

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

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New Beginnings

FRIDAY 10th JUNE saw the Society return to the familiar surroundings of The Riverside for its first indoor general meeting in three years; the Annual General Meeting (AGM) was followed by an enjoyable talk about the High Street by our resident Conservation Architect, Tony Mealing.

Among many familiar faces were some new ones, and it was refreshing to learn that some were standing for office. **Steve Strutt**'s decision to stand for the role of Treasurer freed the previous incumbent, **Colin Hingston**, to stand for the role of Chairman. Both were duly elected. Our long-serving secretary, **Tony Hatton**, reluctantly agreed in the absence of other nominations to serve for another year. Six existing trustees were re-elected: **Mike Blackwell, Malcolm Connell, Nigel Phillips, Willie Reid, David Snoxell and Brian Tranter**; and they will now be joined by **Gillian Humphreys** and **Mollie Robinson**.

Documents covering the AGM had been circulated before the meeting. As is often the case, much had already happened since the period to which they related. It will be for next year's AGM to review April's highly successful Art Exhibition and the May Pann Mill Open Day which followed it. While the echoes of the Art Exhibition are still reverberating, Willie Reid already has new project proposals on the horizon.

Stuart King relinquished his role as President – at his request, “without a fuss”. David Snoxell, speaking on behalf of the Trustees, proposed that the Society should invite Lord Carrington to become a Patron. This led to a discussion about the desire for an ongoing figurehead, and the meeting then endorsed the proposal, which does not require a change to the constitution.

For some of us, accustomed to holding meetings over Zoom, there were forgotten practicalities of real room hire: the overhead of parking, the need for spare batteries for the microphone and advantages of knowing the whereabouts of light switches, but we muddled through and were duly rewarded by a genuine cup of tea at the end of the formalities, thanks to Mary Woodman and her willing helpers.

Jackie Kay



Left and Right – The latest new faces to appear at the Guildhall.

Below: Society Trustee Willie Reid with Artist Dan Wilson whose mural was painted in April while the Society's Art Exhibition took place upstairs.



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

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That was the Exhibition that was!

WHEN PHIL STALLWOOD decided to drop by the Guildhall to take a look at the High Wycombe Society's "Brush with Wycombe's Past" exhibition on its penultimate day, he had no idea that his arrival would be a cause for celebration. Identifying him as our 1000th visitor, we recorded the achievement of a milestone we had quietly set ourselves several months in advance. Just one of many successes!

In the run-up to the exhibition opening, we had kept assuring ourselves that it would all "come together" in the end. Things do. But it was still scary committing to some of the pre-publicity with many issues left to resolve. Even our star exhibit, the quality reproduction of William Hannan's lesser-known painting of the Guildhall end of the High Street, which had been photographed by Andrew Smart of A C Cooper Ltd thanks to Lord Carrington back in the Autumn of 2021, was subject to a delay at its final hurdle when the picture-framer had an untimely positive Covid test result!

The cavalry came in the form of our friends from the Wycombe Arts Centre whose experience in hosting art exhibitions and working to tight deadlines overcame many practical problems. And so "come together" it did! The Carrington room became the "Art Room", home to about 40 pictures arranged chronologically to showcase the changing face of our town centre since Hannan's time; while the Shelburne Room was transformed into a "Map Room" with a selection of maps showing Wycombe through the ages.

Looking back, it is strange to think we ever doubted that we could attract enough visitors to make it worthwhile, or that we would be ready for them when they arrived. It all "came together" with a few hours to spare! The visitor experience was also enhanced for many by the small army of volunteer stewards who rose to the occasion.

It was heartening to engage with visitors, some of whom were seeing the inside of the Guildhall for

the first time. While they marvelled at the architectural features, others of us shared our concerns about its general state of repair. From flaking paintwork to a hole in the ceiling, the historic building showed worrying signs of needing some tender loving care, a cause the Society should perhaps pursue further.

While the exhibition itself already seems a long time ago its legacy will endure. One challenge for the Society

will be to find an appropriate long-term home for the Hannan picture where hopefully the public can enjoy it. Already it has inspired Dan Wilson to create a mural version underneath the Guildhall blending in features from artist Victor Elford's depiction of the High Street, and some original imaginative additions. In Dan's version, among the many individuals depicted, Lorna Cassidy can clearly be seen with her bicycle alongside her, stopped in the High Street so that she can talk to the late Frances Alexander.

There is potential for re-use of some of the other exhibition material, and scope for further related research too. It is surprising how little is known about some of the artists whose works are held in Wycombe Museum and the Discover Bucks Museum and/or published in local history books.

Our thanks to Willie Reid and all who helped the Society succeed in bringing William Hannan's anniversary to the attention of the public.

Jackie Kay

With an Optional Stroll along the High Street

DURING THE EXHIBITION Willie Reid led several walks along the High Street. I joined one on the Monday of the final week. The weather stayed fine. This tour had a large gathering, with 24 participants who happily followed Willie around the town centre to hear stories from the past. Those who have walked with Willie before will know that he provides a flowing performance with no notes in evidence, and with



a memory for dates and details like no other. We learnt about the Guildhall, the Pepperpot, the Wheatsheaf, the Town Hall's Oak Room, the Red Lion and Benjamin Disraeli, Tom Burt and his treasure, plus the war-time activities of Davenport Vernon. I particularly enjoyed the tale of the publican at The Anchor pub in St Mary Street during the Second World War.

