



Maidenhead Civic Society **NEWS**

Issue 1/03

January 2003



The White Brook in full flood – see article on page 9

In this issue

Editorial by John McIntosh

AGM Minutes; Local history by Michael Bayley

Regular features on talks, outings, the Heritage Centre,
projects and planning

Visit our website! : www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

EDITORIAL

INCREASING INTEREST IN THE WORK OF THE CIVIC SOCIETY

Voluntary bodies such as the Civic Society are essential in a healthy democracy, both to fill the gaps in government services but also to provide a route through which people's voices can be heard and to see that action follows. The Society was originally created to give the community a voice in local Planning issues. It has also extended its work to carry out a number of projects such as the resuscitation of Guards Club Park, the definition of the Millennium Walk footpath and many others. It acts as an umbrella under which individuals can take action on issues that matter in keeping the community healthy. Much more remains to be done but there are currently too few willing hands to do it. In brief the Society needs more of the membership to take part in the Society's work. It is felt that the key to improving the situation is to engage the interest and participation of more and of the younger of those who live in Maidenhead in the work of the Society.

Many feel that they are already busy enough and that being active within the Society would just be too much. In the end the amount of time taken up is what the individual wants to put in. The best way to see what the Society is about and become involved is to come along to the Executive Committee meetings. They are held monthly in St. Luke's Parish Centre in Norfolk Road at 7.45pm on the second Wednesday of the month and are open to all members. You will be warmly welcomed and can take part in the discussions raising your own local concerns under the guidance of the Chairman. If you want something done to deal with an issue then the Committee covers the action needed and gives guidance. Don't just leave it to others, for it won't happen!

During the coming months we will be seeking ways of reaching younger members of the community in general and of the Society in particular. Can I also mention that a good way to make contact with the Committee is to come to the Talks and/or come on the Outings. These are well advertised on our website and someone will always be there to greet you.

So we look forward to seeing you!

Your Society needs you!

John McIntosh

HIGHER PROFILE NEEDED

Our Hon. Treasurer, Trevor Farnfield, has recommended that the new Executive Committee consider using some of our accumulated funds on projects such that the profile of the Society is increased locally. He also recommended that a concerted campaign should be made to increase the number of corporate members. To help the Society in this, as Editor I call upon all of you readers to put your thinking caps on and let me know what you think might be suitable projects.

Also, for those of you employed locally, please consider asking your employer if they would support the work of the Civic Society by becoming a corporate member. Encourage them to visit our website to see for themselves what we are achieving.

TALKS

WEDNESDAY 19th MARCH 2003 – 8 p.m.

“THE NEW JUBILEE RIVER”

An illustrated talk by Tony Pound
Jubilee River Warden

Tony will give a talk on the new river, the access and walkways and the plantings that have been made. He will also explain how the river has been used to prevent flooding.

Mike Copeland

OUTINGS

The last visit of the year 2002 was to Brighton Royal Pavilion on December 7th. We managed to avoid the rain and had a most entertaining day. Our guide was an Austrian lady who kept us thoroughly entertained for over an hour during our private tour of this magnificent Pavilion. We all learnt a great deal about George IV and his love life! We also heard how much Queen Victoria hated the Pavilion and how she plundered all of the contents and decorations. It is a great tribute to Brighton Council to see the restored Pavilion and many of the original contents in today's building. We also had time to visit the museum in the grounds and several of our members were to be seen in the Lanes doing some Christmas shopping.

Our next outing is to the Beaulieu Estate in Hampshire on Saturday 22nd March. This is the home of the National Motor Museum, which stands in the grounds of the Palace House, Abbey and beautiful Gardens. We will be visiting the Abbey, which dates from 1204, as well as the Palace, which was originally the Great Gatehouse of the Abbey.



Beaulieu Palace House

On Sunday May 18th we will be going to Oxfordshire to visit Broughton Castle in Banbury. This is the home of Lord and Lady Saye and Sele and dates back to 1300. The castle is surrounded by a 3-acre moat. We have organised a private tour before the castle opens to the public.



North Front, Broughton Castle, Banbury, Oxfordshire

From Banbury we will travel to Henley-on-Thames to visit Stonor, the home of Lord and Lady Camoys. This house dates back to the 12th century, but today has a Georgian appearance. We will see the Gothic interior with its fine collection of antiques and visit the extensive grounds and deer park.



