



Maidenhead Civic Society

NEWS

Issue 3/06

July 2006



The "Punchbowl" at Valley Gardens

In this issue

Success at Valley Gardens; Visit to Bad Godesberg; Crossrail update

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

Visit our website! : www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The summer season is now upon us and with it temperatures that may or may not reflect global warming. With summer also comes Thames Valley's high humidity and a certain lassitude can creep in. That could also be due to a period of intense activity in the Society and for a number of the members of the Executive. In relatively rapid succession we have had the interminable Local Development Framework process with all its many derivatives setting out the strategic view of the Borough's development over the next 20 years; then there was the Great Debate; next there were the Peter Prior proposals for the revival of the York Stream followed almost immediately by the survey of the future of the St. Regis holdings on the South Bucks bank but which could have a major impact on the amenity of Maidenhead and its residents. On top of all that there is Crossrail which central government dropped on the table with a "by the way we propose to make Maidenhead the western terminal, to change the appearance of Brunel's Bridge and to take over Guards Club Park to do it."

The Crossrail Bill has been a particular challenge since the route for seeking amendments to the proposed legislation was via a petition which had to be lodged at the House of Commons and this, as reported earlier, was duly done. After waiting for the wheels to grind through all the various phases and for the Select Committee to work through many petitions relating to London and out to the terminus in Essex, finally on 27 June the Society was called to say its piece in front of the Select Committee in Committee Room 5 in the House of Commons at 10am - or so we thought! Tina Sell, Nigel Cockburn, Bob Dulson and myself duly arrived in good time and as well prepared as we could be. We had thought that we would be called at 10am. have an hour or so to put our case and depart. But no, one of the several bewigged lawyers stood up and it soon became apparent that the Committee operated in a manner akin to a court with the members of the Committee in the place of a judge. Sure enough, after the lawyer, acting for Crossrail, had gone through all the information relevant to the western end of the project, we were called. Thanks to very solid preparation by Tina, Nigel and Bob we were able to present a clear account of the changes we thought were needed and why. True to the Court format the next step was to call as witness the Managing Director of Crossrail who was questioned by their lawyer in defence of their case. Then, on our behalf, Nigel 'cross-examined' him. All the time busy scribes were recording all. And that was it. We were followed by other local petitioners including our MP Theresa May, the Royal Borough and local residents associations. What the outcome will be we have, so far, no idea. Watch this space! The whole procedure was less formal than this makes it sound and I, personally found it impressive.

Nothing can stand still and prosper and that is true of the Society as of any other organisation. The various activities listed in the first paragraph plus Crossrail coupled with Bob Dulson's skills in the publicity field have raised the profile of the Society. With that comes the need to review and revise our executive structure, the way in which we work and the ways in which we contact and try to meet the interests and concerns of our members. Various actions are in hand and in particular you will have with this Newsletter a membership survey designed in as simple a way as practical to learn more about our members and their views. **Please do complete and return it.** Without the answers it can give we are 'flying blind'.

As part of the response to the need for improvement, an Events Group has been formed. Its task will be to plan much further ahead for the activities which are for members to take part in, such as Outings, Talks etc. It also aims to introduce new ones and to present all of them in a more coherent pattern. This Group has as its members Tina Sell (Chair), Mike Copeland, Shashi Dare and June Jorge. It may involve others as seems necessary in doing its job. We have also created an ad hoc Communications Group which is looking into how best to use and develop the website, the Newsletter and our interactions with the media and the public. There are many issues to work on in this field so it may take a little time to come up with firm actions. However, one is already in play and that is the Membership Survey.

Even with these matters taking our attention the work of the Planning Group and of Ann Darracott in her many Projects goes on. These are reported later in this Newsletter. There are many contacts made and meetings to attend and the burden tends to fall on the few. We are always looking for new blood at the Executive Committee so do come forward if you have a reasonable issue you want to pursue. One of the functions of the Society and its Executive Committee is to provide a legal home and guidance in pursuing it. On that note I will sign off for this message. Have a great summer!

John McIntosh – Acting Chairman

PS: Since writing the above message we have learnt that following the representations of the Civic Society, the local residents' association, the Council and our MP, Crossrail have changed their position on Guards Club Park. Read more on page 19!

TALKS

WEDNESDAY 18th October 2006 – 8 p.m.

“FLORENCE – HER HISTORY AND TREASURES”

An illustrated talk by David R. Gilbert

David is a retired corporate lawyer; many years ago he lived in Florence for two months and has returned many times over the past half-century. The talk will cover the early days of Florence, its renaissance heyday under the Medici and, later, its particular affinities with the English from the nineteenth century – illustrated by slides of the city's leading characters over the last thousand years and the buildings and art treasures which they created.

Shashi Dare

OUTINGS

Our latest visit was to Herstmonceux Castle and Hammerwood Park on Saturday 8th July and we were blessed with lovely summer sunshine.

