



# Maidenhead Civic Society NEWS



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Issue 4/10

November 2010

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*Is this the future of Maidenhead? See page 11*

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

# CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

The most numerous participants in the planning system currently are civic volunteers, people like us. And societies like ours are set to play a key part in the ambitions for better planning expected in the Localism Bill. Or so they say.

“Localism”, the new buzzword, is just around the corner, but there’s been a fair amount of scepticism on the street. Do we need to be so wary?

The civic movement’s new umbrella body, Civic Voice, which superseded the Civic Trust, is very excited at the prospect of promoting civic pride and making the places where everyone lives more attractive and we too are keen to play a part in making our town more enjoyable and distinctive. It’s what we’ve been trying to do for 50 years.

The coalition’s commitment was to give “local people the power to engage in genuine local planning”. That was the carrot. How will it work?

Well, details have yet to emerge, but the Royal Borough has scrapped the old government’s process-driven way of revising the LDF Core Strategy and is preparing instead a consultative programme. This could see local groups, parish councils etc., being asked to get involved, say, in a Local Development Plan which reflects local aspirations.

Anyway, one thing is certain – the decisions will still rest with officers or elected members – and quite right too. But then what if we don’t like what they decide? It would be good to see the commitment to local involvement backed by a new community right of appeal against planning decisions. The new Bill could provide the opportunity.

As well as the carrot of involvement, we could have the stick of incentive. Otherwise, one can see that local communities involved in shaping their neighbourhood will quickly become disenchanted if their voluntary efforts are undermined by inefficiency or planning consent for a development which flouts everything that has been agreed.

So yes, we should be wary but if we are presented with an even greater opportunity to make a difference, then we should take it.

*Bob Dulson*

**50<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF  
THE MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY**

**To be held on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> November 2010  
at the Methodist Church Hall at 8.00 pm.**

**AGENDA**

1. Introduction by the President
2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting
3. Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010
4. Chairman's Report for 2009/2010
5. Election of the Board of Trustees  
To approve the appointment of members of the Board of Trustees. *See note below.*
6. Election of the Officers  
To elect from the Trustees an Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer
7. Any other Business.

***Election of Trustees***

Under the terms of the Society's Constitution, one third of the twelve Trustees must retire each year and shall be eligible for re-election. Accordingly, Bob Dulson, Harold James and Tina Sell will retire, and all three offer themselves for re-election. Together with the existing vacancy, there are thus four vacancies and three nominations.

The Membership is invited to make nominations for the position of Trustees. The nominations, in writing, should be accompanied by a seconder and the consent of the nominee, and be with the Hon. Secretary prior to the AGM.

**MINUTES OF THE  
49<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF  
THE MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY**

**Held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009.**

- 1. Apologies for Absence.** There were apologies from Michael Johnson and Brian Madge.
- 2. Approval of Minutes of 48<sup>th</sup> AGM.** The minutes of the 48<sup>th</sup> AGM were approved. Proposed by Ann Darracott and seconded by Jill Powell
- 3. Accounts for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> May 2009.** The Treasurer's Report on the Annual Accounts has been given in the November Issue Newsletter. The size of the Society's income has been reduced because of the reduced take up of seats for coach outings. This results in a reduction in the amount of Gift Aid. Interest on deposits is also reduced. The Society needs to act to hold a reasonable surplus. The main expenditure has been the cost of the redesign of the Website. The subscriptions have just equalled the cost of publishing the Newsletter. Overall the accounts are in reasonable shape but there is a pressing need to gain more membership. We should also seek more grants from local bodies. The meeting then adopted the accounts. Proposed by Martin McNamee and seconded by Tina Sell.
- 4. President's Introductory Remarks.** Welcome to all attending this, the 49<sup>th</sup> AGM of Maidenhead Civic Society. As chair of the Board of Trustees I wish to give you a brief report on its meetings during the year. There has been one full meeting in October but the earlier meeting in March was held on an *ad hoc* basis because of the inability of the non-executive members to be present. The October meeting concentrated on two issues, viz the imminent reissue of the updated and reworked Strategic Review and on the Membership.

The issue of the Strategic Review is linked in to the date on which the Council's revised Core Strategy document is issued. This is not now likely to appear until the spring so there will be a corresponding delay in the issue of the revised version of the Strategic Review. ProM was also due about now to be publishing a Preferred Options paper for its proposed Masterplan for the town centre but I now understand this too has now slipped into the New Year.

Membership is an ongoing concern for the Trustees in general and for the Executive Committee in particular. The matter was discussed in some depth and a variety of actions proposed. These are being considered and taken up at Executive Committee level.

- 5. Report for 2008/2009.** At this point the Chair was taken by Bob Dulson as Chairman of the Executive Committee, who introduced his report of the year (printed in the November Newsletter).

