

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 210

SPRING 2024

An Uncertain Start to 2024

SOMETIMES this Newsletter is easy to assemble; but this time it has been particularly hard to decide what to include and what to leave out. The proverbial cutting room floor is littered with items that didn't make it to the final cut. So, have we made a good selection? Or are there other things you would have liked us to cover? Only you, the reader, can say – so we invite you to do so!

Residents in the “unparished areas” of High Wycombe are currently being consulted by the council about their wishes for future governance. We hope you have taken the opportunity already to “Have Your Say”. Arguments both for and against a Town Council have featured in past editions of this Newsletter. Possible future changes to the Mayoralty may have increased the level of interest in recent group visits to the Mayor's parlour (see p8).

Not covered this time, a public inquiry is under way, triggered by would-be Gomm Valley developers, Taylor Wimpey, exercising their statutory right for their application to be resolved within a certain timeframe. This latest episode, in what some have called the “sorry saga” of plans for development in the Gomm Valley, promises to be costly whatever the outcome. The near court-like atmosphere is a far cry from the collaborative spirit in which development briefs were first compiled using voluntary liaison groups set up by Wycombe District Council.

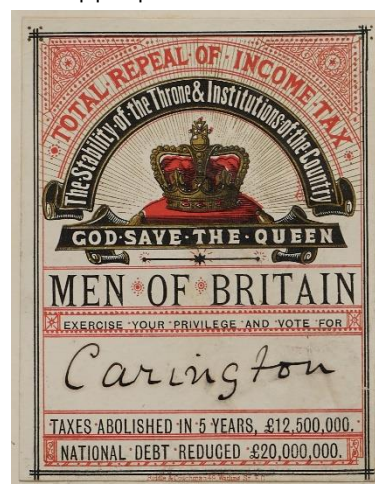
Meanwhile, in the centre of town, the Dandara Homes proposed redevelopment of the Chiltern Centre hit an unexpected setback (see p5); and further afield the Marlow film studio proposals continue to generate a high level of local interest (see p10).

With the possibility of a general election on the horizon, now seems an appropriate moment also to share a local souvenir with you from

150 YEARS AGO...

In 1874, when Benjamin Disraeli became Prime Minister for the second time, Wycombe was represented in the House of Commons by William Carrington, younger brother of Lord Carrington. Another younger brother, Rupert, would join him there as one of two representatives of Buckinghamshire after Disraeli's elevation to the House of Lords. Later, in his scrapbook, Lord Lincolnshire included souvenirs from his brothers' election campaigns including this one promising the “Total Repeal of Income Tax”. Needless to say, Disraeli's government had other ideas.

Jackie Kay



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

Patron: Lord Carrington

Registered Charity No. 257897

Chairman: Colin Hingston, 65 Dean Garden Rise, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP11 1RF. Tel: 07718 103603

Christmases in Summertime?



Is it always summer now in Frogmoor?

IN THE AUTUMN I highlighted Willie Reid's ongoing mission to get the clocks in High Wycombe to tell the time. The promised repair to Network Rail's clock outside the station has since been carried out and we are pleased to note that the church clock also now tells the correct time (at least on three of its faces when last observed). The clock in Frogmoor is still going but seems to be permanently fixed on British Summer Time. Perhaps it is always summer now in Frogmoor?

On 14th December last year, Tony Mealing rounded off our 2023 programme with a seasonal nostalgic talk about local Christmases Past, only to find himself booked to give the talk again out of season, not once but twice more! So, on the morning of 9th January he was up at the Hazelmere Memorial Centre speaking to a U3A group, while on the evening of the very same day he did a repeat performance for the High Wycombe Rotary Club. It all helps raise awareness of the Society.



Network Rail delivered on their promise.

Our 2024 programme got off to a flying start with not one but two group visits to the Mayor's parlour in February (see p8) and we are looking forward to several outings and talks in the months ahead. Already on the Trustees' minds is the AGM in June. Although we have a strong contingent of long-standing trustees, we are not as resilient as we would like to be and have been managing throughout the year without a secretary. So we really would like to recruit more volunteers to help at all levels.

After the formality of the AGM, we have invited Jackie Kay, known to most of you as a former Society Trustee and Chairman (as well as Editor of this Newsletter), to give a short talk based on her recent research work into the Dove family. Dame Frances Dove's contribution to education as the founding Headmistress of Wycombe Abbey School is well-known, but Jackie's talk is intriguingly entitled "**The Other Misses Dove**" and promises to explore what is known of the lives and careers of some of Miss Dove's lesser-known family members.

