

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

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Then and Now

AUGUST IS usually a quiet month. Our Autumn Newsletter generally covers the Society's AGM and confirms a number of winter events.

But this year, things are different. As we each emerge from our separate experiences of life under 'lockdown', adjusting as we go to new ways of doing things in changed surroundings, it seems that no routine can be taken for granted. Our AGM has already been deferred until 2021 and our events are on hold. Demand for flour notwithstanding, the Pann Mill wheel is not for turning, at least not for a little while yet.

Meanwhile, since our last edition, Wycombe Wanderers have been promoted, the new Buckinghamshire Council has quietly come into being and, as we go to press, a new government white paper promises a radical overhaul of Planning.

Despite an enforced lull in our more sociable activities, this Newsletter is bursting with content, from medieval cartography to Apps that save lives, so hopefully there's something here to interest every reader.

*Above: The Boat house still stands on the Rye, its demolition and replacement deferred until September.
Below: The Brunel Shed lost its mural without ceremony. (see p14)*



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

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Towards a New Normal

THE TRANSITION to a **Unitary Authority** was never going to be easy even before the disruptive effect wrought by the arrival of Covid-19. Leaving aside for a moment the whole issue of whether or not there might be a High Wycombe **Town Council** at some point in the future, or an increase in the number of parished areas within our town, the underlying transition itself had failed to capture the public imagination in our town before its reality was upon us. For those of us residing in the “unparished areas”, with a widely acknowledged democratic deficit relative to our parished neighbours, any claim that a move to a Unitary Authority contributed to the ideal of Localism made no sense at all, as the immediate impact was the removal of our most local approachable tier of governance (Wycombe District Council), and with it the loss of key individuals with local expertise whom we had got to know over the years. I am sure I am not the only person who wrote about this to the Secretary of State responsible at the time, but to no effect.

The timing of the lockdown could not have been worse, putting a stop as it did to planned celebrations at the end of the Wycombe District Council era (1974-2020), and preventing any face-to-face opportunities to get to know new people and new arrangements. The postponement of elections which should have taken place in May 2020 added to the feeling that normal activities were somehow deferred or on hold, and yet, to the credit of all involved, many of the regular functions of the past and present councils with which we interface, have proceeded smoothly through the transition.



Signs with the new Council logo have appeared on key buildings within our town.

The new [Buckinghamshire Council] **High Wycombe Town Committee** whose activities can be viewed online, looks and feels very like the old [Wycombe District Council] High Wycombe Town Committee. Its financial resources are quite limited but these may sometimes be boosted by the availability of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money on new developments. Much of its current budget is committed to the provision of a much-needed new cemetery in Hazlemere. At their first meeting, the committee considered an outline work programme and agreed that they should add a review of ideas for the future of Wycombe Market. The committee also considered its powers to award small grants to local community groups (like the one we obtained in the days of WDC to assist our film digitisation work). There was an underspend on these last year, due in part to some applications not meeting eligibility criteria; so it was agreed to review the criteria and also consider how the availability of grants was publicised in future.

Keen observers will note that the new Town Committee has four additional members since transition. This is because the new Council uses the old BCC wards not the old WDC ones. Previously only those WDC councillors whose wards were wholly within the unparished areas served on the Town Committee. Now all elected representatives (including former BCC and WDC ones) whose wards either lie or partially lie within the unparished areas are members, a pragmatic short-term arrangement, pending better resolution of boundary issues.

Contrary to fears expressed before the transition, our **Mayor and Charter Trustees** did not cease to hold office when the new Buckinghamshire Council came into being even if Covid-19 prevented the usual mayor-making activities for which our Town is renowned. There has been no change in their number. Our long-serving Town Clerk, Bill Reid, has, however, quietly retired and his successor, Joe Bradshaw, took over the reins on 1st August.

Above the entrance to the Old Library, the Borough Swan has also received a lick of paint but seems to have lost its golden chain and the green hill on which it should stand.



Joe is no stranger to High Wycombe. His former career in the Royal Air Force included local postings at Headquarters Strike Command, Headquarters Allied Forces North Western Europe, RAF Halton and RAF Uxbridge as well as an overseas posting in Cyprus. Since then he has served as Assistant Clerk to the Lord-Lieutenant and as Executive Assistant to the Chairman of Buckinghamshire County Council.

Covid-19 perhaps helped to suppress any feelings of loss we might otherwise have had when we could no longer watch our elected

representatives from the familiar surroundings of the public gallery in the Queen Victoria Road offices. The facilities for tuning into the new Buckinghamshire Council meetings online are excellent and, the ability to replay parts of meetings from webcasts or recommend others to do so, is extremely useful.

It was thanks to the webcast facilities that I was able to view recent discussions regarding the outlook for a High Wycombe **Town Council**. The latest obstacle in its path is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE's) Electoral Review for Buckinghamshire. It falls within the remit of the **Standards and General Purposes Committee** of Buckinghamshire Council to arrange this with the LGBCE. Background papers to the committee's meeting on 2nd July 2020 included the report of the outcome of the Community Governance Reviews (CGRs) which were carried out last year in the High Wycombe area.

Understandably the LGBCE does not like to carry out its work in parallel with CGRs or related consultations. In this context, the CGR for Wycombe, is regarded as "complete" (thereby satisfying the letter if not the spirit of the law which requires action within a specific timeframe). Its "outcome", widely interpreted to be in favour of a single town council, includes a proviso that "further consultation" is desirable. The decision to proceed with the next steps has been deferred. The somewhat inevitable resolution of the Standards and General Purposes committee was that no action could be taken until the LGBCE delivered its results and a working group of nine councillors was set up to enable the LGBCE's work to progress.

The "Wycombe situation" as it has become known, is unsatisfactory especially as there may be pressures to extend the timescale of the LGBCE review. In any event, the results will not come in time for the 2021 elections. Would it be possible to hold elections for a High Wycombe Town Council before the Unitary elections in 2025? At least that question was asked, if not answered. Perhaps the most encouraging point of the discussion was that the complexity of the situation was recognised and perpetuating the status quo was not seen as a viable long-term option as it would reflect badly on Buckinghamshire Council not to take appropriate action in response to a CGR. My impression: real change may still be a long time coming, but it is on its way.