The castle is just as you would imagine with a moat around it and the slits for archers and cannon. It is now owned by a Canadian university and is a fully working building. A guide gave us a private tour. The castle also has a beautiful walled garden containing a selection of flowers and plants.

We next visited Hammerwood Park near East Grinstead. Benjamin Latrobe who also designed the White House built this as a temple to Apollo. We were shown round this amazing house by the owners who have spent over 20 years restoring it to its original glory after years of neglect by Led

Zeppelin. The enthusiasm they have for the project is amazing and we have never experienced such an unusual and entertaining commentary on a building before.

Our next outing is on the 30th September when we are visiting the Palladian Chiswick House and the Georgian Marble Hill House in the morning. Both contain important works of art and furniture.



Chiswick House



Marble Hill House

In the afternoon we are going on a guided tour of the BBC Television Centre in Shepherds Bush. Numbers are restricted, so book early.



Come and see where your TV programmes are made! – the BBC Television Centre

CIVIC SOCIETY RECEPTION - FRIDAY OCTOBER 6th 2006

We will be holding a reception at Hall Place, which is in the Berkshire College of Agriculture in Burchett's Green, on 6th October between 7.30 and 9.30pm. The purpose is to inform members and non-members about the activities of your Society, to raise our profile and to encourage new members to join us. We will be serving wine and cheese and we have arranged for some light music to be played in this delightful setting. We are also hoping to attract some local community representation. Priority will be given to those members who bring along a guest who may be interested in joining the society.

To reserve a place at the event please call Mike Copeland on 01628 681955.

We do hope that you can join us and that you can encourage new members to attend. We will be running a presentation that illustrates the many and varied activities that your Society engages in.

PROJECTS

GREEN WAY/YORK STREAM



The Route of the Greenway, north of Maidenhead

Town centre

As of 12th July there is still water in York Stream in the town centre a great improvement on last year. It would appear that three years of dredging the White Brook has had an effect. We will continue to monitor the stream to see how it performs for the rest of the summer. However, this all raises the interesting question of what is the prime influence on water flow. Is it low groundwater levels as the Environment Agency (EA) have said or is it the degree to which the stream system has

been kept clear of silt and reeds plus the level of the Thames that determine whether the stream keeps flowing or not. As currently there is a groundwater drought in this area with hosepipe bans in operation and yet the stream still flows I'm voting for the latter combination as the prime influence.

So what are we to make of the EA's application to have work on Maidenhead Ditch deleted from their planning application for the Jubilee River? As you can see from the map the Ditch delivers water from the White Brook and Strandwater to the town centre. This application is currently with the Council who are about to employ consultants to tell them whether the Ditch work is necessary for flood prevention or not (bearing in mind that the Jubilee River can only take ca 87% of it's design capacity so there is a shortfall). Apparently our planning groups' suggestion that the council negotiate some alternative works e.g. removing silt and reeds from the Ditch is not allowable as that is regarded as maintenance.

It doesn't take a brain surgeon to work out that if the EA cleared the reeds and some of the silt from the Ditch as they have done in the White Brook (preferably without this time allowing an inexperienced workman to dig a hole through to the gravel under the stream-bed) more water would be delivered to the town centre and the Ditch would provide increased capacity for flood water.

So will the consultants say that the EA should carry out the Ditch work to allow floodwater to be taken away from Cookham or not. We will have to wait and see.

MILLENNIUM WALK – missing links

Lower Cookham Road to Towpath

The Millennium Walk is an aim in the Royal Borough's Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2005-2015. However this particular link was also an aim in the local plan (adopted July 1999) but that didn't make it happen. In order to increase the chance of achieving this link we have asked the Environment Agency whether they would lease to us the flood bund land they currently own that stretches from the Lower Cookham Road to near to the Thames. We await their response. In the meantime we have been supporting the attempt by Maidenhead Rotary Club to use our route for the 2006 Boundary Walk, the 25th Anniversary of their running of the walk.

Boundary Walk, Sunday 8th October

One of the aims of our Millennium Walk project is "to create a continuous path along Maidenhead's northern boundary improving the Boundary Walk, a charity walk run by Maidenhead Rotary Club". In this the 25th year of the Rotary Club's Boundary Walk it is appropriate to try and walk one of those missing links and let people see an otherwise inaccessible part of the boundary.

With this in mind the Rotary Club and ourselves have been in discussion with Mr John Edwards of White Place farm with a view to crossing from the Lower Cookham Road to the towpath on 8th October using the route proposed as part of the Millennium Walk. Maidenhead Rotary Club have verbal permission from Mr Edwards to do this and are awaiting written permission. Our route will provide a far more attractive path from Widbrook Common to Boulters Lock than that usually walked i.e. along the Lower Cookham Road. Before reaching Widbrook Common there will be the opportunity to see the offending reeds in Maidenhead Ditch (see above under York Stream) and walk along a completed link in the Millennium Walk that runs along the flood bund east of the flood control gate.