- 6. Elections to the Board of Trustees.** One third of the Board retire by rotation each year. This year those retiring are Brian Darracott, Ann Darracott and Martin McNamee. All offer themselves for re-election. This was proposed by Brian Smith and seconded by J. Chance. Agreed nem. con.
- 7. Election of Officers.** Trevor Farnfield offered himself as Hon. Treasurer. During the year June Jorge has continued as Hon Secretary and in the absence of a successor continues in the post. Their appointments in these were proposed by Tina Sell and seconded by Brian Smith. Agreed nem. con.
- 8. Any Other Business.** There being no other urgent business, the meeting closed at 9.32p.m.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT OF THE YEAR**

Our anniversary year was overall a good one with some memorable occasions but it was tinged with disappointments, notably our inability to use our birthday celebrations to attract a new generation of active members.

A major innovation was the creation of Civic Voice, following the demise of the Civic Trust. The new body promises to be a much more active and interventionist group than its predecessor. The Society, having joined as a founder member, now seeks to capitalise on its new and dynamic approach.

### **Planning**

There was a preponderance of extensions to domestic dwellings among the 150 applications examined by the Planning Group, including side, rear, single storey, two storey and all variants of these. Clearly a sign of the financial times; people wanting bigger houses but find moving a step too far. The precise number of Permitted Developments is, of course, unknown and remains a concern but perhaps the biggest planning abuse is the “progressive application”, where a modest initial proposal is augmented with a series of further applications which often overturn conditions of the original consent. We remain concerned at the quality of applications generally, the absence of detail and supporting information, which does not bode well for the future.

One notable application, the redevelopment of the Regus building in West Street, was criticised by the Society for its height and design but approved by the Council. Other contentious plans included a new Tesco shop on the Bath Road (approved) and the redevelopment into flats of “death row” terrace in York Road (refused). A proposal to redevelop the War Graves Commission offices into 12-storey apartments prompted a campaign to preserve the existing building. Meanwhile the scene was set for the revival of the Borough’s Design Awards but we have yet to hear if these will go ahead.

In the background, the Town Centre AAP has reached its final public consultation. Once approved, this should give a firm steer to future developments. We have been

contributing to this throughout, and also to the S. Bucks DC Core Strategy in relation to Skindles and the paper mill.

Our biggest surprise came when we stumbled across a scheme for lots of traffic lights on the A4 which no one seemed to know about - not even our councillors. At about the same time we published a revision of our Strategic Review, first produced in 2004. Unfortunately this did not command the attention we'd hoped for but it is a worthwhile exercise and should continue.

Our thanks are due to chairman **Martin McNamee**, to **Rudi Sheldon** and **Bronwen Renwick** who sift the applications for consideration, to **Michael Johnson** for his continuing liaison with the Waterways Group and to all members of the Group.

## Events

Once again we offered an excellent programme of talks, outings and social events. Our two speaker's lunches with Advertiser editor Martin Trepte at Boulton and Richard Poole at Monkey Island were both successful, cementing this kind of function in our events calendar in future. The Wednesday evening talks included a range of very attractive topics and drew appreciative, if smaller than expected, audiences.

One new venture this year was for the Society to take a stall at the Maidenhead Carnival. It is too soon to say what was gained but it enabled us to test the water and did help increase the Society's profile and contacts. We hope to be able to use the same display at a stall in the Nicholsons Centre in December. Also in the summer we enjoyed another delightful garden party, courtesy of **Shashi Dare**.

All our events are aimed primarily at members but guests of course are welcome. The popularity of our visit to White Waltham Aerodrome was such that two had to be arranged and a trip to Oxford to see the refurbished Ashmolean Museum was highly successful, as was the visit to Dyrham House and Tyntesfield. It is our custom to arrange four outings a year but sadly two this year, despite being very attractive venues, were cancelled for lack of support. A particular disappointment too was a lack of sufficient interest to warrant a return trip to our twin town Bad Godesberg in the golden jubilee year of the twinning arrangement - an omission that deserves redress.

Summing up: the lunches are proving to be our most popular event with members; and some feedback from members would be welcome on talks and outings to see if we're missing a trick. For this work, our thanks go to **Tina Sell** (Events Coordinator), **Mike Copeland** (Outings Secretary) and members of the Events Group as well as those who helped in any way with the events programme.

## Projects

It is good to be able to report some long-awaited progress on our Millennium Walk project. Selected as a priority objective by the Royal Borough's Local Access Forum, a bid is being submitted to fund the road crossing at Speen Hill, to facilitate the link between Prospect Hill and Temple Golf Club. In addition, £50,000 of developer

funding has been earmarked for the creation of the other missing link from the Lower Cookham Road to the Thames Path. However, with the good news comes bad: in a reverse of their earlier decision the EA is now planning to sell a tranche of land which the path crosses without reserving the route.

