a week later. There are promising signs of progress on local projects in advance of the changeover including potentially exciting things happening both at the Boathouse on the Rye and in the Brunel Shed at the station.

But readers will be aware that there are also signs of chronic neglect within our town centre: invasive vegetation on listed buildings, crumbling masonry and overgrown ancient monuments, not to mention the state of the roads. And there are projects and decisions on hold, awaiting an uncertain future. It is hard to escape the feeling that Wycombe deserves better! You may have read in the press that the Society wrote to Cllr Katrina Wood seeking her assurance that reserves in the Wycombe District accounts would be invested in High Wycombe (and the surrounding district) when assets transfer to the unitary authority.



New road signage also seems to be in fashion. Signs on entry to our town advise us not to leave car engines idling while in other places new “no right turn” signs are proliferating. Suffield Hill has acquired a sign to confirm its gradient is 20% while motorists wanting to avoid the town centre are now helped on their way towards their most likely destinations: Aylesbury or Beaconsfield. (How times change – it used to be Oxford or London!)

As our environment changes, so the Society needs to adapt to address the issues that matter most to our members. Air quality is becoming a major concern. The conservation of our surviving heritage is another. Maintaining the mill is a must. In the past our public programme of events was the glue that held the Society together, but it's becoming less clear what members want in this regard. We now have a larger online following than attendances at our meetings. The countdown to our AGM in June has already begun. Please think about what you want the Society to be doing and who you would like to represent you and come along to help shape the future.

I hope to see many of you at the talk on 24th April and/or our film show on 15th May (see p12). Meanwhile the millers are mindful of an upcoming anniversary of their achievements (see pp 4-5) and are appealing for members and supporters to lend a hand at the next Open Day (10th May).

Jackie Kay

*Above: A new sign to Aylesbury on the 'Alternative Route' (see p6)
Right: Pann Mill looking forlorn before its demolition. (see p4)*



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

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Planning Matters

THE WIDE RANGE of knowledge and interests of members within the Planning Group is reflected in the diversity of subjects which compete for our time and attention. In the past few months we have been invited to contribute ideas for regeneration including pre-application discussions about the future of the Boathouse on the Rye and possible uses for the Brunel Shed; we have maintained our usual vigilance over submitted planning applications and continued to monitor progress over the long-term development of the "Reserve Sites"; we have highlighted issues of concern about conservation and maintenance and we have raised an issue on which we think planning enforcement would be appropriate. The position of group chairman is once again vacant, and so responsibilities are currently being shared by group members following Heather Morley's decision to step down from the role.

Cemetery railings In early December, a Society member asked us about the new "ugly and inappropriate" steel security fencing which was being erected around the cemetery. Positioned inside but extending above the brick and flint wall it looked like it would be more suited to a warehouse carpark on an industrial estate. We completely agreed. Whilst recognising the need for such security, we thought the fencing needed at least an appropriate coat of paint e.g. in Post Office green. We also thought that it needed Planning Permission and, as the cemetery was on the edge of a Conservation Area, it should require the approval of the Conservation Officer. We therefore wrote to WDC requesting that they take Enforcement Action and we await their response. Hopefully, the fence may even be replaced by, say, black railings of a more traditional kind. Meanwhile, another Society member whose identity remains a closely guarded secret, found himself inadvertently locked inside the cemetery, but discovered that it was still possible to climb out, so the fencing at that time at least was ineffective.

Terriers Farm update After a long spell with no movement on the Terriers Farm site things are now beginning to happen. In mid-January the developers held an exhibition at the Hazlemere Recreation Ground Pavilion outlining proposals for the site. These are for 460 new dwellings ranging from one to five-bedroom dwellings in a mixture of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses as well as some three-storey apartments, with the housing mix including 48% affordable units. The proposals include two vehicular access points: one on Kingshill Road opposite the existing Tower Street junction; and the more contentious one on the Amersham Road opposite the former entrance to the Equity & Law offices at De Havilland Drive. It remains to be seen how this extra vehicular loading will affect the A404 through Terriers and Hazlemere as well as the road through Widmer End. The proposed development includes three sports pitches as well as other green spaces. Members of the Planning Group have concerns regarding the capacity of utility facilities in the area as well as the provision of school places and doctors' surgeries plus the lack of community facilities in the Terriers ward. There will still be many local

residents who regret the loss of the green space of Terriers Farm but this was inevitable even before the parameters were endorsed by the Inspector at the Local Plan Public Examination. We hope it will be a better-executed development than Kingshill Grange (ex-Wellesbourne School) across Kingshill Road.



The old Boat house soon to be removed, with cankerous trees already gone. Photo: David Snoxell

Rye Boathouse – a summertime treat? The somewhat ramshackle green tin boat shed is to be replaced with something a little smarter, possibly by the summer of this year. WDC's swansong before the new unitary authority kicks in, is to bow to demand for public (including disabled) lavatories at the west end of The Rye. On a slightly larger footprint than is currently used, and with the removal of two misshapen and cankered trees, plans are for a pre-fab building with attractive wood cladding and a sloping sedum roof. The outside space and furniture will also be slightly enlarged, and opening hours will be longer than currently offered. Boat hire, ice creams and drinks provision will stay the same. Society members who attended a briefing at the council offices were satisfied at this practical solution.