Sally Scagell

Planning Matters

THROUGH OUR regular monthly meetings, the Planning Group discusses and monitors many proposed and actual changes to our town. In addition, Group members Chris Woodman and Heather Morley have become heavily involved in the High Wycombe Community Board's wide-ranging efforts to improve the ambience of the town centre. Their efforts include addressing planning-related matters such as measures to improve shop fronts to respect our historic heritage, and wider collaborative work to tackle such issues as antisocial behaviour. Meanwhile the Group's regular activities continue to cover both familiar ground such as the relentless provision of new housing on the reserve sites and newly pressing issues such as the future of Wycombe Air Park. There are minor victories when action is taken in response to feedback on planning applications; and disappointments when agreed enforcement actions do not appear to be taken in a timely manner. Some enhancements to our town are eagerly awaited, none more so than the refurbishment of the Brunel Shed.

Reserve Housing Sites. There has always been strongly voiced concern about inadequate infrastructure provision for the four High Wycombe reserve housing sites: Abbey Barn South and North, Gomm Valley and Terriers Farm. Since their inclusion in the adopted 2019 Wycombe District Local Plan their development has been beyond doubt, but there is much still to settle at a detailed level.

The Terriers Farm proposals by Redrow and Persimmon are being contested by local councillors and residents; and the pre-application exhibition for the Gomm Valley (now in the hands of Taylor Wimpey) was vigorously criticised by residents' associations and ourselves. The number of dwellings proposed for Gomm Valley has now been reduced from 1,000 to 604, which is still much more than the 400 provided for in the approved Local Plan. The Group is now checking whether the designs proposed live up to the developer's claim that they will have a "unique design character".

A major concern with all the above developments is the anticipated overloading of the transport network, for which there is no solution, although developers will normally prepare travel plans which may include car-sharing schemes and support for public transport. Home working may be a more significant factor in the future.

Another concern is the adequacy of sewerage provision. Since the High Wycombe Sewage Works closed in 2005 to make room for Berkeley Homes' attractive Wye Dene estate, our sewage has been pumped under Daws Hill to Little Marlow Sewage Treatment Works, one of several such works for which Thames Water recently paid massive fines for pumping untreated sewage into the nation's watercourses and the sea in circumstances far more frequently than could be called "exceptional". The Group does not know if this has affected our River Wye.

Last November the Council resolved to write to water companies discharging raw sewage into the county's rivers "including the Wye", but the Chiltern Conservation Board (CCB) has advised us that this rarely occurs now that Thames Water have invested to avoid repeating an incident in

2014 when sewage was deliberately discharged into the Hughenden Stream to prevent flooding people's homes. The return of fully treated sewage effluent from Little Marlow to the River Wye near Funges Farm, to maintain the water level, has a characteristic chlorine-laden "pong", but perhaps it is harmless, and CCB tell us the backflow is switched off whenever Thames Water discharge sewage into the Thames. All somewhat unsavoury, though!

Teddy Bear Bubble Tea Shop (TBBT) In the Spring *Newsletter*, we drew attention to Teddy Bear Bubble Tea's proposal to paint the listed building at No.4 Cornmarket a shocking pink. We submitted a strong objection and then waited. We were worried when we read that the application had been approved but on closer examination it transpired that it had been amended to be white. That was a reassuring success, and the speed with which it happened suggested that TBBT had a back-up white scheme

ready to use if a town centre location proved to be sensitive. The design is not typical for the age of the building, but it could have been so much worse, and the business is expected to be an asset drawing more people to our High Street.

Month on month the appearance is improving with the addition of new eateries. The beautifully restored 14th-century "Wheatsheaf" now has as its neighbour the Merletto Lounge (where Boots used to be); but the downmarket fast-food stalls near the Little Market House still do nothing to help the ambience. But wasn't outdoor eating something we all hoped for in Frogmoor? That will be the concern of Dandara Homes who will aim to maximise the value of their conversion of the Chiltern Centre to residential properties; we await their plans.



Marlow Hill Care Home Proposal Care UK's application for an 82-bedroom care home above the hospital on Marlow Hill was refused by Buckinghamshire Council in September 2021,

citing many reasons but the most decisive was probably their opposition ruling as the Highway Authority that the increased traffic levels in and out would be unacceptable on road safety grounds. Care UK have now appealed against the refusal, opting for a full Public Inquiry. Their case addresses all the Council's concerns, and it would be no surprise if it were to succeed.

Stuart Lodge Back in December the owners of Stuart Lodge, an undistinguished building at the top of Stuart Road, above the Friends' Meeting House at 25 London Road and within the Town Centre Conservation Area, submitted an application to convert it to flats, which would have overlooked the private garden of No.25. The Council's officers recommended refusal, as requested by many local residents, saying the conversion would be detrimental to the Conservation Area. The Group also noticed that the separation between the backs of the two buildings fell clearly short of that required by the Council's own Supplementary Planning Guidance. We were pleased - as was the resident of No.25 - when the application was refused.

High Wycombe Cemetery railings Unfortunately, at the time of writing, no progress seems to have been made in repainting the cemetery railings. Readers will recall that ugly railings looking like galvanised metal were erected by the Council (without due notice through their own planning process) in 2019. We noticed them almost immediately and raised the issue with councillors. Despite several reminders, and reassurances that they would be painted black (like the rest of the cemetery railings which are inconspicuous and perfectly acceptable), they still retain the threatening 'ghetto' look. We applaud the re-pointing work being carried out on the brick and flint wall between the cemetery and Benjamin/Priory Roads, but please can Buckinghamshire Council officers get on with the re-painting we have been promised for so long?

