

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

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Spotlights and Hubs



Caught on camera from left to right:

Society Trustee David Snoxell; Hon Treasurer Steve Strutt; Newsletter Editor Jackie Kay; Planning Group Chair Peter Lerner; and Society Trustee Willie Reid. Just some of the faces of the High Wycombe Society.

Thanks to Brad, the manager at The Works, for taking the photo.

OLDER READERS MAY remember a local publication called *Spotlight* from the 1990s. Printed on newsprint-style paper, it used to be delivered free to a large number of households. Among its many adverts, it helped promote awareness of the work at Pann Mill and alerted readers to Open Days. Long-standing High Wycombe residents may also remember the opening of “The Hub” in 2001: a community space behind the Union Baptist Church on Easton Street, still in very active use today. We occasionally hosted our Society meetings there a long time ago.

While assembling this Newsletter I noticed that the words “Spotlight” and “Hub” are back in fashion, being used together and separately in many different contexts. On p8 Steph Osborn outlines the Society’s support for a project providing a “Spotlight” on chalk streams, while pictured above, several Society members recently met up at “The Works” on the High Street where Willie Reid has installed a mini-exhibition to spotlight the Society’s newly created “American Trail”.

Conversation at The Works mostly centred around how we could respond to a new opportunity on the horizon: to “spotlight” our Society’s activities for up to a week in May at the new *We Make Wycombe* hub on the Cornmarket. We all agreed it could be a good opportunity to showcase *what the Society is all about*, but with wide-ranging interests from the depths of local history to the sweep of the distant planning horizon, the “Spotlight” metaphor breaks down a little. There doesn’t yet seem to be a consensus on what to call spotlights within a spotlight.

Steve Strutt has volunteered to co-ordinate exhibition material, which we can expect to include samples of both heritage and planning (see p6 for Steve’s latest report on one heritage project – ensuring the future of SWOP – and p2-4 for latest Planning Matters). See also p11 for how you can help.

Jackie Kay

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

Patron: Lord Carrington

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Honorary Secretary: Steph Osborn, Pann Mill, London Road, High Wycombe HP11 1BJ. Tel: 07724 881440

Planning Matters

AS WE MOVE into the Spring, the Planning Group has a new spring in its step, with Peter Lerner as its new chairman. We thank Tony Hatton for his steady guiding hand over the last couple of years and we are lucky that he'll remain a much-valued member of the Group. Peter is a Chartered Town Planner who spent the first part of his professional career working in local government. After eight years as Director of Planning and Heritage, he became Head of Paid Service / Chief Executive of a large District Council. In 2005, his career took a new direction, when he set up a successful consultancy, working with local authorities on improving standards and skills - including training, coaching, and high-level investigations. As a consultant, he has worked with all types of local authority - county, unitary, district, London Borough and more, as well as helping local groups to find their way through the complexities of the planning process. He has lived in High Wycombe since 1998 - during which time he has been a Governor of two local Primary Schools - and is a dedicated supporter of Wycombe Wanderers. Peter brings energy and experience to the role and has already acquired his own fortnightly column in the Bucks Free Press.

High Wycombe Hospital The future of our hospital has had much attention recently. Many people would like to see an Accident and Emergency (A&E) Unit back at the hospital, but our local Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust has said that this is not part of their plans.

Renewed debate was triggered in the Autumn by a planning application for a new six-storey medical block to be located on part of the existing "Car Park B". Buckinghamshire Council were quick to grant planning permission in December, and work started at the beginning of January.

Members of our Group met onsite with Rupert Mills, the NHS Trust's Programme Manager for the project, and he explained the strategy for the site to us.

Some important medical activities will transfer to the new block from the ageing Tower (which is gradually becoming redundant) but in a more advanced and up-to-date form. The development is taking place quickly as the Government is keen to deliver an improved hospital service and has awarded a large financial grant to the Trust to make this happen in High Wycombe. We were told that this is one of the largest hospital extension programmes under way in England.

The new six-storey block is functional in appearance and does little to reflect the heritage of the hospital or the quality of some of the newer buildings nearby. However, it is difficult to answer the stark question: would we prefer public money to be spent on making the building more beautiful, or on installing the best possible medical technology?

Nevertheless, it is a great improvement on the Tower Block - a building which arouses mixed emotions. It is an outdated structure, but Rupert Mills would not be drawn on plans for its future - when might it be demolished, what will the site be used for.