Brunel Shed renovations. At the end of last year, WDC ran a public consultation on proposals to improve the Brunel Shed at High Wycombe railway station. The design vision put forward for refurbishing and upgrading this Grade II listed building is a sensitive renovation including: improved pedestrian access; a new building entrance facing the train station; the opportunity for improved landscaping and views into the building when approached from the town centre; and the opportunity for a new build extension and entrance.

The High Wycombe Society put forward their ideas for possible functions of the building. These include: a retail outlet such as a small Marks and Spencer or Waitrose; a quality independent café which could serve as a bar in the evenings; an informative display area showing the history of the building with perhaps a copy of Dan Wilson's mural, as unfortunately the present mural cannot be saved; a source of information about the town.

It is hoped that bike racks will be provided outside, maybe also a bike rental scheme could be operated, with cycle track maps if an idea of a continuous track from Hughenden Valley to Bourne End via the station comes to fruition.

Other ideas include a full-size "mock-up" of a broad-gauge engine with one or two carriages as they would have been in the 1850s. The High Wycombe and District Model Railway Society would like to be in part of the new building and if they recreated the broad-gauge railway that came to Wycombe in 1854 and perhaps the main line to Marylebone which arrived in 1906, that would be very striking.

As part of the landscaping we would hope that the unattractive blue railings around the area opposite the Bootlegger pub could be removed.

This building is an important part of our town's industrial heritage and is in urgent need of protection from the weather if it is not to decay further. WDC also needs to consider the setting when proposals are made for development of adjacent sites. The possible extension by two floors of the station car park, for example, would have a detrimental effect in overshadowing the Brunel Shed.

Overall, the plans look good and it will be interesting to see the full planning application.

Controversial Riverside / Legion Hall advert.

Each month we take time to consider planning applications in the town. While many pass our scrutiny, a few strike a raw nerve and prompt us to object. This was the case with a proposal for a large (6m x 3m) illuminated advertising screen to be placed within the grounds of the Riverside Club, to face directly out onto the road. We thought it unsightly, dangerously distracting for drivers and not at all the ideal entry to the town. On 10th December 2018 WDC had refused permission, but the applicants appealed and were successful on 22nd November 2019.

The logic used in the ruling was that as the street scene at this point is *part* "historical" (All Saints Church) and also *part* "starkly modern" (Bucks New Uni), the advert was not incongruous. It is just outside the conservation area, although adjacent. Outgoing WDC Head of Planning Penelope Tollitt made it clear to us that she was 'disappointed' by the outcome of the appeal, as are we. It just shows that we

aren't all-powerful in our lobbying role, and that inspectors sometimes take odd decisions.

'Black Boy' outside drinking area update. Our proposed interpretation board in Church Street, relating to the former Black Boy pub and current Mad Squirrel outdoor drinking area, has now received support from local ward councillors and landowner consent from WDC. We have also received an assurance from Chiltern District Council, who handle recycling collection in High Wycombe, that they will be able to relocate recycling bins that recently appeared on the spot where we plan to place the board. The board's design and content are essentially finalised, and the next stage is to proceed to a planning application.

WDC Community Panel Group On 30th January, the second "Community Panel Group" meeting took place. WDC hope that this regular briefing of interested parties on planning matters will continue under the new Buckinghamshire Council (BC). We are represented at the meetings by Tony Hatton. The focus of the second meeting was on the effects of the upcoming move to a unitary authority: and one message was headed "Business as Usual", which more-or-less said it all. The WDC Local Plan will remain in force until replaced by a BC Local Plan, which is required within five years, and may incorporate elements from existing district plans. Planning applications will continue to be handled in the WDC offices, as now. They will be decided by an Area Committee for the Wycombe area, or by delegation to Council officers, as now, except that there will be a Bucks-wide Strategic Committee for the largest developments (see also article on p8). Supplementary Planning Documents ("SPDs") will remain in being, to add detail, e.g. a proposed new Biodiversity SPD.

In addition, the Enforcement Team was congratulated for recent increased activity and notable successes in tackling breaches of Planning Law (but express conditions of Planning Permissions to prevent damage to grass verges by developers, unfortunately, were said to be unenforceable – so, just restore and reseed!).

"Fix me now!" HSBC bank at 1 Cornmarket in the High Street is a former ironmonger. It is an attractive and robust building in a prominent part of the historic High Street. Sadly, it has fallen into a state of neglect; a tree (possibly Buddleia) has taken root above the cornice on first floor level. There has also been an attempt to cover up graffiti with beige paint. Established in 1836, the cornerstone carving proudly boasts. According to WDC's register of assets, they are the owner of the building. So WDC – it's over to you for a well-deserved clean!

