



Maidenhead Civic Society **NEWS**

Issue 3/08

August 2008



The spectacular garden chessboard at Ockwells Manor – see Page 8

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A lunchtime date with the new Chief Executive of the Royal Borough
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Regular features on Talks, Outings, Projects and Planning

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

We were strolling by the Thames when one of our recent guests from Bad Godesberg, which has the magnificent Rhine at its doorstep, remarked how lucky we were to live in such surroundings in Maidenhead.

Godesberg, after much upheaval, is now known as a place of beauty and high quality living. And although their elegant 18th century town hall which overlooks the lush spa gardens is currently under threat of becoming a motel, the place has a real sense of purpose, Bonn as a neighbour and the stunning Rhine gorge as a backdrop.

“Yes,” he said, “but I should prefer, would dearly love to live here in Maidenhead. You have such a nice small town in a wonderful setting and everything is so near to hand.”

I guess the other man's grass is always greener but our German friend's comment is a useful and timely reminder of the need for objectivity.

As a Society I believe we try always to take an objective view of our favoured town. We demonstrated this in our strategic review of amenity a couple of years back and we strive to be fair and offer constructive criticism in our campaigning and lobbying. Public protests in recent months reflect deep felt frustration for regaining pride in the town. We share that but sense the need for a change of attitude.

However difficult the coming months of economic uncertainty may be, Maidenhead has tremendous potential and we have to avoid the doom-mongers and ensure through positive action that when the pendulum swings back – which it surely will – we are poised to take advantage.

Bob Dulson - Chairman

MAIDENHEAD AS I SEE IT

We would like to encourage members to contribute short articles on any aspect of Maidenhead and its surroundings. You may have a long memory and have seen some significant changes over the years: why not share them with our readers? You may have a particular view on something that you'd like to get off your chest: let us know! To start the ball rolling, Lilia Baillie-Hamilton has given us some thoughts on the changing shopping scene in the town centre, and John McIntosh shares his thought about car parking – something that affects us all.

Interested in the future of Maidenhead?

Then please join us at:

The Civic Society Lunch

*The new Chief Executive
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead*

Ian Trenholm

In his first public speaking engagement since his appointment

Friday 5th September 2008

at

The Norden Farm Restaurant



**Drinks Reception at 12.00
followed by the presentation
Two-course lunch and coffee
Cost £23.00**

Open to non-members

(Further details on page 7)

PLANNING MATTERS

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Over the last three months the Planning Group has considered about 35 planning applications, and commented to the planning authority on 12 cases where it was believed there was cause for concern.

Although the proposed office development at the “Old Cinema” site at the junction of Bridge Avenue and High Street has currently been refused there is considerable office building activity underway. Permission has now been granted – albeit with conditions – for 72-80 Moorbridge Road (the old Stapleton’s Tyre site). This will be a very prominent glass and aluminium block on the eastern approach to town.

Work is underway on the new office block on the Cookham Road roundabout (36-38 Market Street). Again, this will be a large block built close to and dominating the roundabout – but largely obscuring Sainsbury’s! There has also been consultation on the proposals for Kidwells Park House, which is next to the Regus block on St Cloud Way. This would appear to be a five-storey block, but at this stage there has not been an actual planning application for the Planning Group to examine.

A current eyesore is the stripped-down structure (previously Symantec) by the Police Station. Permission has been granted for the development and refurbishment of that site – and it is to be hoped that work gets underway as quickly as possible. Many people felt that the previous Symantec building had considerable merit and it is sad to see it in its current state.

There was a special sitting of the Development Control Panel on 21st April to consider the Michael Shanley proposals for Badnell’s Pit. One panel member, Cllr Simon Dudley, had already taken a public stance against the proposals. He opened the meeting with a very effective and concise presentation, but was then required to leave the proceedings. Theresa May MP had made a special journey from the House of Commons and also made a very good case against the level of proposed development. There were three further speakers against. After presentations from the developers and architects the Planning Officer made the case for the development – to a somewhat hostile reception. The Civic Society has made its views clear in several written submissions over the past three years. The scale of the proposals (402 dwellings) would put severe pressure on all element of the infrastructure – schools, doctors, water supply, drainage and surrounding roads – especially access to the A4 (Bridge Street). We are also concerned about flooding issues which have not been properly assessed. Under pressure for a submission, the Environment Agency submitted what can only be described as a holding letter reserving their position on the question of flood- risk. This was received about three hours before the hearing and on the basis of that communication the Chairman of the development Panel withdrew flood-risk from the list of grounds for refusal. The Civic Society does not believe that a development on this scale can or should be discussed so lightly in terms of flood-risk assessment. Having removed flooding as an issue, the Panel voted unanimously against the proposal.