And as another illustration of how objectionable this work was, we include a photograph showing where a child's memorial plaque was fenced over in a most insensitive way.



Distracting (and ugly) display panels Readers will remember the many protests – sadly unsuccessful – about the huge and ugly display panels facing the Marlow Hill mini-roundabout. The Group decided to object to a rather similar proposal for the West Wycombe Road/Pastures crossroads. On this occasion, happily, Buckinghamshire Council in their capacity as the Highway Authority also objected, considering the proposed location to be more dangerous and distracting to drivers, and it was quickly refused.

1 High Street This building in the Town Centre Conservation Area is Grade II listed, and so a change of colour should have been the subject of an application for Listed Building Consent. The Group therefore submitted an Enforcement Complaint. In future, we hope that all such changes in the Conservation Area will be covered by the Supplementary Planning Document on Shop Fronts, which the Council have said they will develop, resources permitting.

Brunel Shed update As visitors to the station will have observed, the Brunel Engine Shed refurbishment work is nearing completion. It looks splendid! It is unclear, however, who will be the future tenants of this landmark building. A little digging into this subject has revealed no clues, and we very much hope that it will soon be a bustling, welcoming asset to the town.

We hope that there will be a café inside, and perhaps a quality convenience store so that members of the public and home-bound commuters are not denied access to this historic building but instead have cause to visit it.

Wycombe Air Park There are widely reported plans to build “world-class film studios” at Booker Air Park. The Planning Group has had no opportunity to take part in their assessment, although at the Local Plan Examination in 2018 we opposed the disapplication of the Green Belt from areas of the airfield that were not already developed, some of which were subsequently called “Strategic Employment Areas”. The Bucks Free Press, among others, has reported anger from the historic Booker Gliding Club, which has been unable to find a new home and, we understand, may need therefore to be wound up. The film studio company, Stage Fifty, took advantage of the “permitted development rules” to build an 18m-high hangar-like “stage set” (actually only 15m is allowed) – said to be “temporary” until August, but at the same time making a full (permanent) application for this and a second stage set.

The Local Plan is very specific in requiring that developers at the Air Park should demonstrate that they do not compromise or limit flying (including gliding) operations, and Stage Fifty say they have complied with this, taking into account the Civil Aviation Authority's rules. The problem, however, is that the airport's operator – a tenant

(as is the Gliding Club) of the Council – decided to declare that the new buildings make the airfield unsafe for gliding and to eject the Club. We find it extraordinary that the Council should allow one of its own tenants to act in this way. Moreover, the control tower is no longer manned, and one of our members came away from a meeting about the Studio plans with the impression that the airport manager, who benefits from the Air Park being a base of the Heli-Air helicopter sales and training company, would be happy to see all fixed wing operations cease.

It seems to us that the Council's handling of this situation has fallen short of what the public has a right to expect. It is true that the Council itself has important property interests which it must foster on council taxpayers' behalf, and they may share the views of many people that the Film Studios, like those planned at Marlow, will bring considerable economic benefits to the town, but Local Authorities also have a duty to promote the health and wellbeing of their residents. If Buckinghamshire Council knew, or suspected, that the Film Studios project would bring about the cessation of gliding and other private flying, they should in our view have consulted openly on

these issues, giving residents the chance to comment on the right balance to be struck.

Black Boy information board



Our long-planned information board about the Black Boy pub in Church Street, which was demolished in 1931, was finally unveiled on 4th April. David Snoxell, representing the Trustees, gave a short outline of the relevant history and invited Cllr Arif Hussein to do the honours. Cllr Hussein responded by saying, "Wycombe has such a long and fascinating history, and so it was a pleasure for me to unveil this interpretation board. It's so important to pass on the stories of the past to new generations." Congratulations to all who worked to achieve this result.

Planning Group

"Bonkers" British Imperialism

IT IS OFTEN said that Miss Dove was ahead of her time. In 1899 she delivered a lecture to the Wycombe Mutual Improvement Society entitled "The Metric System of Weights and Measures" strongly advocating that it was in Britain's interests to become "more pliant" and "less insular" in its trade and urging the speedy adoption of the systems of measurement used by European competitors which gave them the advantage of being more easily understood by customers worldwide. The Metre Convention otherwise known as the Treaty of the Metre had been signed by 17 nations in 1875 and was a major step forward in setting common international standards.

In her talk, Miss Dove poked fun at imperial measures in use in Britain, some of which had not been standardised even across the country, illustrating her point with "fodders of lead" (19½ cwt in London but 22½ cwt in Derby) and "firkins of butter and soap" (66lbs if the former; 40lbs if the latter). She spoke "as an educationist" about the amount of time spent in schools imprinting the various methods of calculation on young minds, which could be spent much more profitably if Britain could embrace a more logical system of measurement.

Today's readers may need some help to understand that "cwt" is an abbreviation for "hundredweight" which in England at least had been "standardised" by the Weights and Measures Act of 1835 to represent 112lbs (not 100lbs as in American usage).

There have been many advances in metrology since Miss Dove's time. The organisations first set up in 1875 to achieve a common international

standard of measurement for length and mass had their remit significantly broadened in 1921. Their work laid the foundation for the recognition of the whole system of "SI" units for scientific measurements adopted in the 1960s; and their work continues today, most recently undertaking a fundamental review resulting in the redefinition of those units agreed internationally in 2019.