Planning Group

20 Years and Counting, or is it 45?

A LONG TIME AGO in the late 1960s, a big old white painted building and an impressive Georgian house stood near the A40 London Road just before it entered High Wycombe town. (Actually the house was only half a house but that's another story.) The old white building was Pann Mill, a water mill also dating from Georgian times although much altered since then. Unfortunately the mill was now unoccupied and derelict so the local council purchased it along with the surrounding land so that the A40 London Road could be routed across this corner of the Rye.

Demolition of the mill and associated buildings proceeded apace but as we know the Rye Protection Society were successful in getting the planned road re-routed and incidentally stopped the mill demolition process. Not a lot of the old mill was left but two essential parts, the waterwheel and pit wheel, were still in place, albeit attached to a heap of rubble. So in 1975 the High Wycombe Society obtained permission from Wycombe District Council to attempt to get the wheel to turn again.



Fast forward a few years and the site has been cleared, a garden is being developed and thanks to a lot of fundraising by the Society and a generous donation from Marks & Spencer a small building now covers the remaining parts of the mill. Forward some more years to 1985 and the building now contains a lot of the mechanical parts needed to get the mill working once more. These came mostly from a derelict mill in Drayton Parslow while some were obtained elsewhere. At the same time the waterwheel was cleaned and painted and actually made to turn by the power of the river.

Fifteen years then go by, almost in a flash, while we try to work out how to put all the bits together so that the millstones, that had by dint of much sweat and cursing been lifted to the upper floor, could be turned. Fortunately, we were aided by some enthusiastic and ingenious volunteers and a talented engineer, so we knew we were in with a chance. We were also made aware by the Project Leader that the year 2000 was approaching and it would be nice to mill grain again for the Millennium.

And so it came to pass that at the Open Day on 14th May, 2000, Pann Mill came alive once more and ground locally grown wheat to make wholemeal flour. A member of the restoration team took this flour and baked a loaf which

was put on display and later consumed (and very good it was too).

Baked with pride – Project Leader Myra holds the first loaf to be produced from Pann Mill flour.



The following 20 years were not exactly a return to a Golden Age but they have been interesting and fun although often hard work. Team members have come, gone or got older, but the enthusiasm to keep a piece of High Wycombe's heritage remains. The garden was developed to a high standard, the wheel control sluice is now operated from inside the mill, a bridge has been restored across the leat, the waterwheel has been refurbished with new buckets and painted several times, we have made many tons of leaf mould and compost and distributed it over the garden, and before the next Open Day we will have replaced the cladding on the mill building which was suffering from the ravages of time and weather. Every year we strip down and clean the mill stones, collect 700-800kgs of wheat from a local farm and hold three Open Days when we use the wheat to demonstrate traditional milling to the public. We also open for visits from schools, clubs and have even been the backdrop for a wedding reception, numerous photo shoots and art classes.

The next 20 years? Who knows. Hopefully there will still be open days and maybe we will replace the existing store shed with a proper workshop and display/education centre. Whatever happens we know that Pann Mill, a site with a 900-year history, will be able to survive.

Malcolm Connell

Pann Mill needs YOU on (or before) Sunday 10th May



TWO DAYS AFTER the 75th Anniversary of VE Day, the bunting will again be out at Pann Mill for the first Open Day of the year and to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its restoration. Recognising the importance of the day, we are asking ALL members and supporters to help ensure its success. If you've helped before then you will already know that many hands make light work.

Before the day, we need you ALL please to help publicise the event. We also need volunteers to bake cakes for the refreshment stall and maybe dig out some books or other items for bric-a-brac. These items can be dropped off at the mill early in the morning. IF you wish to come as a stallholder (paying £10 on the day) please make sure you book your pitch and tell us your exact needs – don't assume we know you are coming unless you have received confirmation that we are expecting you! IF you think you could help organise rotas etc, please also get in touch preferably via email below*.

On the day itself, we will need people to help set up stalls before 11.00; and dismantle them at the end of the day. Any early birds interested in learning from the millers how to set the sluices to raise the water level to power the wheel would also be welcome. We need volunteers throughout the day to help man the Society stalls (bric-a-brac, books, refreshments and membership) and stewards in the mill itself. We also need people to come and enjoy themselves, so bring your friends and family.

*Email: programme@highwycombesociety.org.uk or you can leave a message on 07396 140075 if you want to help in any way.

Three, two, none – a lament

A ROW OF attractive Victorian terraces has a curious place in my conscience. Now 42-48 West Wycombe Road have finally seen the wrecking ball and it has fallen to me to place on record my lament.

When I was house-hunting and just beginning the process of leaving my native London, I viewed N° 44 West Wycombe Road.

I remember that the property was a student house which had most definitely seen better days both internally and, as most readers are likely to be aware, externally.

It once had character. The ceilings were high, the proportions large but the internal features: fireplaces, cornices, sashes and doors had all been mercilessly removed. Most notably, the curse of uPVC windows and doors had scarred these once attractive properties. The generous gardens, smart brickwork and pleasantly tiled porches framed the houses perfectly. Steps up to the properties added interest. I could only imagine how these houses must have looked when they were individual dwellings.

