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February 2012



Why were there road works on the A4130 opposite Temple Golf Club? See page 8

Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

## **Chairman's Foreword**

After all the festive cheer – and I hope you had some – January can seem a bit dull and uninteresting. But not for the Society....

Just before Christmas our campaign to preserve the setting of Ockwells Manor was given a major boost. A council cabinet meeting unanimously agreed to try and get a 22-acre field opposite the manor designated as Green Belt to prevent it becoming a housing estate. And after some to-ing and fro-ing, the missing link in the Millennium Walk between Berks Agricultural College and Temple Gold Club has been resolved and a crossing of the A4130 was due to be created in January. An inaugural walk of the route is planned for in the spring.

On the planning front, the new year saw plans for an exciting redevelopment of the Chapel Arches area of the High Street, centred on a revamped York Stream – a sort of "little Venice", as predicted in our November edition of Keeping in Touch (KiT). A public consultation was scheduled for early February. While there are elements that won't be to everyone's liking, it should be a significant factor in the town centre regeneration.

Under new government planning rules, local communities are being empowered to draw up their own Neighbourhood Plans. Happily and crucially these must integrate with an overarching Local Plan which the Borough is obliged to produce. RBWM has divided the Borough into seven Neighbourhood areas, five parishes and two towns. In November the Society was invited to an initial meeting to get the Maidenhead plan under way and were party in the group's first decision – to approve an application for a £20k government grant to help fund the process!

The Society is also represented on the Maidenhead Regeneration Group, an umbrella group set up to lobby for town centre improvements and a "critical friend" of PRoM. Along with others, MRG has criticised the plans for the new Kings Triangle development. There is general disappointment that ING's design is too introspective with inadequate links to the rest of the town and the station and does not meet the aspirations of the Town Centre Plan for a striking gateway development.

The Society has been disappointed too that PRoM seemed to have lost its momentum in recent months. But the appointment of a new planning chief in January should help to remedy that. The new head of planning, Simon Hurrell, will be making his first public speaking engagement as our guest at a Society lunch in May.

Finally, I'd just like to thank Brian Smith for the contribution he's made as a Trustee over the last three years. Brian has had to step down because of other commitments but he does plan to continue to get on his bike to help with the distribution of our Newsletter. We are very grateful.

Bob Dulson

### **Planning Matters**

#### **HIGH SUCCESS RATE**

We are pleased to report successful outcomes to many of the major schemes to which we have recently objected. These include the proposal for an events venue at Sheephouse Trout Farm; the redevelopment of 2 Castle Hill Terrace to include two detached new build houses in the back garden (in a Conservation Area), and the construction of a close of five houses in back gardens accessed from 10 Linden Avenue. In addition, the ongoing proposal to hang 62 advertising banners from Maidenhead lamp-posts was finally thrown out. This scheme first surfaced more than a year ago, went away and then resurfaced in the autumn. We very much hope that we have seen the back of it - and that the unauthorised trial banners which have been around for fifteen months will be taken down forthwith. We were also pleased that the proposed raised "Safe Escape Route" across Town Moor will not now be constructed. It was a superfluous requirement as a condition of the development of the Badnells Pit site. It would have detracted from the open space of Town Moor and have been of little relevance in the event of future flooding.

At its meeting on 24 January, the Development and Control Panel refused the application for a development of 12 flats at 19/21 Craufurd Rise. This decision is welcomed by the Society as we were concerned that this would have resulted in the ongoing "Shoppenhangars style" development of Marlow Road/Craufurd Rise.

#### **APPLICATIONS ONLY ONLINE**

Since the last newsletter your Planning Group has reviewed about forty applications and passed comments on ten projects. This rate of review is very much in line with what has become established over recent years. However, the process has become more difficult with the move by the RBWM to a system which is held exclusively online. For the past six months we have not had the facility to examine and evaluate the hard copy files which had previously been available. The on-line planning system has to be accessed and linked to a large screen television for the Planning Group to gather round and evaluate the selected applications. The online system is much less convenient to work with. Scale measurements cannot be made and only one document can be accessed at a time, so comparisons (of existing and proposed, for example) are made much more difficult. Furthermore, the labelling/descriptive for each file is inadequate in both detail and accuracy. If an individual is interested in one particular project time can be taken to become familiar with the file. However, when examining a number of files (some of inadequate standard) it is much more difficult to evaluate the relevant issues. It is to be hoped that the planning process itself is not compromised by the need to examine on line, which is combined with the ever increasing pressure for speedy decision making.