Three weeks later it was announced that the developers were going to appeal against the decision. There appears to be no attempt to modify the scheme in the light of concerns expressed. The full-blown proposal will be subject to a public enquiry by the Planning Inspectorate from 30th September to 8th October 2008 inclusive. Put it in your diary!!

Martin McNamee

ANYONE FOR TENNIS... AT SKINDLES?

The owners of the former Taplow Mill are formulating plans for redevelopment of the 48-acre riverside site which includes Skindles. Nothing is yet determined but we understand they hope to extend and revive Skindles as an hotel and to use much of the footprint of the old mill buildings for a mix of housing, small and large, with the mill shed itself being replaced by flats.

The Society is represented on a community liaison group, set up by the owners' planning agents, which is looking at the options for redevelopment of the site. We want to encourage better public access and sight lines to both rivers and we are discouraging overdevelopment and privatisation of the riverbank. Much of the site is currently classified "employment land" and in an attempt to ensure that any businesses are river-related, we've suggested the location would be ideal for a marina. There is talk of creating new inlets with moorings but these are likely to be fronted by exclusive riverside homes.

However, a footbridge across to Boulter's Island has also been mooted which suggests some public access is likely and would create a delightful circular walk around Boulter's Reach between the lock and Maidenhead Bridge. The owners' agents also consider that a sports facility could be compatible with the site's green belt designation and incorporated to the east of Mill Lane. We shall see.

Whatever emerges eventually in a planning application, the Society is keen that it is of benefit to the whole community – not just the developer.

Bob Dulson

MAIDENHEAD, THE CAR AND PARKING

The modern car has offered us a degree of comfort and convenience in going about our daily activities that would have been a dream to most people pre-second world war. There was a comparable change in travel convenience one hundred and fifty years ago when the railways came into existence. These, having their own fixed termini, never had the problem, which assails car users nowadays - to wit the dreaded 'Parking'. Maidenhead has the problem in spades as a result of the history of its developments.

We want to use our cars to access shops, offices, schools, doctors, leisure facilities etc. and from the point of view of the town's ongoing prosperity the first two are probably the most important. Ideally, being normal, busy humans with all sort of attendant concerns such as luggage, children, shopping and in a hurry we naturally want to be able to park reliably, quickly and conveniently. The latter means, amongst other things, without difficult manoeuvring, without hunting around for a parking slot and certainly without having to park far from the point where we have things to do. The question thus is: where does Maidenhead stand in this utopian scenario?

In terms of parking spaces the town is well equipped with multi-storey, surface car parks (at Nicholson's Walk Shopping Centre; off St Cloud Way, and at Stafferton Way near the railway station). Beyond that there are a number of surface car parks at locations round the town centre e.g. West St., Grove Road, Magnet Leisure Centre, with qualified parking at Waitrose. Where it does fall behind is in on-street parking. A glance at a street map shows how the town is particularly constrained in this respect: there is a limited amount of short stay, on-street parking in areas such as Queen St, Bridge St., and St. Ives Road, for example. The town centre streets tend to be relatively narrow while the ring road cuts through close to the centre and the railway cuts in close on the other side. The town of Marlow stands in sharp contrast with a wide main thoroughfare which provides

good on-street parking. A short time spent standing on that road reveals the frequent turnover in occupation of parking spaces. In short it is a lot more convenient to park briefly near shops in Marlow than it is in Maidenhead. There is certainly some connection between ease of parking and the number and variety of shops in a town centre. This seems to be shown up by the recent change in the payment system used in the car parks. In place of a charge calculated on the basis of the

actual time for which the vehicle was parked, now the expected time has to be guessed with the result that most people feel that they are likely to be paying more than before. The net result – they are less likely to shop in Maidenhead centre.



More on-street parking need in Maidenhead?

The town centre is currently the subject of a major exercise to plan the strategic aspects of its redevelopment so now is the time to follow up on ideas for improving the current parking facilities. Given that major redesign of streets and their connections is unlikely, the most obvious step is to plan for

underground parking and easy access from the outer roads. In particular pressure should be taken off the existing car park facilities by insisting that new office developments are built with enough car parking to cater for all their employees and visitors. At present public spaces are to some extent taken up by commuters.