Stream flow towards Maidenhead continues to benefit from both the dredging of the White Brook by the Environment Agency and the Society's Windows project (now in its third year) that controls the reeds by spraying with herbicide.

The Ockwells Project came into its own this year when maps and documents we'd collected over a period of years helped to prove that the 22 acre field opposite Ockwells Manor house had been part of Ockwells Farm for hundreds of years. The field forms an integral part of the setting of the manor but it is under threat of development. It is currently protected by covenants held by the National Trust. The information we supplied has now been submitted to the Land Tribunal by the Trust in an effort to thwart an attempt by developers to remove the covenants. Meanwhile, the Society is trying to persuade the Royal Borough to re-designate the field as green belt. The Society has a presentation/talk on Ockwells Manor which can be given to groups and clubs that wish it, for a modest fee! We have also recently prepared one on Bisham Abbey.

The Society is indebted to **Ann Darracott** (Projects Co-ordinator) who as well as working on all the above played a part in the successful campaign to Save Jesus Hospital. She notably also helped with the publication in May this year of the revision of Pevsner's *Berkshire*, contributing to the entries on Ockwells Manor, Bisham Abbey and St Luke's Church which led to a very popular talk to the Society by one of the editors Professor Geoffrey Tyack in October.

### Communications

It is pleasing to report that the website brings a steady flow of inquiries, usually about planning matters but sometimes about the Society, although evidence that this has led directly to new members joining is not proven. Following encouragement from Civic Voice, our Website and the Newsletter were both entered into a competition for the best among Civic Societies. Although we did not win, we can be proud of our efforts on an ongoing basis. The Newsletter serves us well and this year appropriately reflected the historical development and achievement of the Society. It is the preferred method of communication among members, although it remains our intention to re-vamp it when funds are available; it does deserve a facelift.

Our thanks to **Brian Darracott** for his inspiration and editorial skills both on line and on paper, and also to **Carol Innes** and her team of Newsletter distributors. We will be thanking our distributors this year with a lunch event at the Rowing Club on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

We have experimented with an electronic newsletter, *Keeping In Touch*, giving an update on matters of interest. Two editions have been circulated to those members

with email addresses and the feedback has been positive. It's a useful way of keeping members informed on snippets of news and events.

The Society's media coverage continues to be fair and positive, when we get it. We've had good news stories, in the main, as well as listings for our talks and lunches and the 50th anniversary commanded positive, if limited, space but each of us has to work harder to maintain the profile. Our biggest story was unintentional – often the way! – but did result in a rapid u-turn on a plan to install five sets of traffic lights on the ring road.

## Membership

At the back of all the Society's anxieties is the level of membership. In seeking to increase the drive for new members a new leaflet has been introduced. Like most charities, we face the need to hunt out new membership and we look to new approaches, for example the possible use of direct mail to people on the electoral register. Thanks to **Shashi Dare** (Membership Secretary) and those on the membership group for their efforts at addressing this question.

In the last twelve months 18 new Memberships were taken up, including Family and Life memberships, which meant an addition of 26 members. Life Memberships actually increased by 30, as some people switched from Individual and Family Membership. Despite this our overall headcount decreased from 385 to 353. This is due in part to mortality but is mostly the result of a reduction in the number of paid-up members. As we have received only one resignation, the implication here is that some people have simply forgotten to pay their subscriptions!

The challenge remains, therefore, to engage with a new generation of members, to be more inclusive and involve more and new people in our activities. The numbers are:

	2010	2009
Total Memberships	264	296
e.g. Individual, Family, Life, Honorary, etc.		
Total headcount (exc. Corporate)	353	385
Life members	98	68
Honorary	26	26
Corporate	3	7

*Bob Dulson*

## TWO SIGNIFICANT FAREWELLS

The Society will be losing two loyal officials over the next five months. First to go will be our events coordinator Tina Sell. Then at the end of the financial year, our Hon. Treasurer Trevor Farnfield intends to stand down.

Tina is to be congratulated for being selected the Ladies Captain at Maidenhead Gold Club in 2012, which is the reason for her leaving her post with us. In the past four years she has created and managed a series of rich and varied programmes of events for the Society, which saw the introduction of our successful Speakers Lunches. We



are extremely grateful for all she's done and delighted that she won't be severing all her links - she's agreed to stand for re-election as a Trustee of the Society.

There'll be time to bid a proper farewell to Trevor in our next edition but it's hard to believe he's been a member of the Executive Committee for 25 years – and Treasurer since 1998.

Tina and Trevor's departures create two quite crucial vacancies on the Executive Committee. We'd love to hear from anyone who might be interested, or of anyone who should be!