Colin Hingston

2024 Membership

AS SPRING COMES, I would like to make a gentle reminder to all Society members to pay their 2024/5 membership fees. Your membership covers the costs of printing and distributing this newsletter and goes towards supporting the programme of talks. I hope everyone has had the chance to attend recent talks at Trinity United Reformed Church. The new venue costs significantly more than our previous home, with the idea that being next to Railway Place car park it is easier for you to get to meetings and park.

Membership offers great value and we have kept our fees at the same level for several years:

Retired Pensioner £4 pa

Individual £8 pa

Family £12 pa

Our bank details are:

Account Name: The High Wycombe Society

Bank Name: Metro Bank Ltd

Sort Code: 23-05-80

Account Number: 42783986

Direct bank transfer is preferable to Paypal, due to issues with Paypal authorisations expiring.

Or pay in cash or cheque at one of our meetings.

Steve Strutt, Treasurer

Home Wood Bound

IN JANUARY we received an interesting email from Janet Mundy of Haywards Heath in West Sussex. She was offering to donate to the Society a marquetry picture of the Guildhall and All Saints Church, High Wycombe, that had been presented to her late grandfather on his retirement from British Railways at High Wycombe Station in 1956. At this point I should mention that the Society is often offered paintings, photos and other items but we usually politely refuse as we don't have many occasions on which to display them for public benefit and we already have many items in commercial storage, including copies of local artworks created for the 2022 Art Exhibition to use when opportunities arise. But on this occasion we were pleased to accept the donation. This picture would be ideal for inclusion in a display at the new Brunel Shed in view of the railway-related back story.

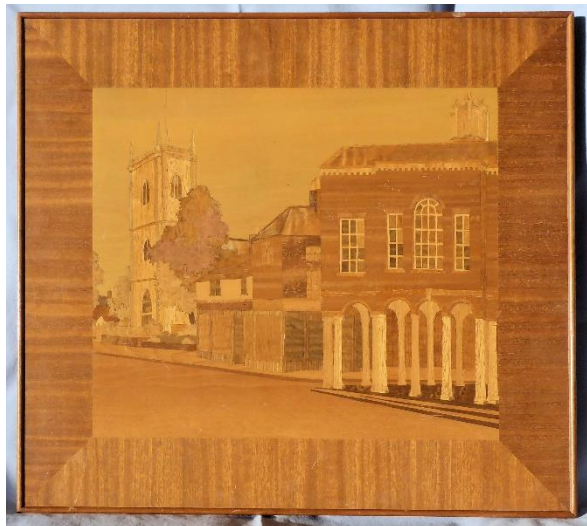
In Janet's words: Ernest Plews (known to all as Ernie) worked for the railway at High Wycombe station. My grandparents moved to High Wycombe from Leeds after the war. I believe Ernie was the Goods Agent at the station but am unsure on that, I think he must have been quite senior in his role as he qualified for First Class Travel on the trains. The picture was presented to him on his retirement from British Railways in 1956 after which he sold his house in Melbourne Road and moved to Westcliff-on-Sea to be closer to my parents and his grandchildren as we lived in that area at the time. I was 7 years old when my grandfather retired but, as a young child, I can remember happy holidays with my grandparents in High Wycombe, in particular going to The Rye for a ride round on the little train which I feel sure has long gone - maybe Mr Beeching was to blame for that

one too! I can also remember travelling on the old steam trains from Marylebone to High Wycombe. Sadly, my grandfather passed away very suddenly from a heart attack in 1968. After my grandparents had both passed away, my mother inherited the picture, and it hung on the wall in my parents' dining room for over 40 years before their house was eventually sold. I am delighted that it has finally ended up with your Society back in High Wycombe.

I, myself, worked for British Rail for 12 years and married a railwayman.

We are both fully retired now, busy doing voluntary work and childminding for our three lovely grandchildren.

Many thanks to Janet not only for donating this magnificent piece, but for covering the courier costs as well.



Marquetry picture originally presented to Ernest Plews on his retirement from High Wycombe Station, now in the Society's possession, thanks to his granddaughter.

West End Play

AS I WRITE, construction of the new play area at the west end of The Rye should be nearing completion. While we are not generally in favour of developments on The Rye (going back to the beginnings of the Society in the 1960s), this looks to be at least an improvement on the previous "Ropes on the Rye" area which did not seem to attract a great deal of use. The new design has more appeal to the whole family with equipment including: a bespoke 'Tree Castle' multi-play unit; a mini space net; a track ride tower; a giant spinning disc; and a 'cocowave' swing.

Colin Hingston



Signs of things to come on The Rye. Colin says: I might have a go myself [on the new equipment] on a Pann Mill Open Day!"