There is of course an alternative scenario which is the provision of a comprehensive public transport system. This would have to be cheap, convenient, frequent and clean, would probably always need to be subsidised and frankly at this stage seems unlikely!

John McIntosh

WHERE HAVE ALL THE BOUTIQUES GONE?

I have lived in Maidenhead since the early 60s, and so have seen many changes. We had no Magnet Centre, no Nicholson's Walk, no bypass to the town and all the traffic went down the High Street. The M4 had just been built, and the house prices were still low. I had a boutique then, called *Jane's*, opposite the Bear Hotel, and ran this for seven years. There were many boutiques in the town: *Rebecca*, *Rive Gauche* and *Joan Sutherland*, for example, were all there, and we could get most things. But they cost a great deal for those days, so when buying I thought of the young mother, who wanted nice things but found it difficult to get to London because of children and little money to spend. Now these boutiques have closed or moved. Large shops have taken their place but the boutiques have the edge because they can cater for different groups of people, whereas the bigger stores with bulk buying don't have the same control. Perhaps boutique owners will have to study the national trend of fashion and see where the gaps are that can't be filled by the national stores. Boutiques can usually buy at shorter notice and so fill the demand for more recent fashions.

But boutique shops seem to be thriving in Marlow, for example. Is this perhaps because of the more shopper-friendly on-street parking situation there, as suggested by John McIntosh in his article, above?

Lilia Baillie-Hamilton

AUTUMN 2008 EVENTS

As announced in the May Newsletter we have an interesting list of events for the Autumn and we hope that our membership will participate in them enthusiastically.

PRESENTATION LUNCH: FRIDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER 2008

At the Norden Farm Restaurant

SPEAKER: IAN TRENHOLM, Chief Executive, Royal Borough Of Windsor And Maidenhead

The new Chief Executive of the Royal Borough, Ian Trenholm, will be the guest at our first Civic Society Luncheon – a new venture for us which we hope will become a regular event.

Mr Trenholm will give a presentation, with opportunity for questions, illustrating his vision for the future of Maidenhead. He wishes to be very much involved in the rejuvenation of the town working closely with the elected representatives. **This will be Ian's first public speaking engagement in his new role and is as such is a real coup for the Society.**

Ian Trenholm graduated from London University and started his career as an Inspector with the Royal Hong Kong Police and then worked with Surrey Police for four years. He came to his post with the Royal Borough in May. Ian worked for Buckinghamshire County Council as strategic director for business transformation and customer services, where he played a key role in the development of customer services and performance management, resulting in improved services for local people as well as significant cost savings for the council and its residents



On his appointment to RBWM he said “Windsor and Maidenhead are beautiful parts of the world. My experience from the Buckinghamshire County Council will hopefully bring a lot to my new job, considering that Bucks is a neighbouring area to the borough and there are a lot of concerns which cross over, such as congestion.” Ian believes that councils must compete with successful businesses to keep their customers satisfied and help raise standards in the services of local people need and use every day. Alongside his business-inspired determination to run an effective and efficient organisation lies an equal commitment to treating people with fairness and dignity.

Although Ian admits that he does not know the area that well yet, he aims to spend a considerable amount of time with the elected members of the council and wants to speak to residents about the issues that concern them. The Civic Society Lunch will be an ideal opportunity for Ian to meet townspeople who really care about its future. You will have an opportunity to discuss issues after his presentation in a Q&A session.

The Luncheon will take place at the Norden Farm Restaurant on Friday 5th September 2008, commencing at 12 noon with a Drinks Reception, followed by the talk at 12.30pm. Lunch will be served at 1.15 pm and will consist of a two course meal (main and dessert), followed by coffee. The cost will be £23.00.

We hope as many people as are able will attend, as the success of this new venture will depend on its popularity. Non-members are most welcome. Please bring as many friends as you wish.

Bookings for places should be received by 22nd August 2008 using the application form accompanying this Newsletter.