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

The Annual Accounts are enclosed with this report and I would like to highlight or explain a few points.

- Improved profits were made from the outings and social events. As a consequence, Gift Aid contributions will also benefit the Society's funds.
- Receipt of tax refunds was delayed. £739 has subsequently been received.
- A donation of £350 was received in August 2009 from Shell International Limited specifically to offset some of the website update/change costs.
- Subscription income has dropped marginally. This is partly due to a take up of Life Membership.
- Interest received on deposited money has dropped significantly due to very low prevailing interest rates.
- A donation of £500 received from a member during a previous financial year, which was intended for use in some way associated with the River Thames, has still yet to be expended.
- The most significant regular expenditure, as always, relates to printing of the newsletter.
- The net cost of meetings is reduced due to charges made to attend talks and profits from teas.
- The Society donated £150 to Civic Voice which was set up following the demise of the Civic Trust.
- The sum for subscriptions includes £327 to the Civic Voice. This includes a first year 'donation' for Life Members of the Society. In future years this subscription is expected to be more like £250.
- During the current year (2010-2011) our insurance premiums have dropped back to £250.

The Society accounts are in reasonable health and, whilst I encourage the Committee to consider further ways of using some of the available funds to increase the profile of the Society, an improvement in membership numbers and income would be welcome.

*Trevor Farnfield*

**MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY - Charity No.  
272102**

**Annual Accounts for Year ended 31st May 2010**

2008/2009		2009/2010
<b>INCOME</b>		
0	Donations/Grants	350
2,252	Subscriptions Received During Year	2,505
466	Interest On Bank And Other Deposits	65
242	Surplus On Outings	700
40	Surplus On Social Events	395
770	Tax Refunds On Deeds Of Covenants / Gift Aid	0
<u>£3,770</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>£4,015</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
<b>Administration</b>		
2,512	General Expenses, Printing, Postage, Etc.	2,220
255	Hire Of Rooms, Speakers And Meeting Expenses	386
194	Subscriptions	381
240	Insurance	290
<b>Donations</b>		
0	Various	150
<b>Other Expenses</b>		
154	Ockwells And Associated Projects (Net Costs)	172
45	Millennium Walk. (Net Costs)	56
34	Various Other Small Projects	0
0	Deficit On Social Events	0
0	Presentations/Memorials	101
2475	Website Redesign	410
<u>£5,909</u>	<b>Total</b>	<u>£4,166</u>
<b>-2,139</b>	<b>EXCESS/DEFICIT OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>-151</b>
13,780	Balance Brought Forward	11,641
<u>£11,641</u>	<b>Balance Carried Forward</b>	<u>£11,490</u>
<b>FUNDS</b>		
1,661	Bank (Lloyds TSB) and Cash	1,940
9,690	Charities Deposit General Fund (COIF)	9,755
290	Debtor/Insurance Payments In Advance	250
0	Creditors/Commitments	-455
<u>£11 641</u>	<b>BALANCE OF FUNDS</b>	<u>£11,490.00</u>

**Trevor Farnfield - Hon. Treasurer**

20-Aug-10

# PLANNING MATTERS

During the past three months the Planning Group considered about 45 applications, and submitted written comments on twelve proposals.

## **ALBANY HOUSE**

We were consulted about the development of the “Regus” building at 27-29 Market Street – or Albany House, as it will become known. Several concerns were raised at a meeting with the representatives of the developers – and we regret that when the application was formally submitted the proposals did not reflect any of our comments. This development is certainly the biggest since Sainsbury’s, and is essentially a nine-storey office block on the south-western quadrant of the Cookham Road roundabout. The block features an acute angle which has been brought forward towards the roadside. This has been achieved by allowing the developer to build on public land, presumably to compensate for the space given up by setting back the West Street frontage.



*Architect’s impression of Albany House, viewed from the north*

Our letter of objection is published below, but the planning application was permitted at the September Development Control Panel. It is of concern that the Civic Society was virtually the only voice of criticism, and such a major project has been passed (albeit on a split vote) without any modification. Of course, there were conditions attached to the permission – but experience has shown that these can be subsequently

overturned/waived. It appears that the scheme was a “done-deal” – including the agreement to sell so-called public land. If the so-called regeneration of areas such as West Street is to be successful, then greater input and control will be necessary from our planning representatives.

It is now quite likely that the seven-storey permission already granted for Kidwells Park House (adjacent on Bad Godesberg Way) will be re-submitted to be increased to nine storeys now that a precedent has been established.