Stonor, Nr Henley on Thames

We do hope that you can join us for these two very different trips.

Mike Copeland

AGM REPORT

As usual, we present here the business proceedings of the recent **42nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** of the Society, which was held on Wednesday 20th November 2002. The full Minutes will be included with the October edition of the Newsletter.

In the absence of the President, Mr Richard Poad, the chair was taken by Mr Harold James, Vice President.

Approximately 40 people were present. Apologies for absence were received from Penny and Clifford Baker and Miss Rosa Lee.

1. Harold James opened the meeting by welcoming the Mayor, Cllr. Leo Walters, the Society's Patron. He went on to say that the situation is very much the same as before. There has been success with the website and hopes for the Millennium Walk but pointed out that there was still concern over the lack of water in the York Stream. It was also pointed out the need to recruit willing workers in the Society and appealed to anyone in the audience to come forward to help. He then talked about the successful visit by members of our sister society in Bad Godesberg.
2. The Minutes of the last meeting held on 21st November 2001 were proposed by Michael Johnson and seconded by Margaret Bowdery.

3. **Accounts**

During the last two years a concerted effort has been made to improve the financial position of the Society such that a foundation is made to allow further projects to be undertaken. The last financial year has seen this process move on significantly. The Annual Accounts have been circulated and the following points are highlighted:

- The bequest from Ted Sammes has in recent years distorted the apparent financial position of the Society. The bequest was left to the Society for specific purposes related to establishment of a Heritage Centre for Maidenhead. During the last financial year, a final sum of £233 was received from the bequest. The total bequest, £83,282 including interest accrued, has been transferred to the Maidenhead Heritage Trust for their use in accordance with the specific wishes of Ted Sammes. This transfer explains the significant change in the 'Balance of Funds' at the bottom of the page.
- Subscriptions have increased mainly due to the higher subscription rates but also an increase in single payments by new Life members. As a result of this factor the overall level of subscription income will reduce in the current financial year. A review of payments is being undertaken to ensure that the new membership rates are being paid by all members.
- Steady profits have been made on most outings due to the high take-up of coach seats.
- The tax refunds noted relate to the last two years under the old Deed of Covenant scheme and a claim is being prepared under the new Gift Aid scheme which could potentially increase our income by over £500 p.a. A letter has been written to the members who have not responded to the Gift Aid claim and a response would allow us to make a comprehensive claim. Thanks to the efforts of Ann Darracott, we received a Charity Aid Foundation (CAF) donation of £500 from Shell. This is for specific use related to the Ockwells project.

- During the last financial year we, along with most other civic societies, had problems in obtaining insurance cover at anything like an affordable rate. The low premium payment quoted in the accounts is there because we were only covered for part of the year. The Civic Trust has now stepped in to offer a blanket policy scheme to members and we have now joined this scheme.
- Just after closing the accounts for the last financial year, most of the money held at Lloyds Bank was transferred to our high interest, tax-free deposit fund with COIF. These funds are secure and not reliant on stock market performance.
- Income from raffles at Talks, whilst not specifically highlighted, has helped to offset some of the speakers' costs.

It is recommended that the new Executive Committee consider using some of our accumulated funds on projects such that the profile of the Society is increased locally. It was also recommended that a concerted campaign should be made to increase the number of corporate members.

The accounts were proposed by Gillian Moore and seconded by Michael Johnson.

4. Reports

The Vice President invited the officers to make any further comments. Full reports from each of the officers were given in the October 2002 issue of the Newsletter

5. Election of Officers

Richard Poad was proposed as President by Gillian Moore and seconded by Brian Madge. The Mayor was proposed as Patron by Gillian Moore and seconded by Michael Bailey. Harold James was proposed as Vice President by Michael Bailey and seconded by Ann Darracott. Michael Bailey was proposed as Vice President by Trevor Farnfield and seconded by Daphne Line.

The rest of the officers were then elected as follows:

Vice Chairman	Angela Howorth
Hon. Secretary	June Churchman
Asst. Secretary	Gillian Moore
Hon. Treasurer	Trevor Farnfield
Hon Membership Secretary	Shashi Dare
Chairman, Planning Group	Michael Johnson
Trustees	Ann Child, Harold James, Richard Poad

They were proposed by Daphne Line and seconded by Ann Darracott

Daphne Line offered herself for re-election and this was proposed by Ann Darracott and seconded by Mike Copeland.