THE WORK OF STANLEY SPENCER: PROPHET OF LOVE AND WORK - Wednesday 17th September 2008, 7.00pm - 8.00pm

At The Stanley Spencer Gallery, Cookham

Where better to learn about this local artist than the Cookham Gallery, which bears his name. **So please note that the talk will not take place in the usual venue nor at the usual time.**

Stanley Spencer was one of the most original artists of the twentieth century and the present special exhibition is entitled *Prophet of Love and Work* and a number of the paintings on show illustrate the dual theme of love and work. The Exhibition features many of Spencer's paintings and drawings including "The Dustman" (or "The Lovers"), "The Scarecrow", "The Fairy on the Waterlily Leaf," and drawings for the Chatto and Windus Almanack, 1927, the only book Spencer illustrated.

In 2006 the Gallery received a Heritage Lottery Grant to help modernise the facilities. This major refurbishment was completed in 2007 and has created a fresh and exciting space accessible to a wider audience.

As well as having a private viewing of the paintings, we will have the benefit of an experienced lecturer to speak about Spencer and his work.

As there are no facilities for refreshments at the gallery, we thought we would make the evening more of a social occasion and repair to the Kings Arms nearby for some liquid sustenance or if you wish, book a table ahead and join a group of us for supper. The entrance fee for the lecture is £5.00 per person (£4.00 for Concessions). It will commence at 7.00 pm and last for about one hour. **If you wish to attend please contact Tina Sell by email: tinasell43@hotmail.com or phone 01628 628675. It would be wise to book as places are limited.**



SIMPLY GARDENS - Wednesday 15th October 2008

A talk given by Martin Little

Martin has been a professional head gardener for twenty five years working at some of the finest houses in Southern England. Trained as a plantsman, his vast experience includes everything from formal walled gardens to natural landscapes. Writing the weekly gardening column "Little and Large" for the *Maidenhead Advertiser*, he has been sharing his experiences for the last three years. Come along and meet Martin when he will continue to pass on the secrets of the "Walled Gardens". As always we welcome any guests who wish to attend and there will be light refreshments served. There will be a small entrance charge for non-members of £3.00 and for members £2.00.

Tina Sell

OUTINGS

Unfortunately our planned visit to Kew Gardens in July had to be cancelled due to lack of support. This was a great shame as we missed the opportunity to see all the new attractions that have just opened and received so much national publicity.

Our next visit is too **Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Club and Museum**, where we will have a guided tour behind the scenes and a chance to visit their famous Museum. From Wimbledon we will travel to **The Imperial War Museum** to view their magnificent displays depicting wars from the First World War to the present. They also have two special exhibits and of course a fine range of war time equipment. The programme will allow about two and a half hours there to browse the exhibits.



The Wimble tennis courts

In early November we have gained permission to take a maximum of 20 people to visit the **Commonwealth War Graves Commission** in Marlow Road, Maidenhead (near the Castle Hill roundabout).

Together with the tasks of structural and horticultural maintenance, the Commission is charged with keeping records of the 1.75 million Commonwealth war dead. At each cemetery and memorial there is a register showing the service details and, in some cases, family details, of the men and women buried or commemorated there. The Commission's archives are an indispensable source for family and military historians.



This visit is free and will be on a first come basis. See the Booking Form for further details

Please support your society on these visits as we feel sure that you will find them most informative and interesting.

Mike Copeland

BAD GODESBERG TWINNING VISIT and OUTING

Civic Welcome Marks 20 years of Friendship

The Mayor and Mayoress, Cllr & Mrs Leo Walters welcomed members of the Bad Godesberg Heritage Society to Maidenhead in May.



A packed programme of events, put together by our President John McIntosh (centre back in photo above) with the help of the borough's Twinning Committee, ensured a memorable weekend and a fitting tribute on the 20th anniversary of the German Society's first visit to Maidenhead.

As well as the Town Hall, the three-day programme included a sneak preview of the nearly completed Heritage Centre, a trip to Winchester and Salisbury Cathedrals with Maidenhead Civic Society members and a visit to the Stanley Spencer Gallery in Cookham.

Exchange visits between the two societies have been taking place every two years since 1988. At a dinner in the Odney Club, chairman Bob Dulson (far right in picture above) talked of the value of overcoming language and cultural differences to share common experiences and build friendships. Effusive in their thanks, our guests extended an invitation to as many Society members as possible to make the return visit in 2010.

Bob Dulson

PROJECTS

GREEN WAY/YORK STREAM

“Windows” Project

A report on this attempt to create “windows” onto the stream north of Maidenhead that are free of weeds and reeds will hopefully be in the next newsletter. At present the contractors Forest & Garden Timbers Services are waiting for dry windless weather to carry out the work.