Planning Matters

AFTER THE LAMENTS in the last Newsletter, we're feeling relatively refreshed as we aim to bring you our regular take on details about the built environment in the town. We will, of course, continue to update you on issues that we raised last time. We can already, for example, tell you that a planning application has been submitted for internal alterations in the Brunel Engine Shed, which encourages us to expect action later this year. Meanwhile, one of our newest group members writes about his motivation to join us. And – get this – there's a planning application for an indoor karting centre on the upper floors of the old House of Fraser store. We cannot get ourselves down to the Eden Shopping centre fast enough! The Planning Group is hoping it will be open in time for our Christmas bash, perhaps twinned with a meal out at one of the restaurants nearby!

But first, we thought you might be interested to know a bit about **Our Planning Applications Review Process**. It's a core function of the Planning Group to review planning applications and decide if we need to make comments for or against them. To assist in this, we produce a spreadsheet, normally once a fortnight, which is emailed round to all group members.

Typically, there are about 100 applications in the High Wycombe area. Determining which are important enough to merit group consideration is not an exact science. We tend to omit house extensions except where they involve conversions to HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation).

We use a computer macro to transform data available through the Buckinghamshire Council planning portal into the spreadsheet. As part of the process, we track the status of the council's decision-making i.e. whether an application has been approved, rejected or withdrawn. There is space on the spreadsheet for us to record our own planning group comments and there are also hyperlinks to allow easy access to the planning application records on the council planning portal.

On opening an application, it is possible to review all the supporting documents as well as the critical dates set by the council for comments to be received and the expected schedule on which decisions are to be made.

The Council's planning portal identifies which ward or parish the applications are from, and we review applications in High Wycombe Town and Downley as well as checking Chiltern Villages, which covers parts of Booker outside the High Wycombe Town area.

Notes from a new member Peter Spence writes: Although I only moved back to the area two years ago, my involvement with High Wycombe goes back to the late 1960s. I lived in Reading and visited the town one day every week for five years on insurance business. Some of you may remember the names of the insurance brokers at the time: Michael Priest at Bennetts, George Thompson, Peter Fry, Sid Busby and Peter White.

Back then it seemed a pleasant but unremarkable place. I returned in the late 1980s and lived in Lacey Green, and High Wycombe was our choice of shopping destination. We moved away in 1989

but still had family connections so kept in touch with local matters.

Upon our return a few years ago, we saw a massive change had taken place. Alongside changes that may be considered for the worse, there is a terrific diversity of architecture in the conservation area within the town centre. One just needs to raise one's eyes above the modern shopfronts to see what benefit sensitive treatments might deliver. And what a feature the River Wye might become in support of a visitor economy!

In the last 20 years I've had involvement with local government regeneration schemes and the urban design sector. I now want to put that experience to use and join with colleagues in the High Wycombe Society to see how we can make High Wycombe, particularly the town centre, the best place it can be. In the past I have been involved in collaborations between local authorities, the cultural, creative and design sectors, along with business and universities, in place-making initiatives to make those places better for us all. I want to engage with members of the Society who share the same aims as me.

Shop fronts action plan The Planning Group is working on a Shop Fronts guidance document, a short and simple document with shop front conventions and rules, suggested colours using free colour design consultation from Group member Cristiana Ionescu (a furniture designer, who used to work at Farrow and Ball – see p5). We will give advice on the style of shop fronts and suggest a palette of colours for a more attractive unified look conducive to economic regeneration (Cristiana will also offer her services for choosing colours for shop interiors).

Within our group we have considerable expertise in heritage conservation architecture, colour design theory and heritage colour theory. We feel very strongly about improving the state of shop fronts in the town centre and we want to transform the look of the High Street over the next few years. HWBIDCo will help us distribute the document to the relevant businesses in the town centre and any business who would like to benefit from a transformative colour design service.

Chilterns Centre Major Redevelopment at Risk?

The Chilterns Shopping Centre has looked increasingly tired over recent years, with many closed shops, including Wilkinsons, now squeezed out by the more modern, successful Eden Centre and perhaps also by changed shopping habits. Indeed, some of the upper floors are already given over to student accommodation. The Planning Group was therefore delighted to be approached by developer Dandara, which specialises in building blocks of flats for rent – where they retain the ownership and maintain a secure 24-hour concierge/reception presence – to consult us about their ideas for no fewer than 303 apartments. There are many attractive features about the development: a new public pedestrian thoroughfare leading from Frogmoor to Priory Road (as existed back in the 1980s when Frogmoor still had a cinema); an interior open green space for the residents; and the retention of the existing perimeter of shops, some of them historic, around from Frogmoor into Church Street. Primark would move (to the House of Fraser building) but the façade facing the Guildhall would be practically unchanged. Most important, however, it is now increasingly recognised that the way to “save” High Streets and the economic activity in town centres is for more people to live there, creating local demand. The Planning Group made a submission in support of the proposal, except for some details about the design of the Church Street frontage. Dandara were also very keen to improve

Frogmoor, and the more pressure for that, the better!