A presentation was made to John McIntosh who retired as Chairman and a unanimous vote of thanks was given for all his work on the Committee. He was proposed as a Vice President by Gillian Moore and Ann Darracott, and seconded by Bob Sandys and Daphne Line. A presentation was also made to Angela Howorth for all the hard work she had put into organising the Talks.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

HERITAGE CENTRE NEWS

In April, the Heritage Centre will celebrate its 10th birthday in its new home at the former Green Dragon pub in Moorbridge Road, 100 yards beyond Waitrose. In those 10 years the Heritage Centre, started under the auspices of the Civic Society and the Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society, but now run by an independent Trust, has become an established feature of local cultural life. The Borough's Local Cultural Strategy sees the Heritage Centre as a major 'heritage provider' and there are hopes that a permanent home will be found within the next couple of years. In the meantime, it is hoped that Civic Society members will visit the centre, which is open from Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 4pm. A wide range of local books and gifts is on sale and in the galleries you will find a new exhibition about every six weeks.

Appropriately enough for a former pub, the opening exhibition of 2003 (ending 15th February) is about coaching inns and the town's breweries. Items on display include a fine collection of bottles, a set of beautiful copper measures and plates from Skindles Hotel; you can even try to get a proper sound out of a coaching horn.

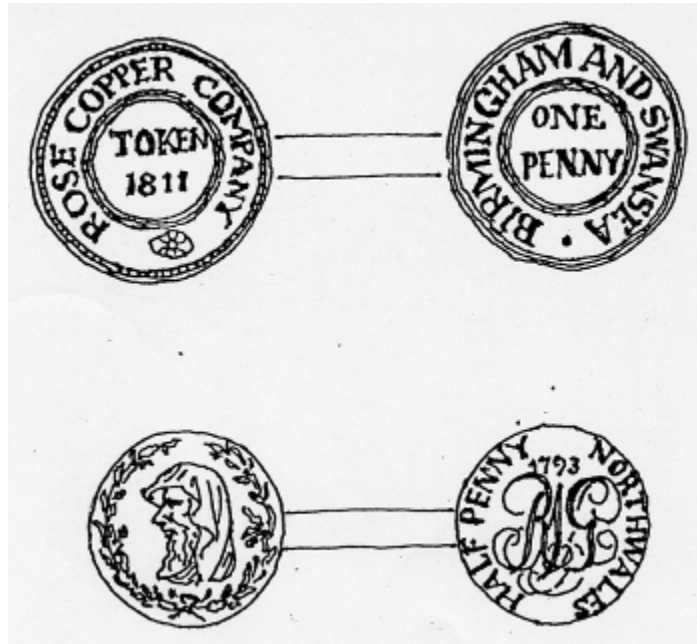
From 18th February to 29th March, the unfriendly face of Old Father Thames will be revealed in **FLOOD!** This exhibition records in words and photographs the disastrous floods of 1894 and 1947 as well as other more recent events: it may even be possible to include photographs of the 2002 flood which so affected Bisham, Marlow and Cookham. Maidenhead and Bray escaped, thanks to the Jubilee River. A comprehensive display donated by the Environment Agency will tell visitors all about the Jubilee River, which is earning its keep as these words are written.

Later in the year the Heritage Centre is planning two new exhibitions: in April/May Maidenhead Then and Now will display 'then and now' photographs alongside each other. Later in the summer Our Bridge to Prosperity will tell the story of Maidenhead Bridge, from which the tolls were lifted 100 years ago.

The Heritage Centre continues to need volunteer stewards or researchers and at the moment is also looking for an assistant Treasurer. Please phone the centre on 01628 780555 for further information.

LOCAL HISTORY

Since our offshoot, the Heritage Trust has moved into the old drover's inn, The Green Dragon, opposite Maidenhead Moor, I wonder if any old natives of this area have seen or had handed down to them 'drovers pennies' like the ones in the illustration below that were given to a great aunt of mine at Cippenham Court Farm in South Bucks. I want to find out if the drovers came through Maidenhead to Cippenham – or even down from the north. I know they went from Cippenham to Dorney, and swam or forded the river by the Willows boatyard, the old Ruddlespool or Boddlespool Thames ford. These names are in the old British language:- RHYDLE PWLL meaning "the pool of the ford", and BODDI-LLE-PWLL "the pool of the drowning place" (it was a dangerous ford especially for medieval pilgrims to St Leonard's Chapel i.e. Legoland!).