North Block - horizontal



South Block - vertical

A more immediate problem associated with the new development is the loss of car park B during construction. This car park is often full of patients' and visitors' cars, whilst using the hospital, as well as patients of Wye Valley GP Surgery, which is located on the hospital campus. We were told by Rupert Mills that not only does the NHS Trust have a large number of leased car parking spaces available at the Eden Centre for hospital staff, there is an adequate number of remaining spaces for public use, available in the present Car Park A,

in the Hospital's multi-storey car park, and at the former Staples building.

Commenting on the car parking solution we observed that some of the leased spaces have a potentially short life, and the resulting mix of available spaces is very confusing - drivers who are unwell, or whose passengers are unwell, do not want to spend a long time hunting for a parking spot. We were assured that signage was on order to simplify the process of parking.

One further thought was that perhaps the "good idea" of locating a GP surgery on the hospital campus had brought additional and unwanted problems, and the Trust might want to look again at where GP surgeries in our town can best serve the public who use them.

The Chilterns Centre has just closed its doors for the last time, and we now await the bulldozers and hi-vis jackets. While nobody loves disruption and noise, the Planning Group is delighted that work is now imminent, with the possibility of a revival of Frogmoor at the end of it.

A planning application for **Octagon Parade**, the high-profile building on the Oxford Road roundabout (previously the post office, a nightclub and briefly known as 'The Curve') is currently still being considered. We hope that Buckinghamshire Council will expedite this application and keep the investor keen to help High Wycombe on its regeneration journey.

There is an interesting current planning application for a new "gateway building" at **25 West Wycombe Road**, the important junction of West Wycombe Road with Desborough Avenue.

Car parking provision is an issue here. The proposed five-storey residential block is attractive but would seem to be an over-development of the site, providing only 29 car parking spaces for the occupiers of the 48 apartments, and their visitors. We also think that more consideration could be given to the opportunity to provide residents with an attractive outlook over the River Wye.

Gomm Valley The latest planning application, for 540 dwellings and other development, has been approved by Buckinghamshire Council. A similar scheme was originally dismissed on appeal because the Planning Inspector was not satisfied that London Road could cope with the extra traffic. Taylor Wimpey re-applied, stating:

"Highways Position: This application seeks to address the highways matter, which was not resolved at appeal through providing new, more robust modelling evidence. On the basis of the appeal decision and having assessed this application, Officers and other consultees have confirmed that all other matters are acceptable. During the determination of the application, there has been thorough and detailed engagement with the Council's appointed highways consultants with new modelling evidence presented and scrutinised. It has now been agreed with Council Officers that, subject to the appropriate mitigation, the scheme could be accommodated on the local highway network in terms of highway capacity and highway safety. Therefore, Officers have concluded that the proposal is acceptable."

Thus, the developer appears to have satisfied Bucks Council Highways on the point.

Johnson & Johnson, one of High Wycombe's major employers, has decided to relocate to Maidenhead. Their current site, in Holmers Farm Way, comprises a well-designed 1980s commercial block, set in landscaped grounds, overlooking the M40 motorway. The site is designated by Buckinghamshire Council as a Strategic Employment Area, not suitable for new housing as it is close to the motorway and would be loud and polluted.

The current planning application seeks to demolish all existing structures, and to build five "contemporary warehouse / logistics buildings". Buckinghamshire Council need to consider carefully the effect this development will have on local employment and highways strategies, as well as ensuring that the new uses do not cause light or noise pollution to surrounding areas.



Illustration from the Design and Access Statement for development at 1 Desborough Ave and 25 West Wycombe Road
Danks Bodnell Architects Ltd

High Wycombe Lido Light and noise pollution are also issues at the Lido on The Rye, where there is a planning application for a new building to address the growing appetite for Padel Courts. Padel is a wonderful, sociable and healthy activity, and one which most of us would support – but sadly, not in this location.

The application is for five new canopied Padel Courts and a single storey timber framed clubhouse on the site of the existing tennis courts. The Gardens Trust in its role as Statutory Consultee (informed by local colleagues in the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust) commented on the application observing that it "may have a material impact on the significance of the setting of Wycombe Abbey, a Grade II registered park and garden (RPG) included by Historic England on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The inclusion of this site on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest requires great weight to be given to its conservation." The nearby cascade and grotto are at present under consideration for inclusion on the Bucks Local List of Heritage Assets. In our view, the proposed building will be completely out of place here, from a visual point of view, and the light and noise from the facility would adversely affect a wider area. There must be another location in High Wycombe which would be suitable for this otherwise welcome activity.

