



Maidenhead Civic Society NEWS



Issue 3/14

August 2014



*Lady Elizabeth Hoby, of Bisham Abbey
What's her connection with William Shakespeare?*

– see page 14

Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

Chairman's Foreword

Fifty-four years ago the Society's first constitution, in language typical of the time, set out its "principal objects", one of which was:

"To stimulate public consciousness and appreciation of the beauty, history and character of the neighbourhood and its surroundings".

We've simplified it a little over the years but the core principle remains the same and lies at the heart of our objectives. And it provided the motivation for our art competition **Maidenhead & Me** which concluded successfully with a prize-giving and exhibition at the end of June (see story on page 6).

As well as the quality of the entries, which were truly amazing, we were particularly struck by the enthusiasm and generosity of those organisations and individuals who helped with time, money and ideas to make it such a success. Our thanks to them all.

It just goes to prove that if you've got a good idea, people want to be part of it.

The Civic Society was spreading the word again at the Maidenhead Festival at the end of July and we will also be having a stand for the first time at the 80th Littlewick Show on Bank Holiday Monday, August 25th. Come and see us.

Having listened to residents, Berkeley Homes have published revised plans for the former Taplow Mill site, including Skindles. It is an improvement but we still feel an opportunity is being missed, as Martin McNamee explains in Planning Matters.

The town centre regeneration programme and what is being done to achieve it saw Maidenhead named as "Town of the Year" in the inaugural Thames Valley Property Awards in May. However, the exposition of plans for revitalising the Broadway Triangle which we'd expected in July have been delayed. It seems we're going to have to wait a couple of months longer for those but work on the waterways and the first phase of Chapel Arches is due to start before the autumn.

Bob Dulson

Planning Matters

Since the publication of our last newsletter, the Planning Group has met on a monthly basis and considered more than forty applications in detail. Comments have been submitted to the planners on twelve applications - of which three are singled out for mention.

The First Church of Christ the Scientist sits on the northwest quadrant of Castle Hill roundabout on Marlow Road. Members may be unaware that it has been out of use for around two years. Consequently plans have been submitted to demolish and develop the site, which also includes an existing modest office block to the rear. The proposals were unacceptable in terms of height, bulk and mass with a five and a half storey frontage sitting right on the building line of the roadside pavement. The adjacent existing office block - the Hanson Building - is only four storeys high, which is plenty enough for this landmark gateway location. We are pleased to report that the application has already been refused.

As part of the Chapel Arches/ Waterways regeneration scheme, you may recall that there was a proposal included for an amphitheatre open air space to the north of Maidenhead Library. This will face north eastwards and overlook the water towards Chapel Arches. Detailed plans have been submitted, and although there are some issues regarding access and levels relating to the footbridge and the Green Way, we welcome this positive contribution to the planning jigsaw.

It is rarely that we find ourselves commenting on plans submitted by the Royal Borough, but we found the proposals to demolish the two redundant office blocks in St Ives Road poorly presented. York Stream House and St Ives House are now sitting empty and are incurring significant business rates whilst unoccupied. This location features in the York Road Opportunity Area which will see unrecognisable redevelopment in years hence. It is also adjacent to the impending Waterways scheme. However, the application to develop a “temporary” car park - surrounded by two-metre high fencing - was not presented in any context relating to future plans, and with no reference to timelines. Our comparison to Guantanamo Bay was picked up by the Advertiser and significant scaling back of a “hastily submitted” application resulted. Modified plans have now been passed and it is understood that the temporary car park will have a five year lifespan.

