



Maidenhead Civic Society NEWS



Issue 1/13

Feb 2013



*Scenes like this are rapidly vanishing as new developments lead to a new Maidenhead. How can we help we preserve what's best of what's left?
See page 7.*

Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

Chairman's Foreword

The word, of course, is already out. As we've noted previously, Maidenhead has caught the imagination of the property gurus with a number of national journals putting the town at or near the top of their preferred buy-to-let investment lists worldwide. And in recent months there's been considerable interest in accommodation and redevelopment opportunities – the latest being the acquisition of the 'eyesore' Berkshire House by a company who want to turn it into flats.

All the activity to date, however, has been self-generated with Crossrail being a significant factor. Other than the publication of the town centre Area Action Plan (AAP), there's been no proactive attempt by the Borough to stimulate interest. But that's about to change.

Towards the end of this month, under the auspices of PRoM, the council will be taking the boldest step it's ever taken to bolster Maidenhead's plans for rejuvenation.

Transforming Maidenhead is a marketing event aimed at agents and developers who will be told about the great investment opportunities to be had here and the changes that are in the pipeline. Business and community leaders will set out what it's like as a place to live and work; and emphasis will be placed on its unique accessibility.

At our committee dinner last month, Theresa May expressed her frustration at the state of the town centre. "The people and the catchment could support a totally different town centre from the one we have," she said. And she's right.

We must hope that the Borough's proactive approach will pay off and attract serious, high-calibre investors in it for the long-term, not spec builders looking for a quick win. Residents and the AAP are looking specifically for a step-change in quality. The message must be: Maidonians are clear about what they want – can you exceed their expectations?

Bob Dulson

Planning Matters

The routine meetings of the Planning Group take place every month, and since the last Newsletter more than thirty applications were discussed in depth, and comments were submitted on eleven proposals.

A further proposal was submitted for the defunct Chef Peking site on Ray Mead Road. The latest scheme is to build nine apartments with landscaping and car parking. Although we would have preferred to see the building continue as a restaurant to enhance the leisure potential of the Riverside, a residential scheme is preferable to the previous possible uses, which included retail (not another Tesco Express!) As long as the architectural style reflects and enhances the late Victorian/Edwardian atmosphere of the surrounding Conservation Area we believe that the latest proposal is an acceptable solution.

Members of the Civic Society will be aware of the current state of flux which is overwhelming planning legislation and procedure. The National Planning Framework was adopted in mid-2012. Before it could be implemented and/or assessed, the Government introduced new proposals to free up “Permitted Development” by allowing extensions and conservatories to be built up to eight metres from the existing house – as long as this did not occupy more than half of the back garden. This was to be permitted without going through the planning process and regardless of neighbours and other issues such as flood risk. The belief is that the planning process slows down development and inhibits building activity. It is very much hoped that the Government is re-considering the proposals, which over a period of three years could do much to undo what has been achieved by planning discipline to date.

WATERWAYS AND CHAPEL ARCHES

The Waterways Regeneration Scheme has at last been approved by the planners. However, there are many conditions to be satisfied and considerable funding has to be put in place. We believe that the scheme will improve the appeal and leisure amenity of the east end of the High Street. The Shanly Group have put forward an ambitious scheme for the Chapel Arches area. Our detailed comments of 22nd November can be read on the Society’s website at:

www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk/planning/applications/2012/2012_aug_dec.html,
Applications 12/02762, 12/02770. 12/02771 and 12/03096 – “Chapel Arches development applications for One Bridge Avenue, Copthall House, two multi storey blocks (all retail/restaurant/office/residential) with associated works including the demolition of the Colonnade.”

Our overriding concern relates to the height of many of the residential blocks. The developer has taken the Sainsbury scheme as the yardstick to build to a height of eight storeys. We believe this is excessive, especially when extended over a large

area of the town. We are concerned that, encouraged by these proposals, the Shanly Group are proposing 23 apartments in a block five storeys high at 8-10 Bridge Avenue. We also seek clarification on the effect of the proposal on the Green Way.



How high should the buildings be?