Changes in progress at the entrance to **Wycombe Abbey School** including the demolition of part of the front wall of the school grounds, have been highly visible to motorists at the bottom of



Marlow Hill. The school obtained planning permission, in October of last year, to demolish several outdated buildings at the front of the site, including the custodian's lodge and a post room, and to replace them with more modern structures, at the same time reorganising the car parking spaces and providing additional landscaping. It is encouraging to see this work progressing.

An update on Conservation Areas. Following the Society's initial discussions with the Council's consultants, there is another consultation in progress. The latest proposals include [small additional areas](#) to be conserved: the south end of the cemetery; Temple End and the former police station; Totteridge Avenue and Gordon Road; and London Road and the Cricket club. There is also some helpful advice to owners and tenants of the properties involved. We have submitted comments on the latest consultation which closes on 12th April.

We have recently responded to two consultations from Buckinghamshire Council regarding the **Buckinghamshire Local Plan**. The first, "the Regulation 18 consultation" was very disappointing. The consultation draft was poorly written, and neither presented a clear vision for the county, nor any details of how land may be

allocated for future development into the 2030s and beyond. The second was a more detailed consultation about the need to find sites for 95,500 new houses across the county in the next 20 years. In our view this is a ridiculously high figure and although very few of the new sites are in High Wycombe, we still urge the council to lobby the Government for a reduction, quoting Greenbelt and AONB (now known as Chilterns National Landscape) in support.

We also had an opportunity to comment on the draft of the Government's revised **National Planning Policy Framework**. This will be much scrutinised by barristers and their clients at future planning inquiries. It represents current government thinking about how planning must be approached nationally. We felt that there are undoubtedly well-financed interest groups who will either support the Framework or not support it, and that it was, sadly, unlikely that the diverse views of the High Wycombe Society would very much affect the government's thinking.

An invitation The Planning Group enthusiastically takes every opportunity to participate in the local planning process, and to enter into dialogues with developers, applicants, consultants and Buckinghamshire Council. We regularly comment on planning applications concerning our town, its conservation areas and its listed buildings. We meet on Monday evenings, every couple of months or so, at the Friends' Meeting House on the corner of London Road and Stuart Road and use email between meetings. We welcome new members – so if you would like to join us, please get in touch at planning@highwycombesociety.org.uk

Planning Group

Membership subscriptions – now £10

THIS IS A polite reminder for all High Wycombe Society members that subscriptions for 2026-2027 are due on 6th April. The new rate going forward is a flat £10 per individual. Existing Standing Orders and automated online bank payments will need to be amended accordingly.

Those who were present at last year's AGM in June 2025, will remember a lively debate on the proposed subscription increase, and the change to £10 per individual was approved for the 2026 renewal. The new rate simplifies administration by eliminating the different tiers for families and retirees. The last change was way back in 2010, and a lot has happened since then.

As I reported at the AGM, the Society remained in good financial health (and still does). For many years, income has amply supported the Society's activities, and our reserves had grown to an embarrassing level from which they have since been allowed to decline gently. Since COVID, however, we have seen our costs increase significantly. When reviewing our finances for the AGM last year, the trustees agreed that membership subscriptions would need to be increased to cover our higher costs.

The Society's bank account details are as follows:

The High Wycombe Society
Sort code 23-05-80 (Metro Bank)
Account No. 42783986

You can also find a [standing order mandate](#) online on our website.

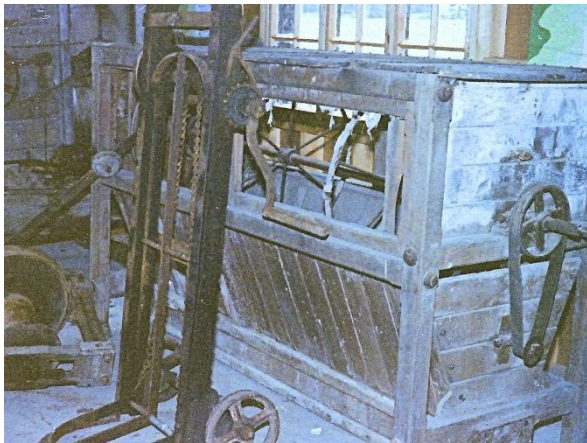
Steve Strutt (Hon. Treasurer)

Graded grains really do make finer flour*.

***With acknowledgements to Premier Foods.**

MANY YEARS AGO, when the dust had settled on the demolition of the old Pann Mill and a new building had been erected on the site, the mill team of the time managed to find an old mill in Drayton Parslow, a village near Milton Keynes, that was being demolished and were able to recover much of the mill machinery and other equipment. If you have visited Pann Mill on an open day you will have seen a lot of the recovered machinery in operation as we grind wheat to make flour.