Meanwhile, hardly yet off the starting blocks are the new **Community Boards**, much heralded within the new model as a replacement for the old County Council forums. They aim to provide an opportunity for community engagement both by individuals and groups. Inexplicably a set-up meeting for the High Wycombe Community

Board was first advertised online by the Bucks Free Press and then held without any means of public access. We have since been advised that the first "real" meeting will not be until September. Its terms of reference are already accessible online, as are some background papers which illustrate the breadth of scope it aims to address. Specifically excluded from the scope are any matters which overlap the remit of the regional planning committees or can be addressed by regular council services.

So, how do we get to know more in the meantime? Buckinghamshire Council is a much larger organisation than we are used to and there are subtle differences in the rules for doing things like "public-speaking" (raising questions or expressing opinions at council meetings), but the structure is quite familiar and there is a lot of information out there on the web.

There are **Cabinet** meetings where the roles of individuals are well-defined and there are **full council** meetings. At the most recent full council meeting, Cllr Sebert Graham was provided with a written answer to his request (submitted as required well in advance of the meeting) for an update on Town Centre Regeneration plans affecting High Wycombe. The record shows the reassurance he was given that Buckinghamshire Council was following through on plans to put in a bid to central government for their Future High Street funding.

The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies has been rebranded as Buckinghamshire Archives.



Cabinet Members' reports to full council are similarly circulated before meetings. The Cabinet Member for Culture, Cllr Patrick Hogan chose to include in a recent report a detailed account of the Buckinghamshire Archives plans for a virtual history fair in September.

Will historians of the future see this as the moment at which High Wycombe finally lost all sense of its identity? Or could this be the moment at which we start to play the role we should do in the Shire to which we naturally belong? There is a risk that because of the unsatisfactory nature of the "Wycombe situation" and the need to keep beating the drum to remind people that we are here, we may sadly be viewed as the recalcitrant borough that failed to play its part in the larger picture. I, for one, don't want that.

The problems we face together, from Covid-19 to Climate Change, pay no respect to traditional boundaries.

Jackie Kay

Planning Matters

IT'S BEEN a strange time! While the terrible history of the corona virus unfolded on the national news every day, the local planning world continued serenely on its way. What is now the Wycombe division of Buckinghamshire Council continued processing planning applications almost normally, and the Council's Cabinet continued to meet – not in Aylesbury but “virtually” – its meetings streamed online much as before. The Planning Group too learnt to live with the situation, its efforts on behalf of the Society and the town undiminished. The Group welcomed a promising new member, and a big new project to consider was a proposed care home on Marlow Hill just above High Wycombe Hospital.

Deculverting the River Wye – are we nearly there yet?

The Society remains strongly in favour of de-culverting the Wye, a move which would literally bring our town's historic narrative to the surface. It is a travesty that our precious Chilterns chalk stream is channelled through underground concrete culverts when other towns and cities with rivers get to reap the benefits, which far outweigh the costs of landscaping and upkeep. So, is there any news?

Just before WDC was replaced by Buckinghamshire Council (BC) it commissioned a review of how various parts of the Wycombe District might be regenerated. The report focused largely on High Wycombe and supported the idea of 'green and blue', consultant-speak for 'put in more planting and make something of the river'. Sounds good to us, although we prefer action to words, and many similar words have been spoken in the past.

Since then, Martin Tett, leader of BC, was quoted in the Bucks Free Press in April as saying, when quizzed about his views on deculverting the Wye, "I think it's a great idea". The BFP has also featured frequent articles and letters in support of deculverting. We love that our local paper is getting behind a subject that's so dear to our hearts. One of the project's champions, Cllr Hugh McCarthy, has made radio appearances on Wycombe Sound specifically to discuss deculverting, and says it's prompted a big response. He says that the new council is looking closely at town regeneration and infrastructure as it sets its budgets, and "Wycombe is in the pot". Sounds promising.

So, after a frustrating delay last year, we may still end up with the right result. No doubt the new BC and its leader will want to be seen to be running a thriving county, and what better way than to invest in this step-change improvement for High Wycombe? In the wake of the Covid-19 lockdown, our local retailers need as much of a boost as humanly possible; but also, with remote working effecting a likely drop in the desirability of living in London with its polluted air, busy roads and shortage of greenery, this could be Wycombe's moment to attract Londoners out into the countryside to an historic town with excellent communications, great educational opportunities, a substantial quantity of new residential property, and – of course – a beautiful riverside townscape.

How can you help? Please write letters to the Bucks Free Press, in support of the deculverting initiative. If you're on social media, then share your enthusiasms there. As the BC cabinet make their budget choices, let's try to nudge them in the right direction!

2/3 High St. – an Update In July we welcomed the news that the Bucks Historic Buildings Trust had been successful in its bid for a Transformational Project Grant of £350,000 from the Architectural Heritage Fund to restore the former Wheatsheaf Inn for mixed use. The ground floor will be a commercial bar while the upper floors will provide community space.

Planning Enforcement In the Spring Edition of the Newsletter we reported that we had requested Planning Enforcement Action in connection with galvanised palisade fencing being erected on the Priory Road perimeter of the cemetery without planning permission. We felt that it was not in keeping with the brick and flint wall. The Conservation Area Appraisal of 2012 confirmed that the wall from Benjamin Road up to the start of “Benjamin's Footpath” (facing the top of The Greenway) was within the Conservation Area. On checking planning requirements, it was clear that planning permission should have been obtained. Our complaint focused mainly on its appearance. A green or black finish would have been more in keeping with its surroundings than a bright silver fence, and its dominating character atop or (within the cemetery) on the face of, the historic wall was also damaging. We have since been advised that a repaint is planned and we are waiting for this to be carried out. Had there been a planning application, we would have been able to submit our concerns before any money was spent, and it is disturbing that the Council acted in a way that they would not tolerate from a private developer. (Incidentally, a recent good example of railings blending with their environment was achieved by Network Rail near the railway bridge across Gordon Road.)

Following on from this issue one of our members reported that garish advertising displays had been installed on the first floor of a property on the corner of Oxford Street and Frogmoor. Advertising hoardings also require planning approval and, in this case at least, the owners of the property have now submitted a retrospective planning application to which we shall respond.

