



Maidenhead Civic Society NEWS



Issue 1/19

February 2019



*Join us on a walk to find out more about our riverside.
See page 10 for more details*

Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

The Chairman's Page

As you may be aware, PRoM (the Partnership for the Rejuvenation of Maidenhead) has had its last meeting.

PRoM was set up by the Council in response to a community campaign launched by the Civic Society, the Chamber of Commerce, the *Advertiser* and others, keen to stimulate town centre regeneration which, in the wake of failures by three successive councils, was long overdue. This involved “The Great Debate” on the future of Maidenhead in 2005 which culminated in a public meeting and readers’ survey.

A key finding of the survey was that planning should be above politics. And credit to them, the controlling Tory administration with opposition support bravely set up PRoM in 2007/8 as a cross-party, independently chaired group with a majority of lay (i.e. non-politician) members from a wide cross-section of community interests. This would ensure that any emerging masterplan was election-proof.

PRoM was charged with finding and promoting agreed solutions for the regeneration of Maidenhead town centre and set about drawing up the Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) which was adopted in 2011. Thereafter, as the plan entered the delivery phase, the group sought to offer objective advice to the council on emerging plans and proposals.

In recent years, however, despite its broader base including more professionals with relevant expertise and younger representatives, PRoM has been progressively marginalised. Rather than critiquing emerging plans, increasingly we felt we were just being asked to rubber-stamp Council decisions. This made it impotent and somewhat undermined its purpose.

With hindsight, therefore, the decision to disband it should not have come as a surprise but its demise nevertheless was deeply disappointing – not just because of the amount of effort we put into getting it established 12 years ago, or its extraordinary levels of expertise and representation, its success in achieving a consensual AAP, its contributions and informed commentaries, or the award won for promoting the town’s regeneration plan but because it suggested that the authority only wants to listen to what it wants to hear.

Initially I was told there was a need to rationalise amount of time spent in meetings by councillors and officers. Latterly, that there was a need for wider representation than PRoM had to offer. But, for whatever reason (and I’m still unclear about the real one), the administration made it plain that PRoM no longer suited their purpose.

There is a glimmer of light. Along with the Regeneration Group – a pressure group which includes the Society, the Chamber and the Waterways Group among others and which was instrumental in the creation of PRoM – I have been lobbying the Leader of the Council and we have been promised that a replacement for PRoM will be found.

The key to successful place-making is community engagement through a body like PRoM. cursory, snapshot consultations or knee-jerk reactions on social media are no substitute. Only through a community forum do you get:

- A proper feel for what the community wants or needs
- A sounding board for emerging plans or proposals to inform the council's thinking before any decisions are taken
- A consensus on the way forward

It is sincerely hoped that, with the arrival of a new MD, these principles can be incorporated in a new body with cross-party, community-wide representation. We shall see...

Bob Dulson

Increase in Membership Fees

The Civic Society takes great care to keep its costs to a minimum and we have managed to maintain annual subscriptions at the same level for more than 5 years.

However, we've now reached a point where the executive committee has reluctantly concluded that a small increase is necessary if we are to fund the work we continue to do. Consequently, membership fees will rise from 1st June 2019. Single membership will be £15.00 and a family membership £20.00. We hope members will appreciate the need for these small increases and, if you pay by standing order, ask that you inform your bank of the change. If you currently pay by cheque but would like to change to a standing order the Society's bank details are: Lloyds Bank, Sort Code 30-95-36; Account Number 00277876.

Of course, donations are always welcome and very useful!

Thank you

Planning Matters

This has been a relatively quiet three months in terms of the number of applications reviewed by your Planning Group. However, there was one major application which involves yet more flats to be added to the current imbalance of housing types being generated by planning permissions. **Boyn Valley Industrial Estate** is to be demolished to make way for a development of 216 apartments in blocks ranging from 4 storeys to 9 storeys. This represents intensive overdevelopment of the site, which significantly is not in the town centre.