Amongst the milling machinery that we collected were a winnower and a bolter or flour grader. Both had unfortunately seen better days but some years ago we managed to restore the winnower to working order and show how the wheat was separated from the chaff. Now we have almost restored the bolter to working order and we anticipate being able to demonstrate it in May.



The bolter or flour grader had seen better days

The flour that comes from the mill is wholemeal, i.e. it contains the entire wheat or other cereal seed which gives it its brown colour. However, it has been known for many years that if this flour is sieved to remove the bran you are left with a more desirable fine white flour. This could then be used to make white bread. Originally the sieving was done by hand and was very labour intensive, so white bread was the preserve of the rich. During the 18th and 19th centuries the process became mechanised and by the early 20th century machines such as ours had become common in mills. Some designs were very sophisticated and incorporated patented improvements that could produce different grades of flour.

In operation, wholemeal flour is fed into one end

of a sloping rotating fabric cylinder, which allows the white flour to fall through while the bran continues to the end. Brushes encourage the white flour to pass through the bolting cloth to increase the yield. The white flour falls to the bottom of the machine where an Archimedes screw pushes it to one end, where it can be collected. The bran meanwhile falls from the other end where it too can be collected. Normally the sides of the bolter would be plain wood, but we have restored ours with transparent panels so that the workings can be seen.

Although fine white flour is better to cook with, producing it removes much of the goodness that is contained in the germ and the bran. It took a long time for this to be realised, but today white flour has a number of additives to restore some of the lost nutrition. Wholewheat flour as eaten by *the masses* does not of course need them.



Restoration of the flour grader is nearing completion MC

The flour grader was intended to be used within a mill using the mill power. However, ours will remain as a stand-alone machine using an alternative power source.

Malcolm Connell

Help Wanted at Pann Mill Open Days 2026

ARE YOU a dab hand with a gazebo? One of the first tasks on every Pann Mill Open Day is to erect the various gazebos used by the stallholders surrounding the mill. A cheerful team start work about 9.30am and know that many hands make light work. By the time the stallholders arrive, the gazebo team have the satisfaction of knowing they have helped get the event off to a good start. At the end of the day, again it's a co-operative venture, whatever the weather, packing things neatly away until they are needed again. If you think you could lend a hand on Sunday 10th May (or Sunday 12th July or Sunday 13th September) please just turn up in the morning or be there around 5pm. We will be very grateful.

SWOP in the Spotlight

WORK IS IN PROGRESS to create a new version of the 'SWOP' website, the long-established, highly successful electronic archive which enables "Sharing Wycombe's Old Photographs". Already a small panel of experienced users have had access to a demo version and have been providing feedback while putting it through its paces. The plan is to launch a refreshed version of SWOP in the next couple of months. Meanwhile, we already have another task in which Society members and supporters could get involved, namely cataloguing more photos in the pipeline. If the thought of spending time looking at old photographs appeals to you, then be sure to read on!

When Harvey Coltman, the originator of the SWOP website, died last year, sadly we temporarily lost the means to add new photos to the SWOP archive. To continue the mission of sharing Wycombe's photographic heritage, and involving the community in exploring, documenting, and learning from the town's history, required a new approach to hosting and cataloguing new photos. This part of the SWOP "refresh" is already complete, and I am pleased to say that we are again in a position where we can grow the archive, but not without some new helpers!

When SWOP began in 2004, the internet was young and tales abound of communal work parties at the Library on Queen Victoria Road, researching and documenting the many thousands of photos then held by the Reference Library and the Museum.

All the digital information in those days was moved around on floppy disks, by 'sneaker net'. It was a mammoth task involving many people. We are very thankful to all those who participated then, and to those whose sustained efforts over the intervening years have made SWOP the valuable resource that it is today. Special thanks to Harvey Coltman and Mike Dewey! But we are now looking for a new team to handle new material.

We have thousands of photographs in storage which need to be catalogued. They include substantial collections of colour photographs of Wycombe in the 1980s and 90s taken by Lorna Cassidy and Bill Page. Another recent loan for digitisation is a set of three volumes of the Rye Protection Society's 'Photographs and Engravings of High Wycombe and District' compiled by Derek Woods, a veritable treasure trove that has not been seen for many years.