Gomm Valley and Ashwells It was a great pity that the beautiful Gomm Valley and Ashwells, between High Wycombe and Tylers Green, was one of the reserve sites designated for development in the Local Plan adopted last year. The Plan confirmed the sensitivity of the site, and accordingly set the “indicative capacity” of 400 dwellings in Gomm Valley and 120 dwellings at the northern end in Ashwells, but at the Public Examination WDC had acknowledged that 600 may be achievable in Gomm Valley, with a higher proportion of smaller dwellings. Predictably, planning permission was sought in February 2019 for 1,000 dwellings (and a primary school, shops and a community centre) and we objected strongly, questioning whether the infrastructure would be able to cope, even with the 520 households approved in the Local Plan. We were therefore very concerned that the drainage might not cope with 1,000 households. A fresh application has now been submitted, addressing Cock Lane and Tylers Green residents’ concerns about the impact on Cock Lane and its through traffic. There are over 600 documents relating to this application on the Buckinghamshire Council website! Many of them are “neighbours’ objections”, but one is from Thames Water themselves and begins, “...Thames Water has identified an inability of the existing “foul water network infrastructure (i.e. sewerage arrangements) to accommodate the needs of this development proposal...”. Thames Water have merely requested a condition on the approval to prevent occupation without an upgrade but we think Buckinghamshire Council needs to see evidence that such an upgrade is feasible. The Group has reinforced its original objection and will continue to participate in the Liaison Group for these sites, focusing on this aspect in particular amongst many others.

Planning in the time of Coronavirus Just as for everyone else, for the Planning Group it was “shock horror” when the virus struck. It obviously wasn’t allowed, and would have been daft, for us to meet in our usual monthly venue, the lovely Friends Meeting House. So for our March session, we ran it by email, going through our agenda at our usual appointed time, all of us online, sending comments instantly and mutually commenting by email return. That worked surprisingly well, but it was hard work

and we ran out of the energy needed to get through the important last agenda item, reviewing all the new applications received by the Council over the past month. In April and May we gave it a miss altogether (although keeping up our regular email correspondence). By June, we were ready and knew enough to run a meeting by Zoom, and it proved to be a relaxing and effective experience. Indeed, for the review of current applications, it actually worked better because Andy Cole was able to get the latest spreadsheet up on our screens and we could actually all be singing from the same hymn sheet, better than when we each have a copy in front of us on the meeting table. So now there’s no looking back – for the Planning Group it really doesn’t matter how long lockdown restrictions continue!

During lockdown, Buckinghamshire Council meetings have been streamed online and available to be viewed afterwards, which is very convenient, although we have heard reports that, at Full Council meetings, some Councillors have exploited the

medium and been more disruptive than usual. The first meeting of the BC Wycombe Area Planning Committee (with practically identical make-up and responsibilities to the old WDC Planning Committee) took place by MS Teams (like Zoom) on 23rd June, with appropriate arrangements for public speaking by objectors and (in reply) by applicants, and we look forward to participating at future meetings where we decide to speak publicly.

Marlow Hill Care Home Project We had heard some time ago from Society members in the Poets Corner area (which runs from Wordsworth Road to Shelley Road overlooking High Wycombe hospital) that a national care home manager was seeking to buy five period houses above the hospital fronting on Marlow Hill, and that all the owners except the one nearest to the hospital had agreed to sell. In due course Care UK’s agents, DLBP, prompted by the Council’s planning officers in High Wycombe, invited us to meet them virtually using MS Teams on 15th June. It was a helpful meeting, with a comprehensive set of slides being received beforehand (which, in normal times, would have formed a public exhibition in the area). We were reassured on most points. We were particularly pleased to learn that throughout the construction project, including the demolition



Architect's view of proposed new care home on Marlow Hill

Image Courtesy of Care UK

phase, there would be a “man on the gate” to ensure the safety of pedestrians, including school children, using the pavement up that side of Marlow Hill. And whilst the loss of four period early-1900s houses is regrettable, developers do not need planning permission to demolish buildings unless they are listed or within a conservation area. We were aware of local concern over the parking arrangements (32 parking places for an 84-bedroom care home) and a possible overspill on to Poets Corner streets. Following a vigorous exchange with local residents on social media, we decided that the developers ought to prepare evidence to justify their statement to us at our meeting that their on-site parking provision was adequate. We alerted them to our concerns and have now submitted a formal objection to the application to ensure that BC can impose appropriate planning conditions to mitigate any parking problems.

Old Cressex Park & Ride site – Aldi/McDonalds pre-application online consultation. Brian Tranter alerted us to an ongoing online pre-application consultation about a new Aldi store, together with a McDonalds restaurant/drive-through proposed for the old Cressex P&R/Cressex Island site.

See <http://aldiconsultation.co.uk/crestroad/>

Readers may remember that this site was the subject of a proposal two years ago for a cash-and-carry business, which the Group opposed on the grounds that large surface-level car parks make poor use of development land. That application was withdrawn but subsequently the Group achieved, with WDC's agreement, insertion of a policy on this subject in the 2019

Local Plan. This policy may again be relevant. The Council is understood to consider this site as unsuitable for housing, being too close to the M40, but more intensive commercial use needs to be considered.

25 High Street. In May, 25 High Street welcomed its new owners, M Glynn Builders|The Bespoke Homes Company. An imposing and impressive Grade II-listed Regency townhouse, No. 25 is currently undergoing extensive refurbishment to bring this beautiful and historic office building back to life. The new owners are working hard to preserve and showcase any original features whilst making the space more suitable for a modern working environment. 25 High Street will retain its commercial status and will be the HQ of M Glynn Builders|The Bespoke Homes Company. In addition, No. 25 will provide flexible workspace, small turnkey offices, virtual office services and a co-working hub for local small businesses. Turnkey offices and virtual office services will be available from early 2021, with the co-working hub following later in the year.

Gemma Shinh, Director of M Glynn, was welcomed into the Planning Group to help preserve the rich history of the town and contribute to the present and future outlook for High Wycombe. Gemma has a keen interest in town centre regeneration and in promoting High Wycombe as a growing, thriving and prosperous business hub. She is passionate about the local economy and future prosperity of the town, believing that its historic past offers a glimpse of what may be achieved in a modern setting.

Planning Group

What's in a Name?

