



# Maidenhead Civic Society **NEWS**

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Issue 2/03

April 2003

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*Will the Council's plans to improve the York Stream area of the Town Centre deal with this long-standing eyesore at the eastern end of the High Street?*



## **In this**

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Improving the Town Centre - Angela Howorth, V.Chairman

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Regular features on talks, outings, the Heritage Centre,  
Projects and Planning

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*Visit our website! : [www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk](http://www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk)*

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# **CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE**

## **HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE TOWN CENTRE?**

Those members who attended the Society's last talk on 19<sup>th</sup> March were able to see the Borough Council's ideas for improving the York Stream area. I hope many of you completed the questionnaires either then or at the Council's exhibition on the same theme in the reference section of the public library. Since the 1980s the Society has been urging the Council to transform the whole York Stream area and so we are now delighted that the Council has made a commitment to work with the Society to achieve this. Few towns have the bonus of a stream running through the centre; the York Stream could be an attractive, eye-catching feature, rather than a muddy weed infested eyesore. But it will take time and money to bring this about. One of the first problems which will have to be tackled is how to maintain an adequate flow of water at all times of the year. There is a suggestion that the outflow of (clean) water from the sewage works at Braywick could be utilised by pumping some of it upstream to Holmanleaze where it would enter into the Cut in Braywick Park where it helps to provide an excellent habitat for wildlife.

Another Council exhibition in the reference library suggested improvements for the "gateways" into Maidenhead by incorporating themes of history, water and transport on the roundabouts and open spaces by the roadside. Unfortunately, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians are too preoccupied in avoiding potholes on the roads and pavements to be able to give anything other than the briefest attention to their environment. Borough Councillors should look again at their priorities!

## **THE CIVIC SOCIETY PLANNING GROUP**

In April, Nigel Cockburn took over from Michael Johnson as the chairman of the Society's Planning Group. During the past five years Michael has worked tirelessly to strengthen the Society's voice in planning matters. He has built up a dialogue with Borough Councillors and it very encouraging that the Council takes note of the Society's views in the majority of the planning decisions. Welcome Nigel, and a warm thank you to all the members of the Planning Group for their efforts to improve our town.

Angela Howorth

# **NEW LOOK FOR SOCIETY**

This issue of the Newsletter will be the second one featuring the Society's new logo on the masthead. It has been designed by Brian Sanderson, who has done so much for the Society in the past. A logo, motif or trademark is only part of an organisation's image. Sometimes rather more is expected from a logo than it can deliver (Maidenhead's new "M" brand, for example?), but we hope ours will be a positive part of the Society's presentation to the public. It will also feature on new Society stationery. It is a small, but significant, step in improving and raising the Society's visibility.

Editor

# TALKS

**WEDNESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> May 2003 – 8 p.m.**

**“NATIONAL PARKS:  
NOT OURS, BUT OURS TO LOOK AFTER”**

An illustrated talk by Adrian Thornton

Since retiring in 1998, Adrian has been an active Volunteer with the Council for National Parks. This is an umbrella organisation that promotes and coordinates the National Park interests of a wide range of other conservational and recreational charities, both national and local.

Adrian will tell us what “National Park” means in the UK, take us on a brief illustrated tour of the present eleven National Parks, explain briefly what the National Park Authorities are and do and what are the relevant roles in the Parks of those Authorities and the National Trust, and discuss some of the threats and problems that the National Parks face. He will also tell us about progress towards the creation of four more such Parks – two in England and two in Scotland.

John McIntosh

## **YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!**

At present, no one has come forward to take on the job of organising Talks. Between us, Mike Copeland and I have arranged two talks in the January to June period. We hope to have a full programme for the autumn and winter. However, there is still a need for someone to take on the role of talks Organiser. It would help greatly if someone came forward and joined Mike and me in the planning of the next series. Apart from creating some continuity, it would be an easy way into what is involved. Any offers?!