### **Comments on application 10/01666 27 & 29 Market Street (Albany House)**

“This is not only a landmark location, but also a potential landmark decision regarding the future of office development in Maidenhead. The proposal for a nine storey office block is excessive, especially with regard to the proximity of the site to the Cookham Road roundabout, and Market Street itself. The existing building is four stories high, as indeed is the newly constructed office block on the east side of Market Street. The Sainsbury development is six stories in height, so the new proposal will dominate the streetscape. Whilst the Area Action Plan identifies the opportunity for redevelopment of West Street, we believe that a maximum of seven stories should apply.

It is appreciated that the south elevation on West Street has been set back to open up the vista at the Market Street/West Street junction and give the United Reform Church some spatial setting. However, the northeast corner of the new building



*How the building will look from the southeast*

is extended onto public land and encroaches some ten metres towards the Cookham Road roundabout. Consequently the apex of the building is only some five metres from the roadside at the roundabout. If the building is to be extended (presumably to compensate for the area given up on West Street) it would be more satisfactory if it was on the northwest corner. This would set the building line back from the roundabout. We understand that this option was considered by the architects at an earlier stage. With the current proposal the apex of the building forges towards the roundabout like an ocean liner. Because of the building line on the Market Street frontage the vista from Cookham Road will be completely overwhelmed by the building. Furthermore, the grass verge on the south of Bad Godesberg Way should be retained at the maximum to maintain a green buffer and enhance the sight lines to Kidwells Park from Market Street. Structures of this height and bulk should be set back and in a landscaped setting – as on the Slough Trading Estate on the A4. This

site is too small and the building frontage too close to the roadside for a nine storey building. Whilst the building is stepped down to “only” five stories on the West Street elevation, this remains too high and should be reduced to three stories so that the United Reform Church is not swamped by the adjacent office block.

We understand that the main entrance is to be at the northern end of the Market Street frontage, primarily to allow the main reception area to be adjacent to the core. There will be no dropping off facility at the entrance – indeed buffer planting and/or pedestrian railings will restrict this. We believe that having generated space on the West Street frontage the pedestrian entrance should be on the southern elevation. Visitors can then walk through the ground floor rather than up Market Street.

We do not believe that there has been adequate analysis of and measures taken to address the increased traffic that will be generated by this scheme. The traffic flow on Kidwells Park Drive and West Street will increase dramatically with vehicle movements forecast to increase by 140%. This is before any subsequent development of the adjacent Kidwells Park House. Car parking access is unclear, as is the ownership of the land between the new building and the church. Some drawings show single lane access whilst others show two lanes, with the single storey church office and entrance being demolished. The application should be regarded in the context of the long-term traffic management plans for the West Street development area.

Essentially, this proposal is to increase the existing office space by more than 130%. Maidenhead has many planning issues and/or opportunities, but this location has never been viewed as a problem which needs addressing. This proposal represents unnecessary development for financial gain of a site which is in a very dominant location with difficult access. We believe that the proposals should be scaled down to reflect the concerns expressed above”.

## **TOWN CENTRE PLAN – FINAL CONSULTATION**

The Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) is now available for public consultation.

Designed as a catalyst for the regeneration of the town centre, the AAP Submission Document provides a policy framework for the kind of development needed to make Maidenhead a centre for the community and an attractive place for business.

It was published on October 14<sup>th</sup> and is available for comment for six weeks until November 25<sup>th</sup>. As its name suggests, this is the version that will be submitted for examination by a government inspector at a public hearing in the spring.

Any representations made at this stage will be submitted with the AAP for the inspector’s attention, consequently comments are particularly being sought on whether the AAP complies with legal requirements and whether it is sound.

The Civic Society has had considerable influence in the preparation of the AAP and we urge as many members as possible to lend their support, at least in principle.

## **FROM THE PRESS**

Recent reports in the property Press suggest Maidenhead may be weathering the storm better than most.

A major unit trust company has bought the Boots building in High Street as an investment for a reported £6.6m. Boots has 11 years to run on the lease. Also, a global software company has recently been sizing up town centre properties with a view to making Maidenhead its UK home. And at the town hall the planning department reports a healthy number of approaches for pre-application advice from developers.

Conversely, an estate agent has said one of the reasons there were so many empty shops and offices in the town was the bad press that Maidenhead gets. Hoping to change that, the newly re-vamped Maidenhead Town Partnership, an association of businesses, traders and the council, are planning a marketing campaign in the run up to Christmas.

## **TAPLOW MILL SHOULD NOT BE A BLOT ON THE LANDSCAPE**

Potential developers of the site of the former Taplow Mill will be told to keep the visual impact of new buildings to a minimum, if proposed changes to South Bucks District Council's core policies are approved. However, uncertainty over the site's future means it could stay a blot on the landscape for some time to come.