TAPLOW PAPER MILL SITE

There was a South Bucks consultation on the Mill House/Taplow Paper Mill/Skindles proposals. We responded to the questionnaire and also made a written submission which is printed below:

“Introduction

The area is of special interest to Maidenians. It forms the backdrop to a particularly attractive stretch of the River Thames between Boulter's Lock and the listed Maidenhead Bridge, and incorporates the long-forsaken former Skindles hotel.

Maidenhead Civic Society has held a close interest in the site over many years and especially since the closure of the former paper mill and sale of the land in 2006 which provided an overdue opportunity to improve the area. We therefore applauded the initiatives by South Bucks DC to breathe new life into the area through the swift appraisal and extension of the Conservation Area, the listing of Glen Island House, and the inclusion of a Policy (CP 15) in the Council's Core Strategy which calls specifically for its sensitive regeneration.

Like our colleagues in the Hitcham and Taplow Society, we believe that CP15 strikes the right balance between the need for regeneration and the protection and enhancement of the riverside environment and the Green Belt. We were also encouraged by the Planning Inspector's additional comments when, noting that the site was adjacent to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead across the Thames, she said: "Policy CP15, to be followed in due course by a Development Brief, would provide a suitable framework for the conservation-led regeneration of this site which would take into account the important issues including those which cross boundaries."

Response to the Consultation

Maidenhead Civic Society supports the principle of sensitive redevelopment of the site in line with CP15 because of the potential benefits it would bring to communities on both sides of the river and visitors, as well as much needed improvements to an important gateway site in this splendid Thames setting.

To this end there is much that is admirable in the draft. In particular we welcome:

- Conservation-led approach
- Proposed land uses, with controls on heights and footprint of new built development
- Improved public access, especially the new footbridge of which we have long been staunch advocates
- Opportunities for employment
- Removal of the gasholder and retention / improvement of views and vistas
- The re-use of Skindles and other buildings of historic interest

However, we have a number of areas of concern:

- A most significant aspect of the site and its major asset is the River Thames. References are made to views of and access to the river but there is scant regard for leisure and tourism or the potential commercial opportunities they present. The words "tourism" or "tourist" do not appear anywhere in the document. Visitors are referred to only in the context of people visiting employment sites. There are no references at all to boats or boating and moorings are mentioned only once as a broad objective. These are serious omissions. We were disappointed at the lack of any reference to "tourism" or "leisure" in CP15. Although implicit in the phraseology, the potential for these two areas of activity should be understood and incorporated.
- Perhaps the most disturbing omission is the absence of any real indication of the amount of development, number of dwellings or units of employment envisaged, which undermines the authority of the Brief as an SPD. Traffic constraints, revised flood risk zones and community opinion all suggest a lower quantity.
- Perhaps because of the restrictions imposed by the new flood zones, the document falls short of the ambitious and imaginative destination we envisaged coming forward from the early discussions. Some of the

shortcomings could be easily addressed with further public access, a Thameside footpath, public slipways, etc. Others would need more thought and carefully chosen locations, e.g. water-related businesses, boating facilities, food and drink amenities. With the right partner and the right advice, a marina would be possible, serving a need and providing a destination for boaters and visitors.”

There are no proposals for the redevelopment of Skindles, and the number of dwellings is unclear. We are disappointed at the lack of river-related activity – both business and leisure. Public access needs to be improved – especially to the west of the site. We are encouraged that the footbridge for Boulters Lock is now a firm proposal – although there is an issue of design and funding.



The progressively deteriorating Skindles Hotel site, which recently suffered further ignominy when the chimney collapsed.

There has also been a RBWM consultation on the potential use of approximately 60 locations around Maidenhead. In some cases, the use of sites was already determined. Some sites were candidates for a change of use. This process was part of the Maidenhead Local Plan. There was also a specific consultation on two sites on which we have already expressed concerns: firstly, the proposal to remove Spencers Farm from the protection of the Green Belt and to permit the construction of 400 dwellings; and, secondly, to re-enforce the protection of the land adjacent to Ockwells Manor – currently covenanted, but not designated as Green Belt. Obviously in both cases we felt that Green Belt status should be maintained.

