



# Maidenhead Civic Society

# NEWS

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Issue 1/05

January 2005

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*Speke Hall, Merseyside; what's this got to do with Ockwells Manor?  
(See inside, page 7)*

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The Norris Families of Ockwells, Speke and Fifield

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Regular features on talks, outings, the Heritage Centre,  
Projects and Planning

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# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The last message I wrote for the October 2004 issue was overshadowed by the need to provide a report for the Society's A.G.M. This one, by contrast seems to be conditioned by the now past merriment of Xmas and New Year celebrations! I trust all members and their families did enjoy the festive season although my personal acquaintances seem to have fallen prey all too often to the influenzal cold doing the rounds-speedy recovery to all who have had this misfortune.

The unremitting efforts of developers to acquire existing properties, to demolish them and then to replace them with blocks of flats has continued apace. Combined with proposals for flats instead of offices at three other major in-town sites this may well result in a glut of such accommodation. Moreover much of this is expensive and well beyond the price of what would be called 'affordable' housing. So it is possible that the town may well be left with the same oversupply of housing as it currently has of offices. The Planning Group has done its best in considering these applications to maintain a balance between needed and sensible redevelopment and those that simply represent, all too often, a jumping on an opportunistic band-wagon to make money without regard to the appearance and environment of the town.

As a counterbalance to the above I am able to tell you that the development of the Strategic Review of Amenity published last July goes on. We have set up a series of quarterly meetings with Councillor Vicky Howes and Senior Council officers to appraise how far their actions in the various fields go to meeting the targets of our Review. We have had two such meetings. These have shown that some progress is being made but given the long term nature of our objectives there is a large deficit. We are now exploring how progress can be made on a wider front. None of this can be swift but we do need persistence. A significant part of the work needed is to bring all political parties to subscribe to the goals set out in the Review for above all we want continuity when change in political control of the Council occurs.

The distribution of the Newsletter has been carried on through the years without fuss and very efficiently by some 40 members and their spouses. This has saved the Society a substantial amount in postage and, since the Newsletter provides the glue that holds the Society together, represents a very useful contribution to its success. This was all recognised in a pre-Xmas lunch party for them held in St. Lukes Church Hall organised by June Churchman and Angela Howorth and attended by a fair representation of the Executive Committee. It was held by all to be a success and reminded us that social occasions and the contacts they bring are needed to help the Society prosper.

This brings me to the perennial plea for more members to become active in the Society's work. Its effectiveness is in direct proportion to the number of those actively involved. I know that I have made this comment frequently and there have been some response but not nearly enough. For example I would like to be able to put on exhibitions and an accompanying social occasion but we need people with the enthusiasm and some practical input to come forward. It is easy to be put off and think 'I don't know enough about that to help.' But if one tries it is amazing how quickly one learns! If you have any ideas of things that the Society could do to be more effective then make contact and give it a go!

Finally, do come along to the talks which you will see listed in this Newsletter. A lot of work goes into identifying speakers and catering for their varied needs and travel plans. Yes, and we are looking for someone to take on the Talks portfolio from Shashi Dare who is in double harness with the Membership Secretary job. What about volunteering for the Talks portfolio?

John McIntosh  
Acting Chairman

# **TALKS**

**WEDNESDAY 16<sup>th</sup> February 2005 – 8 p.m.**

**“THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH FURNITURE”**

An illustrated talk by Mr D.S. Embling

Mr Embling has been a member of the Farnham Local History Group for 20 years and has compiled a lot of information on English furniture.

**WEDNESDAY 16<sup>th</sup> March 2005 – 8 p.m.**

**“THREE CHESTNUTS”**

A talk by Mr C. Hawkins

Mr Hawkins, an independent ethnobotanist, researches and writes about the use of plants in Britain. He will be talking about Avenues and Parks – how they came into being in this country; who promoted them, and how.

**WEDNESDAY 20<sup>th</sup> April 2005 – 8 p.m.**

**“TITLE TO BE ANNOUNCED”**

A talk by Ms Frances Watkins

A talk on some aspects of Flowers and Plants. The exact topic has yet to be decided, so please keep a note of the date, and look out for the posters in town which will give the details.