Canoe Survey

Don Betts of East Berks Ramblers repeated his canoe survey (see the July 2007 Newsletter for last year’s report). This time he took a camera with him so we have a canoeist’s view of the stream from Maidenhead Ditch, (starting just north of Halfway Cottages - further north it is too clogged with reeds) all the way down to where the Cut near Bray connects with the Thames. He reported on the state of the different sections and this report will be passed on to the Green Way Working Group.

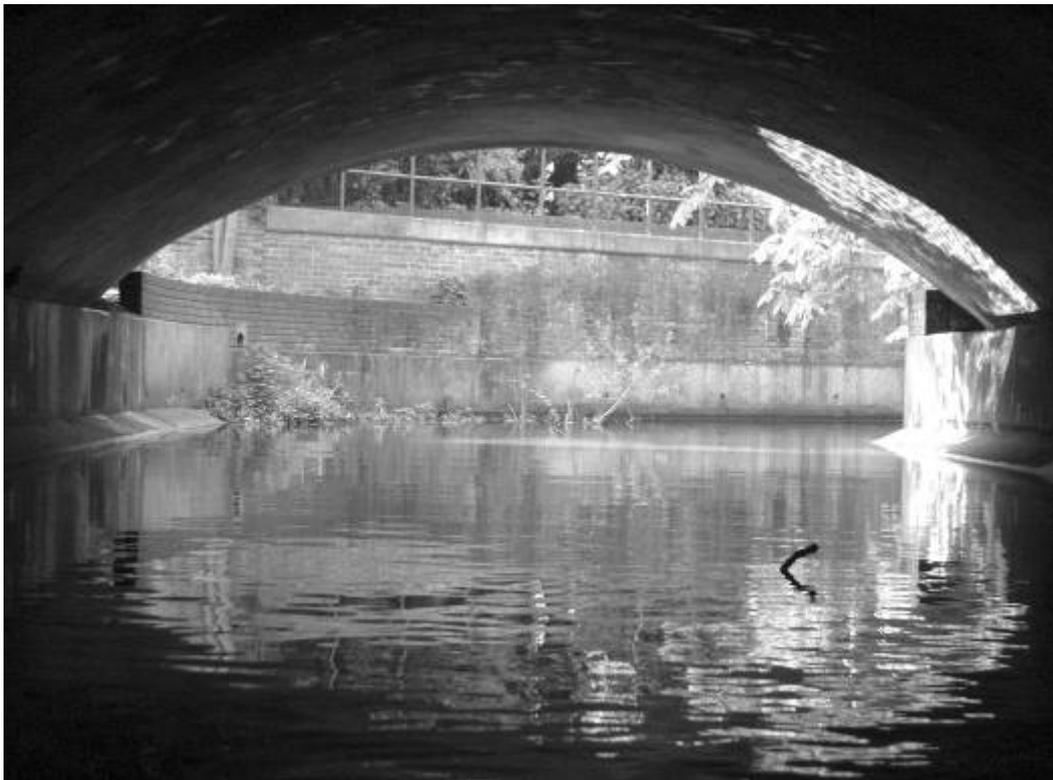
In summary he found that canoeing in Maidenhead Ditch was variable, the stretch between the Hippo and Ray Mill Road East being very difficult. However from Ray Mill Road southwards he reported it was fairly easy into town with just a bit of a struggle downstream of the library to Green Lane and thence a very pleasant paddle to the Thames. The following sequence of photos will hopefully give you some idea of how the stream looks.



North end of Maidenhead Ditch clogged by reeds



York Stream clear near North Town Moor footbridge



Emerging from underneath Chapel Arches, towards the library



York Stream clear near library



A “pleasant paddle” in the Cut to the Thames, in Bray

The reason this section was pleasant is because most of the fallen trees had been removed. Why was this? Because when Maidenhead flooded in July 2007, hitting the national news, there was nearly a disaster in this area where two streams join. This evidently concentrated the minds of those in the Environment Agency who deal with such events; many obstructing trees were removed and hence the creation of a “pleasant paddle”.

What is clear from this is that the existing waterway could be used for canoeing if the obstructing trees and reeds were removed. We hope our “Windows” project will help. We also hope that if the

Council decide to give permission for the Cookham Flood Remediation scheme (see the Feb 2008 Newsletter for details), they will make it a condition that adequate maintenance of the existing waterway be implemented. The only question is how long before someone mentions Health and Safety???