We cannot promise the comfortable surroundings of the old library (although we

note that Hazlemere library retains a space with Wi-Fi access which could prove useful). The growth in online resources makes some of the tasks of identifying, researching, and cataloguing photos much easier than before. While some tasks require collaboration and discussion, others can be carried out remotely by working from home.

To whet your appetite, the photo on this page is an example I recently found in Lorna Cassidy's collection. There was no inscription on the

back. The location in front of the Red Lion statue was easily identified and recorded, but what can we tell about the date? There are clues in the photograph. While the attire suggests a date before 1900, the words printed on the front provide another clue: 'Wycombe Coach L. Roberts Photo'. Laz Roberts was one of the first photographers in

Wycombe to set up shop in 1868, selling CdV's (Carte de Visite). This is the first of his photos in the SWOP collection and, rare for him, an exterior photograph.

Other clues in the photo include a sign on the wall which reads 'Prince of Wales, London & Wycombe, Coach', and, only just visible on the carriage door, the words 'Southhall, Denham'. The *Bucks Free Press* newspaper archive has an advert for the Prince of Wales coach service, which started in 1870 and ran daily between London and Wycombe. The last reference is in 1875. The crowd of people and the observers in the hotel windows suggest an occasion worth recording. Maybe this was the start of the service in 1870, two years after Laz Roberts opened in Wycombe. With slightly more certainty we can say that it was taken before the end of 1875.



Steve Strutt

Wycombe's History in Pictures

SOCIAL MEDIA USERS who care about our town, especially those who frequent Facebook, already have a wide choice of groups and pages which they can elect to join or follow. Most local organisations have some presence on Facebook, but what form it takes and how much interaction is encouraged varies greatly. One group has just celebrated its five-year anniversary and changed its name.

As a Society, we first set up an official page on Facebook in July 2011. It has never played a central role in our activities, but we have used it on and off in various ways to help with publicity. Bursts of enthusiasm have often been followed by long fallow periods of inactivity. There is a separate Pann Mill page with a modest following which came into being in 2012 and which has been used more consistently but sparingly to advertise things related to Pann Mill such as the Open Days. We have also made use of local pages and groups run by other organisations and individuals with overlapping interests.

Over the past 15 years, Facebook itself has evolved in many ways. A recent report highlighted that there are now over 25 million active public Facebook groups. The average size of a Facebook group has been estimated to be in the region of 2K members, but there are wide variations both in size and activity level. Very large groups may have many millions of members, but much smaller groups can thrive as long as there are enough posts to sustain the interest of their members.

Compared to pages, Facebook groups typically demand more investment in time to monitor and moderate higher numbers of contributions. For that reason, we have previously decided not to set up our own Society Facebook groups. But times have changed.

One long-standing local Facebook group is "High Wycombe Now and Then" which began life as a public group back in 2014. Many Society members with heritage interests have joined it and contribute to its content with posts and comments. I recently had the pleasure of meeting one of its admins in real life. The group is well-managed and currently boasts a total membership of 12.2K members; that is over six times the number of people who have ever chosen to "follow" our own Society page.

There are a few large general "High Wycombe" groups and some local pages with large audiences. It should be no surprise that the Wycombe Wanderers FC's official page, which was launched in 2008, has as many as 81K followers. A local history group, by its very nature, is unlikely ever to attract that many members.

One public group that has surpassed initial expectations in popularity was set up by John Gurney just over five years ago in support of SWOP ("Sharing Wycombe's Old Photographs"). With a relatively narrow remit, the group has

nevertheless grown steadily to over 10,000 members, many of whom look forward to their regular "fix" of a post from SWOP arriving in their newsfeed.

For some, it triggers nostalgic memories of our town in days gone by; for others it invites detailed observation and exploration of events in our town's history.

In the wake of the decision taken last year that the High Wycombe Society would play a key role in securing the continuation of SWOP, and in the interests of resilience, John invited Steve Strutt and myself to join him as Admins of the Group. It has been a learning curve for me, at least, to understand what is involved in curating a successful group. Behind the scenes, unwanted submissions are routinely politely declined or deflected to other groups where they might be more welcome. Offensive comments are swiftly removed when necessary. And when time permits, we all do what we can to answer questions and thereby enhance the information relating to the photographs displayed.

We have changed the name of the Group to "Wycombe's History in Pictures" or WHIP for short but wish to assure all members that we will be continuing to showcase SWOP images.