When I first read a report of Miss Dove's talk in the South Bucks Standard, though I found it amusing, I thought it was unlikely that it would ever be topical enough to warrant a mention in this Newsletter; but in 2022, I see that Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been dubbed "Imperial Measurement Man" by Edinburgh News in an article which ran with a headline "Imperial Measurements were Bonkers!" a sentiment I think Miss Dove would have supported, even if she would have expressed it in the rather more genteel language of her day.

Jackie Kay

Piddington Plus

HIDDEN AWAY in a white envelope on a shelf in High Wycombe reference library is a copy of an autobiography of Benjamin North, a nineteenth century founder of a local furniture factory. It's an unusual first-hand account of the life of an entrepreneur, and it's just one of many gems I have discovered thanks to Simon Cains and Brian Robertson whose recently published book is entitled "Piddington & Furniture – a history and dynasty".

Born into abject rural poverty but with a strong will to live a full and meaningful life, the above Benjamin North is credited with founding a dynasty, but it was not until the turn of the twentieth century, when the family business had outgrown its first premises in West Wycombe village, that his son (also Benjamin) brought it to Piddington, choosing a then green-field site for his new factory, with surrounding building plots for workers' housing.

The subsequent development of Piddington village and the business fortunes of B. North and Sons (Steam Chair and Furniture Works) were intertwined for many decades as successive generations of Benjamins took over the manufacturing reins and responded to the challenges of the times. Sustained in their efforts by their Methodist faith, they left traces of their industry which can still be found today if you know exactly where to look.

But the authors avoid wallowing in too much nostalgia, choosing instead to acquaint their readers with up-to-date information wherever they can. Even the early history of the area is examined through the lens of recent LIDAR analysis which clearly shows the nearby hollow

ways used by drovers long before the first brick was laid in the Piddington factory.

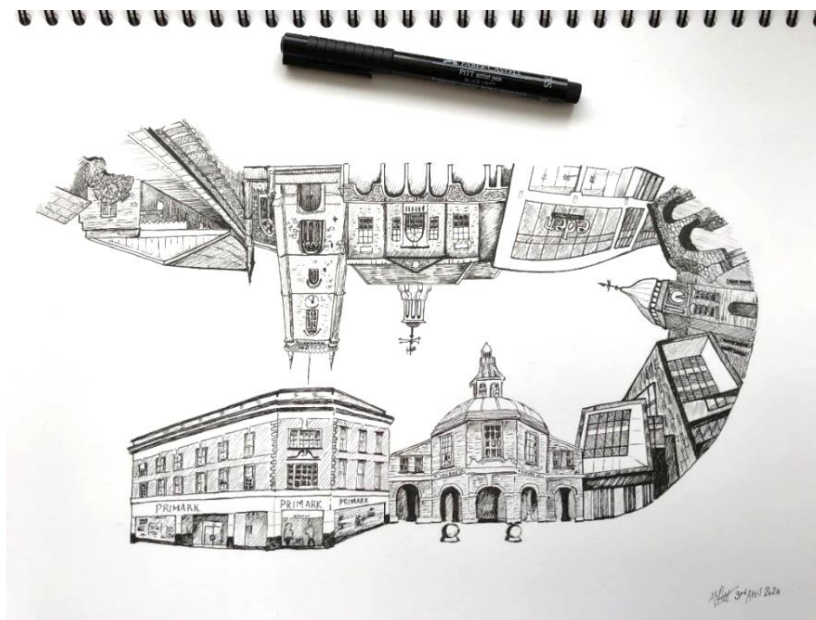
Relative newcomers on the scene, Davison Highley furniture manufacturers, now occupy part of the old Norths' factory. Theirs may not be a household name, but most of us are familiar with some of their "bespoke sofa" products as they feature regularly in high-profile TV shows – a point of pride for Piddington that deserves wider recognition.

Had it not been for the recent Covid restrictions the authors admit they might have been engaged on wider adventures rather than focused on this work. The book must surely therefore be one of the most positive products to emerge from the pandemic. It encourages all of us to take a closer look at the history to be found on our doorsteps.

At £12.00 it is well worth the purchase price – copies can be obtained by contacting the authors via email at simon.cains@gmail.com. Simon can deliver locally or will post (for an additional sum of £2.70). A copy will also be available at Society events for inspection.

Jackie Kay

Stir-Crazy Wycombe by Michael Holt



DURING LOCKDOWN in 2020 when everything seemed to be upside down, shops were closed and outdoor activity limited to one walk a day, an amateur artist, Michael Holt, posted this striking image on social media. He hoped things would straighten out soon. Two years on, he visited our art exhibition and commented that "we are still learning to live with Coronavirus". Coincidentally Michael works for Davison Highley Ltd based in the old Norths' factory mentioned above.

Ducks on the Wall

THERE'S GRAFFITI ART and just plain graffiti, and Pann Mill has recently had experience of both. Although there is no real difference between them we usually understand that graffiti is unwanted words and symbols written or painted on a wall or some similar surface. The writing is often done quickly and may simply be initials or a similar "tag".

Graffiti Art is usually much more flamboyant and colourful and often viewed as art in its own right and occasionally becomes valuable, as shown by Banksy.

Graffiti has existed since ancient times, with examples dating back to ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, and the Roman Empire.

Today these old carvings and paintings are viewed by historians as a great source of social comment of the times and can be useful for dating evidence.