#### CONSULTATION

We have been involved in several consultation processes. We considered and commented on the King Street Triangle Scheme (see below). We supported the residents-driven initiative to create a new Conservation Area for the so-called Furze Platt Triangle. Members are probably aware that this initiative has been successful, and we congratulate those Civic Society members who were involved in the process. Comments were also made to South Bucks District Council on the proposal to develop an out of town shopping centre alongside the proposed Tesco supermarket at the Bishop Centre in Taplow (see below). The introduction of around twelve substantial retail units would compound the already difficult trading conditions experienced by Maidenhead Town Centre. There is even the risk that some retailers may be tempted to relocate to the new scheme. The RBWM also added similar concerns in a submission to South Bucks District Council. There have been no further developments or progress to report on the Taplow Paper Mill/Skindles site.

#### TRANSFORMING CHAPEL ARCHES

The Society was able to preview the designs for a major transformation of Chapel Arches, prior to the public exhibition earlier this month, which we hope you were able to attend. It's a mixed development of apartments, shops and offices from the Shanly Group. With a revamped York Stream at its heart, it makes use of the Colonnade and an area behind, as well as the old cinema site and the block on the corner of St Ives Road. It creates a bijou shop and waterside café culture, with a distinctly Venetian theme, which could be a significant driver for regeneration.



An artist's impression of the scheme looking towards the High Street from the direction of Hines Meadow car park.....



....and how the view from Chapel Arches towards the Library might look

#### TRIANGLE PLANS - STILL MORE TO DO

After all the fanfare and fuss, the Society is disappointed by the outline plans for the new shopping complex Kings Triangle.

There is unanimous agreement that something must be done to regenerate this area of the town centre. It provides a link between the existing shopping areas of the High Street and Nicholson's Centre to the railway station (and ultimately a "transport hub" incorporating buses and Crossrail terminus). The challenge is to develop a retail centre and improve the overall appeal, but without affecting the existing shopping locations, especially the High Street.

One of the most important issues is pedestrian flow. We were disappointed that the scheme represented an understated "gateway" to the town from the Railway Station. We'd like to see a "high level" pedestrian bridge connecting the station to the new development, keeping foot traffic clear of the busy junction.

At the northern end the link to Nicholson's Centre needed broadening to encourage pedestrian flow and integrate the scheme. It was important to consider the flow within the centre - not just through it. The long curve of the Queen Street frontage was in danger of appearing intimidating without some additional features to relieve it.

It is appreciated that the key viability driver is the total retail space but the so-called public spaces were inadequate and would be in shade for much of the year because of the height of the surrounding structures.

It is important that the scheme brings new retailers into town. We do not wish to see successful offerings (Marks & Spencer or Boots) relocating into the scheme. In Maidenhead terms, M & S is an anchor store and there would be dire consequences for the High Street if it were to relocate. We need an expanded offer of new retail operators to increase the overall pull of the town - not a mass relocation of existing trade.

We are supportive of the retail/office/residential mix. It is unclear if the centre will be locked at night. The key long-term objective of the "King Street Triangle" scheme should be to create a successful and integral part of the town - which does not operate in isolation. It is both desirable and essential that the entire town centre benefits from the revitalisation of this sadly neglected area.

#### COUNCILS MUST LIAISE OVER BISHOP CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

The Royal Borough and S. Bucks District councils should get together to discuss the plans to redevelop the Bishop Centre in Taplow, the Society has said.

The Society has submitted a formal objection to the plan to bring big high street stores and a major supermarket to the Bishop Centre. It says the plans pose a direct threat to the long-overdue regeneration of Maidenhead town centre and could significantly damage trade in Burnham and Slough too.