It was therefore with shock that in January we read a forceful – even aggressive – intervention by the Environment Agency, concerned about the flood risk to the new properties. They considered they have the power to block the proposal, forcing it if necessary to a public inquiry where the decision would be taken not by Buckinghamshire Council but a Planning Inspector. Fortunately, Planning Group member Tony Mealing was able to advise us that in a recent case locally, a planning authority held out successfully against the Environment Agency. It was important, of course, to respect the relevant forecast flood levels and make appropriate adjustments to the floor levels, to stand proud of the assessed risk, but that it could be done.

It can surely be done for the Chiltern Centre development too, and we do hope that Buckinghamshire Council will not take fright at the Environment Agency’s objections.

So, lots on the go again in High Wycombe. It is good news that the downturn in the economy has not halted investments in various parts of town. If the above has been of interest, please consider joining the Planning Group. No experience is necessary, just an enthusiasm for our town and its built environment. Meetings are usually at 7.30pm on the fourth Monday of the month at the Friends’ Meeting House on the corner of Stuart/London Roads. More contact details are on the Society’s website.

Planning Group

Designing to Stand the Test of Time

SUCH IS THE strength of the furniture tradition in our town that many local people can, if asked, reel off names of local furniture manufacturers from days gone by. Memories of factories closing or relocating their workforces, however, combine to feed a narrative in which local furniture manufacture belongs in the past. Ask who is designing furniture today and you may be greeted with a blank stare.

Bucking that trend is designer Cristiana Ionescu who not only designs furniture but has her own company ([CI-Design](#)) with examples of her work in a showroom up in Faringdon. Her customers range from designers of industrial and commercial settings, from workplaces to hospitality venues, educational and residential environments, all looking for modern elegant designs. She can also undertake bespoke designs for furniture in domestic homes.

Sustainability is a core value in her work. Describing her recent “Othello” collection, she

explains how essential it is to plan for longevity of use of resources. Towards that end her company offers not just the initial customisation to fit a designer’s requirements but also a “Restyle and Afterlife” service to repair, restyle and recycle pieces so that furniture can be adapted for new uses or changing fashions.

*From Talking to
Cristiana Ionescu*



Seeing the Stone for the Trees

FOR SOME TIME NOW, Society Trustee Willie Reid has been liaising with the managing agents for the owners of the site of The Hospital of St John the Baptist over actions required and/or desired to preserve the ruins and enhance their appearance. There is a delicate balance to be struck in caring both for the Scheduled Ancient Monument and for many of the mature trees that surround it.



A tree has recently been felled giving a clearer view of the ruins.

Photo: J Kay

Of immediate concern until very recently was the condition of a walnut tree which was overhanging the London Road. Last year, it was recognised that it needed to be felled. The necessary permissions were granted in the summer, and the work was planned and undertaken in February this year leaving a short tree stump in front of the ruins.

Some additional tree work is also expected to be carried out shortly to cut back (but not fell) two other trees overhanging Barratt Place.

Regarding the future care of the ruins, the owners have just had a comprehensive Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (HEDBA) done which they

have shared with us, and we understand that they are in discussions with the Council Archaeological Service and Historic England. The next step will be to undertake a condition survey of the ruins, which is expected to make recommendations on what conservation works are required.

It's been a long haul since we first expressed concerns about the deteriorating condition of the ruins, but things do now seem to be moving forward.

100 Objects Present and Future

ADRIAN HON'S "A New History of the Future in 100 Objects" is an epic work of fiction, claiming not to have been written until the year 2082! But telling the history of a time and place through a series of objects is a nice idea that has already been adopted by creative museum curators. Wycombe Museum has a gallery that tells the history of our town in just ten objects. Some time ago "Buckinghamshire Culture" set out with a wider brief to tell the cultural story of Bucks in 100 objects. Recognising that there was a rich collection of artifacts held in museums, archives, stately homes and gardens across the county they began by inviting several prominent Buckinghamshire residents to nominate objects that they thought should be included.

The resulting list can be viewed on the [Buckinghamshire Culture](https://www.buckinghamshireculture.org/) website. There you will find a picture of each nominated object and a link to a more detailed description and justification for its inclusion in the list.