Jackie Kay



*A busy High Street scene chosen to represent the WHIP Facebook group.
Image courtesy of High Wycombe Library SWOP ref: RHW:29012*

Not Bourne Yesterday: Chalk Streams in the Spotlight

THE CHALK STREAMS of the Chilterns are among the rarest river habitats on earth, and those of us who live in High Wycombe are fortunate to have one flowing through the heart of our town – the river Wye. Now, a major new heritage programme aims to reconnect communities across the Chilterns with these ancient, living waterways — and there are real opportunities for the High Wycombe Society and its members to get involved.

Not Bourne Yesterday is a programme hosted by the Chilterns National Landscape in partnership with the Chilterns Heritage and Archaeology Partnership and the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project. Its aim is to celebrate the remarkable and globally rare chalk streams of the Chilterns — and ensure that their future is shaped by the communities of people who live around them. The programme has been made possible by a £350,000 investment from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and is currently in an 18-month Development Phase running until September 2026. If the second-round bid is successful, a five-year Delivery Phase will follow, with an anticipated completion in 2031.

The programme's scope is impressively broad, encompassing no fewer than twelve named project strands. **"Wye Not?"** will involve local communities in improving the condition and connectivity of urban green and blue spaces in the Wye valley. **"Rivers of Iron"** will involve collecting information from long-standing residents to better understand the local history of the chalk streams. **"Walk the Chalk"** seeks to improve access to and engagement with the streams, while **"To the Manor Bourne"** will see Hughenden Stream at Hughenden Manor reconnected and restored. The programme also includes small grants for local community

groups and traineeships for young people – a welcome investment in the next generation of conservation skills.

The Trustees of the High Wycombe Society have written in support of the programme's forthcoming Delivery bid, noting that its vision aligns closely with our own aims to foster appreciation and understanding of our local heritage. We can see clear opportunities for our members and supporters to engage with several of the programme's strands, whether through river activities, supporting oral history and memory-gathering, or participating in walks, talks, and educational events that help people better understand the relationship between our town and its waterways.

We are delighted that Martha Glennon, the Engagement Coordinator for Not Bourne Yesterday, has accepted an invitation to speak to the Society on the evening of Wednesday 8th April at Trinity United Reform Church. This will be an excellent opportunity to hear more about the programme and to discuss how local groups and individuals might support it and get involved. All are welcome to attend.

Further information about Not Bourne Yesterday can be found [online](#).

Steph Osborn

Queen Victoria Road – an update

THE ULTIMATE FATE of the Council Offices on Queen Victoria Road is not yet known. In November the High Wycombe Society Trustees wrote to Cllr Robert Carington, the relevant Cabinet Member, expressing our concern about the proposed sale of the offices, raising awareness of the merits of retaining the original 1932 structure in any plans for regeneration of the site, and calling for attention to be given to its possible ongoing use for public community benefit.

The council offices are a landmark of the inter-war period. The main building, with its distinctive façade, staircase, Mayor's Parlour and internal layout, is architecturally and historically important. It belongs to a wider group of civic buildings that together define the character of the area.

Our letter, which we also sent to the local press, called for meaningful local engagement in determining the site's future and expressed our willingness to contribute constructively to any consultation process regarding the site's future.

A marketing brochure for the site by JLL and Chandler Garvey is viewable [online](#). In a section

outlining the "redevelopment opportunity", it acknowledges only the façade as a non-designated heritage asset and that the building is considered worthy of local listing.

A broad range of possible uses of the site are mooted including residential, elderly living, healthcare or hotel, all subject to planning permission. Appropriate building heights are said to range from two to seven/eight storeys.

In the meantime, plans for the Mayor's Parlour to relocate to offices above Tesco are well-advanced.

Steph Osborn

Old doesn't have to mean inaccessible.

B'HIVE Café is housed in the former Wheatsheaf Inn, one of the oldest buildings on the High Street in High Wycombe, where historic character meets modernity to create a welcoming space for everyone. Despite the building's age, accessibility was a priority during its recent restoration and remains a priority for its current tenants. Downstairs, a wide access door opens into a comfortable seating area and bar, making entry straightforward. If you're using a wheelchair the stairs do not present a barrier to enjoying the café on the first floor — the B'Hive's platform lift smoothly carries you up to the historic first floor, where you're rewarded with a panoramic view overlooking the High Street.

The experience doesn't stop at the setting. The service is friendly, and the food is brilliant too. After enjoying a tapas lunch on our first visit, we couldn't resist returning just two days later for a cheeky charcuterie and cheese platter. With quality like this and such a welcoming atmosphere, B'Hive has quickly become a regular haunt we're always happy to return to.



Cheryl Strutt



Above right:

The platform lift smoothly carries wheelchair users to the first floor.