Following representations made during the public consultation on its Core Strategy earlier this year, SBDC has amended its policy for the Mill Lane area to take account of public concern. There could still be a big building where the mill shed stands but others would have to be smaller. The revised policy says that on the site of the mill building itself "a high quality design could result in a development of similar height to the existing building". But it now adds: "Elsewhere, the height and massing of development should ensure a reduced visual impact." The net effect of any redevelopment, the policy says, should "result in no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and retain the largely open character of the site."

However, the SBDC document also notes the uncertainty over the timing and availability of the site and concedes that, although it would contribute to the council's core objectives, Mill Lane's redevelopment is not vital to its plans.

The former Mill's land, including Skindles, has been designated as an "Opportunity Site" by the Council, along with two others. This status recognises the site's potential and is meant to ensure that its opportunities are maximised – if and when redevelopment occurs.

SBDC is currently consulting on the proposed changes to its Submission Core Strategy in the run up to the examination by a government inspector in November.

## **CIVIC SOCIETY URGED TO STICK TO ITS GUNS**

Maidenhead Civic Society's role as a planning watchdog is just as important today as it was at its inception 50 years ago members heard last week.

Planning scrutiny was and still is the *raison d'être* of any Civic Society and successes were counted as much by what was prevented or modified as what was actually built. On that score Maidenhead Civic Society had a good record, according to Richard Poad, a former president and past chairman of the Society.

Speaking at a lunch to mark the Civic Society's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, he said the Society was formed at a time when comprehensive redevelopment was all the rage, but transparency was not. It was only after a long struggle that the councils were persuaded to share their weekly lists of planning applications."

Richard encouraged the Society to stick to its guns. Over the years its critics had variously accused it of being "anti-everything" and "very particular" but he said the Society took the view that "Maidenhead deserved something better than second best." The planning group didn't just comment on the principle of a new development, they were sometimes extremely critical of bad design.

"Scale, materials and detail are all vitally important," he said, and in a reference to the proposals for Market Street and the War Graves Commission site, he added that he thought "the upward surge of Maidenhead was very regrettable."

Recalling a host of achievements, from bulb planting and the preservation of the clock tower to inspiring the Greenway and the creation of Guards Club Park, Richard said the Society could also be proud that through its history its thinking had been ahead of the game. In the 60s it produced a prize-winning proposal for the riverside. This envisaged pedestrianisation of Ray Mead Road, footbridges to and between the islands and a marina on the Taplow bank. Said Richard: "Four decades later similar proposals were promoted with great fanfare; but remember who was there first!"

In the 90s, the Civic Society was instrumental in founding the Heritage Centre of which Richard Poad became chairman. "The idea was that you cannot plan for the future unless you understand the present, and you cannot understand the present unless you understand the past. The principle is still valid today."

Richard congratulated the Society "first on surviving for 50 years, and secondly for establishing and maintaining a presence as an informed, independent voice, especially in planning matters." Civic Society chairman Bob Dulson, in thanks said: "Richard has single-handedly done more than many organisations to bring an understanding of Maidenhead's heritage to residents and the wider community."

*Martin McNamee & Bob Dulson*

# PROJECTS

## MILLENIUM WALK

### Lower Cookham Road to Thames Path Link

In March 1999 I wrote: *This project is proceeding with the same alacrity you get when walking in treacle; but never mind we are still walking!* In October 2010 I have the same feeling.

On the plus side, for the fifth year in succession, we co-operated with Maidenhead Rotary Club and East Berks Ramblers to clear the path from the Lower Cookham Road to the Thames Path for use during the Boundary Walk on 3<sup>rd</sup> October and also marshalled there on the day (many thanks to Tina Sell, Bronwen Renwick, Shashi Dare and Angela & Bob Dulson). Marshalling this year was definitely enlivened by the decision by two cygnets to walk down the Lower Cookham Road, stopping the traffic and causing one marshal to act as a traffic policeman (Swan Life Line came and got them – apparently cygnets at this time of year are leaving home – they were underweight are now being fattened up at the centre in Eton before being released).



*The happy gang who cleared the path*





*Angela and Bob Dulson, and Andy Dartnell – marshals on the Lower Cookham Road*



*How to stop the traffic!*

On the negative side, the Environment Agency who promised Theresa May in July 2008 that when they sold the land they own (compulsorily purchased for the flood bund and which has been crossed by walkers during the Boundary Walks of the last five years) “*a special condition of sale to be entered in the tender document reserving the right of way along a specific route*” now say, in an email on 14 October, that they are going to put the land on the market without reserving our path on it!

In February 2010, the EA said “*our Estates Department is looking into the possibility of transferring the parcel of land to Maidenhead Civic Society*”; they evidently have changed their minds on this also. There is £50,000 of S106 money available for this project, if and when Whitebrook Park is redeveloped, but in the current economic climate goodness knows how long that will be coming.