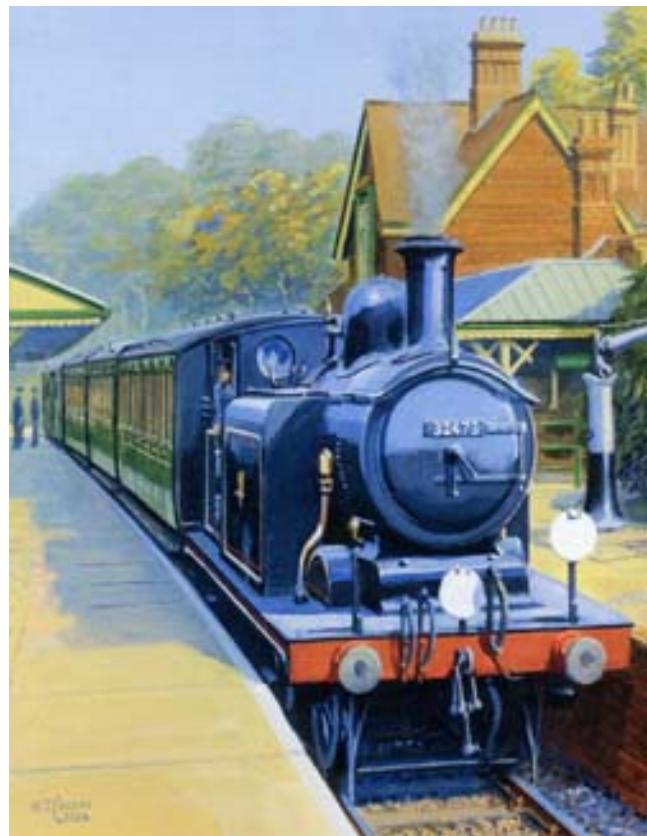
Shashi Dare

# OUTINGS

The planned outing to the RAF Museum in Hendon and the Freud Museum in Hampstead on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> January had to be cancelled due to lack of support. Maybe the idea of visiting places in January put some people off the idea.

Anyway, we will resume our visits in April with something a little different. We will be taking a trip on the Bluebell Line in Sussex, in pre-war carriages pulled by a steam train. After the return trip, and with time for lunch, we will be making a guided tour of Saint Hill Manor in East Grinstead, which is one of the finest sandstone buildings in Britain. The Manor has a very colourful past with many famous owners. It also contains a Monkey Mural, painted by John Spencer Churchill, which is over 100 feet long.

*London Brighton & South Coast Railway Class E4 0-6-2T Locomotive "Birch Grove", built in 1898.*



We do hope that you will support this visit and if you would like to bring along children or grandchildren they will be most welcome.

We look forward to your support for our outings and will always welcome non-Members.

Mike Copeland

# PROJECTS

## **YORK STREAM**

Water is now in the town centre as it usually is in the winter. The crunch will come in the spring when it usually retreats northwards. We hope the work the Environment Agency has done to dredge out the White Brook and the work it will do to control the reeds in Maidenhead Ditch using herbicide will keep the water flowing. If it does not we will write to them again asking them to carry out the promise made when the Jubilee River was planned which said:

*“Existing channels which pass through the centre of Maidenhead town will be upgraded to offer greater capacity during flood time, whilst their appearance under normal conditions will also be considerably improved”.*

We still think they should clear out more of the accumulated reeds and silt not to mention dumped gravel. Presumably they hope the Sainsbury's redevelopment will do this.

The water vole survey of Marsh Meadow is now available and shows that none were recorded in 2004. At the Green Way Working Group meeting in December they said they are preparing a management plan for clearing Marsh Meadow ditches to be done in March or Sept 2005. Hopefully this will help get more water into the system.

## **MILLENNIUM WALK**

### **A404 Footpath 9 Bisham- Secretary of States Orders**

The orders were published on 19<sup>th</sup> November and are supposed to become effective 90 days from the date of the order (9 Nov). This is now unlikely though one can live in hope. The Council decided the bridge into Bisham Woods needed to have disabled access though, as is well known, elsewhere on the route of Footpath 9 there is a stile and the farmer has ploughed the field. The bridge builders came up with a design featuring a 24-metre ramp with several resting places. After consultation with the amenity groups this has been reduced to 13 metres. However there are still problems with an E.A. requirement for a 3-metre buffer zone between the path and the ditch, a zone designed to protect another lot of non-existent water voles!

We plan to have an inaugural walk of the new route, hopefully in May. The plan would be to get the train to Marlow and then walk back towards Maidenhead along Footpath 9. Look for details in the next newsletter

### **Lower Cookham Road to Towpath**

Ready Mix Concrete who own White Place farm have by now, I hope, been taken over by Cemex. The Royal Borough is in the process of writing to the E.A. about gaining access for a path along the flood bund. Once this letter is sent I will write again to RMC to find out there current position regarding access.