This walk of the northern half will be assisted by hiring a coach to take people from Boulters Lock car park across to Woolley Firs Cottage (near to the Shire Horse centre) leaving the car park at 12pm. If you would like to make use of this facility please fill in and return the enclosed form. If you wish to be sponsored, sponsorship forms are obtainable from the Rotary Club website (www.maidenheadrotary.co.uk) where maps of the route are also available. Walkers who are not sponsored will pay £3.50 to register for the walk at Woolley Firs. The Rotary Club will provide

drinks etc en route at the checking-in points. In addition you might like to bring with you a packed lunch as tea/coffee will be provided at Ditton Meads where the Farnfields have again very kindly allowed us to use their garden.

John Edwards (centre) of White Place Farm with Gerry Ayres (left) & Ron Walker of Maidenhead Rotary Club



For more information phone Ann Darracott on 01628 620280. If we are given the go-ahead to use our proposed route from the Lower Cookham Road to the Maidenhead Riverside some clearance work may be needed. If you would like to help please give Ann a ring.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MARGARET BOWDERY MBE

The Society would like to offer our warmest congratulations to Margaret Bowdery, Footpath Secretary and Life President of East Berkshire Ramblers made a Member of the British Empire in the recent honours list. She richly deserves this honour as she has worked tirelessly (on a voluntary basis I might add, unlike others who get such honours) to improve the footpath system in this area.

This Society has a long association with the East Berks Ramblers. The Green Way, a streamside path from Cookham through Maidenhead to Bray was a joint East Berks and Civic Society initiative. Peter Nevell's idea of a linear park became eventually the Green Way and the Society published the first Green Way leaflet in 1985, now on its third edition. More recently we have been working with the Ramblers and Margaret in particular to create the Millennium Walk, a long distance path from Hurley across country to Maidenhead. Last year a connecting path from the Thames Path at Marlow across country to the Millennium Walk at Pinkneys Green was at last opened. No longer do people have to risk life and limb crossing the A404 but can instead walk under the road through the Bowdery Arch. The Society will continue to work to fill in the missing links in other parts of the Millennium Walk inspired by Margaret's example.

VALLEY GARDENS ACTION GROUP

The Crown Estates have yielded and have withdrawn their plan to fence Valley Gardens and charge an entrance fee. Over 20,000 signatures were collected and have been delivered to the Queen. This means that people will still have free entry to the gardens that are simply wonderful in the spring. Please make a note to visit next Easter to see the daffodils and again in mid May to see the fantastic azaleas in the Punch Bowl.

Maidenhead Civic Society was among those thanked at the meeting, held on 27 April, to celebrate the Action Groups success. I would like to thank one of our members, Joyce Pearson, who collected a blank petition sheet from me and proceeded to collect over 300 signatures - a great effort.



Civic Society members prepare to collect signatures, welcomed by Christine Weightman (far right), organiser of the petition

What is interesting about this campaign was the contribution made by new technology. Their website was critical to the success of the campaign. It allowed people to register their protest online and also send off missives by email to a selection of decision-makers. This greatly helped with the old apathy factor. The website was also a valuable information source providing up-to-date information on developments. There are lessons to be learnt from the way this campaign was run.

OCKWELLS PROJECT

Wenlock Jug

A delegation from the Society went to Luton Museum on 25th May to attend the unveiling of the Wenlock Jug, which was visually very impressive. The Civic Society is acknowledged in the board listing donors and we were able to meet the curator, Maggie Appleton and Marian Campbell of the Victoria & Albert Museum both of whom played a leading role in raising funds to keep the jug in this country.



Ann Darracott, Maggie Appleton and John McIntosh at Luton Museum

The Wenlok Jug in its display case, flanked by the Mayor of Luton (left) and the MP for Luton (right)



There are plans to assemble at Luton all three of the English bronze jugs one of which was found in Ghana! - the other two are in the British Museum and the V&A. If this occurs it would be worthwhile attempting an outing to see them plus visiting Luton parish church and the ruins of Someries Castle, all with Wenlock connections. Sir John Wenlock, one of the potential owners of the Jug, is represented by his armorial achievement at Ockwells Manor.

Bisham Abbey

The talk on the history of Bisham Abbey at Bisham on 2nd July coincided with a very hot day so those thick stone walls were a godsend in keeping us cool. Unfortunately, the geophysics results which we hoped would indicate where Bisham Priory Church (built in 14th century, demolished by Henry VIII) were not yet available. However, being able to give the talk in the Abbey itself was a great bonus as afterwards people could walk around and actually see the interesting features mentioned.

Many thanks to my husband, Brian, Mike & Sarah Copeland and Tina Sell and her band of helpers and to the catering staff of the Abbey who looked after us well. I would also like to thank Janet Rose for the loan of her precious projector and Patricia Burstall for bringing along information on All Saints Church whose history is intertwined with that of the Abbey.