### **Prospect Hill to Temple Golf Club Link**

The news here is slightly better. The Rights of Way team at RBWM have applied for funding to put in a crossing of the A308. Both the East Berks Ramblers and the Civic Society have offered financial support for this.

### **OCKWELLS SETTING**

You may remember that the Society has been trying to persuade the Council to re-designate the 22-acre field opposite Ockwells Manor as green belt. This is the only remaining part of the field formerly know as “All Readings” that had been part of Ockwells Farm since before 1639 (see Newsletter 3/10 p7-9). The field is currently “white” land and would be built on if the covenants held by the National Trust were ever lifted. As future planning for housing is now apparently to be made at a more local level we suggested the following agenda item for the Maidenhead Town Forum on October 7:

*As one of the Government's four "vanguard" local authorities, how does the Council intend to manage housing numbers and the Green Belt?*

The Council’s response was:

*Unfortunately your item will now come forward to the 3<sup>rd</sup> February meeting due to the amount of information available to officers at this time.*

As indicated in the last Newsletter, there is a current attempt to lift the covenants; the National Trust has now submitted its case to the Lands Tribunal to retain them. In the meantime we are thinking of appealing for support to a higher authority whose parents and grandmother once visited Ockwells.

*Ann Darracott*

# EVENTS

## FORTHCOMING TALKS

The talks take place in the Methodist Hall, King Street, Maidenhead. They commence at 8:00pm, with a break for light refreshments. Guests are most welcome. There will be a small charge to members of £3.00, and non-members, £4.00, which includes refreshments.

### **Climate Change and Flooding on the Thames**

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2010**

**By Peter Quarmby, Regional Flood Risk Manager, Environment Agency.**

Followed at 9:00pm by the AGM

There will be no charge for this talk to members

Our Climate is changing. We already have the evidence of sea level rise, increased winter rainfall and storms. Flood Risk will increase with more frequent flooding and more people at risk. We cannot afford to provide defences in many locations and there will be an increasing residual flood risk behind defences that we do have. So how can we manage flood risk. Peter Quarmby, Regional Flood Risk Manager for

Thames Region, Environment Agency, will explain how we are changing our approach to managing flood risk both at a strategic level and at a community level. He will look at solutions and consider the role of dredging.



Peter joined Thames Region as SE Area Manager in October 2004 from Southern Region where he was Area Manager for Hampshire & the Isle of Wight. He took on the new Flood Risk Manager role in October 2008. Peter has worked for a variety of organisations including the Electricity Supply Industry, Coopers & Lybrand as a management consultant and the iron ore industry in Africa. He joined the National Rivers Authority - one of the Environment Agency's predecessors - in 1993. Peter has long been associated

with major civil engineering projects, having worked for two years in Southern Africa in the engineering phase of the £1b Lesotho Highlands Water Project.

Peter now manages a programme of over £100 million in managing and reducing flood risk. Peter is part of the Thames Regional Management Team and takes the lead for flood risk management and incident management.

This promises to be a fascinating presentation of topical interest to anybody who is concerned about the future of the planet.

**The Royal Landscape of Windsor Great Park, Past and Present**  
**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011**  
**By ROGER ASKEW**

Windsor Great Park is the largest and oldest open space in the densely populated South-East of England and the most important site of ancient oak trees in North-West Europe as well as home to a large herd of red deer. This talk deals with the history of the Park, its royal residences and other buildings, Virginia Water, the Savill and Valley Gardens and its three Royal statues.

Roger is currently a Member of the Friends and Volunteer Guide at The Savill Gardens, Windsor Great Park and Founder Chairperson of the Stoke Poges Society. He and his wife, Barbara, run Windsor Heritage Talks and Tours, which organises walking and coach tours in Windsor and the Thames Valley, with related talks.

**CIVIC SOCIETY LUNCHEON**

The fourth Civic Society Speaker's Luncheon was held recently on 29<sup>th</sup> September at the Monkey Island Hotel, in Bray. Over 60 people attended, and the event was judged a big success. Our speaker, Richard Poad, gave a personal overview of the Society's achievements over the past 50 years, and a summary of his talk appears earlier in this issue.



*Chairman Bob Dulson introduces guest speaker Richard Poad*

*Former Civic Society  
Chairman and  
President Richard  
Poad tells us to “stick  
to our guns!”*



Our next Speaker's Luncheon is planned for sometime in March next year, so please watch out for further details in the next issue of the Newsletter.

*Tina Sell*

## **OUTINGS AND VISITS**

Unfortunately we had to cancel our latest planned visit to Leighton House and the Florence Nightingale Museum due to lack of support. This was a great shame as both venues are really interesting. We do ask for more support from our members, as there is always a minimum number needed to make these visits viable.

As most National Trust and Heritage properties are closed from October until March we will resume our coach visits next spring. If any member has a particular place that they would like to visit and they feel that it would be of interest to other society members please let me know.