Finally, it should be recorded that the contentious proposals for back-garden development at 10 Linden Avenue (in the Furze Platt Conservation Area) went to appeal and the outcome is awaited.

PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE – MAKE A LIST

The Civic Society is supporting a call for the creation of a *Heritage Assets List* to help protect unlisted buildings. It could also include streetscapes and vistas which people think are important to our heritage.

The idea was originally floated by a former council conservation officer at a meeting with the Windsor and Eton Society last year and it was raised again recently by campaigners who fought successfully to save Eton College's old sanatorium.



Should buildings like these be on a Heritage Assets List?



Such a list could contain buildings, barns and monuments which are not already protected by Conservation Area or Listed Building status and views, as well as spaces, vistas and views. The Borough has said it would support the plan in principle.

So who would draw up the list? Our chairman, Bob Dulson, believes it would sit well on the agenda of the groups currently involved in Neighbourhood Planning in

Windsor and Maidenhead. “These groups are being encouraged to identify opportunities for improvement, development and – in line with government policy – growth, so it would make sense if they were to note the places worth preserving at the same time.”

The list would include sites which are distinctive or of particular importance to the community and deserve recognition. However, being listed would not give a site any extra statutory protection.

“If all it does is make us more aware of what’s around us, that’s a good thing,” says Bob, “But it should change the level of consideration given to preserving the character or appearance of a site during a planning application. At another level it could form the basis of a ‘waiting list’ of sites that could be considered for formal protection in future.”

Currently, more than half the local authorities in the UK have a list for sites of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest.

THERESA PUTS TOWN CENTRE AND HEALTHCARE ON THE MENU

Town centre regeneration and new proposals for a super-hub hospital in Maidenhead were on the menu at the Society’s annual Committee Dinner in January.

Special guest Rt Hon Theresa May MP paid tribute to the Society, to the Waterways Group and to PRoM for what they were doing towards the regeneration of Maidenhead. The state of town centre had been a key issue pre-1997 when she first became our MP and it was still an issue now. “It’s very frustrating when you know that the people and the catchment could support a totally different town centre from the one we currently have,” she said. “It is important to keep up the momentum and show willingness, otherwise developers may pass us by.”

Speaking to forty Society members and friends at Moor Hall in Cookham, she said the government’s new planning framework would help by providing a system that would meet local needs and lead to more local decisions, without standing in the way of growth.

Another question that had been around since before she was an MP was the future of Wexham Park and hospital provision in the area. Mrs May reminded guests that eight years previously she had advocated building a new super facility near Junction 8/9 on the M4.