Crossrail

There has also been considerable activity outside the scope of our Planning Group meetings. Whilst the arrival of Crossrail is awaited with anticipation, there is some concern over the potential impact of the overhead electrification works associated with the project. The initial focus was largely centred on the visual impact of

electrification on the splendid profile of Brunel's Sounding Arches over the River Thames. However, it is now apparent that trackside trees and other foliage will be lost as a vegetation free area is cleared for a minimum distance of 6.6 metres either side of the outside running rail (or up to the boundary fence). This is obviously for safety reasons associated with high voltage overhead wiring and has been included in the conditions of the Crossrail Bill from the outset. Perhaps the full implications were not previously appreciated. A minimum of 6.6 metres means that if the inside edge of a mature tree is just within that distance, then it will be lost. Consequently, the visual and sound screening now offered by trackside vegetation will be significantly reduced especially where the track is set on an embankment. The full impact will only be evident when the clearing work (currently underway) is completed.

Taplow Paper Mill & Skindles

Many interested members may well have visited the follow-up consultation on the proposals for Taplow Paper Mill and Skindles. This was held by Berkeley Homes in early July at Maidenhead Rowing Club. As reported in our last newsletter we have formed a mutual interest group (now called Taplow Reach Interest Group - TRIG) to coordinate responses to the Mill Lane proposals. Alongside ourselves TRIG includes Hitcham and Taplow Society, the River Thames Society and other interested parties, who will be responding jointly to the updated proposals.

The modified plans as presented now include the National Grid land - both riverside and gas holder. The latter will provide land for twelve detached homes. The riverside site has existing planning for offices, which is retained. It will also provide 60 car park spaces for the site - and especially for Skindles restaurant. The architectural styling of Skindles has been improved and reflects its position alongside Maidenhead Bridge. Upstream from the restaurant previously proposed apartments have been replaced with a terrace of seven town houses which are more in keeping with the existing town houses on Mill Lane. Yet again, these town houses will represent privatisation of the river bank. We are still surprised that the Skindles site is still regarded as "too small" for a viable hotel. Boutique chains - such as Malmaison or Hotel du Vin operate many similar sized ventures.

Public access to the River Thames remains very restricted, and there remain missed opportunities for river related and leisure activities. As a residential developer, Berkeley appear uncomfortable when venturing outside their comfort zone. They have pushed up the total number of dwellings to 239 - still largely numerically achieved by the three blocks of Jubilee Apartments. These "four storey" blocks are in fact six storeys - if you include undercroft parking and the set-back rooftop penthouses. Although it is maintained that they are no higher than the existing mill buildings, there must be a danger that they will breach the tree canopy (especially in winter) when viewed from Ray Mead Road.

A major innovation is the introduction of Jubilee Square - an open, circulating, pedestrian space with a feature water wheel and the opportunity for public art. This will be the point at which through traffic on Mill Lane is blocked off.

The Senior Living apartments have been turned through ninety degrees to provide more satisfactory orientation to sunlight. The development brief makes no mention of a requirement for senior accommodation. It must be assumed that this is a gesture towards affordable housing, given the anticipated price levels of many of the properties. The conversion and/or rebuilding of the gentlemen's residences is to be applauded, although we are concerned that the rebuilt Dunloe Lodge will contain only one very large dwelling.

Footpaths throughout the site are to be applauded, although access to the River Thames itself is very restricted - the focus is towards Jubilee River. We remain delighted that our concept of a footbridge link to Ray Mill Island remains a firm commitment within the proposals. This is the most positive element which will improve access to and amenity use of the site.

The new junction onto the A4 (east of VW garage) has been simplified with no traffic lights. Traffic volume appears to have been reduced by permitting a left turn into Mill Lane when travelling eastwards over Maidenhead Bridge. We are concerned that the new junction will prove unsatisfactory, especially for vehicles turning right when travelling westwards along the A4, and for vehicles exiting the development and turning right for Maidenhead. Tesco et al have yet to throw its traffic onto the A4 and a controlled junction or roundabout will surely prove necessary.