Many of you will have seen or be aware of the rather nasty graffiti that occurred at Pann Mill in early April. Annoyingly this covered much of the newly installed cladding as well as the shed and other brickwork. Fortunately, we learned about it quickly and were able to organise the



effort needed to do the cleaning and re-painting. We are very grateful to the team and other volunteers who came along to help.

In particular we are grateful to Dan Wilson, a local artist well known for painting the Victorian railway scene on the Brunel Engine Shed at the station, who

painted over the graffiti on the shed wall with a picture of sunflowers. The sunflowers are no longer there since at the last Mill Open Day, Dan came back and spent the day painting over them with a gorgeous mural of ducks such as can often be seen in the mill garden. (Well two of them can, the third we have only ever found once, but we are told they are not uncommon on the Wye.) Graffiti Art at its best.

Malcolm Connell

... and from Mallards to Pollards!

A DECISION BY Buckinghamshire Council to permit the felling of a walnut tree would not normally be welcomed by our Society. But when the tree in question is one which obscures and potentially threatens the fabric of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (the ruins of St John's hospital), then the arguments for and against tree preservation are more finely balanced.

The Society has been engaged for a while in dialogue with both Savill's, the agents of the owners of the site, and Buckinghamshire Council. Earlier this year, in response to a notification of tree works, the Council imposed Tree Preservation Orders on all the trees within the footprint of the ruins, and there has been much talk about steps that could still be taken to improve the site (subject to planning permission, which would now be needed and Historic England's approval). These include canopy reduction measures and pollarding.

The above-mentioned walnut tree stands outside the area initially protected and became the subject of a second notification. Several reasons support its complete removal. It is

clearly self-sown on the bank at the front of the site and leans out towards the road. It has grown tall but is not in a good state of health. It does not take much imagination to foresee conditions under which it could become a hazard, a threat not just to the ruins themselves but potentially to users of the adjacent highway.

In the meantime, the Society is also drawing attention to the condition of the historic masonry some of which has been observed to be crumbling away. Several members of the Society recently had an onsite meeting with Amreata Marahta, Regional Facilities Manager of Savill's, to discuss some of the above issues.

JK



NOWADAYS High Wycombe residents wishing to travel to London by rail make use of the service provided by Chiltern Railways, which carries passengers to Marylebone from as far away as Birmingham. Only those of a certain age will remember ‘the other line’: the steam train crossing the London Road at Loudwater, puffing along through the trees on the southern side of the valley, passing over the level crossing at the bottom of Treadaway Hill to Flackwell Heath, and chugging on to Wooburn Green and Bourne End and thence to Marlow or Maidenhead. Newcomers might assume that the line to Marylebone was the first and only railway line to Wycombe, yet this was only built in 1907, 53 years after the connection from Bourne End.

It was in 1854 that Isambard Kingdom Brunel built the first “Wycombe Railway” at broad (7ft) gauge, and it was extended to Oxford and Aylesbury by 1864. But by the 1860s the gauge war was lost, and the line was converted to Standard Gauge (4ft 8½) in 1870. This single-track line was Wycombe’s only rail link for 40 years, but dwindled in importance when the faster line to Marylebone was built, and so the line between Bourne End and Wycombe was closed and lifted in the early 1970s. It had been there 120 years: almost the same amount of time as the current main line has been in place.

The Marylebone line was a joint venture of the Great Western Railway (GWR) and The Great Central Railway (GCR) and was part of an ambitious plan for a fast route from the Midlands to a proposed Channel Tunnel, and to give the GWR a faster route to Birmingham.

But these were only part of a series of proposals for lines through Wycombe in the middle to late 19th century, and our position in the Chilterns was key to this. The hills run diagonally from Reading to Luton, forming a formidable 40-mile barrier to engineers wishing to carry lines from London to Birmingham and the Midlands, especially in view of the relatively low power of the engines at the time.

Wycombe offered a gap through the Chilterns between the Thames in the south and Princes Risborough in the north. The more northern part of the gap, such as the Bradenham valley, may have been formed during the Anglian period of the Pleistocene age by seasonal meltwater flowing directly from the huge ice sheets that rested against the northern edge of the Chilterns around 450,000 years ago. The southern part, from West Wycombe to Bourne End, was probably formed by surface water draining from the Chalk Strata into the River Wye.

The second half of the 19th century saw plans for around a dozen railways passing through Wycombe. These comprised a sort of funnel system which, upon reaching either end of the Chiltern Gap, would spread out in all directions. At the southern end, Wooburn Green and Loudwater were popular for proposed railways and branches to places such as Farnham Royal, Uxbridge, Slough and even the Chalfonts, with the ultimate destination being London. At the northern end the proposals went by various routes to Aylesbury, Oxford, Tring and Witney, with the ultimate aim of reaching the Midlands.