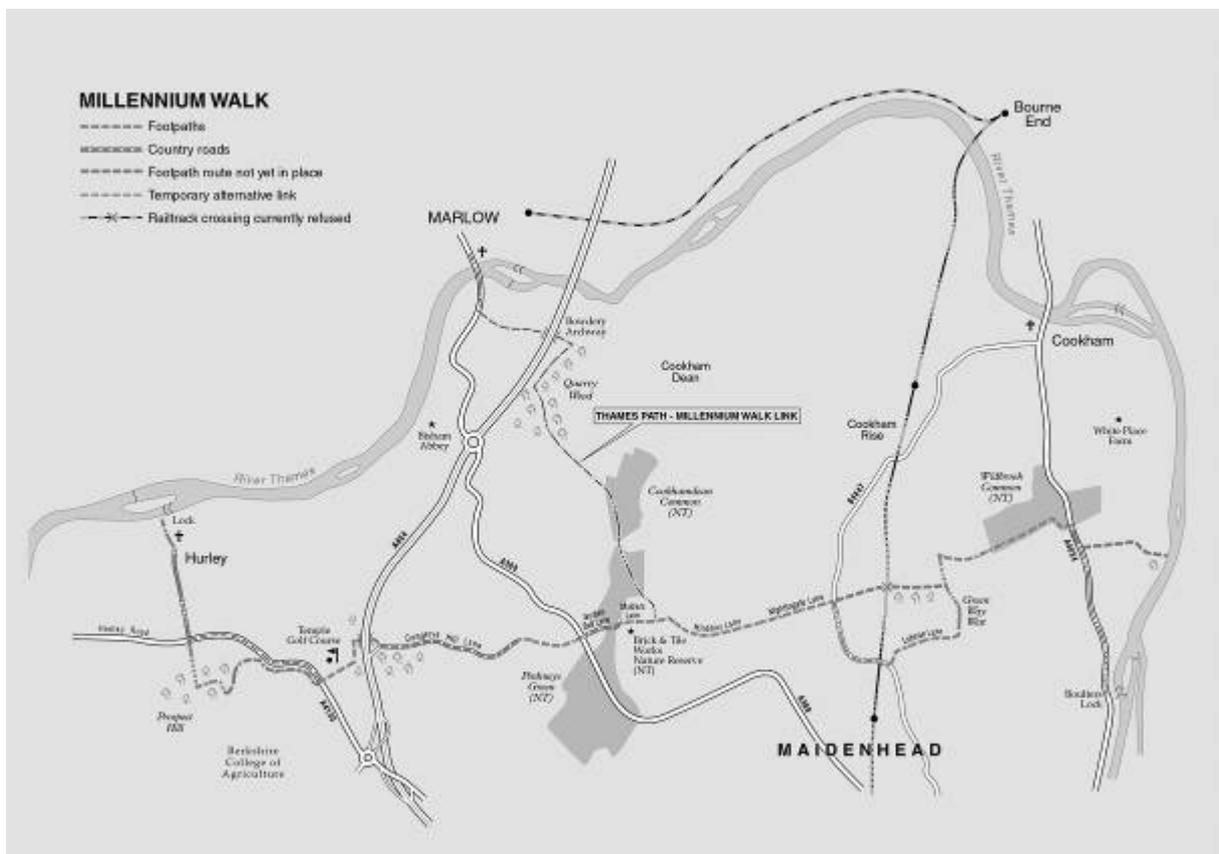
ps: We have pointed out to the planning officer dealing with the Cookham scheme that the consultant's report relating to the transfer of possible pollutants arising from the construction of bunds on Marsh Meadow was inaccurate as it has water in the White Brook flowing the wrong way!!! Apparently our comments have been passed on to the Environment Agency as statutory consultee.

MILLENNIUM WALK

New Map

Thanks to Dave Ramm of the East Berks Ramblers Association we now have a new colour map of the Millennium Walk. This is a vastly improved version of my earlier scrubby attempt and is now available for downloading from our website. We are very grateful to Mr Ramm for producing such a clear and colourful map.

A copy of the new map has been forwarded to the Local Access Forum that is involved in enhancing recreational walking in the Royal Borough.