Left:

Enjoying historic surroundings on the first floor.

Right: Tapas made for sharing.



Keeping on Track

THE NEWLY REFURBISHED Brunel Engine Shed offers another very different historical environment in which it is now possible to enjoy refreshments. Currently open every weekday 6am-4pm, it includes a small Costa coffee shop inside.

An understated part of the refurbishment takes the form of plain white lines on the floor which mark the location of the original railway tracks.

Now a part of the Bucks New University estate, the building's use is evolving. In November last year it was the venue for a general High Wycombe Town Meeting which several Society members supported.

We note that future plans include its use for the Wycombe Jazz Festival on Saturday 6th June. This annual event has previously been held at the Wycombe Arts Centre. Tickets can be found online at www.wycombejazzfestival.com.

THE OLD LIBRARY building in Queen Victoria Road has also seen a new lease of life since "Patch" took it over, with Django's Speciality Coffee House on the ground floor.

Followers of social media will already be aware that on Friday 10th April at 6.30pm there's an unusual event taking place there. Mark Page, known to many for his extraordinary collection of High Wycombe memorabilia, has teamed up with Stuart King, well known to us as a former President of our Society, to provide an evening's entertainment on the quirkier side of Wycombe's history.

The event is FREE but donations to next year's "Wyrd Wycombe" event would be welcome. Mark says it would be good to see some familiar faces, and we are advised to "bring ourselves, bring our kids and bring our curiosity".

JK

Coming Soon...

THE SCAFFOLDING IS DOWN at the old “Liberal Club”, or “High Wycombe Social Club” as it should now be known.

Wycombe Museum say that the new Chair Discovery Centre on the upper floor of the building will open “in the Summer”. It will offer the chance to view items that have been in storage for a while, including over 250 chairs, furniture archives, reference books and study resources. The new site promises the opportunity to study these items of the museum collections at a deeper level than could be achieved within the constraints of the existing museum site. The old frontage of the building retains its 1930s character, but the entrance to the Chair Discovery Centre is from St Mary’s Street where a “gleaming copper façade” is the most obvious feature.

More details can be found on the [Wycombe Museum website](#)



The gleaming copper façade is a distinctive feature.

Image: courtesy of Wycombe Museum

Already in “The Works”

WILLIE REID has been continuing to develop The American Trail which featured in the Autumn 2025 Edition of this Newsletter. As a result of his efforts to promote the trail, in January Willie was invited to talk to David Weston on Wycombe Sound radio; the trail also featured on a Nostalgia page of the *Bucks Free Press*, highlighting in particular the stained-glass window of William Penn in the Oak Room, the second “point of interest” of the trail in High Wycombe. “The Works” on the High Street is the “third point of interest” within High Wycombe as it is the site of the former Antelope Inn.



There, by arrangement with the management, Willie has set up a mini exhibition with information about the trail as well as some more background information about John Gaspard Le Marchant, who founded the Royal Military College.

Latest Library Innovation



PEOPLE WHO RARELY use reference libraries tend to think of them as austere silent places with shelves full of dusty books, but most libraries nowadays have evolved into vibrant inclusive community spaces offering a range of services from children’s play areas to warm spaces for the vulnerable.

Sadly, when it comes to revenue-generating potential, collections of books no longer compete even with empty spaces. High Wycombe library already boasts an impressive set of hireable meeting rooms, while it no longer has room for many of the local history resources we used to take for granted would remain accessible.

The latest innovation is being marketed as a “Single Occupancy Workspace” although I have also heard it called a “privacy pod”. For only £5 per hour, you can rent it complete with free Wi-Fi. I have yet to see anyone use it. Personally, I’d sooner have access to another 100 books, but it seems I am out of step with the times.

JK

In the days of “The Tech”

OUR “Special Edition” Winter Newsletter prompted many readers to contact the Editor. All were appreciative of Stuart Rooksby’s contribution. This is just a small selection:



I read the latest Newsletter with great interest as those lads and their activities were so very close to where I lived. My bedroom overlooked their quadrangle. The lone Lady Verney girl on her way home along Birdcage Walk was almost certainly me. I'll have a think and see if I can contribute some more memories.

Marise



I have only just got round to reading the winter newsletter and I found it excellent as usual.

I especially enjoyed Stuart Rooksby’s writing about the “The Tech” even though as a girl in the 50’s and 60’s I had very little personal experience of it.

I found the information very interesting, and his writing is very accessible and amusing, which you must have recognised when giving over most of the newsletter to it!