Readers may find of particular interest the entries for Hannah Ball's Clock, Castle Hill House and Wycombe's Centaur. The clock was nominated by Society member Christine Clark and is said to have hung in the Methodist chapel that Hannah had built in 1779. It was made by a local clockmaker called John Lee. Castle Hill House of course now houses Wycombe Museum and was nominated by a newcomer to Bucks who was impressed by the building's history. "The

Centaur", nominated by former Society Chairman Jackie Kay, is the weathervane on top of the Guildhall in High Wycombe, which reminds us of John, Earl of Shelburne, who financed its building as a Town Hall in 1757. (see p7)

Other entries include: Pann Mill, which was nominated by a society supporter; Bekonscot Model Village, the planned destination of a Society visit in June this year; and the most recent Wycombe-related nomination made by Mark Page is for Wycombe coins and tokens including the "Wheels of Industry" token that was featured in the recent Winter Newsletter.

Malcolm Connell

Just Passing Through

IN APRIL 1786, two American tourists had just six days in which to see something of the English countryside outside London. They set off together from the capital by chaise. Top of their wish-list was to visit the birthplace of William Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon, but they were also keen to see Edgehill and Worcester, locations of battles in the English Civil War that they had read about. Sharing an interest in horticulture, they devised a circular itinerary, which took in many notable gardens on their way. Their last stop for refreshment and entertainment would be the Antelope Inn in High Wycombe, where they had mutton chops and potatoes as well as cold meats, bread and cheese, washed down with copious amounts of beer and wine. But who were they?

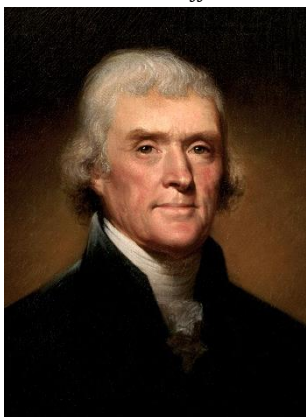
The first was John Adams, aged 51, and based in London. He had been appointed the previous year as the first American Ambassador to Great Britain. His house in Grosvenor Square still stands and there is a plaque commemorating his residence there (at No. 9).

His travelling companion was Thomas Jefferson, aged 43. He had succeeded Benjamin Franklin as Minister to France, so was based in Paris. Adams had arranged for Jefferson to have an audience with the King (George III) during his visit to Great Britain, but it had not gone well; diplomatic relations with the former colonies were fragile to say the least.

Upon his return to London, Adams made a single entry in his diary listing all the places visited: "Mr Jefferson and myself went in a Post Chaise to Woburn Farm, Caversham, Wotton, Stowe, Edghill, Stratford upon Avon, Birmingham, the Leasowes, Hagley, Stourbridge, Worcester, Woodstock, Blenheim, Oxford, High Wycomb[e], and back to Grosvenor Square".



*Creative Commons images:
Above: John Adams;
Below: Thomas Jefferson*



The Worcester Civic Society have recently installed a plaque commemorating the duo's visit to the Hop Pole Inn in Worcester and Adams' recorded view that "All England should come in pilgrimage" to the nearby Fort Royal Hill. Sadly, he didn't find anything to say about High Wycombe!

Today both Adams and Jefferson are remembered as "Founding Fathers" and past presidents of the United States of America. When George Washington became the first USA President in 1789, John Adams became Vice President. Eight years later, in 1797, Adams became the 2nd President, with Thomas Jefferson as his Vice President. And in 1801 Thomas Jefferson in turn became the 3rd President of the United States.

There is an excellent website, which enables many historical documents relating to the Founding Fathers to be accessed freely online. [Founders Online: Home \(archives.gov\)](#)

Jackie Kay

Wycombe's Centaur



From left to right: Jackie Kay, Clare Turnbull (Chair of the Beaconsfield Historical Society) and the Mayor of High Wycombe receiving a cheque in aid of the Mayor's charities.

On Saturday 24th February Jackie Kay gave a talk to the Beaconsfield Historical Society entitled "Wycombe's Centaur". Some readers may recall her giving a talk with the same title to the High Wycombe Society back in 2017 shortly before a Society visit to Bowood, the country seat of the Earls of Shelburne, in Wiltshire. Her talk has since evolved to include information from that visit and more recent research on the Shelburnes.

Weighing Up in the Parlour



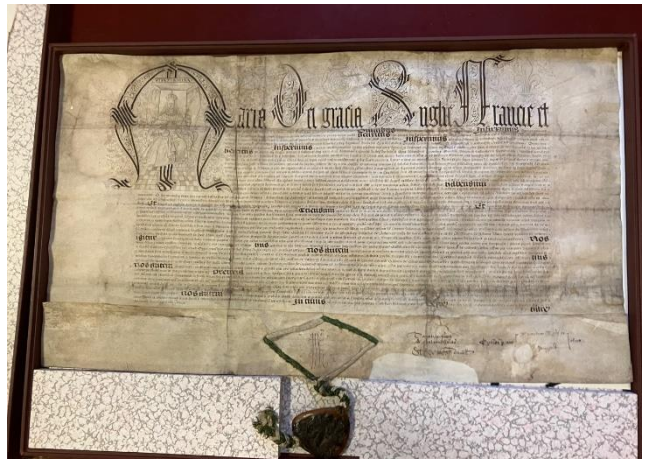
Members of the High Wycombe Society surround the Mayor as he demonstrates the weighing apparatus used in the Annual Tradition of Weighing the Mayor.
Photo: Dorothy Coomer

THE SOCIETY VISIT to the Mayor's parlour on 6th February was over-subscribed, so a second visit was arranged for those who could not be accommodated on the first occasion. Our thanks to the Mayor, Cllr Paul Turner, for hosting both events.