I plan to write up part of the talk as a separate item since it is of interest to the librarian/archivist of Exeter Cathedral, and the church at Ottery St Mary. For those who didn't attend the talk or don't remember, the connection between these places and Bisham (see July 05 newsletter) is, in summary: the church at Ottery St Mary, Devon, was built as a replica of Exeter Cathedral by John Grandison, Bishop of Exeter in the 14th Century, around the same time that his brother-in-law William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, was building Bisham Priory Church. The time frame and architectural similarities indicate the Bishop may have assisted in the building at Bisham.

The Grandison family featured in my talk, especially Sir Otho Grandison, uncle of Bishop John, and his sister Katherine, wife of William Montacute. Otho had accompanied Prince Edward (later Edward I) and his brother Edmund Crouchback, Earl of Lancaster, on crusade to the Holy Land in 1270. Edmund had become overlord of Bisham in 1266 raising the question of whether any Bisham Templars went with them. Otho was an émigré from what is now Switzerland and returned there after Edward's death. The castle he built at Grandson on the shores of Lake Neuchatel is said to resemble Conway Castle. This is not surprising as Otho and his brother William (Katherine's father) were both involved in the building of Edward I's Welsh castles with the help of their near neighbour Master James of St George from Savoy. When Caernarfon Castle was finished Otho became its first Constable and lived in the Eagle Tower. According to the exhibition in the castle the tower may have been named by William Grandison (Otho's brother), Deputy Justiciar in North Wales, whose armorial coat bears eagles.



Grandson Castle, Switzerland



Conway Castle, north Wales

Ann Darracott

HERITAGE CENTRE NEWS

Exhibitions and Events

The Story Of Maidenhead: 2nd August – 30th September

The history of our town will be told in 9 easy sections, with the display cases packed with items from the Heritage Centre collection, helping to illustrate the passage of the centuries.

Maidenhead in Art: 4th to 30th October

This will be a must for all lovers of painting. Lots of famous artists painted in this area, and here is a unique chance to compare their work (even though there will be no original Turners or Spencers on the Heritage Centre walls).

There are still a few seats available for the Heritage Centre's **River Thames Historical Cruise** on Wednesday 6th September, leaving Maidenhead at 10am and returning at 3pm. The boat cruises upriver to Bisham Abbey, and on its return goes downstream as far as Bray, with a commentary about the buildings, people, gossip, wildlife and environment of the river. For tickets visit the Heritage Centre.

Maidenhead Heritage Centre is open from 10am to 4pm, Tuesdays to Saturdays
3 Kingsway, King Street, Maidenhead SL6 1EE, ☎01628 780555.
Website: www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk

Understanding our Spa Partners

Bob Dulson gives a personal view of the visit to Bad Godesberg

When a group of 13 Society members embarked on a visit to our twin town on The Rhine over the May holiday weekend, the anticipation at Heathrow was palpable – despite evidence in some quarters of rust under the wings of the 'O' level German.

The trip was the ninth in a series of self-funded exchange visits which, inspired by the European Year of the Environment in 1984, have been taking place every two years since 1988 when the Bad Godesberg Heritage Society first visited Maidenhead.

We'd all been advised in advance about the formality of our hosts, even to addressing them by their surnames. For my wife and I, who are Angie and Bob to everyone, this was scary enough. But our first evening was to be spent having dinner with a German couple, in their home, alone; and we didn't have a word of German between us - except joint ownership of a BMW some years ago. Over a glass on the plane we agreed it was probably best not to mention the war - or football!

Events on arrival were not encouraging. Perhaps because they knew he used to be a BA pilot, Lufthansa had demolished Richard Poad's suitcase. And in Bonn's Marktplatz, the heavens opened during an *al fresco* lunch and Nigel Cockburn and his salad got a dressing neither had bargained for!

That evening, at a reception in the elegant 18thC council offices, overlooking the spa gardens, our party was formally welcomed to Bad Godesberg by its equally elegant chief burgher Annette Schwolen-Flümman who was either the mayor, chairman or council leader, depending on your interpreter.



Society members with their hosts

Gifts were exchanged, the benefits of the twinning links extolled and our glasses recharged for the toasts.

*“Here’s one I made earlier”
– Richard Poad presents a
gift of Heritage Centre
publications to Annette
Schwolen-Flümman*



I was still silently rehearsing my first-ever ‘Guten Abend’ when our personal host approached through the crowd. “Hello, you must be Bob. I’m Manfred and this is Jutta.” “And this is Angie”, I said. “Let’s have another glass of this Riesling.”

Home was in the suburbs near the river which was three times the width of our Thames. We stopped on the riverbank. Immediately, Manfred was pointing out a white building just upstream. The Rheinhof Dreesen. It was there, he said, that Chamberlain met Hitler. “Oh really?” I said. “Shame it didn’t work out!” We laughed a lot over the next four hours; and learned a lot too. Manfred seemed not at all disappointed at our apparent lack of enthusiasm over Germany hosting the World Cup...but showed us instead a parcel he’d received from a friend who’d moved to Piedmont to run a vineyard – and went to fetch fresh glasses...