ING's plans for the new Kings Triangle in Maidenhead include 20,000 sq m of retail floorspace with many units of similar size and potential tenancy to those proposed for Bishop Centre. Agents for the Bishop Centre redevelopment have suggested that Maidenhead could benefit from a complementary out-of-town shopping complex but the evidence suggests otherwise, and a direct clash is on the cards.

The Society is urging the two councils to get together to discuss them, in the interests of the communities concerned. In a letter to both councils, the Society has said: "It is clear that a combined effort is required to avoid a potential conflict. This is too important simply to be left to market forces."

S. Bucks planning policy stipulates that any improvement to the Bishop Centre should be related to local need and avoid impact on other local centres. The Society says the proposals fail to comply on both counts. "For these reason we would like to see the scheme revised and we urge SBDC to refuse the application or at least to defer the decision while the proposal is reconsidered."

The Society also criticised the design of the Bishop Centre development and has concerns about the traffic implications. It adds: "There is no evidence of desire from local residents for what's on offer and the scale and role of the proposition is distinctly out of place."

#### NEW HEAD OF PLANNING APPOINTED

The Royal Borough has appointed Simon Hurrell, a planner and economist, as the council's new Head of Planning and Development. He succeeds Tim Slaney who moved to be director of planning at the new South Downs National Park in the autumn. In fact, Simon has been holding the reins in the planning department since Tim's departure.



He said: "These are exciting times for the Roval Borough. We have new opportunities to improve the quality of life and environment for everyone and, through plan new local the consultation which is due to start soon, we hope to engage people from across the community so everyone has the opportunity to be involved."

As well as planning, Simon has experience in economic development, property management, procurement and tourism in a career which has spanned the

public and private sectors in various parts of the country. Most recently he was programme director for Ealing's Building Schools for the Future project. Simon lives in west London with his wife Louise, and his interests include singing, walking, historic buildings and gardens.

Simon's first public speaking engagement will be as the Civic Society's guest at a luncheon in May. See page 16 for details.

#### Martin McNamee and Bob Dulson

### **Projects**

#### THE MILLENNIUM WALK

#### **Opening of New Link - Prospect Hill to Temple Golf Club**

At long last we are able to report actual progress towards the completion of the Millennium Walk that runs from Hurley across country to Maidenhead Riverside. The new permitted path on Berkshire College of Agriculture land has been put in place and the works necessary to create a safe crossing of the A4130 near Temple Golf Club were recently completed. We are extremely grateful to Peter Thorn, past Principal of Berkshire College of Agriculture who originally agreed to the new permitted path and to the current Principal, Steve Wain, for supporting the project. Peter is also Chairman of the RBWM's Local Access Forum that has made the completion of the Millennium Walk a priority objective.

To launch this new addition to the path network we are organising in conjunction with East Berks Ramblers Association an inaugural walk along the path on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May (see page 16 for further details). We are also aiming to publish, by the 12<sup>th</sup> May, a new leaflet describing the route. Space is limited on the leaflet, so only a few photos of places of interest can be included.

However, the following photos will give a taste of some of the interesting building and beautiful views that you will be able to see now as you walk along the section from Pinkneys Green, via the open land of Temple Golf Club to Hurley.



The sweeping vista looking towards the east across Temple Golf Club

On passing through the Golf Club towards the A4130, walkers will discover the new safe crossing a few yards along the road towards Maidenhead. On the opposite side of the road there is now a gently inclined path, protected from the traffic by a fenced barrier, which leads up to the new gate at the entry to the College of Agriculture land.

The construction of the crossing and gate was organised by the Highways Department of the Royal Borough, and was built by their contractors Balfour Beatty, with CD Fencing constructing the retaining wall. The Society is contributing £750 towards the Royal Borough's estimated costs of some £20,000.