Thames Path

Finally, the situation regarding the "missing link" in the Thames Path continues to be unresolved. There have been concerted efforts by residents of Bridge View to prevent a footpath being installed along their river frontage. This long running saga should have been sorted years ago, and it appears that the RBWM are now backing off in the face of confrontation and potential spiralling costs - both compensatory and legal. We are not in agreement with the current "preferred" option, which proposes to generate a private car park on 220 square metres in the northwest corner of Bridge Gardens. Not only is Bridge Gardens protected public open space within a Conservation Area, but the loss of several trees and green screening will be incurred. Furthermore, several of the Bridge View properties do not have established parking spaces for which alternative parking is a required provision. The proposed new footpath will run alongside the east of Ray Mead Road.

Martin McNamee

Maidenhead & Me

SOCIETY ART COMPETITION BRINGS STUNNING RESULTS

The Civic Society's first art competition – **Maidenhead & Me** – drew over 60 impressive entries and a wealth of positive comments from visitors to its exhibition in the Nicholsons Centre.

The competition asked entrants to reflect “what Maidenhead means to me” in the medium of their choice. Among the 62 entries were a relief wood carving, cartoons and a silk painting as well as drawings, photographs, oil paintings and watercolours. They also included 14 submissions by children in the Under-16s category.



Home Secretary and Maidenhead MP, Theresa May, formally opened the exhibition after presenting the prizes to our winners. At the launch and prize giving, which was attended by around 50 guests, Mrs May congratulated the Society for conceiving Maidenhead & Me and said: “We need to get out and tell people what is great about Maidenhead and this competition is all about that.”

The overall winner was Maidenhead artist Mandy McAllen from Summerleaze Road with an evocative depiction of scenes and images called Maidenhead in Time. The children's competition was won by 6-year-old Sophia Carter with a strikingly simple illustration of two kids on scooters in Oaken Grove.



The event was arranged to help celebrate national Civic Day 2014 on June 21st, which is about valuing where we live, organised by Civic Voice, the national charity for the civic movement.

All the entries were put on display at the exhibition in Nicholsons which was open for two weeks. Marie-Anne Leonard of Bovilles and Art on the Street who coordinated the judging said: “There were some really imaginative entries and the quality overall was impressive.”

Society chairman Bob Dulson said: “Since it was formed, a principal aim of the Society has been to stimulate public consciousness and appreciation of Maidenhead. With so many changes planned for the town, we thought the time was right to ask the artistic community what Maidenhead means to them. The feedback we’ve received has been overwhelmingly positive. It’s the first time in our 54-year history that we’ve run an art competition but it’s generated such quality, variety and interest, I think it may become an annual event.”

Maidenhead & Me was devised and organised by the Civic Society with joint sponsorship from the Louis Baylis Charitable Trust. Additional contributions, support and help were afforded by Bovilles Art Shop, Enjoy Maidenhead, the Maidenhead Advertiser and Nicholsons Shopping Centre. The Society is also grateful to those members and others who volunteered as stewards. Civic Voice said the level of cooperation was a perfect demonstration of civic partnership.

Full Competition results

Adult category

- 1st Prize (£250) – Mandy McAllen for ‘Maidenhead in Time’ (mixed media)
- 2nd Prize (£100) – Stephanie Gay for ‘A Town in the Country’ (paint on silk)
- 3rd Prize (£50) – Rod Bird for ‘6am on Platform 4’ (photograph)

A special Art on the Street prize was awarded to Geoff Blacker for ‘Maidenhead - A Mirror Image’ (lime wood carving) and the following were given commendation prizes:

- June Dobbs for ‘Heritage, Community, River, Fun’ (watercolour crayons, pencil)
- Edward Hancock for ‘Maidenhead in Black & White’ (pencil)
- Bronwen Renwick for ‘Bridge in Guards Club Gardens’ (pen & wash)

Under-16s category

- 1st Prize (£50) – Sophia Carter for ‘Scooters at Oaken Grove’ (pen)
- 2nd Prize (£20) – Imogen Quadling for ‘Growing Up at Boulters’ (acrylic)
- 3rd Prize (£10) – Isabel Audrey Saunders for ‘Modern Maidenhead’ (pencil)

Bob Dulson

Projects

NORTH TOWN MOOR POND

This pond is located on the Green Way, the stream side walk from Cookham through Maidenhead to Bray that the Society was heavily involved in creating in the 1980's. At that time the pond was very silted up and home to the larvae of gnats and midges.