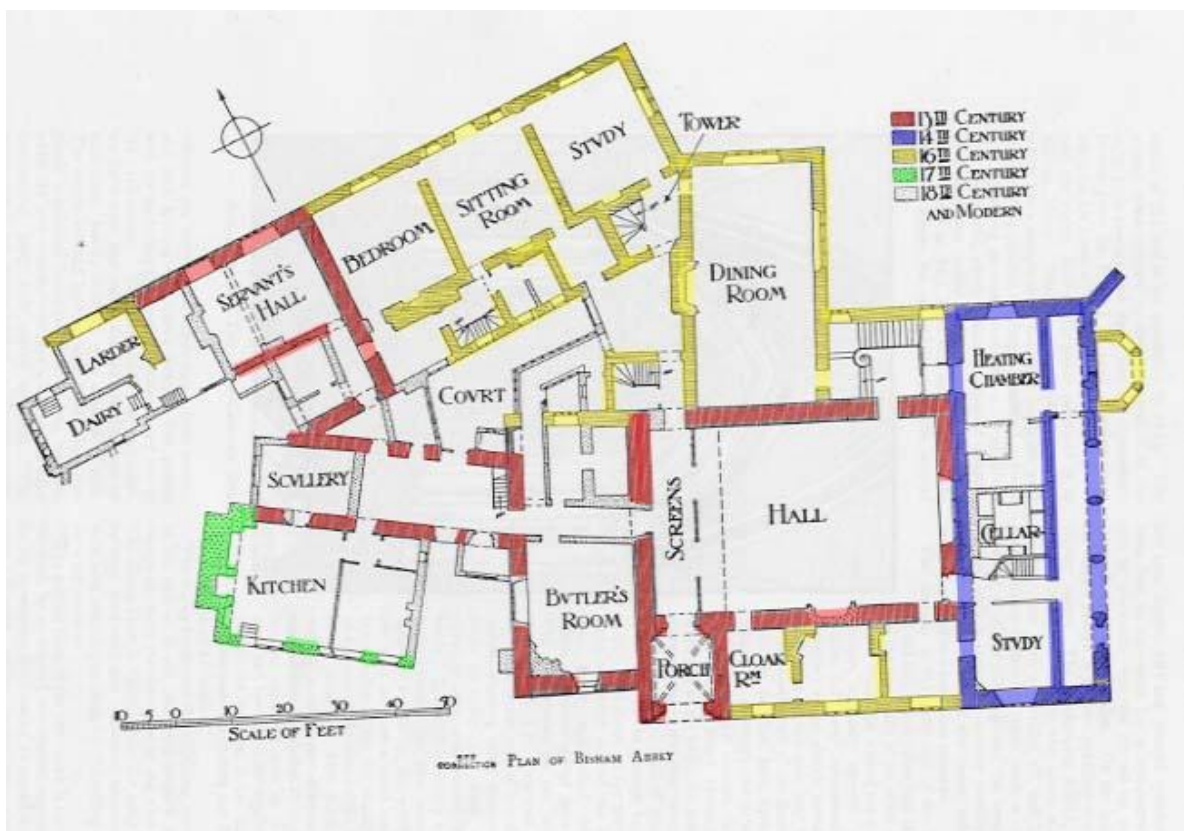
This was now back on the agenda. Proposals by Bracknell MP and GP Philip Lee would see a Royal Thames Valley Hospital being built at the “epicentre” of the region in Maidenhead with smaller community services in outlying areas in a sort of “hub and spoke” model.

Martin McNamee and Bob Dulson

Bisham Abbey

PUBLIC ACCESS

Last year we were approached by the Marlow Society for help in arranging a visit to the Abbey by the Flintshire Historical Society in July 2013. Flintshire is a part of North Wales with a historical link to the Abbey and also the Hurley/Bisham area (more of that in the next newsletter). The Abbey - a Grade I listed building, dating from the C13th with additions from the C14th and C16th - is owned by Sport England and the site is now managed by Serco (who also manage HM Prisons and other places!). I will be visiting Bisham shortly to help facilitate this visit and in this connection we are very grateful to our MP, Theresa May, for contacting the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to clarify the question of public access to the Abbey with the current management.



Plan of Bisham Abbey layout

The Flint Society is interested in the existing Abbey because part of it was built by William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, who, in the C14th, added a quadrangle onto the end of the Templar's Hall (the remaining side of this is to the right of the above plan). He also built the lost priory church. C14th armorial glass for Montacute and his wife, Katherine Grandison, probably retrieved from the demolished church and put back up in 1562 by Thomas Hoby, can still be seen in the Elizabethan Room in the Abbey.

LOCATING BISHAM PRIORY CHURCH

The Council have recently approved a planning application to build a new accommodation block at the Abbey together with an increase in parking provision. English Heritage said permission should not be given until there has been an archaeological field evaluation of the site. Unfortunately, in practice, this field evaluation only comprised digging trial trenches near to the existing building, apparently to establish the depth of worked land. In our comments on this planning application we urged that the archaeological field evaluations should include a ground probing radar survey to be carried out in the hope that it would find the location of Bisham Priory Church which was demolished during the Reformation. Regrettably, this is not now going to happen.

Bisham Priory was founded by William Montacute in 1337, in which year he was made Earl of Salisbury by Edward III. Apart from building a priory church for the order of Austin Canons he added a quadrangle or cloister onto the end of the C13th Knights Templar hall. It was only an abbey for six months (when Henry VIII moved the abbot and monks from Chertsey there to pray for his dead wife Jane) but the name has stuck.