THE FAMILIAR BELL INN in Frogmoor was recently the subject of a Listed Building Application for a rear extension and internal changes. The Society's Planning Group had no difficulty with the proposed physical changes but objected strongly to the intention to change its historic name to 'Sosh Club', a current slang term for a 'social' venue. At least no-one's yet suggested "Belly McBellface"!

Pub names, once established, seem to have some immunity to fashion fads, witness the number that have reverted to their former names. 'The Hobgoblin' was never quite at home in our High Street and has settled back in as 'The Three Tuns'. 'The Sausage Tree' in Saffron Platt has once again become 'The Mason's Arms', and the former 'Wheatsheaf Inn' looks set to be remembered as such long after its various twentieth century occupants have been forgotten.

If the new Marlow Hill Care Home is granted planning permission, then we are reliably informed that Care UK will also be seeking suggestions for its name.

Time to start thinking.



London Road and Crest Road woes

SIGNIFICANT WORK IS underway to modify most of the junctions on London Road, with lane closures and temporary traffic lights already causing considerable delays. This route, running east from the centre of Wycombe, is one of the most congested in the Wycombe area. Most of the junctions are traffic light controlled, and the Society's Transport group has never been satisfied that the controls were working with optimum performance, or indeed that the junctions would not be better as roundabouts. Various electronic linking systems are said to be in place with acronyms such as MOVA (Microprocessor Optimised Vehicle Activation) and SCOOT (Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique), but they are not very convincing. Transport for Bucks, however, remain very wedded to traffic light control.

The latest London Road scheme starts at the Gordon Road roundabout and includes Hatters Lane, Gomm Road and Rayners Avenue junctions. There will be some road widening, lane realignment, and removal of a bus lane, but most significantly, a smart traffic management system allegedly working from one end of the route to the other.

We shall see.

Whilst it would be nice to see improvements in traffic flow, it is important to understand that the driving factor is to cope with the extra traffic which will be generated by the Gomm Valley and Abbey Barn developments at that end of town.

At the same time there has been a virtual consultation about proposed work at Cressex: to remove the roundabout at the junction of Crest Road and John Hall Way replacing it with more "smart" traffic lights.

It is claimed that this will result in reduction of the congestion at the Cressex Roundabout and

Handy Cross. I can't see this working.

By the time you are reading this, the consultation will have closed, but you may still be able to see the displays and many other such consultations (both open and closed) via

<https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/>

The respite in traffic during the lockdown has been interesting, and although levels are increasing again, the peaks have flattened, and the lack of long delays reduces the pollution significantly. It's a shame that normally the roads run at over 100% capacity, and more attention is not directed towards removing pinch points, such as West Wycombe, where a steady flow of traffic even at 20mph would be far better than the continual start-stop situation at present.

Nigel Phillips, Transport Group

Development Plans in Booker

PLANS TO BUILD new houses in the 'paddock' at the top of Horns Lane have been published by Buckinghamshire Council. The proposal is to build 62 new homes on the 2 hectare site. Until last year this land was protected as part of the Green Belt but protection was removed as part of the Wycombe District Local Plan, which is now part of Buckinghamshire Council's plan for future growth.



The need for additional homes is understood but the plans offer no solutions to the problems that will be caused by the additional traffic, particularly at the junction between Horns Lane and Cressex Road. Locally there are also concerns that these plans will be extended to include the adjacent allotments, also removed from Green Belt in the Local Plan.

Social distancing requirements prevented normal face-to-face consultations at a local exhibition. Instead, a website was set up to enable the public to comment on the proposals. It is also hoped that a 'remote' presentation with a question and answer session will be organised. We encourage all local residents and those who wish to protect our green spaces to consider the proposal and make their views known.

Brian Tranter

Keeping our Programme in Suspense

IN SEPTEMBER 2019 we advertised at Pann Mill for someone with 2020 vision to help us shape our programme for the year ahead. In practice none of us could have foreseen what would happen as all our planned events and activities fell prey to the disruptive effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The first Society casualty was a planned talk on 24th April by Sarah Charlton, Archivist of the Carington Estates, about Lord Lincolnshire's huge scrapbook (which first featured in our Winter 2019 Newsletter). At the April 2020 event we had intended to announce that the High Wycombe Society had entered into an agreement with Lord Carrington and had undertaken to pay half the price of the digitisation work to make this unique historical resource accessible to the people of High Wycombe.

As previously reported, the scrapbook includes a huge variety of material including items which, if studied at a detailed level, enrich our understanding of past events in our town.

Take this delightful 'scrap' as an example: a revealing handwritten account of the costs incurred in entertaining 3500 children and their teachers in Loakes Park on July 31st 1878. This would have been shortly after Lord Carington's marriage, a cause for great celebration in the town. He was 35 and his new wife just 22.

The costliest item on the list was currant cake, priced at only 5½d per lb, but ordered by the hundredweight (10½cwt = 1176lbs). This was served in addition to the cheaper bread cakes priced at 6d per quartern (4lb). (Those 370 quartern would weigh another 1480lbs if my sums are right.) There was plenty of butter to spread on the bread – and a further 330lbs of sugar to put in the tea along with 54 gallons of milk. The children who attended would recall their treat for the rest of their lives, but it is touching to know that Lord Carington also kept his own souvenir. Its position in the scrapbook suggests he may have pasted it in some 30 years after it was written.

Work on the scrapbook has now been completed. The digital images will be deposited at Buckinghamshire Archives in Aylesbury, but the High Wycombe Society has a copy of the images for our own use, so you can expect to see further extracts in the Newsletter from time to time. Sarah would still like to come and talk to us, too, when circumstances again permit.

Next to fall under the Covid-19 axe in 2020 were our planned Open Days at Pann Mill in May and

	£	s	d
370 Quartern Bread cakes @ 6 each	9	5	0
10½ cwt Currant cake at 5½ per lb	26	19	0
198 lbs Butter @ ¼ per lb	13	4	0
444 " Tea " 2/6 "	5	10	0
330 " Sugar " 4 "	5	10	0
54 Gallons Milk	2	10	14
145-140 feet of Tables & Seats erected	15	1	0
Hire of Hugs & Jugs	5	2	1
" " Tent	2	0	0
Printing &c	5	14	0
	£90	5	5

Details of an event to remember, preserved in Lord Lincolnshire's scrap book, and reproduced by kind permission of Lord Carrington.