The decision was made to restore the pond which is fed by a pipe taking water from road run-off which then, as now, resulted in an oily surface layer on the water. The outlet sill was repaired and a digger removed the silt most of which was distributed on adjacent banks around the pond. The variety of pond life improved and we were shortlisted for a prize arising from the European Year of the Environment.



Harold James (far right) and his gang repairing the sill in 1987

However, after thirty years the silt layer had increased again and needed to be removed. The *Make Space for Life* Group, working at North Town Moor, asked for our help and we were able to obtain a grant from the Baylis Trust to help pay for analysis of the silt to discover whether the silt was contaminated with oil or not (something that didn't arise in the 1980's!).

Hydrocarbons were found which meant specialised, and therefore expensive, disposal sites for the silt. What the Royal Borough decided to do was to dredge the silt within the pond and make a silt bank.



The new silt bank



The Royal Borough also installed a new outlet sill (*left*) with a control device that maintains a greater depth of water in the pond. They are planning to put in coir rolls planted with plugs of aquatic plants into the pond and we have offered to help fund this using the balance of the Baylis Trust grant.

Analysis of the pond life since the new developments indicate that the water is still dominated by a limited number of species characteristic of stressed environments, especially water fleas (*Daphnia* sp.) that seem to like nutrient rich water. Larvae of gnats and midges (bloodworms) were also abundant together with water lice. However, once more oxygen is introduced into the water by aquatic plants there should be greater diversity.

Ann Darracott

And these are the news headlines.....

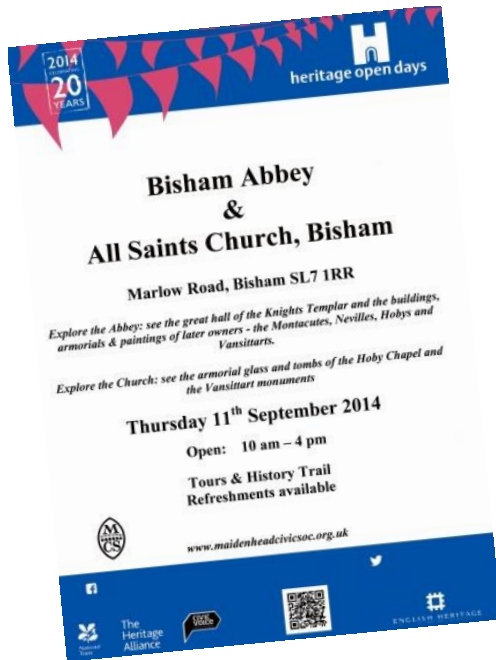
Our recent visit to the new BBC Newsroom in London was a sell-out, and everyone who came along would agree the day was most enjoyable and interesting insight into to how the programmes that we may take for granted are produced. Highlights included the chance to “read the news”, present the weather forecast and participate in a radio drama production – and there’s no doubt that there’s hidden talent in the Civic Society membership! Here’s a montage of photos taken on the day:



Future Events

The Society has planned two related events for the late summer:

HERITAGE OPEN DAY (HODS) at Bisham Abbey & All Saints Church, Bisham Thursday 11th September