John McIntosh

# OUTINGS

On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March we went down to the New Forest and visited Beaulieu. The weather was glorious and we saw the Palace, gardens and Museum at their best. The Museum was beautifully presented with shining examples of motorcars in all their forms from the beginning. They also displayed a considerable amount of motoring memorabilia and recreated street scenes and garages from a bygone era. Many of us took the opportunity to ride on the Monorail, which passes through the Museum and gardens. The Palace had a 'lived in' feel and Lord Montagu had written the captions on pictures and furniture with a very personal touch. The ancient Abbey and Domus gave a wonderful insight into early monastic life in this country.

Our next visit is on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May to Broughton Castle and Stonor (see last Newsletter for details). We still have a few places available, so if you would like to join us please give me a call.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> July we are visiting Highclere Castle, just outside Newbury and Broadlands on the edge of the New Forest. Highclere is only open to the public a few weeks each year, so this will be a rare opportunity to see this Castle with its many styles and some of the treasures that the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Carnarvon found when discovering the tomb of Tutankhamun.



*Highclere Castle, near Newbury*

Broadlands was the home of Lord Mountbatten, and also of Lord Palmerston. It is situated on the banks of the River Test and is a truly beautiful Palladian mansion.



*The Salon at Broadlands*

Another date for your diary is Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September. We have managed to arrange a group visit to Buckingham Palace to visit the State Rooms, the Royal Mews and the Queens Gallery. This visit is only available to a limited number of groups and is to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Coronation. The Coronation Dress and Robe of Estate along with the Coronation Frieze commissioned by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh will be on display. In the Queen's Gallery there will be special exhibitions 'Royal Treasures' and Leonardo de Vinci 'The Divine and the Grotesque'. The booking form will be in the next Newsletter, but you can reserve a place by calling me on 681955.

If you would like to come on the trip to Highclere and Broadlands please return the yellow booking form by 10<sup>th</sup> June 2003. We would like to encourage more people to support our outings. We use modern coaches with high seating for a good view, and we take care of all the arrangements to make your day as enjoyable and informative as possible.

Mike Copeland

# HERITAGE CENTRE NEWS

## WIN-WIN WITH THE HERITAGE CENTRE '100 CLUB'

Maidenhead Heritage Centre, celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday this April, is offering Civic Society members a fun way of supporting it. The enclosed leaflet explains how the **100 Club** works – basically you subscribe £1 per month (£12 a year) and every month have a very good chance of winning prizes of £25 or £10, with prizes **doubled** at Christmas. A successful '100 Club' is an essential part of the Heritage Centre's fund-raising strategy, which needs to produce over £300 per week to run the listed Georgian premises in Moorbridge Road. Have *you* visited yet? The former Green Dragon has a very friendly feel to it – and there is free parking and free admission! The gallery space is better, there is a large collection of historic photographs and books to browse through and a good selection of local books and gifts to buy. The policy of changing exhibitions every 6-8 weeks continues, and visits from groups and schools are building up: groups range from Brownie packs to the Friends of the Royal Borough Collection and local WIs and church groups. Spreading the heritage message in the local area, the Heritage Centre's team of speakers expect to give about 25 talks to other groups and clubs this year. And behind the scenes an ever-growing collection of artefacts, documents and other objects relating to Maidenhead and district is looked after by Brian Boulter, the curator.

All this is quite an achievement for a six-month experiment embarked on in 1993 by the Civic Society and the Historical Society because they had got bored of waiting for the local authority to fund a local museum. In 1995 the two societies set up an independent Maidenhead Heritage Trust runs the Centre. From small beginnings, visitor numbers grew to 12,000 a year while the Heritage Centre was in the precinct, although as expected numbers have fallen considerably at the new location: hence the concentration on the group marketing and the outreach programme. Coming soon is a website which it is hoped will be linked to the Civic Society and other local sites.

## COMING EVENTS

*Until 24<sup>th</sup> May 2003*

### **Maidenhead Past and Present**

Nostalgia rules at the exhibition of photographs of Maidenhead then and Maidenhead now. Where possible, modern photos have been taken from exactly the same viewpoint – except where risking life and limb in traffic was involved!