The site to be developed in Boyn Valley Road. The adjacent Travis Perkins site is in the distance behind the trees to the right of the centre of the photo

To the west of this industrial estate lies the Travis Perkins yard, which has been previously identified as a site for residential development by RBWM in 2014. The two sites are of a similar size and in 2014 Travis Perkins was identified as suitable for 58 dwellings, of low-rise flats and maisonettes. In the interim four years the drive to maximise the number of dwelling units and developers profits has seen more and more high-density flatted developments, of smaller units combined with inadequate parking provision and amenity space. The Boyn Valley Industrial Estate proposals should have 378 parking spaces under current RBWM parking planning policy. This is based upon the number of 1-, 2- and 3-bedroomed flats. Because of the proximity to the town centre (within 1 km.) the developer proposes exactly half that number – 189 spaces. If this development is permitted, then the Travis Perkins site may be developed on a similar scale which would deliver more than 400 flats in a few hundred yards of the south side of Boyn Valley Road. Permission has already been granted in 2016 for a flatted development at a commercial site known as Middlehurst further west. Instead of 15 maisonettes as previously identified, a total of 45 undersized flats were granted permission. In our objection at the time we stated that a similar density would result in more than 200 units on the Travis Perkins site. Nearly 500 new dwellings on Boyn Valley Road cannot be acceptable or sustainable.

Of course it is to be expected that a high number of flats will be delivered in the town centre, with Chapel Arches, York Road, The Landing, the Bowling Club site and several smaller sites all at various stages of development. However, we believe that flatted developments outside the town centre should be positively discouraged. Yet more than 100 new flats are under construction at two sites on Oldfield Road, and permission has just been granted for 61 flats to be built on the Laundry Site on Furze Platt Road.

It is important for Maidenhead's future that not only do we have more dwelling, but that we have the right mix of house types – not just flats, but maisonettes, townhouses, semis and detached for young families, middle aged and elderly alike. In December 2018 RBWM published an Annual Monitoring Report for the year April 2017 to March 2018. This highlights in stark, statistical terms the reality of the imbalance in delivery of new dwellings by type. In 2017/18 a total of 515 dwellings were granted planning permission – of which 81% were flats. Yes – 419 flats compared to 96 houses! Although this was the highest percentage of flats over the past five years, in total terms flats represent 65% of permissions over those five years. At the last housing census in 2011 19% of dwellings nationally were flats, with Maidenhead having 23%. Now of course, it must be accepted that Maidenhead's proportion of flats is front-loaded because of the earlier development of the town centre. But these statistics are before the inclusion of the high-density flatted schemes such as the York Road Development Area, The Landing, the Bowling Club and others that were granted permission after March 2018. Suitable sites for real “houses”, such as the Golf Course, will come on stream later. In the meantime the risk of oversupply of flats will be reflected in a declining market. We should not have to wait for market forces to point out that just maybe we are building too many flats. In terms of the number of bedrooms, 1-bed dwellings have trebled as a percentage in the last five years; 2-bed have remained static and 3-bed and above have reduced to about one third. Simplistically, there has been a switch from 3+ bedrooms to 1-bed flats. As single professionals become couples and then families, there is a risk that suitable family homes with parking and garden amenity space will become even harder to find or afford in Maidenhead.

In terms of affordability, the RBWM Monitoring Report also highlights the failure to generate a supply of “affordable” homes. In spite of the proportion of high-density flatted developments, most developers are able to persuade the Borough that social housing or affordable homes are unviable. This is in spite of the fact that in the town centre developments do not incur any Community Infrastructure Levy. RBWM has a target of 30% affordable in new developments, but over the past five years only 8% has been achieved – and this is largely front-loaded with 23% in 2013/14 but only 4.5% in 2017/18.

Since our last Newsletter planning permission was granted for **The Landing** - an application that was recommended for refusal by planning officers. This scheme has been reduced marginally in height, with the tallest residential tower comprising 16 storeys rather than 19 as before; the actual reduction in height is 7 metres. The other two towers have been reduced from 16 storeys to 15 storeys, but the building height

reduction is only 1 metre. It remains an enormous edifice that will dominate the Maidenhead skyline for decades to come. It adds to the oversupply of flats, has inadequate parking provision, insufficient affordable housing and a height, bulk, mass and scale completely out of character with the town. The permission being granted by the Development and Control Panel is to be regretted. We do not accept that a development of this scale was necessary to protect the Green Belt – which is still under threat within the Borough Local Plan.