The gentle incline from the road up to the College of Agriculture land



The new gate, with the Golf Club across the road in the distance



Finally! We have the warning sign on the A4130



Walking westwards along the new permitted path on College of Agriculture land, viewed from the new gate



Another fine panoramic view, this time looking north towards Hurley and the Thames valley from the top of Prospect Hill



Having crossed the Maidenhead to Henley Road and proceeded down Hurley High Street, the first building of note is Ye Olde Bell Inn - founded in 1135, though the present building is 15<sup>th</sup> Century. It was originally a guest house for the priory at the end of the road. During WWII Winston Churchill and Dwight D Eisenhower stayed there while visiting Ladye Place - a secret U.S. Intelligence base - next to the church.



The small early 14<sup>th</sup> Century tithe barn, which stands next to one of three village greens purchased in 1976 by Hurley Village Association, together with the lordship of the manor.



St Mary the Virgin Church. A Benedictine Priory, as a cell to Westminster Abbey, was founded in this church in 1086 by the Norman lord, Geoffrey de Mandeville. Through the gateway are the remains of the monastic cloister. Did you spot it in a recent episode of "Midsummer Murders"?



*Tithecote House – formerly an early 14<sup>th</sup> Century tithe barn with dovecote before conversion in 1950* 

#### **OCKWELLS MANOR SETTING**

As you know we have been campaigning to protect the setting of Ockwells Manor for some years. In 2009 we approached Maidenhead Town Forum to have the 22-acre field to the north the manor (see the Google Earth image below) re-designated as green belt and in the last couple of years we have visited places connected with Ockwells to draw attention to the threat. Our campaign has recently received a fillip as, following a successful online and paper petition organised by Cox Green Councillors, the Council in December 2011 agreed unanimously to try and designate the field as greenbelt to prevent it becoming a housing estate. Many thanks to all of you who voted.

The covenants held by the Trust were set up by a past owner of Ockwells Manor, Sir Edward Barry, who in 1945 covenanted 260 acres that included the manor house and lands to the north and south. A later covenant of 1947 protects 63 acres to the west of Ockwells.



Since then, the National Trust have reluctantly agreed to relinquish the covenant governing land north of the house to allow the building of a road and housing estates. Only 22 acres remain of this land. The Civic Society feels that the Trust have done more than enough to facilitate the suburban spread of Maidenhead and are actively supporting the NT's current attempt to preserve the covenant on the remaining field; the case will come before a High Court Judge in the spring.

It is true that, as it is a private house, Ockwells is not usually open to the general public, though the current owners have allowed interested groups to visit it, and the

house and grounds have been open for charitable purposes, most recently in aid of St Michael's Church Restoration Fund. To give the wider public a chance to appreciate this Grade I listed building - described by Nicolas Pevsner as *the most refined and the most sophisticated timber framed mansion in England*, a building older than St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle - the Society has created a PowerPoint presentation that is a *"Virtual Tour"* of Ockwells Manor house. This has been used to give talks to interested groups, in return for a small fee to help support the Civic Society's projects. Any group wishing to "take the virtual tour" should contact the Society via the website.



If the field is built on, it will degrade the setting of the manor house and imperil its future. Who is going to buy it with ca. 400 houses next door? Currently, one side of the oriel in the Great Hall, that houses the priceless armorial glass, is being treated for wet rot and death watch beetle; some glass has had to be taken out so that the repair can be effected. In addition, the ceiling of a room on the west wide of the house is sagging, as a previous owner had knocked two rooms into one by removing the intervening wall. This is a building of brick and timber that needs a lot of TLC. Its survival until now is a miracle; its future depends on what happens in the High Court this spring.

In 1892 the auctioneer, when bidding for the house reached £22,500 and was then withdrawn, said that he wished somebody had the *patriotism to purchase the property and present the house to the nation as a specimen of what an English house had been and should be.* The Society has long believed that Ockwells, because of its great heritage value, should be owned by the nation and the same goes for its setting.

Ann Darracott

### **Events**

As usual we will not be organising any visits over the winter/spring period since most attractions are closed. We have not planned any evening talks for the near future, but instead have organised two special lunchtime talks, which we believe will be of great interest to all members.

#### AGE CONCERN – A LOCAL SUCCESS STORY

Since 1970 life expectancy has been increasing by 2 years every decade. It's now 78 for men and 82 for women. Nearly one in five of us will live to celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. All well and good, but getting older is something that concerns us all, particularly if there's no family at hand to help.