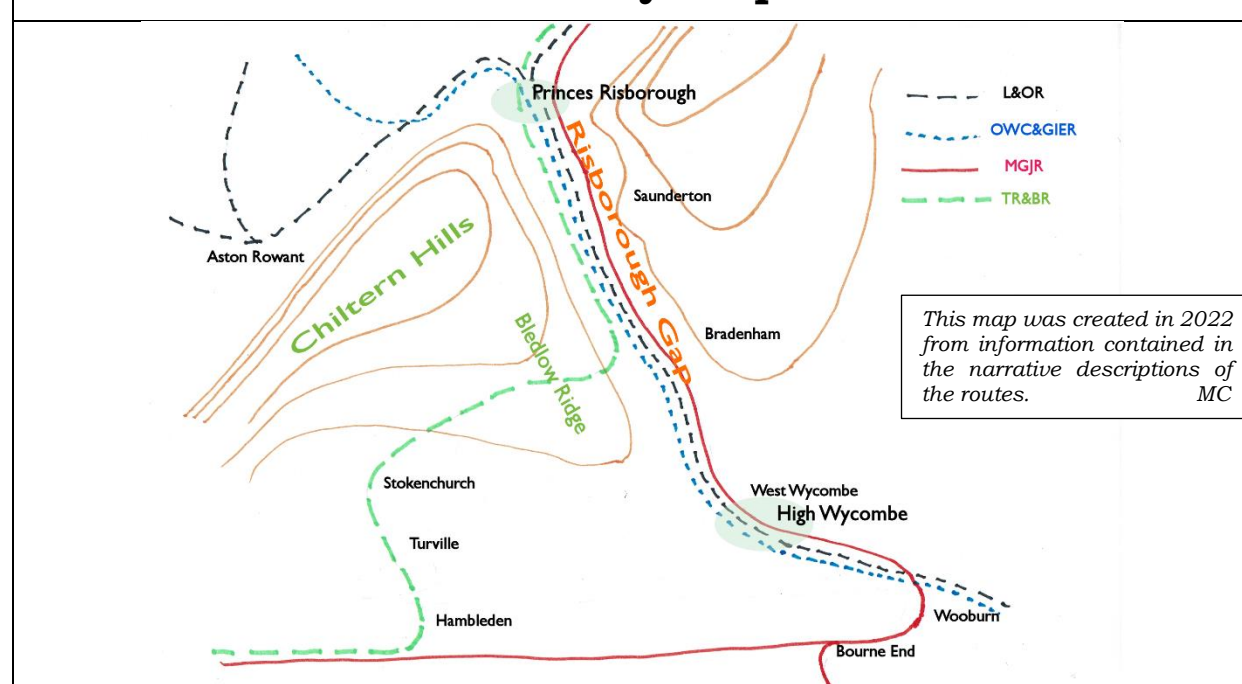
Many plans were submitted to parliament for approval but most never came to fruition, reasons including lack of funds, the extended length of time taken for acts to pass through parliament and the cancellation of other railways upon which their own plans depended for connections.

Opposite are four examples, all of which were submitted to Parliament in 1845. Three passed through High Wycombe – the topography for the fourth would have been challenging but feasible; a railway could only be built using the various valleys, supplemented with tunnels, embankments and bridges. The Turville and Hambleton valleys are within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and I shudder to think of the effects a railway might have had on their appearance.

Our line has diminished in stature from the days when there were four tracks at Wycombe, Beaconsfield, Gerrards Cross and Denham stations and when, like so many places, we had huge shunting yards. It is interesting to speculate how, if any of the rejected proposals had gone ahead, the railway and industrial history of Wycombe might have turned out differently.

Mick Lewis

Unsuccessful Railway Proposals of 1845



LONDON & OXFORD RAILWAY (L&OR) This started at a junction with the London & Birmingham Railway near Harrow and ran to Oxford via Iver, Fulmer, Wooburn, High Wycombe, West Wycombe, Bradenham, Saunderton and Princes Risborough, where a branch was planned going north to Aylesbury. A western branch would then run to Oxford via Bledlow, Aston Rowant (with another branch to Thame), Tetsworth, Wheatley and finally Oxford.

Apart from suffering from lack of shareholder funds, this proposal encountered opposition from the London & Birmingham Railway, who considered Aylesbury to be in their sphere of influence, and also from the Great Western Railway (GWR) because of its own plans for a route to Oxford.

MIDLAND GRAND JUNCTION RAILWAY (MGJR) The aim was to connect railways in the Midlands with the GWR and thereby to the south coast (including the Isle of Wight but with no explanation of how to reach it!). The route starting at Reading took in Caversham, Henley, Marlow (with a branch off to Slough), High Wycombe, West Wycombe, Bradenham, Princes Risborough, Aylesbury and on to the Midlands. During the planning process the MGJR had financial problems and hoped the GWR would assist. But GWR demanded the use of broad gauge or a third rail outside the standard gauge to accommodate broad gauge rolling stock, which the MGJR could not afford. Further north, the London and Manchester Railway, saw MGJR as competing with their services, although ironically, their own plans failed to obtain parliamentary permission, partly because the Duke of Bedford complained their proposals would spoil his view!

OXFORD WITNEY CHELTENHAM & GLOUCESTER INDEPENDENT EXTENSION RAILWAY (OWC&GIER) This proposed route started at a branch off the GWR at Southall and went via Uxbridge, Denham, Hedgerley, Beaconsfield and Wooburn to Wycombe, then to West Wycombe, Bradenham, Saunderton, Bledlow, Chinnor and Thame. At Thame there was to be a branch north via Aynho to the Oxford & Rugby Railway. The main route continued from Thame to Oxford and Witney, eventually reaching Cheltenham. The OWC&GIER also hoped for connections with the GWR at Aynho but this line was not built until 1850 and a related London Cheltenham & Oxford railway was also not built at all.

TRING READING & BASINGSTOKE RAILWAY (TR&BR) This proposal would have affected our neighboring countryside. The aim was to connect the London & Birmingham Railway at Tring to the GWR at Reading, and then go on to Basingstoke, using the London and South Western Railway. So from Tring the railway headed south to the western end of our "gap" at Princes Risborough, and used the popular route towards High Wycombe via Saunderton but only until Bradenham. There it turned south to Bledlow Ridge, Radnage, Stokenchurch and the Turville and Hambledon Valleys to Fawley and Henley upon Thames before crossing the Thames at Caversham to enter Reading. This scheme eventually went bankrupt, with shareholders complaining of irregularities and difficulties obtaining details from the Directors.

