



THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

News Update

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JUST BEFORE the Spring Newsletter went to print, I added the words “Coronavirus permitting” at the top of the list of Dates for your Diary. At the time I wondered if I was over-reacting to news on a distant horizon and if people would laugh when they read it. By the time the Newsletter was being distributed, however, it was already becoming clear that our planned programme would have to be suspended.

April also brought a flurry of sad news as we learned in quick succession that three longstanding Society members were no longer with us: Sheila Fooks, who was our friendly welcoming Membership Secretary for over ten years; Maureen Simmonds who never sought the limelight of office but who was always willing to lend a helping hand behind the scenes; and Ron Sims, a veteran of the Rye Protection Society, who until recently served as a Trustee of the High Wycombe Society. We shall miss them all.

While much of the Society’s work is on hold at present, like most organisations we have been discovering new ways of doing things. If you have received this “news update” by post, but have an email contact address you would like us to use for future such communications, please drop a short note to membership@highwycombesociety.org.uk and we will update our records accordingly. Wherever possible we will communicate via email whilst coronavirus-related restrictions remain in place.

For our Planning Group it has so far been “business as usual” except that monthly meetings have been replaced by volumes of email. The change to the unitary authority seems to have been as “seamless” as was promised, with webinars providing a comfortable substitute for meeting attendance in the public gallery. Consideration of major developments such as the latest Gomm Valley proposals currently under consultation, is, however, deemed to be beyond the remit of the Wycombe Area Planning Committee.

Meanwhile demand for flour has had the millers scratching their heads to try to work out how they might help, but sadly it’s just not been possible.

For those of us who dabble in local history, the closure of libraries and study centres has been challenging to say the least, but frustration has to an extent been balanced recently by some online resources being made freely available.

Jackie Kay



Left: Sheila Fooks seen manning a stall for Civic Day

Below: Maureen Simmonds

Below right: Ron Sims enjoying a mug of tea at Pann Mill



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The Buckinghamshire Historic Buildings Trust has submitted two planning applications for the former Wheatsheaf Inn at 2/3 High Street. These can be viewed online on the Buckinghamshire Council website using the references 20/05908/FUL and 20/05909/LBC.

The intention is that the façade of the building will remain intact, the ground floor will be used as a cocktail bar and internal changes will enable public access to the upper floors for use by community groups without interfering with the historic fabric.

The plans have been greeted with enthusiasm by members of the Planning Group who hope they will help breathe life back into our High Street.

David Snoxell has been out and about with his camera – and has captured this view of local parkland during his legitimate “exercise”. Not often seen by the general public but that may be due to change soon. Do any of you know where it is? All will be revealed in the next newsletter.



Sarah Charlton's planned talk to the Society on 24th April was unavoidably postponed, but a project to digitise the contents of the Marquess of Lincolnshire's scrapbook to make them more widely available has gone ahead and is now nearing completion thanks in part to support from the High Wycombe Society.

The Coronavirus crisis has provided a wonderful opportunity to take stock of the Society archives which include many interesting donations received over the years. Among these are some short reminiscences by Arthur Charles Lowe, a factory worker whose childhood home was in Abercrombie Avenue. His recollections of his first Saturday job working for the Muffin Man of High Wycombe just before the First World War inspired Stuart King to produce this illustration of James Herbert, the Muffin Man. Society member, Ian Simmons can also remember childhood excitement waiting for the Muffin Man on a Saturday shortly before the Second World War.