The Mayor and Charter Trustees are guardians of many items of historical importance to the town and Mayor's parlour visits such as these provide a good opportunity to study some of the items and ask questions.

On display this time (and shown here) was the earliest surviving Royal Charter for the Borough of Chipping Wycombe. Drawn up in 1553, it has been preserved complete with its seal. Inside the stylised letter M for Marie is a small portrait of the monarch.

The Mayor was also happy to pose for photographs with members of the High Wycombe Society whilst sitting in the chair used each year for the traditional ceremonial weighing of the mayor, for which our Town is well-known.



Mary's Charter complete with its seal

Photo: Steve Strutt

The Plaque that never was



A BLUE PLAQUE inside the Fortune Theatre in the West End of London has recently been unveiled to commemorate the real-life wartime contribution of a former Wycombe Abbey girl: Hester Leggatt. Employed by MI5 in the Second World War she is said to have composed the fictional love letters that were planted in a briefcase attached to a corpse and washed ashore as part of "Operation Mincemeat", an elaborate plot to deceive the enemy about the Allies' plans. A 1956 film "The Man Who Never Was" first brought this extraordinary tale to public attention. "Operation Mincemeat" has once again become newsworthy as the subject of a well-researched book by Ben Macintyre, in a newer version of the film, and more surprisingly, it has also been made into a musical. The plaque may look from a distance like a normal blue plaque, but it is embroidered using cross-stitch, hence its indoor home.

From correspondence with Dave Scott

Tales of a House Detective



WINSTON CHURCHILL once said, "We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us". Come and hear Marian's tales in a profusely illustrated talk about the people who lived in some of the buildings she has researched, from stately piles to country cottages.

Tales of a House Detective

A talk by Marian Miller

Thursday 18th April 2024

Trinity URC at 7.30pm

Good Mourning!

with Sally Scagell as your guide

ON SUNDAY 28th APRIL, at 3 pm, there will be a group visit for Society members and supporters to High Wycombe Cemetery. Those wishing to take part need to book their places, preferably by email to chairman@highwycombesociety.org.uk.

In the older parts of the cemetery every headstone has a tale to tell. Our guide, Sally Scagell, has been researching the lives (and deaths) of the graves' occupants (and the mourning practices of those left behind) for the past 15 years. The tour will take between 60 and 75 minutes depending on the walking speed of participants, who are recommended to wear "sensible" shoes for walking on wet grass!

Let's capture the scene



LONG AGO, in the rapidly dimming past, did you, or maybe your parents, have an 8mm cine camera? I mean the type that used real (or should it be reel to reel) film that was sent off for processing and came back on 3 inch reels, often with a yellow cover, and took about 4 minutes to project. If so, have you still got them? With the advent of video cameras those old films were often tucked away in cupboards or attics "to do something with sometime". Maybe "sometime" has arrived.

The Pann Mill team are keen to get hold of any film or video of the old mill that was demolished in 1971 or of the restoration work that produced the current mill. If you think that you have such film perhaps you would dig it out and I will offer to convert it to a format that can be viewed on a computer free of charge. The condition is that, after conversion I can keep a copy of any relevant scenes and use them as mill history or to promote the mill. The origin and copyright would of course be acknowledged. The original film will be returned to you with thanks.

If you think that you have anything then please drop an email to malcolm@pannmill.org.uk to discuss a way forward.

Films can be Standard 8mm or Super 8 format. Unfortunately, I cannot do other sizes but if you definitely have some useful footage then still let me know as there may be scope to do something in the SOFA (Saving Our Film Archive) project. Any video would also be very welcome.

Malcolm Connell



Letters to the Editor

By the time you are reading this, the High Wycombe Society will have hosted a meeting on 14th March at which Robert Laycock, co-founder and CEO of the Marlow Film Studios, will have had an opportunity to outline the proposed development of Marlow Film Studios and Society members will have had an opportunity to ask questions. These letters were received prior to that meeting.



2024 is set to be an exciting year.

One thing I am especially keen about is the ongoing proposal for the new film studio next to the A404. It's called the Marlow Film

Studios, but it is a project of real importance to Wycombe too.