An Archdale Memorial Uncovered

THE ARCHDALE FAMILY occupied Loakes Manor throughout the 17th century, after which it was conveyed to Henry Petty, 1st Earl of Shelburne. Anyone who is familiar with All Saints Church will no doubt have seen the Shelburne monument, which dominates the North Chapel. What is less obvious, however, is a large grey slab on the floor in the northeast corner, the only memorial at All Saints to a member of the Archdale family, despite there having been at least eight of their number buried at the Church.

Given the placing of the slab, and some of the Archdale burial entries in the Parish Register being annotated with the words “the upper part of the North Chancel”, there is more than likely to be a family vault underneath. The slab is headed by the family coat of arms, under which is inscribed: *Here lyeth the Body of THOMAS ARCHDALE Esq^r who departed this life August 9th 1711, Aged 36.*

Thomas was baptised at All Saints on 2nd Oct 1675, the son of John Archdale (about whom an article was written in the Autumn 2014 Newsletter), and great grandson of Richard Archdale, who bought Loakes Manor in 1604. He was educated at Wadham College Oxford and was made a Freeman of Chipping Wycombe in 1698. The following year he was returned as MP in place of his father, who, having been duly elected, refused to “take the oath” on account of his Quaker leanings.

During the same year, on 20th August, Thomas was married at Narford, in Norfolk, to Jane Turner, the daughter of a wealthy landowner from Kings Lynn. Loakes Manor was sold the following year, and they subsequently settled at Stanhoe (Stanhow) Hall, in northeast Norfolk, a house built especially for them by Jane’s father.

Thomas had a brief army career which began in 1706 but had ended by March 1711. He was buried at All Saints on 12th August 1711, although the event was not recorded in the Parish Register. His name was, however, written in the Bishop’s Transcripts, so this may have been a simple oversight. But, it does, perhaps, raise the question of why Thomas was buried in High Wycombe, rather than Norfolk.

The answer might be provided by two of those who witnessed his Will on 7th July 1711 – Samuel and Richard Welles, names which are synonymous with High Wycombe. By this time, Thomas was “sick and weak in body”, so maybe he was visiting his mother and father, and was unable to return to Norfolk. His Will mentioned, but did not name any children, although it is known that he was the father of two young

daughters, Anne and Mary, baptised at Stanhoe in 1702 and 1705 respectively.

Interestingly, when all the memorial inscriptions at All Saints were last catalogued in 1989, many that had been previously recorded could no longer be seen, so their details were obtained from older documentation. Such was

the case with Thomas Archdale’s memorial, first recorded by Thomas Langley in 1797 (*History & Antiquities of the Hundred of Desborough*), but not by George Lipscomb in 1847 (*History & Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*).

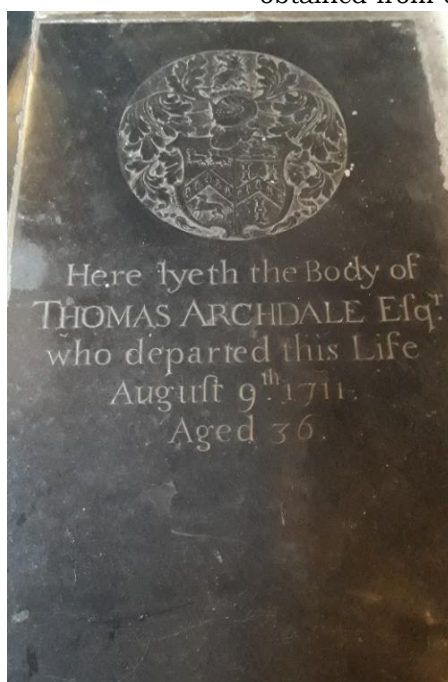
It was, however, mentioned again by John Parker in 1878 (*Early History & Antiquities of Wycombe*), so maybe it had been brought back into view by Street’s restoration of the church in the mid-1870s. Or was Parker simply aware of its existence, and copied the details from Langley? There was certainly no mention of it in the comprehensive notes published in 1897 by the Bucks Archaeological Society,

as received from Richard Samuel Downs, Head Teacher of the National Schools in High Wycombe, and eminent historian and archaeologist.

Herbert Green’s two-part guidebook to the church, published in 1964 and 1966, included the following remark about the North Chapel: *Mural tablets and floor slabs, with inscriptions in English and Latin, may be inspected, although with some difficulty caused by the furniture and furnishings of a Vestry.* Just how long this part of the church had been used as a vestry is difficult to determine, but it would certainly explain why the Archdale memorial has received little mention. It could also explain why it is still in such good condition today, if you can see it, that is. Although it was exposed in 1993, when the vestry was relocated, it is still often partly hidden by items placed on top!

In another article, I intend to revisit John Archdale, and challenge a frequent assumption made about his life.

Ann Davies



An elusive Ragged School



AS A FORMER university lecturer now resident in Germany I am sadly no longer able to travel to Wycombe to further my research which, since retirement, has concerned the history of schools in and around the High Wycombe area. A recent communication informed me that a now-deceased Wycombe resident had once possessed a picture of Newlands Ragged School, the fate of this picture being unknown.