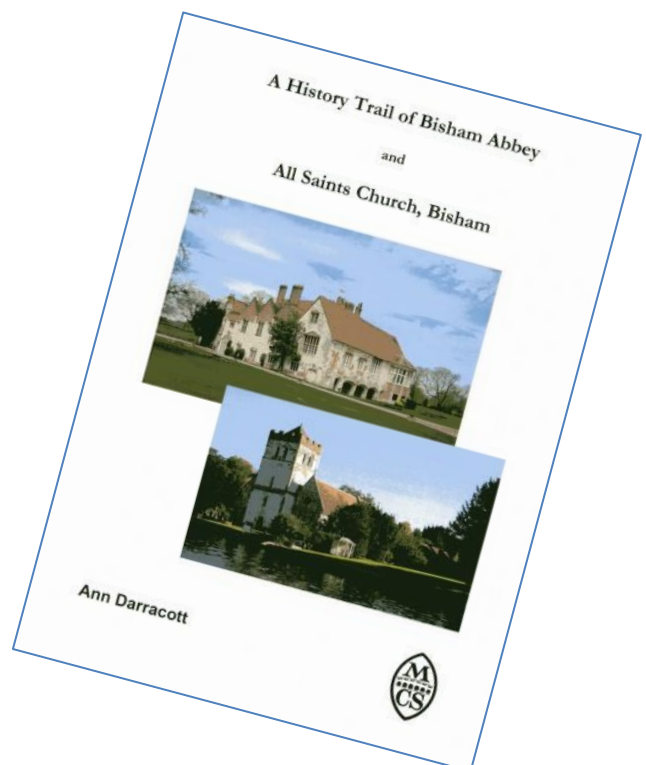


HODS is a Council of Europe initiative that is organised by Civic Voice, the National Trust and the Heritage Alliance, supported and sponsored by English Heritage. 2014 is the 20th anniversary of HODS.

This year the Society is organising a heritage open day at Bisham Abbey & All Saints Church with the cooperation of Serco who manage the Abbey and Bisham parish church.

The Abbey, grounds and church will be open from 10am to 4pm and entrance is free. There will be a printed history trail available for purchase in the Abbey, and guides will be on hand to help with explanations.

This is a unique opportunity to learn more about the history of this fascinating building begun by the Knights Templar in the C13th and whose great hall was added to by William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, in the C14th and the Hoby brothers in the C16th. Finally, the Vansittarts restored and decorated the house where once Elizabeth, the late Queen Mother, stayed.





The Great Hall at Bisham Abbey (now, above) and how it looked in the late 19th century. The large tapestries that were then in the Great Hall were brought over from Flanders by Sir Philip Hoby, and are now believed to be in Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick, Ireland. A copy of a section of this tapestry showing Tobias and the Angel can be seen at Stonor, home of Lord Camoys, near Henley. Sir Philip Hoby was married to Elizabeth Stonor.



The Society would like to thank Steve Martin, General Manager, and Claire Broomby, Business Development Manager, at the Abbey, and Patricia Burstall of All Saints Church for their kind assistance in arranging for these two buildings to be open on the day. We are also grateful to the Baylis Trust for a grant which will cover the printing of history trails for the event and other expenses.

“Shakespeare & the Countess”

A talk by Dr Chris Laoutaris, Birmingham Fellow and Lecturer at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham.

Wednesday 10th September, 7.45 for 8pm, in the Warwick Room of Bisham Abbey (this room has disabled access)

The Countess in question is Lady Elizabeth Hoby, wife of Sir Thomas Hoby who, with his older half-brother Sir Philip Hoby, built at Bisham Abbey. Her magnificent portrait hangs in the Great Hall of the Knight Templar at the Abbey. A very clever woman with a penchant for writing Latin epitaphs, after both Philip and Thomas brothers died she added the Hoby Chapel to nearby All Saints Church, to provide a setting for their magnificent alabaster monument that she helped design.



The Warwick Room at Bisham Abbey

She married secondly John Russell, heir to the Earl of Bedford, who unfortunately died before his father thus failing to make her a Countess. Her own monument in the Church, thought to be to her design, has her effigy wearing a Countess's crown.