After the odd demolition of the house furthest east, the remaining properties stood for a while, their damaged internal walls revealing someone's home at some point, exposed for all and sundry to see. Bins obstructing the path gave a further sense of being rundown.

It could be argued that these houses were not of great architectural merit, nor were they particularly noteworthy in their design but the question I would ask is this: is what will replace them of better design and form than what has been removed? Sadly, I am of the opinion, not in this case. The



Houses on West Wycombe Road before demolition

Photo: Robert Hutton

proposed design is a blocky and flat roof style with white render to some elevations. I would suggest that the architecture is unimaginative and does nothing to improve the street scene. What a sad loss for that part of the town.

Robert Hutton



To take the Alternative Route eastwards, from West Wycombe Road take Westbourne Street then follow the new signs for Beaconsfield, left onto Desborough Road at the Wycombe Arts Centre, Straight on at Eden, and right onto Suffield Hill.

Taking the Alternative Route

THE PROJECT to create an “alternative route around the town centre”, recently completed by the opening of the Gasworks Link Road now known as Suffield Hill, has a long history. WDC, under their then Head of Planning Jerry Unsworth, realised that the key to opening up the town centre and, in the long term, getting rid of the ugly, intrusive, and (to pedestrians enjoying the town) obstructive Abbey Way flyover, was to provide another way for vehicles to travel from the “Magic Roundabout” at the foot of Marlow Hill out to the West Wycombe Road (and back).

Originally, the draft Core Strategy embodying this aim was rejected by the Committee on Architecture and the Built Environment, who argued that the case had not been made for its feasibility. There followed intensive working between the District and County Councils to come up with detailed plans and the result was that the aim of ultimately removing the flyover was approved by the Planning Inspector in the Delivery and Site Allocations Plan in 2013, and then re-confirmed in the New Local Plan last year. And now, in 2020, the Alternative Route is fully operational.

But does it work? Well, it is difficult to get reproducible timings, with roadworks never ceasing, but eastbound, from the Pastures crossing to the former Office Outlet, tends in my experience to be almost a minute faster by the alternative route, because you avoid congestion at Bellfield Road and the M&S roundabout. Westbound, there is not much in it, whichever way you go. In the rush hour, however, it's tricky. Although the junctions on the route work well, delays at the ends – long queues approaching both the Pastures crossroads and the Magic Roundabout from any direction – dwarf any subtle differences in timings between the two routes.

And is it safe? The unmarked, un-prioritised Bridge Street/Desborough Road and Westbourne Street/Oxford Road roundabouts need care, and woe betide any drivers who disregard signs telling eastbound traffic on

Desborough Road or Suffield Road to give way to traffic following the Alternative Route! We have heard suggestions that for traffic from the Eden Car Park wishing to get to the Desborough area, turning right along Suffield Road at the top of Suffield Hill may be a precarious manoeuvre. But on the whole, as far as I can see, the new arrangements are shaking down satisfactorily.

So, does it fulfil its aim? With the new route in operation, the eventual removal of the flyover looks feasible and, indeed, before that, nothing now seems to stand in the way of opening up the River Wye along Oxford Road outside Sainsbury's. It all depends on how far our new Buckinghamshire Councillors are willing to endorse the conclusions of the Regeneration Review for the revival of the town centre and restoration of its historic feature, the River Wye.

And is that all? Well, there's still the question of drivers going from Marlow Hill to Hughenden. The Alternative Route will avoid the tricky Oxford Road roundabout and land them up quickly at the junction of Bellfield Road. Removal of the unnecessary traffic signals at that junction will be hugely helpful and is in the Masterplan, together with a one-way system in the area of McDonald's and the skate park. We shall see. It's still unfinished business, as is the dreadful functioning of the Magic Roundabout in rush hours.

Chris Woodman



To take the alternative route westwards from the bottom of Marlow Hill, take Queen Alexandra Road past the hospital and follow the new signs to Aylesbury – i.e. right at the top of Suffield Hill to descend into the blind dip with 20% gradient, left at the bottom and right onto Westbourne St at what would appear to be a redundant sign!



Scooting – the coolest way to go to school?

SOCIETY MEMBER Sarah Lewis launched a debate about the pros and cons of encouraging school children to “bike” to school using electric scooters when she outlined some ideas in a letter to the Editor shortly before publication of this *Newsletter*. She suggests that with our history of fostering innovative transport ideas and our access to the new Local Community Hub (Planning), the Society could view the availability of cheap, relatively portable electric scooters as an opportunity to help Wycombe reduce its traffic congestion, address its air quality issue, move towards net zero carbon emissions, and accommodate the inevitable increase in traffic on our roads when the occupants of new housing currently under construction move in. Low-cost infrastructure schemes with demonstrable financial return, she thinks, are the only ones likely to appeal to a new authority under pressure to contain its Capital Budget.