*14<sup>th</sup> May 2003*

### **100 years of Powered Flight**

Illustrated lecture by Richard Poad

8 pm Wesley Hall, High Street Methodist Church

*28<sup>th</sup> May – 26<sup>th</sup> July 2003*

### **Maidenhead Bridge**

Telling the 750-year story of Maidenhead Bridge, to which the town owes its very existence. 15<sup>th</sup> century bridge timbers, plans, photographs and paintings are all included in this fascinating exhibition.

Maidenhead Heritage Centre is open Tuesday – Saturdays, 10am to 4 pm. ☎ 01628 780555

# PROJECTS

## **YORK STREAM /GREEN WAY**

As I write this report on 4<sup>th</sup> April the stream in the town centre has already dropped significantly and is moving only slightly. This is not surprising, as no clearing has so far been done by the Environment Agency on either the Marsh Meadow ditch at Cookham Moor or the White Brook that crosses Widbrook Common. Hopefully the work will be done soon.

As far as the White Brook is concerned it would appear that in high flow conditions water flows from Cookham, through Strandwater and into the Brook that then flows **into** the Thames at Islet Park, as it did recently during the floods. However, during conditions of low flow the White Brook in the past has reversed its flow and water has entered the Brook from the Thames eventually reaching Maidenhead town centre.

We have been monitoring the situation at Islet Park and can report that following the floods in January (see Jan 2003 newsletter) water was still moving into the Thames on 5 February. Since then flow has gradually decreased with no flow being recorded during the latter half of March and early April. Until the Environment Agency clears some of the accumulated reed we think it's unlikely that flow from the Thames at Islet Park will recommence. Without this flow the town centre is likely to dry out again.



*Reeds clogging the White Brook on Widbrook Common*

## **Ideas for enhancing York Stream, the Library Gardens and the Green Way**

Members of the Civic Society executive led by our planning chairman, Michael Johnson, attended a meeting in January, set up by Cllr Denniford, to hear what consultants appointed by the Royal Borough had to say with regard to this area of Maidenhead. I think its fair to say that the problem