Finally, a few words on the perennial issue of parking: the town is beset with problems, some short term, some long term. The refurbishment and extension of Nicholsons Car Park on Broadway was always going to create a shortfall of parking across the town centre. There is some uncertainty with timing because of the change of ownership of Nicholsons Centre, but it is hoped that the cleared Landing site will provide some short term parking relief. On-road commuter parking is leading to an ever increasing introduction of residents permits on roads within walking distance of the railway station.



The Vicus Way multi-storey parking site, next to the Loftings and Lidl

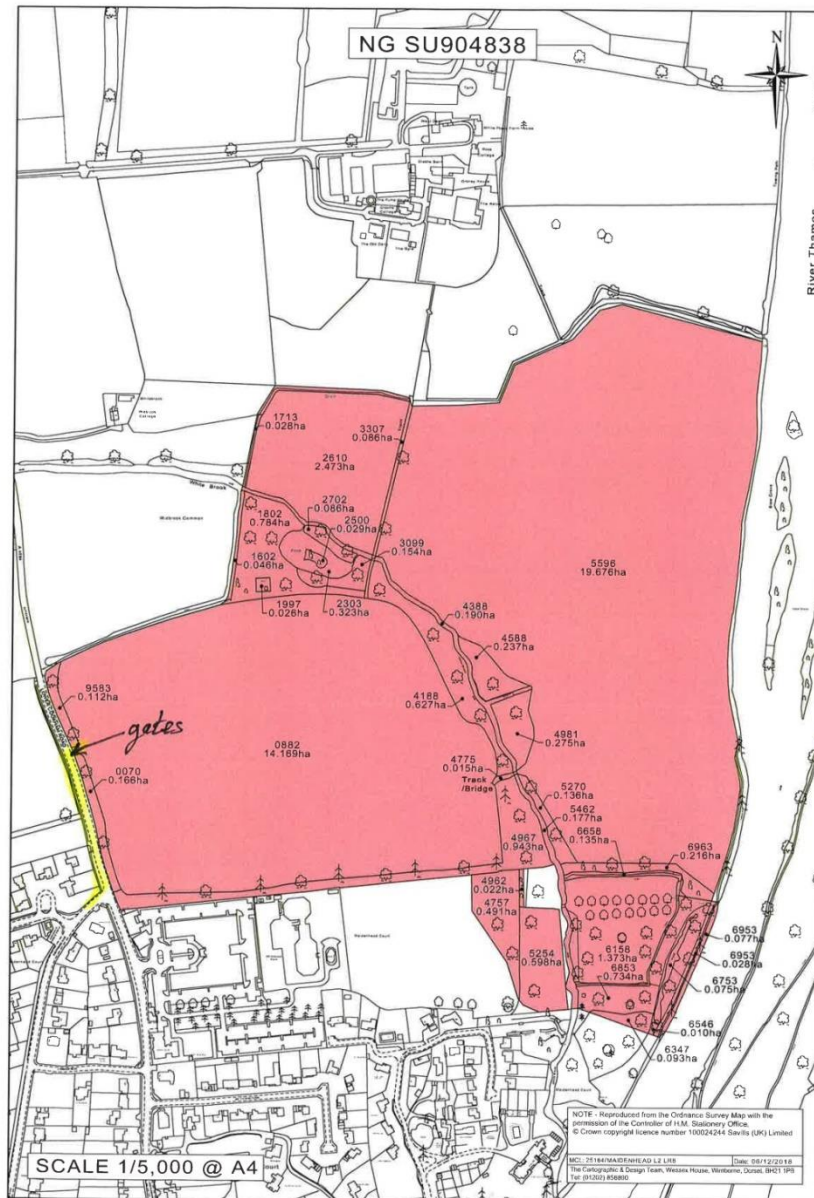
We have not raised any objection to the proposed five-storey car park on **Vicus Way**. It is essential that additional capacity is introduced to accommodate commuters attracted by the introduction of the Elizabeth Line. Stafferton Way is the logical and most convenient location – and the site is available. On a smaller scale RBWM have at last applied for permission to extend **Boulton's Lock Car Park** with 40 additional spaces on the site once considered for a community/worship centre. The additional capacity is clearly required down at Riverside, with visitor numbers and parking visibly increasing since the opening of the footbridge from Ray Mill Island to the Taplow bank, something which – to his credit – our esteemed chairman advocated at the outset to facilitate a circular walk along both banks of the Thames.