Elizabeth is the subject of the new book, *Shakespeare & the Countess*, by Dr Chris Laoutaris and he has very kindly agreed to come to the Abbey the day before Heritage Open Day to talk about her. To quote from his book:

In November 1596 William Shakespeare was engulfed by a catastrophe. The force which stormed into his life and shook it to the core was a woman named Elizabeth Russell. This is the true story of the woman whose battle with Shakespeare and his associates gave birth to the world's most iconic theatre: the Globe.

Dr Laoutaris is happy to sign copies of his book brought to the talk.

This event will be open to the general public so please book early. To secure a place ring Joyce Delasalle on 01628 637342 and then send a cheque for £5/member (to include light refreshments) to Joyce at 7 Laxton Green, Maidenhead, SL6 3HW.

News from the Heritage Centre

The Heritage Centre's summer exhibition about **Maidenhead's Motor Industry** is in full swing with the second vintage car of the show (the only surviving Burney Streamline) now on display until August 16th, when it will be replaced by a 1932 Marendaz Special similar to the car rallied by Aileen Moss, mother of Stirling. Through him, the Moss connection continued with Vanwall in the 1950's. Tickets are available now for a special Vanwall Racing Cars lecture, which includes rare archive photos and film footage, on Thursday September 4th at 7.30pm at the Desborough Suite at the Town Hall. The talk is sponsored by Cordwallis Commercials and the exhibition by Hewland Engineering, the White Waltham company which retains Maidenhead's links with motor sport.

Also in September are the popular **River Thames Historical Cruises**, when you can enjoy 5-hours on the river between Maidenhead and Temple, with a live commentary along the way. Tickets are still available for the cruises on Tuesday 9th and Thursday 11th September; just phone us on 01628 780555.

Our World War I exhibition called '**Maidenhead's Great War - the Home Front**' runs from 17th September to 22 November. We are hoping it will be popular with local schools as well as with adult visitors, who will be surprised at some of the lesser known side effects of 4 years of war. Also planned for the autumn is a War Poets event - watch our website www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk for details.

Virginia Jenner, the Education/Learning Officer, is doing a great job and has already attracted several school visits as well as running events for families during half terms and the school holiday. She has just been awarded a Bursary to work with Langley Academy on a project to develop apps for our displays. The Heritage Centre is keeping up with technology and you can follow us on Facebook and Twitter, using the hashtag #flyaspitfire.

Meanwhile ideas for the redevelopment of the area around the Town Hall are slowly taking shape, and Maidenhead Heritage Centre intends to be an active partner in any redevelopment. The prize, of course, would be new and much bigger premises and we are encouraged by the support being shown by the Royal Borough. If nothing else, the Motoring exhibition demonstrates that bigger galleries are needed urgently - if we could have borrowed a Vanwall racing car we would have had nowhere to display it!

Visit www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk or phone 01628 780555 for details of all the events mentioned above. You will also find details of the lunchtime lectures at the Heritage Centre on the second Thursday of each month.

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 10th September 2014
Talk

“Shakespeare and the Countess”
By Dr Chris Laoutaris
Warwick Room, Bisham Abbey, 7.45 for 8.00pm
£5 members; £6 non-members

Thursday 11th September 2014
Event

Heritage Open Day
Bisham Abbey & All Saints Church, Bisham, 10am-4pm
Free

Thursday 18th September 2014
Talk

“The Archaeology of the First World War Trenches at Marlow & Berkhamsted”
By David Greenwood and Norman Groves
Organised by **Archaeology in Marlow**; Liston Hall, Chapel Street, Marlow, SL7 1DD. £5.00 at the door.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2014

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

14th January, 11th February, 11th March, 6th May, 10th June, 8th July, 9th September, 11th November, 9th December

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS FOR 2014

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

8th April, 14th October

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 19th November 2014 in the Wesley Hall at the Methodist Church at 8.00 pm.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
of the Newsletter is 10th October 2014**

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