Apart from a couple of sharp showers, the weather was kind and a packed three-day programme put

together by Sylvia Werner of the Bad Godesberg Heritage Society and led by their chairman, Karl Schwalb, was fascinating and went without a hitch – once we’d found the bus stop! It began with Beethoven’s birthplace and included Rhine gorge landmarks, medieval castles, Königswinter, the half-timbered houses of Muffendorf (the “Bray” of Bad Godesberg) and a former Cistercian Monastery, Kloster Eberbach which is now - yes you’ve guessed - a world famous winery.

It was our first time in Bad Godesberg. And we were impressed. Once a famous spa resort, its waters, according to one guide book, were renowned for their “radioactive” properties (... could there be hope for Badnells Pit?) It was the diplomatic quarter when Bonn was the capital city, full of embassies and official residences. Then, in 1999 when the parliament moved to Berlin, developers threatened to seize many of these large characterful buildings and concrete over the town. Thankfully, a good proportion has been saved, many as flat conversions or impressive homes and Bad Godesberg is now known as a place of beauty and high quality living. Over the past few years it has evolved as a modern health care centre with first-class clinics and rehabilitation facilities. And it has become home to Deutsche Telecom. Just shows what bit of forward planning can do.

On the return journey, I thanked Richard for twisting my arm to go. He said: “While the trips themselves are enjoyable, the formality of the exchange visits helps to foster understanding between ordinary citizens in our two countries – behind the obvious language and cultural differences, we have so much more in common than people often think. Secondly, we have found that while our towns have many problems in common, including traffic and redevelopment, the solutions can often be different and by sharing ideas we, hopefully, all benefit.”

Three days, a hundred memories, lots of fun – my scepticism over twinning virtually evaporated. And hasn’t Riesling improved tremendously over the last 20 years?

PLANNING DIGEST

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

During the last sixth months the Planning group reviewed 55 applications in detail and commented to the Council on 28 of them. We continue to object to applications by Miller Homes which have gone to appeal on the important Bridge Road site, principally because of the density of the development, its façade which looks like a barracks and the effect on local traffic. And while the redevelopment of Waitrose in Moorbridge Road is encouraged the inclusion of flats as part of the development is unnecessary and the plan for the building facing Forelease Road is hideous.

Comments on some of the more significant applications were as follows:

44 High Street (Change of use from restaurant to adult gaming centre)

We object to this application at this prominent site in the centre of the town. The proposed use of these premises at this location is inconsistent with the mix of retail shops and services in this part of the High Street. The views of the Police on this application should also be taken into consideration. If a change of use were to be permitted the category to which it is changed should be restricted to those proposed in the accompanying letter which says it will be for quiet gambling. This application is at variance with the way the Civic Society wishes to see the town centre developed.

Primavera, Shoppenhangers Road (Construction of 8 apartments following demolition of the existing house)

In accordance with PPG 3, the Council needs to produce an overall plan and planning guidance for where this type of dense development is appropriate in Maidenhead. Such developments should be well designed and also enhance and respect local character. There are already more than enough

developments of flats in Shoppenhangers Road and there should at least be a mix of different types of dwellings in the road to give it some character. We object to the removal of another fine house on this important road to be replaced by a block of flats of undistinguished design, which does nothing to enhance local character. The development will increase the footprint of the building, tarmac the rest of the site and result in a loss of green space. The density of the development is too high for the area and the amount of amenity space around the building is too small. It is out of character with the area and will lead to increased traffic on a busy road. Access for emergency service appears to be difficult and there will be additional parking problems from vehicles parking or stopping outside on Shoppenhangers Road.

The replacement of a single dwelling by 8 apartments will also put additional strain on the local infrastructure of schools, hospitals, roads, water and other services and resources. Such development is not sustainable and requires significant investment in local infrastructure in advance of such development.

Maidenhead Service Station, Bridge Road (Demolition of existing structures and replacement of sales forecourt building and forecourt shop, storage compound, ATM, car wash car parking and landscaping)

This is an important landmark site on one of the main gateways into Maidenhead. The proposed development is architecturally depressing and a more impressive building is needed with a tasteful forecourt. The site is subject to flooding and the application should not even be considered before a Flood Risk Assessment is provided by the developer. The significantly larger footprint of the shop and new storage tanks will reduce flood capacity. We are also concerned about the existing contamination of the site in the floodplain which must risk polluting the river nearby. We should like to see the opportunity taken to improve the local road layout by providing a filter for traffic to turn left from Bridge Road into the Lower Cookham Road. This would help relieve the backlog of traffic on Bridge Road at Maidenhead Bridge. The loss of an exit from the petrol station onto Bridge Road will also compound the existing traffic congestion at this busy roundabout.

11 High Street (Change of use from A1 Retail to A2 Licensed Betting Office)

We regret the loss of a retail unit on this prime retail site in a prominent position on the High Street, especially as it is in the Conservation area.