By 1552, after the dissolution of the monasteries, including Bisham Priory, when the place was acquired by Philip Hoby (the tomb of Philip and his brother Thomas is in nearby Bisham Parish Church), the priory church had already been levelled. The puzzle yet to be resolved is: *where was it located?*



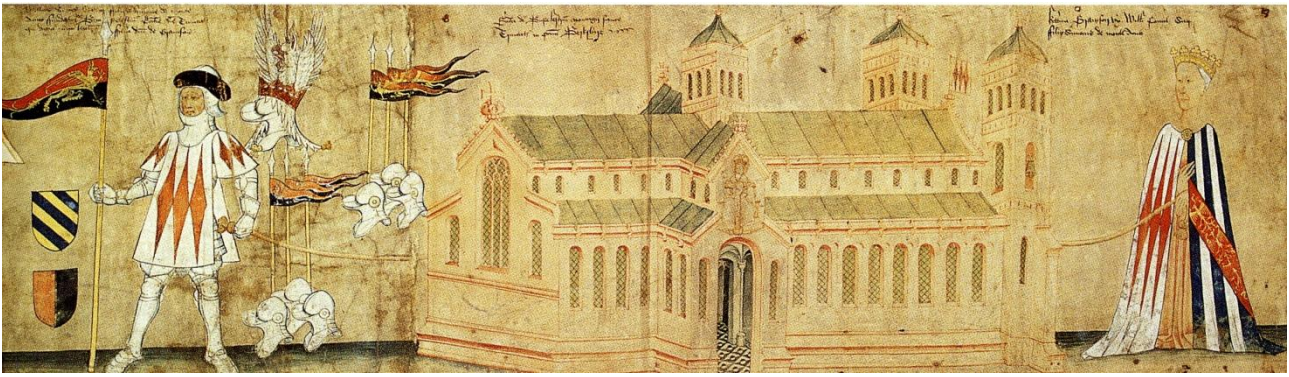
1603 Bisham Abbey when held by Edward Hoby; the orchard in the south west was planted by his father in 1562. This area is now covered with buildings (note that the map is oriented with west at the top)

Given that churches usually have an east-west orientation, with the quire at the east end, there are only a limited number of places where it could have been located and still be accessible from the road. We know it needed access to the road as in 1463, Richard Neville (the “Kingmaker”), Earl of Warwick & Salisbury, then holding Bisham, arranged an elaborate funeral procession for his father, Richard (who had married the Montacute heiress becoming earl of Salisbury in her right), and his brother Thomas (both killed at the battle of Wakefield in 1460). The funeral cortege processed from Marlow to Bisham Priory Church where it was greeted by another brother, Robert Neville, Bishop of Exeter, at the west door of the church. The west door was big enough to allow a man on horseback, bearing the arms of the earl of Salisbury and carrying an axe, to ride through it and down to the quire, as part of the funeral ceremony. The present access road into the ancient site seems of long standing (compare Edward Hoby’s map with the Google satellite image below) so it’s likely the church was located on the eastern side of the site (i.e. in the lower part of Edward Hoby’s map).