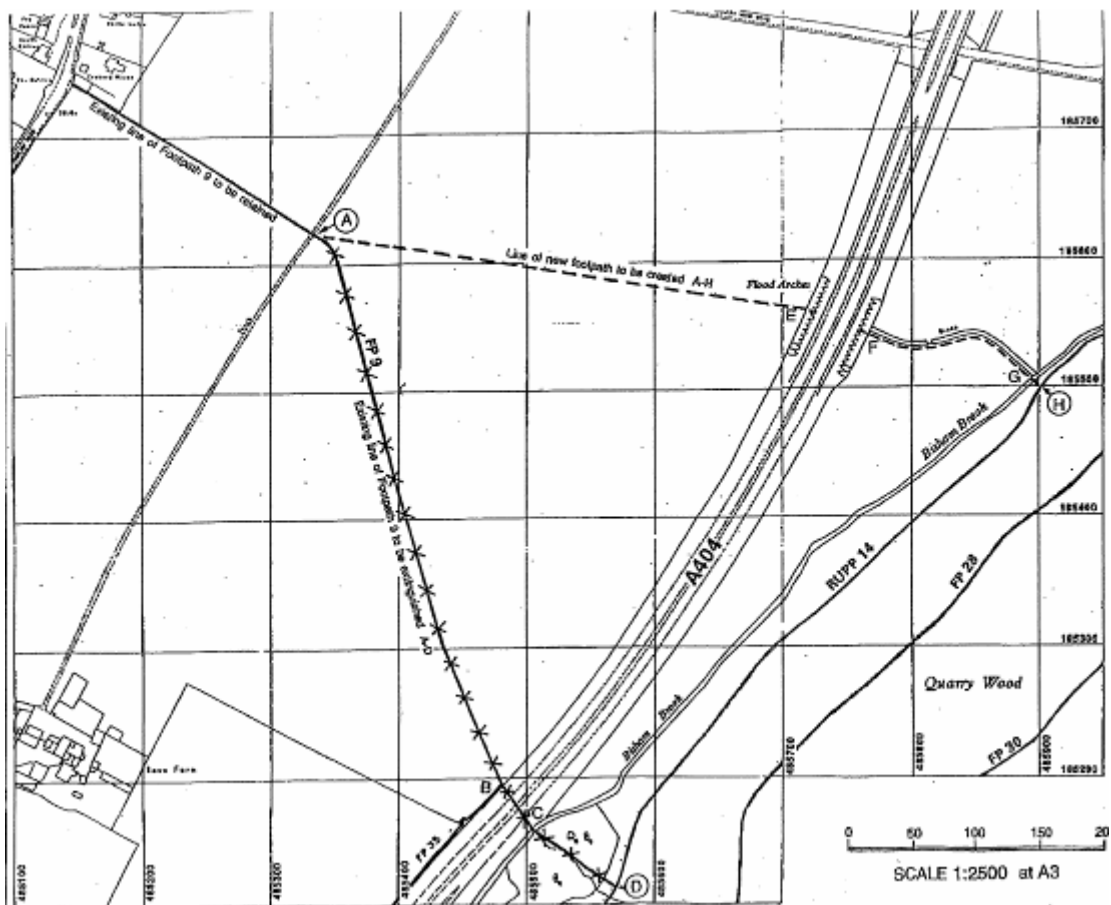
of how to keep water in the town centre section of York Stream throughout the year was not addressed. However, they did have ideas on how to improve the area. These were tried out on the public via a poster plus questionnaires that was in the library in March. We were able to borrow a copy of this poster and exhibited it on our stand at the re-dedication of Wesley Hall on 1 March and at the talk on the Jubilee River on 19<sup>th</sup> March. Completed questionnaires from both events have been forwarded to Mark Braddock of the Royal Borough.

The results of the questionnaires will presumably not be made known until after the local elections in May. The planning group plus members of the executive with experience of the past history of this area will be looking at their suggestions which include removing the loos, clearing some of the trees, new seating and lighting, a new bridge, new ramps, widening the town centre section of the Green Way to make it into a cycle way, and a water feature between Chapel Arches and the bridge next to the library, the latter apparently “to ensure that there is always water visible along the stream, regardless of the seasonal variations of its flow”.

## MILLENNIUM WALK

### A404 Footpath 9 Bisham

As you probably read in the Advertiser, the Rights of Way Committee, which met on 4 March to discuss the Secretary of State’s orders, decided by a small majority to object to the order extinguishing Footpath 9 except for the section where it crosses the A404 and also to object to the creation of a new route under the flood arch (see map below). This is despite the Officers’ recommendation that the Council approve this order. The chairman said they would object to the creation order on financial grounds. The Officers’ report noted that financial issues in themselves would not justify the Council objecting to the draft order.



*The proposed new route of Footpath 9, A-E-F-G-H*



The Civic Society has written in support of the orders and a petition in support consisting of signatures of concerned people who visited our stand at the Wesley Hall rededication has been sent. This matter will now go to a public enquiry.

**Lower Cookham Road to Towpath** (see map Oct 2002 newsletter)

In February I met the Director of Stiefel Laboratories, Dr Matkin, who agreed to allow our route to cross the land in their tenancy. This visit was followed up by a site meeting attended by Ian Monro and Ian Harrison (Stiefel), Andrew Fletcher (Rights of Way Officer of the Royal Borough), Margaret Bowdery (East Berks Ramblers), Jane Gifford (Windsor & Maidenhead Urban Wildlife Group), and myself. The visit looked at the old bridge, regarded by Stiefel as unsafe, and the possible location of a new bridge. Stiefel Laboratories have since the meeting donated £1000 to the Civic Society towards the cost of a new bridge



*Left to right: Jane Gifford, Ian Monro, Ian Harrison, Andrew Fletcher and Margaret Bowdery*

We hope that a round-table discussion of the outstanding issues, attended by all interested parties, will be able to take this matter forward. Our M.P., Theresa May, who has been very supportive of this project, has said she will attend if she is free.