Martin McNamee

Projects

The Millennium Walk

The Millennium Walk stretches from Hurley to Maidenhead Riverside, connecting at both ends with the Thames Path. I wrote the original proposal in 1994 with Margaret Bowdery of East Berks Ramblers as a joint Millennium project. Margaret, who died in 2016, would have been delighted to know, as I am, that another missing link in the Millennium Walk, from the Lower Cookham Road to the River Thames, will be created this year thanks to the recent purchase by the Royal Borough of 110 acres of White Place Farm that includes the willow fields to the east of Whitebrook Park.



The Royal Borough's new acquisition – Battlemead Common – shown in red

The Borough has commissioned tree and topographical surveys which will be fed into a plan for the new open space, to be termed *Battlemead Common*. The willow

fields will become a wildlife area. “*Battlemead*” derives from the suggestion it was the site of a battle between the Danes and the Saxons.



“Cricket bat” willows in the southern part of Battlemead Common

Not only is it an area of great landscape value offering spectacular views of Cliveden and the Cliveden Reach but it has an interesting history. It seems in the medieval period this area was used for growing hay and for pasture and was one of the open meadows with “Commoners rights” prior to enclosure completed in 1852. In 1303 a survey of the manor of Cookham described it as *Battlemeade*. In 1611 the Crown seized White Place, the manor of Bullocks, and meadows including *Bartlemead* to pay the fine of their owner Edward Manfield, a recusant, and in 1650, during the Commonwealth period *Battling Meadow* was surveyed, and as it was reputed to be a possession of Charles Stuart, late king of England, was seized the following year by virtue of an Act of Parliament and then sold. You can read more on this in the book “*Chapters in the History of Cookham*” by Stephen Darby (1909) pages 31 & 292.



View towards Cliveden from new Common

A path linking Widbrook Common with the river is a long-standing objective of the local community. It appeared in the Cookham District Plan of the 1970’s; was a 1977 Silver Jubilee project of East Berks Ramblers; was an aim in the 1999 Maidenhead Local Plan and is mentioned in both RBWM Public Rights of Way

Improvement Plans of 2005-2015 & 2016-2026. Happily, it will be achieved in 2019.



You may remember that for seven years from 2006 to 2012 the Society, in collaboration with the Ramblers and Maidenhead Rotary Club and with the permission of Mr John Edwards of White Place Farm, cleared a path along the southern border of the farm alongside the flood bund and then through the willow fields to the Thames. This allowed people doing the Boundary Walk to cross from the Lower Cookham Road to the Thames. This is *not* the route of the new link as the Royal Borough's new acquisition gives the opportunity for our preferred route to be used which will re-trace the 1934 Boundary Line, and which we hope the 2019 Boundary Walk will be able to follow.

Anthony Hurst, RBWM's Parks & Countryside Manager, and a fallen boundary stone which he Society will arrange to be re-positioned



*View from the bridge over the White Brook across to the Thames
– part of the new route*

We hope to have more details on this in the next Newsletter.

You may have noticed that the above photos show there is a lot of water about on the new Common, even though the level of water in Summerleaze Sailing Lake is below normal. The willow fields are especially wet, yet the fields are where we used to walk across during the Boundary Walk from 2006 to 2012. How can this be!!

The answer relates to when the White Brook was dredged. In 2002 the stream dried out in Maidenhead town centre and in July 2003 the Environment Agency (EA) arranged for dredging to begin, which continued until 2011.

Basically more water is entering the White Brook from the Thames at Islet Park than the stream can cope with so it overflows. The EA in the past arranged dredging to prevent flooding. Now that they have the Jubilee River and the North Maidenhead Flood Bund they will no longer pay for dredging and will not dredge for amenity purposes (such as the stream drying out in the town centre!).

In the past the White Brook was dredged every four years. If this needs to be done in the future it will be the responsibility of the riparian owners which are RBWM, the National Trust and Summerleaze Gravel.

Ann Darracott

Annual Society Dinner



The Society's patron, Prime Minister Theresa May, was given a warm welcome by 63 members and guests when she was the guest speaker at our annual dinner held at Moor Hall, Cookham at the end of January.