I'm an out-and-out supporter. To my mind it's one of the best things we can bring forward to support our local creative sector and help inject excitement and opportunity to inspire our younger residents to stay local and invest in Wycombe. It has the potential to put us at the heart of the resurgent British film and TV industry bringing high tech and creative jobs to the town with its long-established tradition of craftsmanship, creativity and opportunity. I just find that so exciting!

Last year a planning decision on the studios was deferred, and we're now expecting a final decision to come from Buckinghamshire Council in May. There is nothing certain about the outcome, and I am keen that we don't lose the chance to register our support in High Wycombe's interest.

The main objections come from the environmental lobby. I, too, am passionate about the quality of our towns and countryside. But I don't see this project as a threat to it. I am reassured by the work done, from the excellent design of the buildings themselves and the proposed landscaping of the area, through to specific actions aimed at addressing the environmental impact. The site is that of an old gravel pit – it is not a rural paradise under threat. Besides, expert opinion suggests that it's just a matter of time until the site is developed, one way or another, and I cannot see any virtue in it ending up, say, as an Amazon warehouse employing few and up-skilling nobody.

Of practical interest too are the expected improvements to car access from the existing roundabout on the A404 into Marlow and promised bus services from High Wycombe to the Elizabeth line in Maidenhead.

Many young people want to work in the creative sector in a wide range of occupations including, as technicians, accountants, hairdressers and set designers. We owe it to them to encourage this investment in the local area, with thousands of new jobs promised. The backers of the Marlow Film Studios are currently working with educators to conceive courses and internships that could lead directly to well-paid employment for our

youngsters. And it's not just those who want to work in film – it's also taxi drivers, electricians, sandwich shops, plumbers and local pubs that will benefit.

If you're reading this and agree – and want to support good growth in High Wycombe – I'd love to hear from you. I'm hoping to coordinate some letters of support to the application, so would welcome the help. The studio is also on both Instagram and Facebook, should you wish to follow the latest updates.

If you're less sure, have any questions, or would be interested in meeting the Marlow team to chat about the project, I know they'd be happy to meet. I'll be able to help with arrangements.

Either way – this is too important an opportunity to let pass by – and I hope you agree.

Heather Morley

Vice Chair | High Wycombe Community Board - Covid Recovery & Regeneration Action Group



I have made a calendar entry for 14th March as I am interested to hear how Robert Laycock can justify the proposed new film studios.

In the Thames Valley we now have huge new film studios at Shinfield (near Reading M4 junction). These must almost be big enough to compete with Pinewood.

We also have a new film studio at Wycombe Air Park. I go to Wycombe Air Park quite regularly and the film studio must have been there now for over a year but, as far as I can see, has never been used.

So why do we need to build another film studio on land reserved for a country park? It seems that just because the existing land is not manicured green lawns, people consider it to be wasteland.

Another issue with Wycombe Air Park, it could be redesignated "Wycombe Car Park!" Almost the entire airfield car park is covered in second hand used cars for sale!

Dave Scott

The similar-sounding but quite separate development at Wycombe Air Park has caused some confusion. As I hope will be explained on 14th March, these are not direct competitors, as the facilities are quite different.



Officers of the Royal Bucks King's Own Militia in the Orangery at Wycombe Abbey in 1852

Dad's Armies: The Amateur Military Tradition in Bucks

**A talk by Prof. Ian Beckett
at Trinity URC**

Thursday 16th May at 7.30pm

Telling the story of our county's citizen soldiers from 1558 to 1945 including the Militia, Yeomanry, Volunteers, Territorials, and the Home Guard – and with specific reference to the Royal Bucks King's Own Militia at High Wycombe.

To “Waters Whelming” in May!

ON FRIDAY 24th MAY there will be a group visit for Society members and supporters to see the watercress beds at Ewelme. Those wishing to take part need to book their places, preferably by email to chairman@highwycombesociety.org.uk and make their own transport arrangements to get to Ewelme, where the plan is to meet up at 1.45 pm in the Recreation Ground Car Park (OX10 6PG). From there it is a walk of just under half a mile to the Watercress Beds Centre through the pretty village.

There will be a film from the 1960s on the Watercress Industry and then a guided walk around the site, which should finish by about 4pm. The site is owned and maintained by the Chiltern Society.

Ewelme's name originally meant 'waters whelming' in old English, or 'place by the river brook'. This refers to a spring just north of the village, which forms the King's Pool - so named after Henry VIII, who used to stay at the Manor. The Manor of Ewelme came into the hands of the Chaucer family through the marriage of Thomas Chaucer, son of the poet, to Maud Burghersh. Their daughter Alice (1404-1475) founded an Almshouse and grammar school. Her elaborate tomb is in the church of St Mary. The graveyard also contains the grave of Jerome K Jerome who wrote *Three Men in a Boat*.