14-16 Queen Street (Demolition of rear building & erection of new 3 storey building to form 3 new retail units and 6 new apartments)

We welcome the proposed residential accommodation in the town centre and improved access to Nicholson Walk. We also commend the proposal to improve the road surface of Brock Lane. However, we regret that the opportunity has not been taken to cover Brock Lane with a roof to give the place a sense of enclosure. This would improve the area and make the entrance to the Nicholson centre more inviting. We also support the proposal for improved signage but the overhead sign shown in the application is not in keeping with the character of Queen Street.

1/2 Gringer Hill (Demolition of existing buildings & erection of 9 two-bedroom apartments with associated parking- Outline)

While we regret the loss of this house of character we trust that any new building will reflect the character of the surrounding area. The heights and elevations should be appropriate and not dominate any of the neighbouring properties. A three storey block is likely to be too high.

Only 9 car park spaces are considered insufficient for this size of development given its size and location. This is a busy road and the site is distant from the town and other transport facilities.

St Edward Campion School, Altwood Road (Construction of new early years facility and additional classroom)

We appreciate the need for this new facility which will be conveniently located between two

existing schools. However, insufficient attention has been paid to the traffic implications. Parking and traffic in the area at the start and finish of school is already a nightmare and extends around the whole area and not just on Altwood Road. As well as parents dropping of and collecting children at the schools some elder children at the neighbouring school drive to school and park nearby. The new school will generate extra traffic which will create additional disruption to the neighbourhood. Rather than restricting parents to dropping off and collecting their children on Altwood Road proper provision should be made for a safe facility on the schools' grounds. There is sufficient land in the schools' own grounds to provide a safe drop off and collection zone which could include its own in and out entrance. This and other steps should be taken to reduce the traffic congestion.

14-18 Cookham Road

(5 Storey rear extension to 18 Cookham Road with new mansard roof to 14-18 to create 4 new flats and extended office)

We object to the proposed fifth storey on this fine terrace as it will aesthetically destroy the balance of the building and it will be too high and out of proportion with neighbouring properties. Given the care that has been taken to preserve the façade of such a dignified building we expect the same care and attention to be taken with any new alterations and extensions.

4 Marlow Road (The conversion and extension of former Arts School to provide accommodation for various social organisations)

We commend the bringing together of various services in one location and support the preservation of the listed building, particularly the removal of the extension at the rear. We oppose the loss of open space that will result from a new building in the green garden next to the former Art School which forms an entrance to Kidwells Park. This development will reduce the amount of open space adjacent to the park which is already under pressure.

23-31 York Road

(Outline application for 13 flats following demolition of existing building)

The Civic Society wants to see a first class piece of architecture on this site to improve this important part of the town centre. The development should be done in close conjunction and take account of other proposals for this part of the town. There is the possibility for a new Town Square nearby and the potential development of the Grove Road car park. This is a clear opportunity to develop a planning brief to encourage the type of development that is needed here.

Butler House 19-23, Market Street (Change to 14 residential flats)

We regret the lack of any amenity space available on the site and note the lack of car parking space available. We ask that the lack of car parking spaces be considered in the context of similar developments as there is a cumulative effect from such developments which results in a need for additional car parks in the town centre.

Waldeck Road and Moorbridge Road (74 residential flats)

We recognise the need for this type of affordable accommodation and support progress being made quickly. However, the density of this development is too high and is far in excess of government guidelines. Part of the site also appears to be in the flood plain. This is an important corner on an entrance to the town and we should like to see more care and imagination given to the architectural design on the corner of the block facing Bridge Road. There is also an opportunity which should not be missed to extend the cycle way along Moorbridge Road and Waldeck Road and we should like there to be at least a shared path for cyclists and pedestrians in front of the building.

Abbott House, Starting Grid, Atro House and 70 Norden Road (Redevelopment to provide two buildings within class B1 together with landscaping, access, servicing, car parking and associated works).

We are concerned about the extra traffic that will be generated by this development especially at peak times on already congested roads. The impact of the traffic on nearby roundabouts running to

the motorways and the single lane road under the railway bridge needs to be carefully assessed. The single part of Norden Road with traffic lights under the railway should be widened to two lanes to avoid further traffic congestion.

So regardless of the Council's restrictions on residential development building is set to continue apace.

On the Local Development Framework comments have been given to the Council on their Core Strategy document and on the Housing and Employment and Major Site Allocations Development Plan Document: Issues and Options Paper. If you think that is a mouthful you should see the actual documents! Once again we wait to see if the Council listens properly to our views. The documents still lack a cohesive view of what sort of town Maidenhead should be. The Statement of Community Involvement has now been adopted following a review by a Government Inspector and we expressed directly to him our concerns about the consultation process.

We continue to press the Council to take action over the eyesores in the High Street and are pleased to hear that at last the Council is taking some enforcement action over the state of Cressett Towers. It is also encouraging to hear that the new owners of the Old Cinema site intend to redevelop the site. On the York Stream Peter Prior's proposals are very interesting and we are seeking to support this initiative by participating on the Committee that has been formed to take them forward.