Theresa said that while improvements were being made to the town centre, Maidenhead faced many challenges. Talking about the importance of creating a sense of place, including the need to include gardens and amenity space in new housing developments, she commended the work of the Society for stimulating public appreciation of the place we call home and for encouraging community engagement in place-making.

Forthcoming Events

An Invitation to our 'THEME TEA'

Wednesday 20th March 2019

It's afternoon tea with a difference. We are inviting members to join us for what we hope will be the first in an occasional series of "theme teas".

We're planning a social occasion where we enjoy a delightful afternoon home-made tea with sandwiches and cakes while joining – or just listening to – a discussion on a theme of local interest. And to kick things off, we've chosen that perennial hot topic:

Parking in Maidenhead!

The idea responds to feedback we received in our members' survey last year when a good number said they'd welcome the chance to meet socially more often and discuss issues that matter to them and to us as a Society.

So our first Theme Tea will take place on Wednesday 20th March in the Parish Centre at Holy Trinity, Cookham, starting at 3pm. There is ample parking. Please feel free to bring a friend. Non-members will be welcome. To cover costs, there'll be a charge of £7 per person. To reserve your place, please contact Mike Copeland on 07770 421221 and send your cheque, payable to Maidenhead Civic Society, to him at 14 Laburnham Road, Maidenhead SL6 4DB.

CIRCULAR WALK

Wednesday 15th May 2019

Following the success of the "Guardians" Walk last year we have decided to organise a similar walk, taking in Maidenhead and Taplow Riversides. The opening of the new Bridge at Boulters – as yet unnamed – has created a very interesting circular walk. Long-standing members may remember a Civic Society Jazz Evening in a marquee in the grounds of Taplow Paper Mill in 1985. The Paper Mills put the marquee up for their annual thrash and very kindly allowed charities to use the marquee on other evenings. Ever wondered what is there today? Now is your opportunity to see the Taplow Riverside development of Berkeley Homes and also learn something of the past history of this part of the river.

It is proposed to meet at the car park near Boulters Lock at 2.00pm, setting off at 2:15pm along the riverside, past Boulters Lock, heading towards Maidenhead Bridge and there to cross over to the Taplow side of the River and proceed up Mill Lane to enter the new *Taplow Riverside* estate being built by Berkeley Homes and to discover how the area has changed in the last two years. Then across the new country park, complete with "trim trail", to the footbridge above the Jubilee River and then alongside it to reach Mill Lane where we will cross back into the estate.



The view from Maidenhead Bridge: New homes and the new Roux restaurant (Skindles) on the old Skindles site.....

....and the former view looking back towards the Maidenhead side. What's all this about?



The "trim trail" in the country park of Taplow Riverside



Mill Lane weir, the beginning of the Jubilee River



Homes overlooking the Jubilee River

Once back in Mill Lane we will be able to look at the Mill House, once the home of the manager of the Paper Mill and now refurbished to create three homes. We may possibly see another refurbished property, Glen Island House, used as offices by the

paper mill, depending on how much progress has been made by mid-May. This house is Grade II listed, and a former gentleman's residence built in 1869, (architect unknown) for Lt. Gen. Sir Roger William Henry Palmer (d.1910) an Irish landowner who participated in the Charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War. It is being converted into luxury flats.



nb: As work has not yet begun, we won't see the new period-style building on the site of Dunloe Lodge. The Lodge burned down in 1988 and, worryingly, it's thought the probable arson involved was not investigated because the area was earmarked for development. It has an exotic history. Information from the Hitcham & Taplow Society archive says it was formerly known as Millstream House, becoming Dunloe Lodge after its purchase by William Le Poer Trench, 5th Earl of Clancarty (d.1929) who married music hall actress Belle Bilton and whose son believed in flying saucers and founded a UFO group in the House of Lords!

Dunloe Lodge before the fire

We will then retrace our steps to the new path along the west bank of the Jubilee River to reach the *River Crossing Picnic Area* and the new bridge over the Thames at Ray Mill Island, the subject of the talk at the Society's AGM last year by its architect Martin Knight.