Pennies given by the last of the Welsh drovers to my great grandfather James Philip Headington when pasturing overnight at Cippenham Court Farm before swimming the drove over the Thames at Ruddlespool, Boveney.

The footpath from Bray Village to the Fishery passes over a grassy ditch by way of a concrete and rusty iron bridge called Sawkins Bridge. This is where the York Stream and Greenway Ditch rejoin the Thames. 70 years ago it could take canoes and punts, and 200 years ago, barges. It is another very old local place name – “SAWGH-KENS Bridge” means “the former backload or horseload bridge”.



Sawkins Bridge, Bray, in medieval times.

PROJECTS

YORK STREAM /GREEN WAY

There is now water in the town centre thanks to a very wet winter. The Environment Agency still plans to dredge the White Brook on Widbrook Common and the ditch at Marsh Meadow, Cookham, which connects to the Thames. When this will happen they are unable to say, but it probably won't be before the spring.

The White Brook, having been stagnant for months, began flowing again sometime between 1st and the 18th of December. The flow was then weakly from the Thames (see left hand photo below). During the recent flood conditions this was reversed and flow was strongly towards the Thames (see right hand photo below). It was interesting to see this phenomenon, often described by one of our Vice-Presidents, Michael Bayley. The dramatic increase in flow in the White Brook appears to have been caused in part by floodwater being deflected off the new bunds towards Widbrook Common most of which was underwater (see front page).

The Environment Agency is reported to have said that maintenance would not influence a flood of this magnitude. However, we feel the lack of maintenance resulting in accumulated silt and reeds (clearly seen in the left hand photo) probably didn't help facilitate flow. As of 16 January, the floods had largely subsided but flow was still towards the Thames. More images of the Widbrook can be seen in the News Section on our website.

If we are lucky, this flow may scour out some of the silt and reduce the need for dredging. However, it's probable that despite the present abundant water, if nothing is done to improve flow, the stream is likely to dry out again next summer. We will continue to press the Environment Agency to produce a long-term plan for managing the stream which will ensure year round water in the town centre.



The White Brook east of the Lower Cookham Road on 18 December 2002, showing the reed growth and flowing from the Thames



The White Brook east of the Lower Cookham Road on 9 January 2003 in flood conditions flowing towards the Thames

Michael Bayley also often describes what York Stream used to look like. The photographs (over the page) of York Stream to the north of Maidenhead taken in 1950/51 by Mr T. C. Fields, then residing in Ellington Park, illustrate the change. The photos are from approximately the same

location to the east of Halfway Houses, in 1950/51 and today. Fifty years ago the stream appears wider and far less overgrown than at present.



York Stream east of Halfway Houses in 1950/51



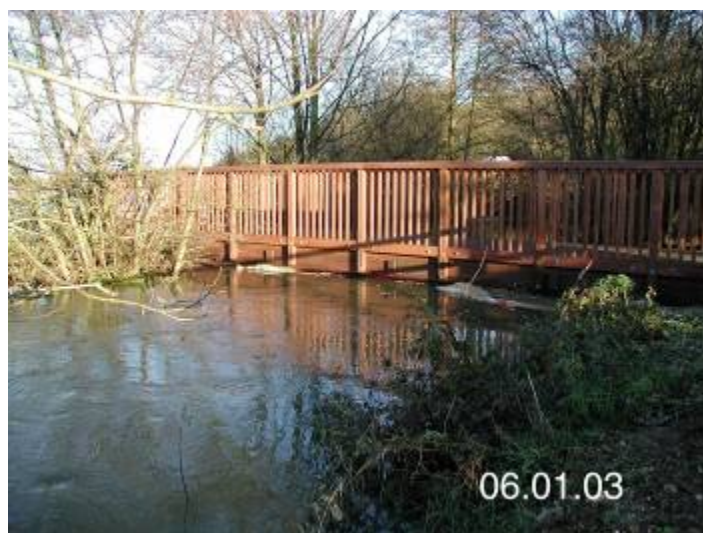
Approx. same location in December 2002

MILLENNIUM WALK

A404: Marlow to Malders Lane Link

The Secretary of State has decided to divert Footpath 9 Bisham under one of the flood arches. This is great news and we are very grateful to Theresa May M.P. for tabling parliamentary questions on our behalf. However we are not celebrating until the diversion is published and the crossing over the A404 extinguished. We hope the other two routes which currently cross the road - Green Lane and Footpath 15 - will also eventually be extinguished.