Nigel Cockburn

BETWEEN THE LINES

This is Tina Sell's "Diary of Events" which chronicles the long road/rail traversed in presenting a petition to Parliament. It is just a brief outline of what is entailed. For all those contemplating such a ride, it should also be read as a health warning!

22nd February 2005

The Crossrail Bill and the Environmental Statement (ES) published. Consultation on the ES invited by the Department for Transport (DfT).

March 2005

I never thought on my first visit to observe an Executive Committee Meeting of the Maidenhead Civic Society on 9th March 2005, that just over a year later I would be walking through the doors of the Houses of Parliament to attend a hearing in front of the House of Commons Select Committee on Crossrail. Beware a show of enthusiasm on a local concern! It could take over your life.

What a steep learning curve it has been to get this far and it is not over yet. It all began with a question raised at the meeting: "Does anybody know anything about Crossrail?" At the time, it seems, little was known. Having some time on my hands the next day, I popped into the library as I understood there to be some information for public access. Three hours later I walked out amazed at what I had read about the proposed development.

The first issue to make an impact was the compulsory purchase of Guards Club Park, then the realisation that the rail line would be electrified using gantries and wires over the Sounding Arch, further to that a new station was to be built taking over half the present car park with no plans for providing alternative parking elsewhere. There was no mention anywhere of how the infrastructure of the town would be able to cope with the construction period and the disruption caused, particularly around Shoppenhangers Road, already a mini building site, let alone the permanent impact upon the town from traffic and parking.

Later in March, other groups were waking up to effects of the proposals. The Thames Reach Residents Association and The River Thames Society made known their disapproval of the scheme. Ann Darracott wrote a letter to Crossrail detailing the history of Guards Club Park, informing them of the involvement of the Maidenhead Civic Society in creating the amenity. She made reference to the fact that there were covenants stating that it should be kept as an open space and also expressed her concerns about the possible environmental damage. She raised issues about conservation of heritage artefacts.

The campaign was now in full swing.

April 2005

Having established the facts and thoroughly absorbed the Environmental Statements published by Crossrail (not an easy task), a group was formed to consult with and lobby any persons or institutions who may have had an interest in the project. In April the Task Force was formed: John McIntosh, Nigel Cockburn, Bob Dulson and Tina Sell. Little did we know how often we would be in discussion over the next year or so.

May 2005

John McIntosh spoke with Theresa May, who agreed it would be a good move to have a consultation with Crossrail as soon as possible. This was arranged for 24th May 2006.

In the meantime, a meeting had been pre-arranged with planning officers of RBWM and Cllr Vicky Howes to discuss some local issues but it was also a good opportunity to find out the council's response to the Crossrail proposals. We were pleased to find that they had similar concerns to our own and would be considering presenting a petition.

9th May 2005

We made contact with English Heritage to see whether they had a view on the electrification of Maidenhead Bridge. Dr Diane Green, Historic Buildings Inspector, seemed ignorant of the proposals made by Crossrail but on speaking to her superior, Nigel Barker, we found that Crossrail had, only that week, arranged a meeting with him to discuss their plans.

10th May 2005

At the Town Forum held at the Braywick Nature Centre, Crossrail was on the agenda, due to concerns expressed by The Thames Reach Residents Association. Peter Hitchen explained that the Bill would be a most unusual one and that anyone could send in a petition if the Bill was going to affect them. He reassured his audience that the Council would be acting on their behalf but those with issues to raise should write to the Town Hall prior to their Cabinet Meeting on 26th May 2006 in order to make their voice heard. We immediately sent a letter detailing our concerns to the Director of Planning.

16th May 2005

The Crossrail Task Force met to discuss the procedure for presenting a petition.

24th May 2005

We had our first meeting with the Crossrail team: Jacqueline Saultry, Consultation Manager, Phil Spencer, Senior Design Manager and Martin Dover, Design Manager. They explained the proposals in detail and listened to our suggestions politely but were rather unmoved by our arguments. They did reveal that they were working to plans submitted in the early nineties.

3rd June 2005

A further meeting with the Crossrail team together with Theresa May and the residents of The Thames Reach Association. Theresa May was better able to press them to consider other

alternatives, particularly on the use of the River for transportation of materials rather than using the roads and also to consider the termination of the line at Reading.

7th July 2005

Rt Hon Geoff Hoon announces that the Second Reading of the Crossrail Bill is scheduled for Monday 18 July. Giving the Bill a Second Reading the House is giving assent in principle rather than in detail. Once the Bill has passed its Second Reading, a Select Committee will be formed to hear from Petitioners who have not been able to reach agreement with the promoter.

15th July 2005

English Heritage have now had talks with Crossrail. They have concerns with the proposed demolition of two bridges in Bucks but accept the need to electrify the line. However they were not happy with the present designs for the gantries on Maidenhead Bridge and have asked that they be looked at with more care, especially with regard to colour, size and position. They are awaiting drawings and further discussions.