A black & white version of the new colour map of the Millennium Walk

Missing Links

As you will see there are several missing links in the route across from Hurley to Maidenhead riverside. Negotiations with Berkshire College of Agriculture and the Royal Borough's Traffic Safety Officer are ongoing and we hope to have a resolution soon relating to the creation of a path from the top of Prospect Hill to Temple Golf Club. Another of the missing links, from the Lower

Cookham Road to the towpath, will be walked again this year during Maidenhead Rotary Club's Boundary Walk on 5th October. If anyone is willing to help clear the path (on the morning of 20th September) or act as marshals on 5th October, I'd be grateful if they could ring me (01628 620280) to volunteer their services.

OCKWELLS MANOR: Open Morning in aid of the restoration of ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, BRAY

As reported in the last newsletter, there is a longstanding link between Ockwells and St Michael's church in Bray. St Michael's is currently in need of restoration so at our suggestion the appeal committee approached the owners, Mr & Mrs Brian Stein, who kindly agreed to an open morning. This took place on Saturday 21st June when visitors were able to see the beautiful grounds and the great hall with its famous armorial glass. The occasion was a great success with around 130 people attending, including the new Mayor of Windsor & Maidenhead, Cllr Dorothy Kemp. The event was opened by the new Vicar of Bray, the Rev Richard Cowles.



Left to right: Mrs Cowles, the Rev Richard Cowles, Ann Darracott, the Mayor Cllr Dorothy Kemp, Mrs Jill Stein and Jim Tucker

I was on hand to act as guide in the Great Hall and local historian Elias Kupfermann helped guide in the grounds. To provide a record of the link between Ockwells and St Michael's I wrote a new leaflet detailing the connection between the two which was printed by the Appeal committee and sold on the day in aid of the restoration appeal as was the Society's history trail of the grounds. Around £1400 was raised by the open morning.

Those of you who did not attend may have an opportunity to see something of the gardens at Ockwells in October when Martin Little, ex Head Gardener there, who still does projects such as the spectacular chessboard, will be talking to the Society.

Ann Darracott

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 5 th September 2008 Lunch & Talk	The Civic Society Lunch with Guest Speaker, Ian Trenholm, Chief Executive, RBWM Norden Farm, 12.30pm
Wednesday 17 th September 2008 Local Visit & Talk	“Stanley Spencer – Cookham Artist” Stanley Spencer Gallery, Cookham, 7 pm
Saturday, 4 th October, 2008 Outing	Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Club & Imperial War Museum
Wednesday 15 th October 2008 Talk by Martin Little	“Gardens I have Grown” Methodist Church Hall, 8 pm
Wednesday 12 November 2008 Local Visit	Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Maidenhead 10.00 am
Wednesday 19 th November 2008 Talk by Linda Aitken, followed by AGM	“St George’s Chapel, Windsor” Methodist Church Hall, 7.45 pm

CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

President of the Trustees	John McIntosh, 26 Harvest Hill Road, SL6 2QQ	633259
Hon. Secretary	June Jorge, 134 Beverley Gardens, SL6 6ST	626616
Hon. Treasurer	Trevor Farnfield, Ditton Meads, Winter Hill Road, SL6 6NS	638142
Executive Chairman	Bob Dulson, Bryher, Islet Road, SL6 8HT	627130
Strategy & Policy	Nigel Cockburn, Willow House, Fishery Road, SL6 1UN	621084
Planning Group	Martin McNamee, 14 Lower Cookham Road, SL6 8JT	623203
Projects Group	Ann Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
Communications Group	Brian Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
Events Group	Tina Sell, Marlborough, River Road, Taplow, SL6 0BB	628675
Outings Sec.	Mike Copeland, 14 Laburnham Road, SL6 4DB	634181
Membership Sec.	Shashi Dare, Silvretta, Islet Road, SL6 8LD	629976
Newsletter Distribution	Carol Innes, Contour, Briar Glen, Cookham Rise, SL6 9JP	532418
Webmaster	Tim Goldingham, 76 Walker Road, SL6 2QT	630108

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2008

Parish Centre in St. Luke’s Church, at 7.45 p.m.
8th January, 12th March, 14th May, 9th July, 10th September, 12th November

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS FOR 2008

Parish Centre in St. Luke’s Church, at 7.45 p.m.
9th April, 8th October

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 19th November 2007 in the Wesley Hall at the Methodist Church at 8.00pm.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
of the Newsletter is 17th October 2008.**

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