Readers may remember that the current Rights of Way Committee, by a small majority, overturned two earlier decisions to divert Footpath 9 in favour of providing an alternative route (E) alongside the A404 to eventually join Footpath 15 and Green Lane on an elevated walkway through Bisham Brook culvert. This walkway is still not in place but the new bridge taking route E over Bisham Brook has been finished. In January, during flood conditions, this bridge acted as a dam and water from the brook flooded route E. There is another bridge, a short distance away connecting to the Orchard site, that is set higher and is slightly arched so did not impede flow. Somebody didn't do his homework! It will be interesting to see at what height above the brook the elevated walkway is placed.



The new footbridge over Bisham brook acting as a dam

Path on adjacent property to White Place Farm (see map in October 2002 Newsletter)

We hope to hear news soon about possible changes of land ownership, which would be helpful to us. In the meantime it is worth recording that the land owned by Quintain, despite the existence of the Jubilee River, still flooded recently so can never be built on (should anybody decide to try to overturn the covenants forbidding construction laid down by Waldorf Astor). This does not mean that attempting to gain access across it is unsuitable as the land is only flooded when the adjacent towpath also floods, as at present.

PLANNING DIGEST

Since the last Newsletter, the Planning Group have met several times and considered and responded to over 30 planning applications.

One of the more important concerns the **Bridge Road/Oldfield Road corner site**. This is a revised site design with 120 housing units, offices and parking. The Planning Group submitted the following response to the Council:

“While being pleased to see a significant element of housing on this large site, we are concerned at the rather massive scale of the corner office block which, while trying to present itself as a significant gateway to the centre of the town, does so in a way that overpowers the road, and the shops opposite. Our biggest concern is with the traffic problems. Oldfield Road as it stands is unlikely to be able to cope with the additional traffic that a development of this scale will cause. We recognise the traffic lights at the junction which could well help, but possibly not if the pedestrian crossing by the shops is not more carefully considered within the scheme. The development is likely to generate more traffic under the difficult railway bridge and on the approach roads to the south of that, and it would seem to be essential to incorporate this part of the town into the useful traffic study already commissioned for the town centre.”

By the time you read this Newsletter, the Council will have considered the Application at their meeting 22nd January. In the Maidenhead Advertiser on Friday 17th January it was reported that even if the Council approve the scheme, the deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, would have the final say. He may intervene on the grounds that there is a conflict with the government’s regional employment policies. Bridge Road is one of the main gateways to the town centre and it is vital that whatever is finally built on this site satisfies all the concerns and aspirations of the residents of Maidenhead.

NEW WEBSITE

Thanks to the good efforts of Tim Goldingham, the Society’s new website is up and running, and already proving useful in publicising topical news and events. But don’t think that only the Society’s committee members can place items there. If you have any relevant item that would be appropriate for putting on the web, please send it to the Newsletter Editor (address at the back of this Newsletter) and we’ll get it uploaded!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 19th March 2003

Talk

“The New Jubilee River”.
Tony Proud
Methodist Church Hall, 8 p.m.

Saturday 22nd March 2003

Outing

The Beaulieu Estate.

Sunday 18th May 2003

Outing

Broughton Castle and Stonor.

CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

President	Richard Poad, Hollyhocks, The Common, Cookham Dean, SL6 9NZ	484298
Chairman	Vacancy	
Vice-Chairman	Angela Howorth, Cymbeline, Islet Road, SL6 8LD	627606
Secretary	June Churchman, 20 Chiltern Road, SL6 1XA	638546
Asst. Secretary	Gillian Moore, 10 Langdale Close, SL6 1SY	630130
Treasurer	Trevor Farnfield, Ditton Meads, Winter Hill Road, SL6 6NS	638142
Membership Sec.	Shashi Dare, Silvretta, Islet Road, SL6 8LD	629976
Planning Group	Michael Johnson, Waters Edge, Islet Road, SL6 8LG	629807
Outings Sec.	Mike Copeland, 14 Laburnham Road, SL6 4DB	681955

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2003

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

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

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
of the Newsletter is 4th April 2003.**

News Editor **Brian Darracott**
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