P.S. We would like to thank the Urban Wildlife Group for producing a wildlife survey report on Quintain's land, which among other things, was able to reassure people that the snakes on this land were grass snakes and not adders!

Ann Darracott

# PLANNING DIGEST

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Since the last Newsletter, the Planning Group have met three times and considered and responded to 19 planning applications. Whilst most of these deal with very localised developments, of broader interest will be our responses to the following Planning Applications:

### **Environment Agency's Application to cancel new work on the Maidenhead Ditch**

“We are concerned about the timing of any decision. The mathematical and other models which the Agency have used to judge the effectiveness of the Flood Alleviation scheme need to be supported by real life experience before the apparent success of the scheme can be confirmed. We would suggest that it would be prudent to experience a full summer of low water, with any possible effects on navigation and the flow of the York Stream for example, and another winter of high water before any irreparable decisions are taken. If all goes well it would then be sensible for the Agency to save money by not completing that part of the scheme listed in the Application.

However we strongly believe that the first priority for the money saved should be to safeguard the positive flow of water through Maidenhead. A number of initiatives are being taken within the Borough to try to make the central section of the York Stream an attractive feature of the town, while recognising that it does have some drainage importance. We have the impression that the Agency is not whole hearted in its support for any such change, and some of their reluctance may well be financial. We therefore propose very strongly that the first call on the Agency's savings should be to contribute finance and enthusiasm with the Borough, in order to achieve a prompt and acceptable solution to the flow of water through the town.

This may mean modifying the drainage between Cookham and Maidenhead or more inventive solutions, but the release of money from the Ditch should go a long way towards making this a serious priority for the Environment Agency.”

### **Extension to the Public Library**

“We are pleased that the library, a valued Borough facility, is being given the support it deserves to extend its services. On the outside appearance, we consider it a pity that the style of architecture could not be continued by extending the gantry style roof over the extensions, which otherwise sit out as rather boxy additions. Internally, we note with concern the intention to move the exhibition area. We have commented before that the present corner site is ideal for this most important function, since it has good light and it attracts the eye and the interest of people as they enter the building. We are pleased to see changes to the entrance, which get rid of the dangerous brick slope, but since the whole of the Maudsley Gardens area is under current review it might be sensible just to delay that design element until it can be fitted into the wider picture.”

### **Redevelopment of Civic Amenity Site and Access Road, Stafferton Way**

“We recognise the importance of this facility particularly for the segregation and disposal of all kinds of rubbish. We welcome the proposed improvements to the parking and layout for the public.”

### **Development of Bridge Road/Oldfield Road corner site**

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, the Council met on 22<sup>nd</sup> January and, surprisingly, rejected the various Applications submitted by Salmon Harvester Properties for the development of the Bridge Road/Oldfield Road corner site. There have been two applications submitted – the first for a certain amount of office space, plus 30 affordable housing units, and associated parking; and the second with a lesser amount of office space, but with 120 housing units. The developers had appealed in both cases, and the Council have recently announced that the appeals will be heard in the Town Hall

Council Chamber on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> September 2003. Bridge Road is one of the main gateways to the town centre and it is vital that whatever is finally built on this site satisfies all the concerns and aspirations of the residents of Maidenhead. From the point of view of many of the local residents the issue of increased traffic in Oldfield Road, and the constriction of the road under the railway bridge were never adequately addressed.