19th July 2005

There was a successful Second Reading of the Crossrail Bill and the Bill was formally committed to a select Committee which will in due course consider petitions lodged against the Bill.

July and August

During these months a great deal of research was being carried out into "How to Petition a Hybrid Bill". A Hybrid Bill is a rare occurrence; therefore few people have had previous experience of dealing with it. This includes officials and lay people alike. It is a parliamentary bill which has some of the characteristics of a public bill and some of a private bill. Strictly speaking, a hybrid bill is a public bill which affects specific private interests in the same way that a private bill would. The most well known in recent years has been that to build the Channel Tunnel. Many meetings of the Task Force were held and queries constantly fielded to the Crossrail helpdesk and to Sian Jones, Clerk of the Crossrail Bill in the House of Commons, before the Maidenhead Civic Society Petition was ready to be deposited at the Private Bill Office, by hand.

16th September 2005

John McIntosh and Bob Dulson deposited the Petition on the behalf of the Maidenhead Civic Society on a very rainy day - with a big sigh of relief. All we had to do was to sit back and wait for our appearance before the Select Commons Committee. Ours is Petition No. 122 out of 357!

12th January 2006

A heated debate took place in the House of Commons. The Business being considered was "Motions relating to the Crossrail Bill". Most of the debate focussed on the anomaly of choosing Maidenhead as the terminal rather than Reading, and the lack of clarity as to whether this could be considered as an issue for the Commons Select Committee to give an opinion after hearing from Petitioners viewpoints. It was decided that they could.

17th January 2006

First sitting of Commons Select Committee

23rd June 2006

Received notice informing us of the date of our appearance. It is Tuesday 27th June 2006 (Memo: Cancel one Wimbledon ticket, though might make Glyndebourne).

8th June 2006

Meet to examine response document from Crossrail. One concession is that the gantries are no longer to be placed on the external parts of the bridge and their design has been modified. There is more information on the reasons for choosing Maidenhead as the terminal but it is not convincing.

9th June 2006

We have a meeting with Theresa May to discuss our appearance at the House of Commons. She is scheduled to appear the following day.

Week beginning 19th June 2006

Papers and photographs prepared for presentation as documentary evidence to the Committee.

25th June 2006

Final meeting held to decide strategy. John McIntosh will introduce the Petitioners and state our interest, Nigel Cockburn will present the case and cross question the witnesses.

Tuesday 27th June 2006

The Big Day!

Since writing this, we have learnt that Crossrail, in the proposed electrification of the rails as they cross Brunel's railway bridge, will **not** now be using Guards Club Park for office buildings and storage of materials nor gaining access to the island via the small footbridge. Also, they will **not** be using Oldacres for lorry traffic for transporting materials. Crossrail will instead make use of a barge to transport materials to the site, and will store these on Network Rail's own land. Crossrail has also agreed to part-fund a multi-storey car park at Maidenhead station to provide additional parking spaces. While the Society is encouraged by Crossrail's help in providing additional parking, it is still felt that the terminus should be at Reading, otherwise despite all the provision for extra parking and transport interchange at the station there is still going to be unknown and perhaps unacceptable upheaval there.



Nigel Cockburn and Tina Sell at the House of Commons

YOUR E-Mail ADDRESS

We would like to recruit active new members and also speed up communications to members, so if you have an e-mail address please sent it to the Membership Secretary (Shashi Dare) at shashi.dare@yellgroup.com.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 30 th September 2006 Outing	Chiswick House, Marble Hill House, and BBC TV Centre
Friday 6 th October 2006 Reception	Berkshire College of Agriculture, Burchetts Green
Sunday 8 th October 2006 Walk	Maidenhead Boundary Walk (half)
Wednesday 18 th October 2006 Talk by Mr David R. Gilbert	“Florence – Her History and Treasures ” Methodist Church Hall, 8 p.m.
Wednesday 15th November 2006	46th Annual General Meeting Methodist Church Hall, 8 p.m. and

CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

President	Richard Poad, Hollyhocks, The Common, Cookham Dean, SL6 9NZ	484298
Acting Chairman	John McIntosh, 26 Harvest Hill Road, SL6 2QQ	633259
Vice-Chairman	Vacancy	
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
Publicity	Bob Dulson, Bryher, Islet Road, SL6 8HT	627130
Co-ordinator		
Newsletter		
Distributor	Carol Innes, Contour, Briar Glen, Cookham Rise, SL6 9JP	532418

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2006

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

11th January, 8th February, 8th March, 12th April, 10th May, 14th June, 12th July, 13th September, 11th October, 8th November, 13th December.

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 15th November 2006 in the Wesley Hall at the Methodist Church at 8.00pm.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
of the Newsletter is 13th October 2006.**

(Unless otherwise acknowledged, photographs taken by Ann & Brian Darracott using the Society's digital camera purchased with a grant from the Kidwell's Trust)

News Editor **Brian Darracott**
6 Medallion Place, Maidenhead, SL6 1TF (01628 620280)