Her suggestion draws on her experience 15 years ago when, in an attempt to investigate the “bike-ability” of routes to schools, she tried to cycle to the top of Marlow Hill making use of various footpaths from the centre of Wycombe. The three secondary schools at the top of Marlow Hill alone accommodate over 3,000 pupils between them, so a scheme which encouraged their pupils to use footways could significantly reduce the effects of the school run. The conclusion of her experiment at the time was that no school child would consider using the routes with their bikes on a regular basis as the bikes would need to be pushed uphill for significant parts of the way. There were also concerns about the dangers both to the children themselves and other path users if children took to speeding down the very steep inclines on the lower sections of the routes.

But that was all before the advent of electric scooters which can be walked where necessary, and the strategic placement of some zig-zag sections could lessen the gradients. Secondary school age children might accept the additional exercise, with its inherent health benefits, if it became cool to scoot to school.

A new scooter route up to the Marlow Hill schools from the valley bottom could also be linked to existing East/West bicycle lanes: the route across the Rye, and the route from the recreation ground off Mill End Road through to Desborough Avenue.

Initial reactions from Society members have been mixed. Those who have looked at detailed maps and rights of way are sceptical. Most of the routes identified are footpaths, not bridleways and are already well used by pedestrians including school children. Some are too narrow as they stand. Some tarmacked sections are not in good repair and are liable to flood in wet weather. There would be lots of practical issues to resolve including daytime storage, security and recharging requirements. Concerns immediately raised include safety and legality, and lighting in winter. But all are agreed it is a debate worth having and it has already stimulated other ideas to mitigate effects of the school run.

Val Hinkins who has walked all High Wycombe’s footpaths over the past two years as part of the Society’s project to verify the Rights of Way on the Definitive Map, wonders if more could be done to encourage pupils to use existing public transport or walk to school. She would also like to see better enforcement of double yellow lines outside all schools, preventing parents from parking up to an hour before the end of school just waiting for pupils to arrive. She has observed that the primary school on Loakes Road allows parking on its playground at the end of the school day, thereby easing congestion on Suffield Road. Could other schools do this? Or do they already? Could school breakfast clubs for those who walk or cycle regularly help to spread school arrival times? In other parts of the country these have proved popular. Or perhaps a free parking arrangement say of up to 30 mins at the Park&Ride car park could be introduced for school drop offs and pick ups with pupils expected to walk to their respective schools from there? Re-opening the footpath between School Close and Daws Hill Lane would help provide a safer pedestrian way to the schools there.



So what do YOU think?

Electric scooters are, on average, the same weight as conventional bicycles (and a lot lighter and cheaper than electric bicycles). The 1988 Road Traffic Act makes their use illegal on UK roads; and interpretation of the 1835 Highways Act has also rendered their use illegal on pavements. But the law is currently under review.

The Shape of Things to Come

ON 1st APRIL WDC and BCC will both cease to exist, and the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council will come into being. Initially it will comprise all 202 elected councillors of all five existing councils; but this will reduce to 147 (three for each county ward) when the local elections take place on 7th May. It all sounds so huge and remote! But in preparation, the Shadow Executive, led by Martin Tett (the BCC Leader), with WDC Cllr Katrina Wood as his Deputy and WDC Cllr Green as another member, have been making comprehensive arrangements to ensure that decisions that currently fall to the district councils will still be taken as locally as possible. In addition, some Society members have already discovered that meetings in Aylesbury can be viewed remotely via webinar and webcast facilities which work well.

In the Planning Group we are accustomed to a regime where planning applications submitted to WDC in High Wycombe are usually delegated to local planning officers for decision in accordance with the Local Plan, but in some cases forwarded to WDC's Planning Committee for debate and decision by elected Councillors (occasionally aided by public speaking contributions). Those selected to receive full consideration include the larger, obviously significant, cases and those where the Planning Committee Chairman, in concert with the Head of Planning, perhaps after representations from ward councillors, decides there is a need. The Committee receives its papers and advice from WDC's Development Management team, led by Alastair Nicholson, reporting to Penelope Tollitt, Head of Planning, and the system works well.

So, how will it work under the new regime? Firstly, there will be a local Planning Committee for the former Wycombe District made up, as now, of councillors from relevant wards nominated by their parties. This will continue to be serviced by Mr Nicholson's team and will have full delegation to determine all cases except those above a certain threshold in size or considered to be of "strategic" significance (including transport considerations); these will be determined by the new authority's planning committee, normally meeting in Aylesbury.

There will also be Community Boards – including one in High Wycombe – at which councillors will be expected to "engage with communities and address local issues". The participants will include local town and parish councillors and possibly representatives of amenity organisations (such as ourselves). These will be advisory, not executive, bodies, but it is hoped that councillors will be guided in their decision-making by the discussion there.

There will also be Council Access Points, including one in High Wycombe, where residents will be able to access information about all Buckinghamshire Council matters affecting them. These will effectively take over the role of WDC's public enquiry point at their offices in Queen Victoria Road, and also cover ex-BCC matters such as education, transport and social services.

From the Planning Group's point of view, the main change is that planning policy – including

the drawing up of a new Local Plan and additional Supplementary Planning Documents on particular aspects such as Air Quality, Houses in Multiple Occupation, etc – will in future be done mainly in Aylesbury.