July. We were also obliged to cancel the AGM in June; and the Summer Newsletter had to be reduced to a short update to go with the AGM cancellation notice. Most notifications were sent out electronically but about 100 had to be home-printed and posted.

Our contribution to the 2020 Wycombe Arts Festival, would have been a film show presented by Stuart King featuring films from the SOFA (Save Our Film Archives) project. These films which were originally created by the High Wycombe Film Society have now been digitised so we are entering a new phase of the project in which we are trying to determine how best to make use of the material, a difficult thing to do when you can't meet up. Sadly, a number of the soundtracks to the films are missing but the visual material is beginning to prove itself to be a useful archive resource.

When the Black Lives Matter protests in Bristol came to our attention I was asked if I had any photographs of Black and Asian Mayors "doing

good things" in Wycombe. It was easy to find photos of Mayors at Pann Mill, and I also found I had some of Cllr Sebert Graham in his Mayoral year, planting a tree in our twin town of Kelkheim, but High Wycombe's first Asian Mayor, was Cllr Mohammed Razzaq, and his mayoralty (1988-89) significantly pre-dated the surge in use of digital photography. In the SOFA collection we have a documentary of his mayoral year complete with soundtrack. One of the highlights was his re-instigation of the Mayoral annual inspection of Wycombe Market.

So what of the rest of our 2020 programme? Sadly it's all still on hold.

We had an event pencilled in for the anniversary of VJ day, but it, too, had to be cancelled.

We held out as long as we could hoping that we would be able to have our Open Day at Pann Mill in September, but it was not to be. The limited space at the mill made it practically very difficult for the millers to work safely. To open the mill to the public would have required the installation



In 1988, Mayor Cllr Mohammed Razzaq issued certificates to market traders with long service records who in turn contributed to the Mayor's Appeal

of perspex screens among other things, and guidelines for limiting the spread of the virus on the day would have been difficult to implement. So, is there anyone out there who would like to help us plan for 2021?

Jackie Kay

Keeping an eye on our Ruins

SOCIETY TRUSTEE Willie Reid has recently been in touch with Historic England to express concern about the condition of the ruins of the Hospital of St John the Baptist in Easton Street. Responsibility for maintenance of this Scheduled Ancient Monument site rests with the owners who periodically arrange for vegetation to be cut back, but it doesn't take long each time for the ruins to become submerged again. It seems like they are fighting a losing battle and the archaeological importance of the remains would seem to be under-appreciated. Willie has provided photographic evidence of the problem, which now awaits the availability of an inspector.

It often comes as a surprise to local people to learn that the ruins are not publicly owned. This is perhaps because for the majority of the twentieth century they belonged to Bucks County Council. In 1944, they were formally vested, as part of the College Annexe, in BCC as the Education Authority. This was the status when the information board was unveiled in 1976, an event organised by Wycombe District Council at which the Mayor officiated.

But in 1989 significant things happened. With a change in ownership, planning permission was granted for demolition of the old College Annexe which occupied the old Royal Grammar school buildings immediately behind the ruins.

The relatively newly built offices with their historic "grammar school" façade retained, have recently again undergone extensive refurbishment. But what of the important and attractive ruins in their grounds? Are they receiving the care they deserve?

Historic England say they currently have a backlog of casework due to Covid-19 where visits were not possible but that their inspectors are working methodically to catch up. We await with interest what they have to say.

JK



A 1990 documentary in the SOFA collection captured the scene from Railway Place when only the façade of the old Grammar School buildings remained held in place by scaffolding.

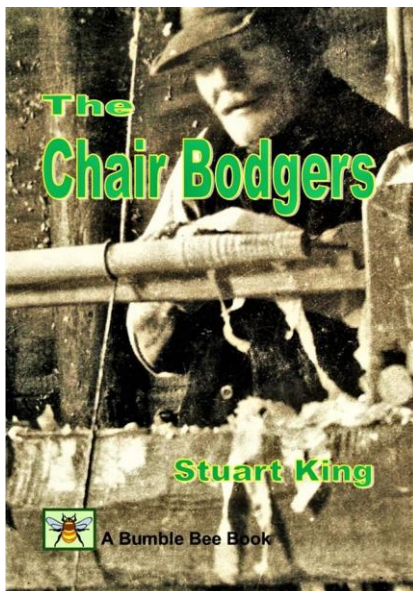
The Chair Bodgers – a new book

THE CHILTERN CHAIR BODGERS were a hardy group of skilled craftsmen. For nearly 300 years these woodland wood turners produced chair legs and other “turned stuff” for the world-famous locally based furniture trade. Their working practices evolved over generations and their traditional ways of life adapted to many changes in the countryside, but ultimately, they succumbed to the relentless march of progress.

As a traditional woodcraftsman throughout his life, and with a dad who worked as a bodger, Stuart King is well-placed to tell their story. His newly released A5 format, 52-page book draws on his own life-long observations as a chronicler of the changing country lifestyle.

The book is bursting with colourful illustrations from his unique personal collection of photographs; while the large-print easy-to-read text clearly introduces the reader to the essential features of the bodgers’ way of life.

In his own words, Stuart is “proud to be a descendant of a long line of country folk who



Mr Howlett from Chinnor operating a pole lathe

tilled the soil, worked the beech woodland and created wonderful things in workshops in and around the Chiltern Hills”. He has embarked on this self-publishing adventure to “tell the stories of hard-working craftsmen and women” in a way he hopes will be appreciated by readers of all ages. He also hopes it will help dispel some myths along the way.

The book can be purchased directly through Stuart King’s website at:

www.stuartking.co.uk/book-the-chair-bodger Price: £9 plus £1 towards postage. Total: £10 if posted in UK.

What Three Words?

AS COVID-19 restrictions began to lift, in line with Government guidelines many of us arranged to meet with friends from other households at outdoor locations where social distancing could be maintained; Pann Mill and the Boathouse café both served me well in that regard. But what do you say when a friend asks: “Where exactly is that?”

Until recently I would launch into a long description of how to get there, where to park and so on. Friends more accustomed to meeting in remote rendezvous locations might on occasion suggest a grid reference would be helpful, but more often than not they would rely on being able to make contact by mobile phone in the event they got lost or delayed on the day.