There will be no charge made for this event but for those who wish to partake of refreshments after the walk, Boulters Inn are aware of our plans and will welcome those who choose to call in for afternoon tea. Other eating places are available nearby, such as Jenner's Café.

It would be helpful if you could let us know if you wish to participate by contacting Tina Sell on 01628 628675 or email tina.sell@talktalk.net by the end of April. And bring along any friends you think might join the Society!

**'JAZZ BY THE RIVERSIDE' featuring *The Fabulous Shirtlifters*
Saturday 14th September 2019, at Maidenhead Rowing Club**

We're planning another evening of traditional jazz with Cookham's *Fabulous Shirtlifters* to round off the summer. This will be "bring your own picnic!" as before. More details will be published in the May Newsletter.

**AGM with a speaker
Wednesday 20th November 2019**

More on this in later editions of the Newsletter as our plans evolve.

Society members may also be interested in the following talks organised by local history and archaeology groups:

Maidenhead Archaeological & Historical Society (MAHS)

(Talks held the RVS Centre, 42 York Road, Maidenhead SL6 1SH; 7.45 for 8pm; visitors £3; contact 01628 630924 for talks, and 01628 629614 for outings)

Wednesday 27th February: Talk by Graham Horn *The Thankful Villages of the Great War*.

Wednesday 27th March: Talk by Colin Oakes *The Bryant and May's Match Girls Strike of 1888*.

Wednesday 24th April: AGM followed by a talk by member Derek Salter *N-Ice Ages*.

Marlow Archaeology (MAS)

(Talks held at the Liston Hall, Marlow, SL7 1DD; £4.50 non-members; contact 01628 523896)

Thursday 14th February, 8pm: *LIDAR – the new illuminating the past*, talk by Andy McGrandle (jointly with AiM).

Thursday 14th March, 8pm: *The Anglo-Saxons of the Upper Thames: dress and identity in the 5th and 6th centuries*, talk by Dr Toby Martin.

Thursday 11th April, 8pm: *The Monks' Graveyard excavation: finding a lost abbot at the Abbey Church and Cathedral of St Albans*, talk by Ross Lane.

Thursday 23rd May 2019, 8pm: *Sutton Hoo*, talk by Jennifer Foster (jointly with MAS).

Archaeology in Marlow (AiM)

(Talks held at the Liston Hall, Marlow, SL7 1DD; £4.50 non-members; contact 01628 485961)

Thursday 14th February, 8pm: *LIDAR – the new illuminating the past*, talk by Andy McGrandle (jointly with MAS).

Thursday 28th March, 8pm: *Wycombe Rye Roman Villa*, talk by Brian Withington.

Thursday 23rd May 2019, 8pm: *Sutton Hoo*, talk by Jennifer Foster (jointly with MAS).

News from the Heritage Centre

EXHIBITION: "Classic Toys 1950-2000"

Now until 23rd February 2019

EXHIBITION: "12 Things To Know About Maidenhead"

26th February 2019 until TBA

LUNCHTIME TALK

Wednesday February 13th at 12.45pm (title tba.)

Lunchtime mini-lectures lasting 35-40 minutes are held at the museum on the 2nd Wednesday of most months. There is a small charge of £2. Advance booking is not required.

As always, full news and information about the Heritage Centre is available on our website www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 20 th March 2019 Theme Tea	Afternoon with discussion on Parking in Maidenhead 3.00 pm at Parish Centre, Cookham Holy Trinity Church
Wednesday 15 th May 2019 Guided Circular Walk	Circular Riverside Walk 2.00 for 2.15pm at RBWM car park near Boulters Lock
Saturday 14 th September 2019 Social evening	Jazz by the Riverside with the <i>Fabulous Shirtlifters</i> Details to follow
Wednesday 20 th November 2019 AGM	Civic Society AGM , preceded by a talk Venue to be advised. 7.45 for 8.00pm.

CIVIC SOCIETY – KEY CONTACTS

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Projects	Ann Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
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Newsletter Distribution	Sue Ross, 3 The Chantry, 21 Boyn Hill Avenue, SL6 4EY	626849

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2019

At St Luke's Community Hall, Norfolk Road, Maidenhead

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

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 20th November 2019 at 8.00 pm, venue to be announced

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
of the Newsletter is 19th April 2019**

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