Given these arrangements, one may wonder why such passions are being raised in the press and social media about the changes. One concern, as many of you will know, has been the future of High Wycombe's ancient mayoralty (and its timeless customs such as mayor-weighing!). Since the local government reorganisation in 1974, the historic functions of the Mayor and the regalia and ceremonies have been discharged by the Charter Trustees, who are the WDC Councillors for wards within the old Borough Council area. There is authoritative legal advice that procedures will enable them to continue to function in April and beyond, unless and until there is a new Parish Council (or Town Council) formed for High Wycombe which could take over. It is disappointing that so much misinformation is being put around about this.

Whether there should be a High Wycombe Town Council (whose powers would be quite limited, including open spaces and cemeteries) is indeed highly controversial, with strongly held opinions being expressed, on both (or all?) sides. The Community Governance Review in 2019 in which the public were consulted over whether Wycombe should have a Town Council, showed that more than two-thirds of respondents were in favour, but WDC could only refer this to the new Shadow Executive and on 7th January that Executive deferred a decision until the new Council was in place "recognising that further consultation may be necessary at that stage". Given the extensive new local arrangements to be put in place, that is understandable, but to some it looks undemocratic!

Personally, I believe that a Town Council would be good for High Wycombe as it would establish a body which had real ownership of the town centre. A modest source of funds through a Town precept (as there is now for the Charter Trustees) would enable it to meet regularly, to work with other parties such as the commercial HWBidCo and hopefully ourselves to rid High Wycombe of its "tatty town" status.

Chris Woodman

Barclays Bank Branch Photos

WHILE BROWSING ONLINE I recently came across a surprising collection of historical photographs belonging to the Barclays Group Archives. They include external and internal views of all branches of Barclays Bank including this gem which used to grace High Wycombe's High Street.



Image – Courtesy of Barclays Group Archives

In subsequent correspondence, archivist Rosie Chew confirmed that Barclay & Co. Limited purchased 17 High Street in 1908 at a cost of £2510 and, in 1916, it bought the adjacent property (No. 16) for £1950.

Plans to erect a new building were raised in March 1923. The tender from Allen Fairhead & Son for £8719 was approved a couple of months later in August that year. The bank still occupies these premises although they were completely rebuilt between 18th September 1967 and 26th July 1969, during which time the branch moved into temporary premises at Priory Road.

Three other branches of Barclays Bank in Wycombe have their photos in the archive along with pictures of a "Remote Management Centre" which was also based in High Wycombe.

To explore further, visit <https://www.archive.barclays.com/>

Daily Postcards

STAFF AT THE Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies have increased their activities on social media recently to widen access to some of their archive material. Facebook followers for some time now have been receiving regular Friday afternoon posts featuring historical photographs of pubs around the county. Building on this success, a relatively new initiative is a daily drip feed showcasing items from their postcard collection. Many of the cards are of Buckinghamshire churches. One such shown here attracted a lot of attention when it was first shared online to High Wycombe interest groups. It is an unusual internal view of All Saints Church in High Wycombe, and there was an immediate challenge to determine its date.

In the foreground is the font, made by Thomas Earp in 1875 to a design by G.E.Street, complete with its elaborate wooden cover donated in 1884 in memory of Emily Parker who died in 1881. In the background, the choir pew pillars can clearly be seen. By 1906 these supported statues of four saints, given by the Parker family.

Online discussion speculated about the marks high up on the wall above the nave where the royal coat of arms once hung. Meanwhile, David Snoxell recognised the view as very similar to a drawing used by Herbert Green on the front cover of his 1966 guide "The Parish Church of High Wycombe" and an illustration within the guide showing the same layout of the pulpit, lectern, chancel and choir pew pillars was said to be "about 1900".

Jackie Kay

Image Credit: from the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies Collections.



News in Brief

WHILE THE SOCIETY took a break from hosting any events of its own in January it was good to see a high attendance at the **Wycombe Wildlife Group** meeting advertised in our last *Newsletter*, at which Richard Bradbury, Editor of Chiltern magazine, spoke about why he loves the Chilterns. After the talk, the speaker expressed an interest in learning more about Pann Mill and we hope to welcome him at one of our Open Days in the near future.

At a **Marlow Society** meeting in February, Willie Reid gave a “virtual” guided tour of High Wycombe, which undoubtedly helped raise the level of interest in our town’s heritage. Willie was also recently a guest on Mick Lewis’s show on **Wycombe Sound**, where he talked about the career of John Gaspard le Marchant. As part of his research, Willie had accessed some of the military maps used by staff at the Royal Military College when it was in High Wycombe.

Disraeli Letter. Readers who remember the Society’s “Wycombe Pioneers of Progress” exhibition held in Wycombe library in 2011 may be interested to learn that one of the exhibits – a letter from Benjamin Disraeli from his campaign headquarters at the Red Lion Hotel in the High Street to James George Tatem – is now safely lodged with the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies in Aylesbury where it will be available to future researchers.