Thank you again for all you do for the Society,

Judith Gerrard



I have just read the latest High Wycombe Society Newsletter, cover to cover. Stuart Rooksby has written a wonderfully evocative piece. Please pass on thanks and congratulations to him.

I reckon I was about 8 or 9 years behind him. I went to Crown House School a few hundred yards down the road and although I never went inside ‘the Tech’ much of what he has written seemed very familiar.

It occurs to me that there are some things I could easily write about, from my perspective being a pupil in an all lady-teacher primary school.

John Rolfe

Editor’s note: I was pleased to arrange for Marise and Stuart to be in direct contact with one another. Several correspondents said that Stuart’s reflections had inspired them to think about what they could contribute to a future Newsletter. Contributions from people who remember Wycombe in its earlier days, are always welcome.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Email: volunteer@highwycombesociety.org.uk



This is your invitation
to help the High
Wycombe Society

Step into the SPOTLIGHT
6th-9th May

If you have 2 hours or more to spare at the start of May and think you might enjoy engaging with members of the public then please use the above email to let us know of your availability,

or lend a hand in PRODUCTION

If you have ideas and practical suggestions for what should be included in our exhibition to highlight what our Society is all about, Steve Strutt would like to hear from you as soon as possible.

SWOP needs YOU TOO!

This is just a reminder that on page 6, Steve Strutt is also appealing for volunteers to join a new team to catalogue photos and help enrich the value of the SWOP archive for the future.

The email volunteer@highwycombesociety.org.uk can be used for all volunteering opportunities.

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Owain Gardner
John Merchant
Peter Turski

Obituaries

We regret to inform members of the death of:

Alan Hill

AGM paperwork accompanies the distribution of this Newsletter to Society members.

We don't usually publicise clashing events in our schedule of dates, but the weekend of 9th/10th May seems to be one of those pinch-points when lots of things are happening. On the Saturday, as well as our SPOTLIGHT HWS exhibition, there is an opportunity to visit the Air Raid Shelter within the grounds of Hamilton Academy school. And on the Sunday of our first Pann Mill Open Day, Wycombe Museum also hope to entice people away to a talk about De Havilland.

Talks and events in our programme are open to the public and are FREE to attend unless otherwise noted. Updated programme details can be found on the Society's website.



Society members pay an annual subscription which covers the cost of communications including this Newsletter. Enquiries about membership should be sent to membership@highwycombesociety.org.uk

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 2026**

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!!!**

2026	
Wednesday 8 th April Trinity URC 7.30pm	A talk by Martha Glennon, Engagement Co-ordinator for "Not Bourne Yesterday" the Chiltern National Landscape scheme focusing on chalk streams. (see p8.)
Friday 10 th April – Patch	Mark Page and Stuart King - an evening of quirky local history. (see p9)
Saturday 11 th April 10.45 am start by Guildhall	A shortened version of Beating of the Bounds will take place after the mayor's annual inspection of the Market. Help keep the tradition alive!
6 th , 7 th , 8 th and 9 th May <i>We Make Wycombe</i> Hub	"SPOTLIGHT HWS" – an exhibition at The <i>We Make Wycombe</i> Hub featuring the work of the High Wycombe Society (see front page and p11)
Saturday 9 th May Hamilton Academy 10.30-2.30	Priory Road Air Raid Shelter Open Day – A relatively rare opportunity for the general public to see the air raid shelter discovered in Hamilton Academy Grounds.
Sunday 10 th May Pann Mill 11am-5pm	Pann Mill Open Day – Note: Gazebo team volunteers wanted. (see p5)
Saturday 23 rd May By the Guildhall c11.40 am	The annual event for which High Wycombe is famous: Mayor-Making will include the weighing of the Mayor at approx. 11.40am.
Saturday 6 th June Brunel Shed 2pm-11pm	Wycombe Jazz Festival (see p9)
Wednesday 17 th June Trinity URC 7.30pm	High Wycombe Society AGM followed by a talk by Harry Burr of Chiltern Railways covering existing services, as well as plans for the future.
Sunday 12 th July Pann Mill 11am-5pm	Pann Mill Open Day
Sunday 13 th September Pann Mill 11am-5pm	Pann Mill Open Day
Saturday 26 th September Beaconsfield NFTS	Bucks Local History Network Conference. This year's theme is "Political Struggles". Details will be on the Bucks Archaeological Society website.
Trinity United Reformed Church has been booked for the evening of Thursday 1 st October and the afternoons of Saturdays 7 th November and 12 th December - Details to be announced nearer the time.	