### **A CHANCE TO VISIT TWO OF SLOUGH'S OLDEST BUILDINGS**

The Society has been able to arrange a visit to St Laurence's Church, founded by Merton Priory, and noted for the Bulstrode memorials and the gravestone of William Herschel the astronomer, and also to see inside of the nearby Upton Court. In addition, if the weather is clement a tour of the graveyard may be on offer!

This is an opportunity to learn more about the Bulstrode family, one of whom was brother-in-law of the builder of Ockwells Manor! The Bulstrode armorial achievement in the great hall at Ockwells Manor is almost certainly for William Bulstrode, married to Agnes Norreys, sister of John Norreys Esq who built Ockwells. St Laurence's Church, Upton by Chalvey, where Agnes (d.1462) is buried still has part of her funeral brass (a kneeling figure of a woman).



*St Laurence's Church,  
Upton – Slough's oldest  
building*

Upton Court is the second oldest building in Slough. Tree ring dating of the present building gives a construction date of ca. 1325. It has the standard medieval pattern of an open hall and a cross wing. It preserves the original central hearth, underneath the present floor on which an open fire provided heat for the hall. Dormer windows were included to let smoke out of the room. A new annexe was added in 1988 and until recently it was the home of the Slough & Windsor Observer newspaper group. The Court is currently empty and we have the opportunity to see inside before it is re-let.



*Upton Court – a 14<sup>th</sup> century building with a 20<sup>th</sup> century annexe*

The visit is free and comes with a complimentary cream tea in the church. However, donations to St Laurence's Church will be very much appreciated. The visit starts at 2pm on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December. There is ample parking in the grounds of Upton Court, which can be accessed off Datchet Road (the B376) near the large roundabout on the A412 at the junction of Mere Road and Yew Tree Road, Upton, on the eastern side of Slough. **If you would like to come please let Mike Copeland know on 01628 634181 so we can let St Laurence's know how many visitors to expect.**

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

In the last edition of the Newsletter we put out a call for a volunteer to act as a Newsletter distributor to cover the east side of Maidenhead. Well, we're pleased to say that Brian Smith – one of our Trustees – has stepped into the breach and offered his services, and for that we're very grateful. Without Carol Innes and her team of distributors it would be a challenge to get the Newsletter out to members in an economic way.

## NEWS FROM THE HERITAGE CENTRE

Society Members who enjoyed their visit to West London Aero Club may be interested in *Wings over White Waltham* - a special exhibition to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of White Waltham, running from 5<sup>th</sup> November – 18<sup>th</sup> December 2010. The Centre is also offering *Maidenhead's Aviation History* – a programme of 6 evening talks and a daytime visit covering over 100 years of local aviation history. This will be on Tuesdays at 7.30pm, at WLAC, starting 11<sup>th</sup> January 2011 (by kind permission of West London Aero Club) and costs £45 in aid of Maidenhead Heritage Centre funds.

The other big news is that the National Lottery, through the Heritage Lottery Fund, is giving a grant of £50,000 to the next phase of development at the Heritage Centre, which includes “*Grandma Flew Spitfires!*”, a dedicated Air Transport Auxiliary Exhibition and Study Centre which will showcase the large collection of ATA memorabilia held at Maidenhead. ATA used male and female civilian pilots to deliver over 300,000 planes from factories to front line squadrons during World War II; the 168 intrepid women flew everything from Tiger Moths to Spitfires to Lancaster bombers and “*Grandma Flew Spitfires!*” will be a permanent memorial to them and their 1000 male colleagues. Subject to raising the matching funds required by the Lottery, “*Grandma Flew Spitfires!*” will open in the summer of 2011.

Further details of these and other activities can be obtained from the Heritage Centre: 01628 780555, or by e-mailing [info@maidenheadheritage.org.uk](mailto:info@maidenheadheritage.org.uk).

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2010  
**Talk** by Peter Quarmby, followed by **AGM**

“Climate Change and Flooding on the Thames”  
Methodist Church Hall, King Street, 8.00 pm


Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010  
**Visit**

St Laurence’s Church and Upton Court  
2.00 pm at Upton Court, Slough

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011  
**Talk** by Roger Askew

“The Royal Landscape of Windsor Great Park”  
Methodist Church Hall, King Street, 8.00 pm

## CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

		
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## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2010

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

12<sup>th</sup> January, 9<sup>th</sup> February, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 13<sup>th</sup> July, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 9<sup>th</sup> November, 14<sup>th</sup> December

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS FOR 2010

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

13<sup>th</sup> April, 12<sup>th</sup> October

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2010 in the Wesley Hall at the Methodist Church at 7.45 pm.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue  
of the Newsletter is 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011.**

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