Jewish Connections. An interesting enquiry was received from Ellin Bessner, a Canadian author whose specialty is Canada’s 17,000 Jewish servicemen and women who volunteered and served in WWII. With a bit of help from friends in the Widmer End Residents Association and access to the 1939 wartime register, we were able to assist with her research into a missing airman, Sgt Harris Black.

News of the death of **Roger Scruton**, son of Jack Scruton, founding Secretary of the High Wycombe Society, prompted some long-standing Society members to relate their memories of him. We were pleased to discover that the Summer 1990 *Newsletter* within our archives carries an account of a talk he gave to the Society in the Oak Room on the subject of Vernacular Architecture. Were you there?



With the disappearance of Wycombe District Council at the end of March, Wycombe Lotto will be rebranded as the Buckinghamshire Lottery. The High Wycombe Society will still be a registered good cause to which participants can choose to direct a proportion of their ticket price, but the central fund benefits will now be spread over the whole of Buckinghamshire.

New Arrival We are delighted to share the news that our minutes secretary, Stephanie Osborn, now has a daughter, Evangeline. Like many voluntary organisations our future outlook depends on new people coming forward to take on roles for those wishing to retire. The trustees look forward to welcoming Evangeline as a full member of the Society in her own right in November 2037!

Town Clerk Bill Reid (not to be confused with Society Trustee Willie Reid) has given notice that he is relinquishing his role as Town Clerk, so the search is on for a successor. The role comes with a modest Honorarium (not a salary) and involves working with the Mayoralty and the Charter Trustees, at the heart of all the arrangements for traditional civic events: from the annual inspection of the market to the weighing the mayor, from beating the bounds to attending civic services, from arranging the freedom of the borough parades to keeping the accounts. Anyone wishing to register their interest in the role is recommended either to speak to the current Town Clerk or contact the Mayor’s office for further details.

Love in a cold climate? The Mitford sisters’ association with High Wycombe is well-known. Later this year, we hope to be able to include in the Society’s programme a talk by David Snoxell who lives in the cottage which used to belong to the Mitford family. To complement this event, if there is sufficient interest, there is a proposal also to host a Book Group style discussion on one of the Mitford novels.

The Buckinghamshire Historic Buildings Trust are progressing their plans for 2/3 High Street – and expecting a decision on capital funding in June. They are working with Giles Quarme Architects and Richard Oxley of Oxley Conservation to develop a scheme that is as sensitive as possible and works with the surviving historic fabric. The Trust will be applying for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent within the next two months and has met with the Society’s Planning Group to discuss these in advance.

Heathrow Service The Oxford Bus Company has just announced a new “X50” coach service to Heathrow. Starting on 29th March 2020, there will be 19 daily departures from High Wycombe spread throughout the day and night. Starting at the Bus Station, the coach will call in at both High Wycombe railway station and Cressex Coachway before heading off for Heathrow Terminal 5, continuing afterwards to the Compass Centre and the Central bus station at Heathrow. On its way it will also call at the railway station in Maidenhead, thereby providing a link from the Chiltern Line to Great Western’s Crossrail now called the Elizabeth line.

Festive Fare and a Fond Farewell

IT SEEMS A long time ago now, but back in December 2019 there was a congenial gathering of members of the High Wycombe Society at Wycombe Museum, including mulled wine and mince pies (and wine, cheese and biscuits for the dietarily challenged).



The Society hired the larger of the two Education Rooms which was laid out with long tables, like an indoor street party. Wycombe Museum Curator, Dr Catherine Grigg, gave a short educative and entertaining talk about various traditional Christmas “dishes” in times past, which was well-received.

We also said a formal farewell to Eileen Walters who for many years has overseen our Society Programme but has found it necessary to step down having moved away from the town. (We still hope to see her back at some of our events though!)

We presented Eileen with a quirky object to remember us by in her retirement: the china chair pictured here purports to be a model of Sir Walter Scott's chair at Abbotsford but also depicts the “seal of Wycombe” –



cue chorus of comments about the swan not being right! Our thanks to Society Trustee, Willie Reid, who made the arrangements for this event.