I was on The Rye when I first heard of a relatively new way to specify exact locations. A companion received a text message from a mutual friend who had failed to meet up with us. In response to her plaintive “I’m here - where are you?” I was already constructing a narrative in my head to describe the main features of The Rye, unsure of what direction she would be coming from, when my companion said “I wonder if she’s got the What Three Words app on her phone”. It meant nothing to me but a few more key strokes on

his phone established our own location as “knee.bolts.lush” a square of land with no distinguishing features except the picnic blankets that we had brought with us. Those three words sent to our absent friend gave her all the information she needed to find us.

If you want to know more, there’s a good video at <https://what3words.com/about-us/> which is also where you need to go to download the app and start using it. In an emergency, having this App on your phone could even one day save a life.

In the meantime if anyone asks you where Pann Mill is, a cool response is just to send them “w3w.co/expect.guess.fits” in a text message, and you could also advise them to pay to park at “deeply.rapid.stays” in the carpark you enter by “upgrading.funny.laws”.

Jackie Kay

St Francis Church and Vicarage

SIR GILES GILBERT SCOTT is perhaps best known for two things: he was the architect of Battersea Power and Bankside Power stations (the latter now houses Tate Modern); and he was the designer of the 1930's iconic red telephone box. His name is often confused with that of his grandfather, Sir George Gilbert Scott, a prolific Gothic revival architect of the nineteenth century whose claims to fame included his design of the Albert Memorial in London. Both men undertook some of their lesser-known work locally. It was the grandfather (George) who worked on designs of workhouses including the Wycombe Union workhouse out at Saunderton, whereas it was the grandson (Giles) whose architectural legacy in High Wycombe includes both a Grade II* listed church and its accompanying vicarage which has recently also acquired Grade II listing status.

Perched on top of Amersham Hill, not far from the Royal Grammar School, St Francis Church at Terriers is one of only a few examples of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's smaller churches. Its tower is one of High Wycombe's landmarks but from the road its imposing flint-faced walls are most-parts hidden by trees and other buildings. Its architectural importance was first recognised by English Heritage in 1973. More recently, it has undergone significant preservation work, thanks again to English Heritage and a substantial grant from the Lottery Heritage Fund.

Even more effectively screened at ground level, but clearly visible on 1930's postcards and online within family history archives of the Falkner family builders, is the adjacent vicarage, built in buff brick laid in stretcher bond with ashlar dressings and a pantile roof. Its plan view which can be seen via Google Earth incorporates large semi-circular projections with windows which exploit its south-west to north-east orientation.

Both buildings would seem to have been commissioned together, financed by a Mrs Field, widow of the Rev. Frederick Field who had first proposed in 1916 that a more substantial church would be needed to replace the small wooden building erected in 1912. No progress was made at first due to the First World War but it was

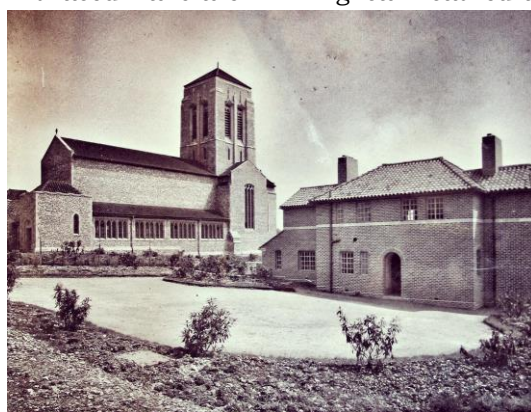
Mrs Field who later selected Sir Giles Gilbert Scott as the architect. His fame as a designer and restorer of churches was already assured as in 1903, at the age of twenty-two he had won the competition to design Liverpool's Anglican cathedral. In 1924, following its

consecration, he received a knighthood. He also designed his own home, Chester House, Clarendon Place in 1925-26, now a Grade II listed building. This pointed the way to future domestic designs such as the vicarage at Terriers. Building work at Terriers began in 1929 and finished in 1932. The building cost was £32,000. A new parish of Terriers was formally created in 1937.

Those who visit the church enthuse about its internal appearance, especially its limed timber roof structure and a 1930/40's stylised crucifix on the west end wall, not to mention its impeccable acoustics. Sir Giles Gilbert Scott designed all the furniture and fittings right down to the lighting.

Although in need of some renovation work, the house also retains many of its original fittings: panelled doors and door furniture, and fire surrounds which correspond closely to original architectural drawings in both the dining room and sitting room.

Jackie Kay and Tony Mealing



Above: newly built St Francis Church and vicarage – Photo: courtesy of Falkner family archive.

Below postcard view in which the vicarage is dwarfed in front of the church

Far below: Google Earth view shows the church and vicarage enclosed by trees.



The Ride, Daws Hill Parkland

IN THE UPLANDS adjacent to the former US/RAF Daws Hill base (now Pine Trees residential area), bounded by the M40 to the south and Abbey Barn Lane and Keep Hill/Deangarden Wood to the north, lies an extensive enclosed area of parkland which few know about as there has never been public access. It has always seemed a rather remote area. This will change with the completion of Abbey Barn Park by Berkeley Homes, at the top of Abbey Barn Lane.

To understand why this parkland was created in fields and grassland, bordered by dense woodland, we need to go back to 1896, when Earl Carrington (later Marquess of Lincolnshire) sold Wycombe Abbey and planned a new residence up the hill at Daws Hill farm, another part of his estate. His four-year-old son, Viscount Wendover, laid the foundation stone on 27th February 1899 and in 1901 the family moved in to their sumptuous new country residence, first called Daws Hill Lodge and later Daws Hill House.

Earl Carrington began with the creation of parkland to the east of Daws Hill. The Wycombe Abbey Estate plan of 1896 shows eight evenly spaced 'roundels' (clusters) of deciduous trees, four on each side, enclosing a wide space down which a 'ride' was to be developed. This was extended to seven roundels on either side, starting at Abbey Barn lane and terminating near Daws Hill House, to provide a parkland vista from the House. The Ride, as it became known, 70m long by 55m wide, was supplemented in the early 1900s with a double avenue of lime trees on either side, linking the roundels, and in 1925 with a way down the middle. This was not intended to be a grand carriageway leading to the House, as Lord Carrington had already created three entrances: from the Rye, Marlow Hill and Daws Hill Lane (see my article Approaches to Wycombe Abbey, Newsletter, Summer 2008). The ornamental gardens were on the south side of the House, extending to the Crispin Way entrance on Daws Hill Lane, where stone pillars (from the St Mary's Street entrance to Wycombe Abbey) formed an imposing entrance.