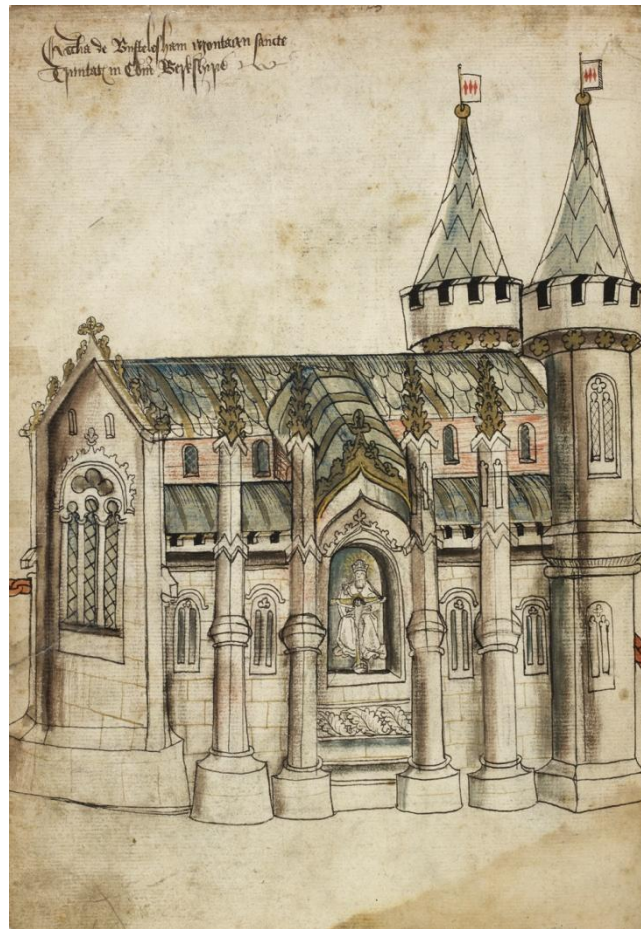


Google image of Bisham Abbey today

Two contemporary drawings of Bisham Priory Church exist, one from an armorial roll of ca.1463 created for Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick and Salisbury, then resident at Bisham Abbey; and the other dated 1483-85 from a roll prepared for Richard III, who married one of Warwick’s daughters.



*Bisham Priory Church from the Salisbury Roll of ca.1463.
Courtesy of the Duke of Buccleuch.*



Bisham Priory Church from Salisbury Roll copy A of 1483-85 – probably the more realistic of the two drawings. Courtesy of the British Library.

William Montacute was in close contact with his brother-in-law, John Grandison, Bishop of Exeter, who was at that time busy building the nave of Exeter Cathedral and who in 1337, the same year that Montacute founded the priory at Bisham, had founded a collegiate church at Ottery St Mary. The Ottery St Mary church was a miniature replica of Exeter Cathedral and I believe the same basic design was used at Bisham.

Ann Darracott

Future Events

JAZZ BY THE RIVERSIDE

We're planning another evening of traditional jazz at Maidenhead Rowing Club on Saturday 14 September.

Make a note of the date. It's a chance to enjoy an evening of lively music by the well-known (and some might say "notorious"!) *Fabulous Shirtlifters* from Cookham. As before, you are invited to bring your own food to enjoy a picnic-style meal using the tables and chairs provided and there will be a pay bar. It's a formula that's proved really popular. Last time it



was a sell-out and this year we're holding it about a month earlier to take advantage of the lighter nights. So why not get a group of friends together and come along? Booking forms will appear in the May newsletter, we hope to be able to peg the price at £12, same as 2011.

VISIT TO SHOTTESBROOKE CHURCH AND MEDIEVAL HALL Tuesday 23rd April

As there was a waiting list for this visit last year we have arranged a repeat visit. This is an opportunity to see Shottesbrooke Church, the best C14th church in Berkshire and learn about its architecture and the donors who helped built it. The collegiate church was founded by William Trussell in 1337, in the same year that William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, who was one of Trussell's donors, founded the priory at Bisham. The tomb of Trussell and his wife is still there in the north transept. The medieval hall (where we will have tea) is later, thought to be C15th.

Arrive **2pm** at Shottesbrooke Church, Broadmoor Rd, White Waltham, SL6 3SW. To book a place contact Mike Copeland on (01628) 634181. **Places are limited to 25.** Cost £3 to be collected on the day. Refreshments will be available for a donation.

Our guide will be **Keith Hasted** who has a particular interest in English Cathedral architecture and Italian Renaissance palaces. He teaches history of architecture at Oxford University Continuing Education and the WEA. **Jeff Griffiths** will be on hand to say a few words about the Landmark Trust, an organisation founded by the

late Sir John Smith that is based at Shottesbrooke. The Trust aims to restore historic buildings so that they can be stayed in.



As detailed in the last Newsletter, we have produced a report on the armorial glass which was once in the church and recorded by Elias Ashmole in the mid C17th. Copies of this will be available for sale (£5) on the day. We hope also to produce a hand-out describing the few shields that remain and some of the monuments.