Past perusal of the South Bucks Free Press and Aylesbury newspapers had previously not enlightened me about that school, so I can only surmise that it would have existed for a few years between, say, 1850 and 1870, perhaps as a wooden structure in the Newlands slum area, probably pioneered by a Nonconformist church, and, like other Ragged Schools, it would not have charged for attendance as the contemporary British and National Schools in the Borough did. Its purpose would have been to educate the offspring of poor families i.e. poor but not paupers, the children of the latter being taught at the Wycombe Union Poor Law School at Bledlow.

When previously consulting pertinent sources at the Buckinghamshire Archives I found that the Parish School Board first Minute Book related that the Board had wished to build a school at the western end of the parish i.e.

beyond the then Borough boundary, but encountered difficulties in procuring a suitable site. By inference it appears that the owners or trustees of the no longer functioning Ragged School offered their building as a stop gap measure to the Parish School Board (although it lay in the Borough and not in the Parish) so, pending the construction of a permanent school at a suitable site, the Parish School Board accepted the offer.

Can any readers help determine the exact location of the school building, or shed any light on which church it belonged to or when it was in operation? Any help on the elusive topic of this obscure modest seat of elementary learning is eagerly awaited. Does anyone know the whereabouts of the picture?

Dr Jack Slade

Prints from an Exhibition



FOLLOWING THE AGM Tony Mealing treated the Society to a gallop through our town's early history slowing to a canter up and down the High Street illustrated with images of his impressive recently completed friezes which were on show at the Society's Art Exhibition in April.

Tony's talk provided an informative and amusing account of the various architectural styles along the High Street with a potted history of the changing uses of each of the buildings over the past few centuries. One attendee who wishes to remain anonymous said that he had "so much to recount that we were in danger of being locked in for the night!"

Tony has very generously given the Society the right to produce further prints of his paintings and sell them with all proceeds going to the Society.

If you would like your own copy of a complete frieze of the High Street these can be ordered via email to treasurer@highwycombesociety.org.uk or in person at Society events such as the Pann Mill Open Days in July and September.

Full size prints are £20 each (North or South side) Approx length: 2.6m

Half-size prints are £10 each (North or South side) Approx length: 1.3m

The Society also has a stock of cards featuring two of Tony's paintings: the Guildhall and the Market Place. These are on sale at Society events



Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mollie Robinson*
 Sian Connelly and family
 Peter Wainwright
 Mike Salem
 Robert Neighbour
 Joan and David Boyd
 Gillian Humphreys*

*Our apologies to Mollie Robinson who actually joined the society over a year ago, but somehow, we omitted to mention it in the Newsletter at the time. We are delighted to note that both Mollie Robinson and Gillian Humphreys have volunteered to serve as Trustees of the Society.

Obituaries

We regret to inform members of the deaths of:

Beryl Guy
 Roy Harris

Frogmoor and its Fountain.

Trustee Willie Reid has the plight of Frogmoor firmly in his sights. As he mentioned during "Any Other Business" at the AGM the 150-year anniversary of James Oliff Griffiths' purchase of Frogmoor Gardens is approaching and could provide a focus to revive the area including possibly reinstating a water-feature. If you have thoughts on what the Society could do in this regard, then please share them with Willie &/or the Editor.

Planning Group wish to make it known that they would welcome new members. They meet monthly on Monday evenings to discuss current issues and planning applications. No prior knowledge is required, just a willingness to read the agenda and join in. If you would like to join them, drop a note to Chris at: planning@highwycombesociety.org.uk.

Thank You to all those members who have renewed their membership for 2022/23 – and a gentle reminder to any who haven't yet done so that subscriptions were due on 6th April.

Annual subscriptions remain set at: £8 for individuals; £12 for families; £4 for retired pensioners.

The Society's bank details are:

The High Wycombe Society
 Sort code: 23-05-80
 Account No. 42783986

For enquiries about your membership status or to update your personal details, please use the email address:

membership@highwycombesociety.org.uk

A Big Thank You also to those who volunteer their time and effort in support of the Pann Mill Open Days, not just the millers but to the various stallholders and special mention this time to Sharon Heron and her team who provided an exceptionally inviting array of cakes in May. Can anyone forget the Guinness cake?

Future Programme Our newly elected Chairman, Colin Hingston, would welcome your suggestions for inclusion in the future programme. These can be sent to him at chairman@highwycombesociety.org.uk – or you can find him at the HWS stall at Pann Mill.

Contributions Please.

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

newslettereditor@highwycombesociety.org.uk

All contributions to the next edition must be received by **20th August 2022**

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!!!**

2022	
Sunday 10 th July 11.00-5.00 pm Pann Mill	Pann Mill Open Day. We welcome the news (via Mary Woodman, the co-ordinator of stall bookings) that there will be two new stalls offering beautiful hand-made crafts in addition to some familiar stalls.
Sunday 31 st July 11.00-3.00 pm Wycombe Museum	Wycombe Museum are advertising a free Family Day event focusing on "The Trees of Wycombe Museum". For further details please see Wycombe Museum's website (www.wycombemuseum.org.uk)
Sunday 11 th September 11.00-5.00 pm Pann Mill	Pann Mill Open Day to coincide with Heritage Open Days. To book a stall contact Mary on pannmillstalls@highwycombesociety.org.uk
Saturday 1 st October The Oculus, Aylesbury	BLHN 2022, the annual Local History conference organised by the Bucks Archaeological Society will be on the subject "Cottage Industries in Buckinghamshire". (a change from the previously advertised subject)