In 2010, Age Concern Slough & Berkshire East (ACSABE), in common with a majority of other former Age Concern organisations, chose not to go with the merger with Help the Aged that saw the creation of Age UK.

Tracey Morgan, CEO of ACSABE, says: "We decided to remain an independent local charity. It means that the funds we raise can be used locally to improve the quality of life for local older people and to provide local services, help and support."

Last year ACSABE's home visitors provided services for nearly 400 vulnerable older people. The charity's turnover was £2.5 million enabling 150 paid staff and 500 volunteers to provide a wide range of services and advice as well as personal care.

Tracey will be speaking about this remarkable local success story and its relevance to Maidenhead at our Civic Society Luncheon at Norden Farm on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March at 12.30 pm. We have arranged a three-course meal and the price includes a welcoming drink. Members £27 and non-members £29. For details and a booking form, see page 18.



# NEW PLANNING CHIEF'S FIRST PUBLIC OUTING - SOCIETY LUNCHEON

The special guest at our Civic Society luncheon in May will be the Royal Borough's new Head of Planning and Development, Simon Hurrell. He arrives just as the government's new planning initiatives begin to take effect. Planning is firmly back on the agenda. What, for example, will Neighbourhood Planning or the new national planning policy guidelines mean for Maidenhead?

We are delighted that Simon, who was appointed in January, has chosen to make his first public speaking engagement with the Society.

Our luncheon is being held on Friday  $11^{\text{th}}$  May at Boulters Restaurant at 12.30 pm. Boulters is now enjoying a deserved renaissance, following its extensive makeover a couple of years ago. Their chef has put together a delightful three-course menu for us with choices for each of the courses, and the price includes a welcome drink. Members £27, non-members £29.

#### The Menu:

#### Starters

Home Smoked Scottish Salmon, Blini & Chive Cream; or

Pea & Parmesan Risotto

#### Mains

Pork Tenderloin with Mash Potato, spinach, apple salad, apple purée & Calvados jus; or

Pan Fried Hake with Lyonnais Potatoes, fennel & Bouillabaisse Sauce **Dessert** 

Macerated Strawberries with Vanilla & mint Pannacotta; or

Pear & Marsala with Walnut Ice Cream

Please indicate your choices on the booking form on page 18 (and perhaps keep a note of what you ordered!)

#### INAUGURAL WALK OF THE NEW PERMITTED PATH

To launch this new addition to the Millennium Walk we are organising an inaugural walk along it on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May. The plan is to meet in Hurley car park (at the far end of Hurley High Street) at 10.00 am and leave via a coach at 10.15 am for Pinkneys Green from where we will walk the 3.5 miles, back to Hurley, expecting to arrive at Temple Golf Club at midday for the formal opening of the new link. After this we will carry on to Hurley, where we hope St Mary's Church, where a Benedictine monastery was founded in 1086, will be open.

As we are not sure whether the next Newsletter will get to interested people in time, we are giving you the information now. If you want to book a place on the coach please ring Mike Copeland on 01628 634181, or email at mike@mjcconsulting.demon.co.uk, giving your name, number of people (and their names) and a contact phone number; don't delay as there will be walkers from

several other groups who'll also want to hitch a lift! There will be a charge of  $\pounds$ 4/person to cover the cost of the coach and light refreshments provided in the Sun Lounge of Temple Golf Club after the formal opening. This will be collected on the coach. No dogs, please, and the golf club asks that their dress code be adhered to (i.e. no blue jeans!!)

#### ST LUKES CHURCH FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

The Executive Committee of the Society meets in St Luke's Parish Centre and so we were contacted by the church's new vicar, Rev Sally Lynch, to see if we would like to participate in their first Christmas Tree Festival on 9-11 December 2011 that involved sponsoring and decorating a tree. We agreed and the combined talents of Bob & Angela Dulson, Ann Darracott and new Hon. Secretary Eileen Goford produced a splendid tree decked out in the Society's colours (blue & white), with numerous baubles describing our activities. Over the weekend the church was open for the many trees to be viewed. Visitors, including our MP Theresa May and the Mayor Asghar Majeed, could vote for their favourite tree, patronise the craft and produce stalls and partake of seasonal refreshments. It was a pleasant event that will be repeated again this year, so we will be able to give you more warning this time.