After the Marquess died in 1928 his brother, the fourth Baron Carrington, sold Daws Hill House and the adjoining 200 acres, including the parkland, to Wycombe Abbey School.

In 1942 Wycombe Abbey was requisitioned for a US base, and a bunker and camp were built



Above: The Ride in 2020 – Photo: David Snoxell

Below: 1897 OS map showing 7 roundels on each side of the Ride. Daws Hill house is at the top left.



which straddled part of the Ride closest to Daws Hill House. In 1946 the Abbey building was returned to the school, and the 40 acres occupied by the base were sold by the school to the War Office. In 1973 some permanent buildings were constructed, cutting off Daws Hill House completely from its parkland. The Ride was further to be truncated in 1973 by the construction of the M40 and widening of Abbey Barn Lane where it tunnels beneath the motorway. However at least two thirds of the Ride survived.

In 1987 Wycombe Abbey grounds were registered by English Heritage on the Historic Parks and Gardens Register as Grade II, though Daws Hill parkland was instead designated as

forming part of the wider historic landscape of Wycombe Abbey, making the Ride a protected landscape. It is regarded as an attractive land feature of local historic significance. The US base, shared by the RAF, closed in 2007. In 2011 the Ministry of Defence sold the 50 acres of land occupied by the base to Taylor Wimpey.

The WDC development brief for the public consultation in June 2012 proposed that the Ride become a public realm linked to the development of the Abbey Barn South reserve site. Berkeley Homes have designed a very attractive plan for turning the Ride into an open green space that both residents and the general public can benefit from. It will comprise woodland trails, footpaths, a circular fitness trail of 1.5km, ecology and wildlife area, children's play area and water features. Chiltern Rangers will move to a new site near the Ride where the American recreational area and BBQ pavilion were. The plan was approved by WDC.

David Snoxell

Peter Goodwin (1926-2020)

A LEADING FIGURE in the High Wycombe musical scene for over half a century, Peter Goodwin died in June at the age of 94. Peter's father was a headmaster in the London borough of Richmond, and Peter grew up there until evacuated to Wycombe during the war. His godmother was a local milliner – a friend of the family. Later, she – one Edith Evans – took to the stage, notoriously uttering the famous line "A handbag?!" in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Peter taught music at Mill End Road Girls' School, finishing his time there with a performance of Handel's *Messiah*. Years later I met someone walking her dog on the recreation ground, and on hearing that I knew Peter she burst out in praise, saying how inspiring he had been for ordinary children, getting them to reach heights of performance they would never have imagined.

He continued inspiring his students when he set up the O and A-level music course at High Wycombe College – now Bucks New University (BNU). His brief, at a time when the college was very inward-looking, was to foster outreach to the town, and this he did with great effect, being a founding committee member of the Arts Festival and bringing performances by famous orchestras and internationally renowned soloists to College and Town Halls. Peter's High Wycombe Orchestra often performed in the Parish Church and in St. Lawrence's church at West Wycombe.

But Peter's most remarkable achievement was probably the 26 opera productions he did in



the College hall. With his associate Ronald Swains, who sadly died in March, he recruited local singers to his opera evening class, and performed operas from Mozart to Mascagni, Verdi to Vaughan Williams, and Smetana to Strauss and Sullivan. Our very own Jackie Kay was among those recruited; she played her 'cello under his baton in the orchestra pit on at least two occasions.

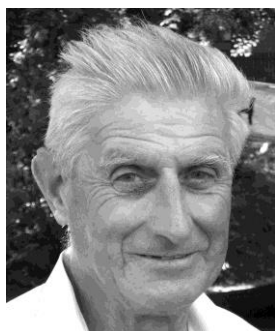
In 2013 Peter was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by Bucks New University "In recognition of his many years with the institution, and the dedication, enthusiasm and effort he has

put into bringing ... music to High Wycombe."

We are hoping to arrange a memorial concert at West Wycombe when the Covid-19 crisis eases, and will be pleased to hear from friends with memories of Peter, or who would like to be kept informed about that occasion: P.M.G.Memorial@gmail.com

Clifton Hughes

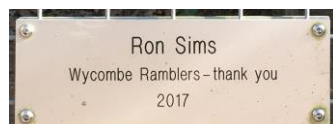
Ron Sims (1931-2020)



RON SIMS will be remembered with affection not just for his various roles in the Rye Protection Society and High Wycombe Society, but also as a keen ramble, and a familiar figure around High Wycombe with his neat bow tie, summer shorts, and always

with his little briefcase.

Did you know there is a plaque dedicated to Ron by the Wycombe Ramblers on a fence near Brands House, Four Ashes ?



Some readers may also remember a brilliant cartoon drawn by Ian

Barratt which featured Ron and then Society Chairman Roger Lawson at a time when the Society was trying to stop a skateboard facility being placed on the Rye. It is reproduced here in colour for the first time.

Chris Woodman



Evidence of GWR Broad Gauge

THE BRUNEL SHED at High Wycombe station has recently been the subject of much publicity, but I was wondering if any other Society members had spotted what I believe to be another connection to Brunel's GWR Broad Gauge. There are some fence posts along the A40 near the site of the former West Wycombe Station which appear to be made from broad gauge track which was presumably reused after it was taken up. In total there are about 94 posts made from "bridge" rail.



9 of these can be found to the left of the entrance to the footpath over the footbridge over the railway to Downley and about 12 to the right. The remaining (approx.) 73 posts border Grant and Stone's premises. They are all about 4' to 5' above ground although many are most parts hidden by undergrowth, trees and fence planks.

Two of the most easily accessible posts have writing on them, the first including the letters "GWR". In addition, two more pieces of rail have been joined at the end of a wire fence near the road side of the nearby footbridge over the railway. The latter are more exposed and hence more corroded.



I am a member of the Board Gauge Society and they have reported similar fence posts near Chinnor in their July 2019 News Sheet, so there are other examples in the area.