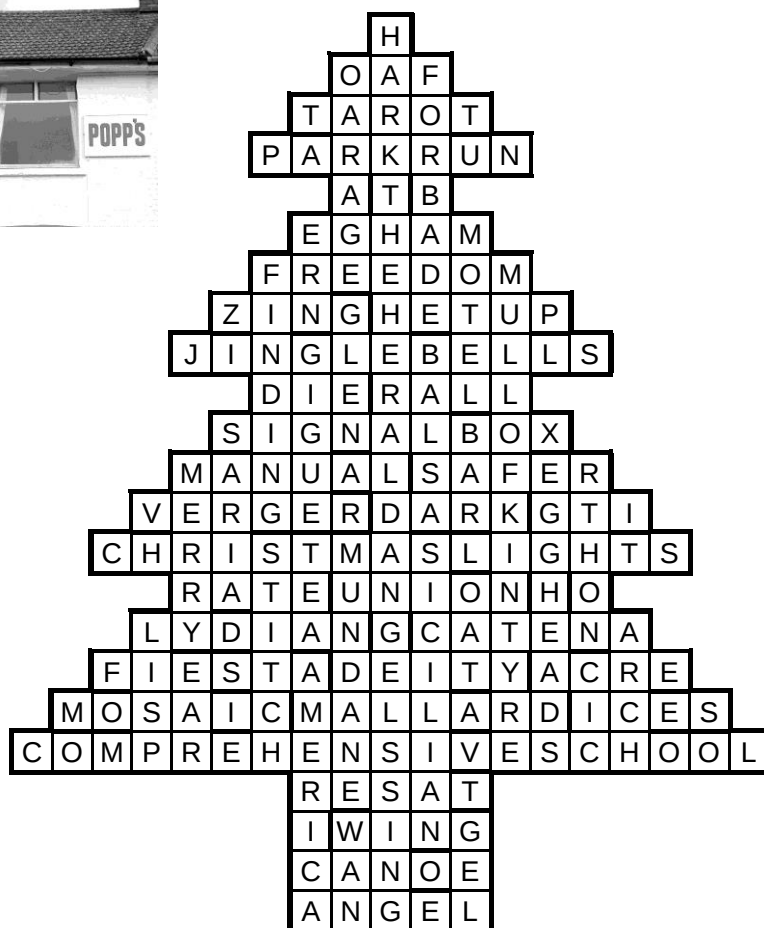
Popp's is Back!

FORMER participants on Willie Reid's guided walks around Wycombe were among the first to notice when a familiar Frogmoor landmark went missing last year. The Popp's signs, newly painted, were restored to their proper place in December where they will continue to be appreciated by all who know about the saga of Mr Popp and his legendary campaign to make Sunday Trading legal. See the article on pp8-9 in the Spring 2015 Edition of this *Newsletter* (available in the Newsletter archive online) if you are unfamiliar with this episode in High Wycombe's history – or book to go on one of Willie's walks during the Wycombe Arts Festival!



Clarsach's Christmas Challenge

We hope you enjoyed Clarsach's crossword in the Winter edition of the *Newsletter*. Herewith the official solution.



Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr Nigel Middlemiss
Mrs Gemma Shinh and family
Mr Andrew Humphrey
Mrs Julie and Mr Ari Vartiainen
Mr Peter Wilks
Mr Michael Williams and family
Mr Barry Townsend

Obituaries

We regret to inform members of the death of:
Mr Bridgefoot

24th April 2020 - Pasting Wycombe's Past. In the Winter 2019 edition of the *Newsletter* we carried the news that a huge scrapbook compiled by the Marquis of Lincolnshire (1843-1928) had been discovered at Bledlow Manor and was undergoing conservation. The Society is supporting work to digitise its contents to help local people to access it. Sarah Charlton, archivist of the Carington Estates, has agreed to talk to the Society about the insights it provides into a part of High Wycombe's history.

AGM followed by talk

The Annual General Meeting of the High Wycombe Society this year will take place on **Friday 19th June at 7.30 pm at The Riverside.**

Friday 15th May - Film Show May is always a busy month with the first Pann Mill Open Day of the year and our contribution to the Wycombe Arts Festival which, as last year, will be a film night featuring newly digitised films from the Society's SOFA (Save our Film Archive) project. Please come and support.

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 May 2020**

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

(Coronavirus precautions permitting)

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

2020	
Thursday 23 rd April Brookwood Cemetery	Group Outing in shared cars to include tour of the military cemetery at Brookwood (near Woking). Contact our Treasurer, Colin Hingston, for further details.
(Also) Thursday 23 rd April Quainton Railway Centre	BAHN (Buckinghamshire Archives and Heritage Network) meeting - subject "Funding: securing it, spending it". Anyone interested in being one of two Society delegates at this meeting should contact Jackie Kay.
Friday 24 th April 7.30 pm The Riverside	"Pasting High Wycombe's Past" – a talk by Sarah Charlton, Archivist from Carington Estates at Bledlow about Lord Lincolnshire's scrapbook which featured in the Winter 2019 <i>Newsletter</i> (also see above).
Sunday 10 th May 11.00-17.00	National Mills Weekend – Pann Mill Open Day (see p5). Members who can spare an hour or more to assist, and stallholders wanting to reserve pitches should email: programme@highwycombesociety.org.uk or leave a message on 07396 140075.
Friday 15 th May 7.30 pm The Riverside	"Wycombe Nostalgia on Film" - The Society's contribution to the Wycombe Arts Festival – Suggested donation: £2 (see above).
Friday 19 th June 7.30 pm The Riverside	AGM. After the formal proceedings Nigel Phillips will give a short talk on the subject: "High Wycombe Railways - past, present and future".
Sunday 12 th July 11.00-17.00	Pann Mill Open Day
Sunday 13 th September 11.00-17.00	Pann Mill Open Day – (part of the National Heritage Open Week)
Saturday 24 th October Aylesbury (The Oculus)	Advance Notice. This year's Buckinghamshire Local History Network (BLHN) conference will be on the subject: Shopping in Buckinghamshire – from marketplaces to retail parks.