### **NEW RBWM POLICY ON PUBLIC OPEN SPACE**

On behalf of the Civic Society, Janice Crew of the Planning Group attends quarterly Development Control Stakeholder Meetings convened by the Council's Planning Department. At the March meeting there was useful discussion about this new Council policy based on Government guidelines. The aim is to provide 4.3 hectares of public open space per 1,000 of population. There are two main categories: formal sports provision, and informal open space. If necessary, land will have to be purchased to meet these targets. With immediate effect all new residential developments will have to make a financial contribution towards this provision.

Planning Officers have already listed existing provisions, what improvements are necessary and what new facilities are required. This is done on a Parish basis – e.g. Bray, Bisham, Datchet, etc – and some are more adequately catered for than others. Local Parish and Ward Councillors will collaborate with Officers to determine the implementation of this policy, and, in particular, what priority will be given to different schemes. However, for the centre of Maidenhead, there is no Parish Council! There will therefore be no public involvement or monitoring of this new scheme in central Maidenhead unless someone volunteers to fill this gap. The Council's policy document shows that central Maidenhead has the greatest shortfall of public open space in the Royal Borough!

At the recent meeting of the Society's Executive Committee it was agreed that the Civic Society could and should play a useful role in this respect and that this would best be progressed if one of our members could focus on this issue and act as champion.

### **Would any one be prepared to volunteer for this potentially influential position?**

### **NO MORE OFFICES**

Readers may have seen the letter from Dr R.G. Hill in the Maidenhead Advertiser of 4<sup>th</sup> April, concerning the overcapacity of office space in Maidenhead. Your Editor thought it worth quoting from it:

“My crude calculations obtained by simply totting up the available office space advertised on hoardings, puts this at well over a million square feet. I suspect this is an underestimate as I am sure I have missed some. It is useful to put this into perspective – it represents a space 10 by 10 ft for 10,000 people. In addition there are numerous office blocks with planning permission that have not yet been built..... I suspect that quite a number of the office blocks have been empty for two or three years.....the Conservative Council is going to be contributing hugely to this pool of vacant offices in their scheme for the redevelopment of the town Hall. While the proposed scheme does include some homes and shops these are a small part of the total development. A worrying issue is that if commercial property prices start falling and the developer backs out or goes bust the whole scheme could end up as one “giant white elephant” leaving the council tax payers in the Borough to pick up the bill. Maidenhead does not need more offices, but better shopping facilities, and more homes.”

An article in a recent issue of “Property Week” (14 February 2003) focussed on the ambitious plans to regenerate Maidenhead's town centre and confirms that the town already has around four years supply sitting empty.

Food for thought!

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2003

**Outing**

Broughton Castle and Stonor.

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2003

**Talk**

“National Parks: Not Ours, But Ours to Look After”.

Adrian Thornton

Methodist Church Hall, 8 p.m.

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2003

**Outing**

Highclere Castle and Broadlands.

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2003

**Outing**

Buckingham Palace – State Rooms, Royal Mews  
and Queen’s Gallery.

## CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

President	Richard Poad, Hollyhocks, The Common, Cookham Dean, SL6 9NZ	484298
Chairman	Vacancy	
Vice-Chairman	Angela Howorth, Cymbeline, Islet Road, SL6 8LD	627606
Secretary	June Churchman, 20 Chiltern Road, SL6 1XA	638546
Asst. Secretary	Gillian Moore, 10 Langdale Close, SL6 1SY	630130
Treasurer	Trevor Farnfield, Ditton Meads, Winter Hill Road, SL6 6NS	638142
Membership Sec.	Shashi Dare, Silvretta, Islet Road, SL6 8LD	629976
Planning Group	Nigel Cockburn, Willow House, Fishery Road, SL6 1UN	621084
Outings Sec.	Mike Copeland, 14 Laburnham Road, SL6 4DB	681955

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2003

Parish Centre in St. Luke’s Church, at 7.45 p.m.

8th January, 12th February, 12th March, 9th April, 14th May, 11th June, 9th July, 10th September, 8th October,  
12th November, 10th December.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue  
of the Newsletter is 26<sup>th</sup> June 2003.**

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**News Editor**     **Brian Darracott**  
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