## **Booking Forms**

#### Civic Society Age Concern Lunch

Please reserve for me ......places at £27 and / or ..... places at £29 for the *Civic* Society Age Concern Lunch on Thursday  $29^{th}$  March at Norden Farm. I enclose a cheque for £..... payable to Maidenhead Civic Society.

NAME...... (PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS)

ADDRESS	
POSTCODE	TELEPHONE No

#### Civic Society Simon Hurrell Lunch

Please reserve for me ......places at £27 *and / or* ..... places at £29 for the *Civic Society Simon Hurrell Lunch* on Friday 11 May at Boulters Restaurant. I enclose a cheque for £...... payable to Maidenhead Civic Society.

NAME...... (PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS)

ADDRESS.....

POSTCODE......TELEPHONE No.....

My party's names and menu choices are:

	Name(s) (USE BLOCK CAPITALS)	Starter Salmon / Ris	Main Pork / Hake	Dessert Strawb / Pear
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

Please send your completed form to Mike Copeland, 14 Laburnham Road, Maidenhead, SL6 4DB to reach him no later than April 20<sup>th</sup>. Phone: 01628 634181. Email: mike@mjcconsulting.demon.co.uk

### Announcements

"Thank you very much" to all members who have paid their annual subscriptions in FULL, in line with current Membership fees, for the period 1st June 2011 till 31st May 2012!

I would urge members who have not updated their Standing Orders to the current subscription levels to please do so before the next year commencing 1st June 2012. If you are still short of the correct contribution this year, cash or cheque to the membership secretary will put the status of your account to 'Paid in Full'.

I would also remind those members who have NOT PAID at all, for whatever reason, that it is not too late to send in their dues now or to let the membership secretary know otherwise. Your help will be greatly appreciated as it contributes directly to providing membership support to the Society.

Shashi Dare

### **News From The Heritage Centre**

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the 2012 Olympics are being celebrated at the Heritage Centre in Park Street this spring.

Following building works to create a new visitor entrance, funded by Biffaward, the Centre will reopen on March 1st with a special Diamond Jubilee exhibition called "God Save the Queen!" The exhibition will feature royal souvenirs from the last 60 years, photographs of royal visits to the Maidenhead area, films and much more besides.

Following in April (April 5th - June 10th) will be a special exhibition called "Our Sporting Life", which is a national exhibition with a local Maidenhead flavour. The core of the exhibition concentrates on the modern Olympics, and features Lord Desborough as organiser of the 1908 London Olympics. Around this core will be a celebration of our local sporting heritage: everything from Vanwall racing cars to paralympic archers. Among objects on display will be a very rare programme from the 1908 games, an Olympic torch carried through the streets of Maidenhead in 1947, and Olympic posters from the 1980s.

The permanent "Grandma Flew Spitfires" exhibition, with its highly popular Spitfire simulator, will also reopen on March 1st.

More details from the Heritage Centre websites <u>www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk</u> and <u>www.atamuseum.org</u>

### **Dates For Your Diary**

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012 Social Event

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2012 Social Event The Civic Society Luncheon "Age Concern – a Local Success Story" Talk by Tracey Morgan. Norden Farm, Maidenhead, 12.30pm

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The Civic Society Luncheon "Planning in the Royal Borough" Talk by Simon Hurrell Boulter's Restaurant, 12.30pm

#### CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

President of the Trustees	John McIntosh, 26 Harvest Hill Road, SL6 2QQ	633259
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#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2012**

Parish Centre in St. Luke's Church, at 7.45 pm. 10<sup>th</sup> January, 14<sup>th</sup> February, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 8<sup>th</sup> May, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 13<sup>th</sup> November, 11<sup>th</sup> December

#### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS FOR 2012**

Parish Centre in St. Luke's Church, at 7.45 p.m. 10<sup>th</sup> April, 9<sup>th</sup> October

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 21st November 2011 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 13<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

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