Please note: access at the entrance gate is by entry phone; then follow the drive to the church. Parking is limited, so share cars if possible and remember: there is no heating in the church, so dress appropriately! If you are interested in the details in the remaining armorial glass bring binoculars.

SOME EVENTS IN COOKHAM

Civic Society members may be interested in these forthcoming local events:

“Development and the Green Belt” is the subject of a talk being given to our colleagues in the Cookham Society at their AGM in March. The speaker is John Shaw who is Director of the Association of Small Historic Towns and Villages in the UK. Their meeting takes place on Thursday 7 March, at 7.30pm in Moor Hall.

The first event on the 2013 Cookham Festival calendar is a talk on the Origins of Cookham at Moor Hall on Wednesday 8 May. Local archaeologist Colin Berks tells Cookham’s story from Neolithic times into the Anglo-Saxon period when it was a significant religious and political centre. An exhibition accompanying the lecture will remain open until Saturday 11 May. Full details of the festival programme and tickets will be available shortly. Keep an eye on: www.cookhamfestival.org.uk.

Announcements

SUBSCRIPTIONS

We are currently reviewing our records for claiming the tax back on Member's subscriptions. It has been a while since we last did this exercise and need to bring these records up to date. The Society benefits greatly from this refund to the tune of approximately £650 per year. We would be very grateful if therefore you could assist us in completing the enclosed Gift Aid form, and returning it in the enclosed SAE. This does not apply to Life or Honorary members.

Thank you for your assistance.

News from the Heritage Centre

2013 is Maidenhead Heritage Centre's 20th anniversary year, which will be celebrated with a variety of events including a special exhibition starting just after Easter. We would be delighted to hear from Civic Society members who were involved in the early days of the Heritage Centre in Bridge Street: perhaps you have some photos of the first Maidenhead Heritage Centre which we could copy for the exhibition.

A new and permanent History of Maidenhead exhibition is being installed this Spring, with custom built display cases funded by £29,000 of Section 106 Developers' Contributions. The new display will enable many more items from the Heritage Centre collection to be displayed, and still leave space in the Sammes Gallery for five temporary exhibitions a year.

Exhibition: "The Magpies Story". 23rd January – 6th April 2013.

We have a revival of our popular exhibition about Maidenhead United Football Club and their historic ground at York Road. Admission free.


The programme of lunchtime talks at 12.45pm on the second Thursday of each month starts again in March; full details of these talks and our temporary exhibitions are posted on our website (www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk) and then in various shop units in Nicholson's Walk.

Dates for your Diary

Tuesday 23rd April 2013
Visit

Shottesbrooke Church; Guided Tour
2 pm at Shottesbrooke Church car park.

CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

		
President of the Trustees	John McIntosh, 26 Harvest Hill Road, SL6 2QQ	633259
Hon. Secretary	Eileen Goford, 6 Laxton Green, SL6 3HW	638238
Hon. Treasurer	Mike Emmerson, 15 Twynham Road, SL6 5AT	628006
Executive Chairman	Bob Dulson, Bryher, Islet Road, SL6 8HT	627130
Planning Group	Martin McNamee, 14 Lower Cookham Road, SL6 8JT	623203
Projects Group	Ann Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
Communications Group	Brian Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
Events Group	Vacant	
Outings Sec.	Mike Copeland, 14 Laburnham Road, SL6 4DB	634181
Membership Sec.	Joyce Delasalle, 7 Laxton Green, SL6 3HW	637342
Newsletter Distribution	Sue Ross, Castle Hill Lodge, St Marks Road, SL6 6DG	626849

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2013

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

8th January, 12th February, 12th March, 14th May, 11th June, 9th July, 10th September, 12th November, 10th December

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS FOR 2013

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

9th April, 8th October

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 20th November 2013 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 12th April 2013.**

News Editor **Brian Darracott**
6 Medallion Place, Maidenhead, SL6 1TF (01628 620280)
editor@maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

Printer by: **Denwal Press, Unit 1, Maidenhead Trade Park, Prior's Way, Maidenhead, SL6 2GQ**
denwalpress.co.uk