David Adamson

According to Nigel Phillips, our Society's resident railway enthusiast, this type of re-purposing is common in ex-GWR territory. He has observed similar items in Dorset.



Above: GWR features found by David Adamson

High Wycombe station was built in 1854 as the terminus of the broad gauge line from Maidenhead. The line was extended past West Wycombe by 1862 and later converted to standard gauge when the broad gauge rail was repurposed as noted above.

The adjacent picture, taken by Chris Woodman and posted by him in the "All Things Great Western" Facebook group, shows how work is progressing on the refurbishment of the old Brunel engine shed at High Wycombe station. The intention is to reuse as much of the existing fabric as possible. The doors at both ends have been removed to allow the interior of the building which has been unoccupied for some years, to dry out.



Refurbishment in progress at the Brunel Shed viewed from a vantage point in the multi-storey carpark – Photo Chris Woodman

Some Society members have expressed sadness at the loss of the mural on the western end of the Brunel Shed but it is understood that it will feature somehow internally within the plans for restoration of the building.



Wycombe's place on a Medieval Map

IN 1809 Richard Gough, an antiquary and expert on British topography, bequeathed to the Bodleian Library a rather unusual map of the island of Great Britain, which he had previously acquired at a sale for the sum of half a crown. While the reason for its creation remains a mystery and scholars still debate its exact date of origin (likely to be from mid fourteenth century to the early fifteenth) not to mention the provenance of various copies, today the Gough Map is widely known as a medieval treasure of cartography, and recognised as the earliest surviving map to show routes across Britain and to depict a recognisable coastline. It is also the earliest known map to depict the location of [High] Wycombe.

The original held at the Bodleian was drawn on the flesh-side of two pieces of sheepskin parchment, stitched together to give an overall size of approx. 553mm/22" (height) by 1164mm/46" (width). Making good use of the space available, the map was orientated towards the east i.e. Scotland and the North are to the left which takes a bit of getting used to. Wycombe therefore appears beneath London.

Towns on the map are shown as vignettes. The one for "Wycombe" shows 2 buildings with red roofs whereas many other local towns like Aylesbury and Buckingham show only a single building. More elaborate nearby vignettes include depictions of the castle at Windsor and a spired church with cross at Reading. The London vignette is more elaborate still with features originally produced using silver and gold leaf.

Another feature of the map is that many settlements are joined by straight red lines with roman numerals indicating distances. Wycombe is on such a route from London to St David's, between Uxbridge and Tetsworth.

From Uxbridge to High Wycombe is 12 units; from High Wycombe to Tetsworth is 10 units.

More prominently displayed and exaggerated in size are the rivers. Although they are not labelled by name it is easy to pick out the Thames, the Colne and the Wye.

Thanks to "The Linguistic Geographies project" a fully interrogatable digitised version of the Gough map is now freely accessible online at www.goughmap.org along with a number of fascinating related academic essays.

Alternatively, if you prefer to use more traditional methods and have enough wall space to spare then it is also possible to buy posters of the map which are bound to prove interesting talking points.

My thanks to Tony Mealing for first drawing my attention to the existence of the Gough Map.

Jackie Kay



Talking Point

AN EMPTY FRAME begging for a picture? Or a view that must be preserved as it is part of the High Street Conservation area? Artist Andrew Lilley's suggestion that the wall on the side of the town houses at the east end of the High Street could be enhanced by some public art, has triggered a range of reactions.

The Editor would be interested to hear your views.

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr James Jenkins

Walks around Wycombe with Willie

Willie Reid hopes to resume his walks in aid of www.streetkidsdirect.org.uk. His NEW circular walk is entitled "Rusty, knights, mosquitos and more". He invites all to "Come and hear about the industry that made Wycombe famous throughout the world, learn about Wycombe's serial criminal and of the club where practical jokes and amorous pursuits were encouraged."

Wycombe Museum in Eden



Model of High Wycombe town centre currently on display in the Eden Centre.

Wycombe Museum have created an exhibition by moving some items from their furniture collection into an otherwise empty shop in the Eden Centre. Also featured is a historical model of the town centre (shown here) originally created by planners to show the effects of redevelopment proposals.

A warm welcome awaits visitors. It is open on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday each week. Admission is free but donations are welcome.

Pubs of Local Historical Interest

Do you know a pub with an interesting history? Back in 2009 the Historic Buildings Group of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society launched a survey of the County's Pubs, but it was adjourned in 2013 before it reached High Wycombe! October's BLHN conference (see below) aims to re-ignite interest in pubs as well as breweries. If you would like to help compile information about Wycombe pubs – or would like to nominate a pub, please let the Editor know.

Bucks in 100 Objects

An organisation called Buckinghamshire Culture has received several nominations of objects in High Wycombe to "help tell the story" of our County, including: Hannah Ball's Clock; The Red Lion in our High Street; an entry to a Chepping Wycombe Town Planning competition from 1913; a Wheelback Windsor chair; the Centaur weathervane on top of our Guildhall; and a Waterfall Geometric Mural by Teakster. Further details of the project can be found at:

<https://buckinghamshireculture.wordpress.com/bucks-in-100-objects/>

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 November 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	
Saturday 12th September Online	Virtual History Fair hosted by Buckinghamshire Archives. This event is likely to include an official launch of the availability of the digitised version of Lord Lincolnshire's scrapbook, a project which the High Wycombe Society has part-financed. (see p8)
Sunday 13th September CANCELLED	Please note that in the light of ongoing uncertainties re. Covid-19 and measures to help combat its spread we have reluctantly cancelled the Pann Mill Open Day previously advertised for this date.
Sunday 13th September 14.00 hrs start	"Rusty, knights, mosquitos and more" . Covid-19 permitting Willie Reid will lead his new walk starting outside Wycombe Museum (see above). It includes two short steep climbs/descents. Distance 3 miles in 2 hours. There is no need to book- just to turn up. (Subject to any government limits at the time on number of participants.)
Saturday 24th October Online 13.30 hrs start	BLHN - Wellers, Wethereds and Wheelers – Buckinghamshire Brewers through three centuries. - A half-day Buckinghamshire Local History Network conference replacing the previously advertised full-day conference which has been postponed until 2021. Further details to be found on the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society website.