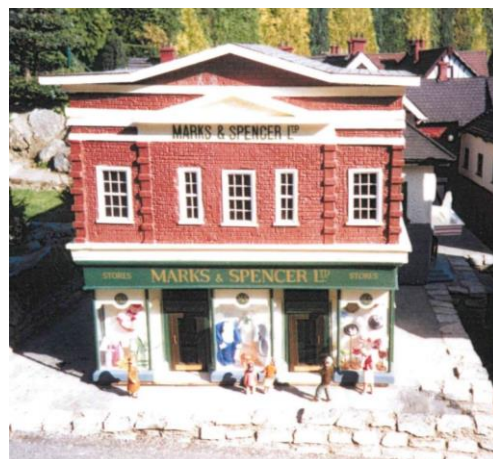
And on to “High Shrunkham” in June?

ON WEDNESDAY 5th JUNE there will be an after-hours group visit for Society members and supporters to Bekonscot. Those wishing to take part need to book their places, preferably by email to chairman@highwycombesociety.org.uk and make their own transport arrangements to arrive in good time for an early evening talk at 6pm on the history of the village followed by an opportunity to wander around.

Since it first opened in 1929, Bekonscot has been continually evolving, so there are always new things to see on any visit. A recently introduced attraction, High Shrunkham Junction, was officially opened in 2023 by Michael Portillo.

Participants are advised that there is parking on Warwick Road or in the Pay & Display car park about 100 metres away (but the church car park across the road is not available in the evenings). It is also only a short walk from Beaconsfield station, but High Shrunkham Junction is not yet on the Chiltern Line!

Bekonscot (HP9 2PL) is normally open 7 days a week from 10 am until 5.30pm (with last entry at 4 pm)



Marks & Spencer Ltd in Bekonscot is a model with a High Wycombe connection.

Photo: courtesy of Trustees of Bekonscot

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Ayesha Walawalkar

Peter Spence and family

Obituaries

We regret to inform members of the deaths of:

Mrs Anne Hildersley

Barbara Rippington

P G Gibb

Appeal for Plants or Cuttings



The ladies running our popular Plant Stall at Pann Mill would welcome any surplus plants or cuttings you can spare for our first Open Day on Sunday May 12th. Even that houseplant in need of TLC would be acceptable! Please bring offerings to Pann Mill on the day from 9.30 onwards. If transporting them is a problem, please contact Mary Woodman 01494 528106 in advance.

A Reminder All talks and events in our Programme are open to members of the public who wish to attend and/or participate and are FREE unless otherwise noted. Updates to the Programme will be added to the website. Where booking is required, details will usually be sent out by email. Any readers wishing to participate who do not regularly receive Society emails are advised to contact the Society Chairman via email: chairman@highwycombesociety.org.uk or by telephone: 07718 103603



Contributions Please.

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

newslettereditor@highwycombesociety.org.uk

All contributions to the next edition must be received by **20th May 2024**

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!!!**

2024	
Thursday 18th April Trinity United Reformed Church 7.30 pm	Talk: "Tales of a House Detective" – by Marian Miller As detailed in the Winter Newsletter. (see p9)
Sunday 28th April High Wycombe Cemetery 3 pm start	"Good Mourning" – a tour of the older parts of High Wycombe Cemetery with guide, Sally Scagell. (See p9) To reserve a place for this event please email chairman@highwycombesociety.org.uk
Sunday 12th May 11 am-5 pm	Pann Mill Open Day to coincide with National Mills Day. See above appeal on for plants or cuttings.
Thursday 16th May Trinity United Reformed Church 7.30 pm	Talk: "Dad's Armies: The Amateur Military Tradition in Bucks" – by Prof. Ian Beckett, formerly Professor of Military History at the University of Kent. (see p11)
Friday 24th May 1.45 pm – 4 pm approx. Meet at Ewelme Recreation Ground Car Park OX10 6PG	Group Visit to Ewelme Watercress beds. (see p9 for more details) A short walk from the car park to the Visitor Centre followed by a film on the Watercress Industry and a guided walk around the site. To reserve a place on this outing please email chairman@highwycombesociety.org.uk
Wednesday 5th June 6 pm Bekonscot HP9 2PL	Group Visit to Bekonscot for a talk and tour. (see p11 for more details) There will be a talk on the history of the village then free time to wander around. To reserve a place please email chairman@highwycombesociety.org.uk
Thursday 13th June Trinity United Reformed Church 7.30 pm	AGM followed by "The Other Misses Dove" – A talk by Jackie Kay (see separate AGM paperwork and p2)
Sunday 14th July 11 am-5 pm	Pann Mill Open Day