### **BOY AND THE BOAT STATUE**

Hopefully by the time you get this newsletter the statue will be back up in the town centre. It is now repaired and will be erected soon, when the weather is suitable. The Society is very grateful to Lydia Parker (nee Karpinska) who created a new arm to replace the one lost when it was vandalised and who used her contacts to get the rest of the work done. We are also grateful to the Maidenhead Advertiser whose financial contribution facilitated the repair.

## OCKWELLS PROJECT

### Ockwells Manor

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in one of their earliest campaigns helped preserve Ockwells Manor house. In 1880 they produced a report detailing its state and condition and by 1887 there were fears that the house would be destroyed, with William Morris himself declaring in the press that it must not be. Then owned by William Henry Grenfell, Lord Desborough, the house was subsequently restored. The Civic Society, as part of a special edition on stained glass of their magazine *Cornerstone*, arranged to photograph the Ockwells glass and I was asked to write about it. The magazine also includes an interesting article on the shortcomings of said restoration and the SPAB's involvement. I have deposited copies of *Cornerstone* (vol 25, no 4, 2004) in the Heritage Centre and the library should you wish to see it.



*Ockwells Manor, Maidenhead*

### Bisham Abbey

Arising from my work on the Ockwells entry in the update of Nicolas Pevsner's book "Berkshire", I have also helped out on the entry for Bisham Abbey. Owners of Bisham have been an exciting lot including the Knights Templar; William Montacute, whose wife Katherine may have dropped the garter picked up by Edward III; Thomas Montacute, shot in the eye at the siege of Orleans in 1428, the year before Joan of Arc raised the siege; Richard Neville Earl of Salisbury killed at Wakefield during the Wars of the Roses, and his son, also Richard Neville, the Kingmaker, who buried his father with great pomp at Bisham in 1463. Most of them were buried in the priory church. The last Neville, Margaret, Countess of Salisbury was not. She was a staunch catholic and Henry VIII had her beheaded in the Tower or tried to. She refused to lay her head on the block and ended up being hacked to death. Compared to the above, later owners - the Hobys and the Vansittarts - led more mundane lives.

Henry VIII, when he seized the Abbey in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, demolished the priory (it was really a priory not an abbey) church, which, judging from illustrations, was quite something. Some geophysical work has been done on the Abbey grounds and we are trying to get a copy of the report to see if it offers a clue as to where this church was.

## **The Norris families of Ockwells, Speke and Fifield- are they related?**

John Norreys Esq (Norys, Norris) built Ockwells Manor ca 1450, at which time another family called Norris lived at Speke, near Liverpool. Their manor house was Speke Hall, now a National Trust property. Yet another Norris family established themselves in Fifield, near Bray. All the pedigrees of the Norris's of Ockwells show descent from the Norris family of Speke, which is highly unlikely. The Fifield Norris's however were certainly descended from the Speke line.

One of the great unknowns is how the Norris of Ockwells family came to bear the coat of Ravenscroft. To try and resolve this issue I have studied the published family tree of John Norris which as noted above clearly shows him linked to the Norris families of Speke (near Liverpool) and Fifield (near Bray). I have seen the earliest document to connect all three families - a pedigree compiled for Sir Henry Norris of Rycote towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which is now in the College of Arms, London.

This is what I think happened:

In 1487, at the battle of Stoke - the last pitched battle of the Wars of the Roses - both William Norris (of Speke) and Edward Norris (grandson of John Norris of Ockwells) were knighted by Henry VII. This may have been when the two families met. Edmund, younger brother of William Norris of Speke, appears to have moved to Fifield near Bray as he is considered to be the ancestor of this cadet line. In 1567, a later William Norris (of Speke) had a pedigree included in a Visitation of Lancaster done by a herald from the College of Arms. By 1568 Henry Norris, Lord of Rycote, who had been knighted by Elizabeth I in 1566 (his father was the Henry beheaded for "undue familiarity" with Anne Boleyn), had commissioned a pedigree which took many years to compile.

What the herald did was join Henry's pedigree into the Norris of Speke family tree produced by the Visitation. It is at the join that two attempts to relate John or Roger Norris to different Ravenscroft females (Millicent and Elizabeth) occur. Apart from that indication of unreliability, the pedigree also supposes a Henry Norris of Speke, known to have been alive in 1437, to be the great-great-grandfather of John Norris of Ockwells who died in 1466. Impossible! There is a mention of Berkshire in the Norris of Speke pedigree. *Sir William Norrys of Yatindin, co Barks* (sic) occurs in the family tree as the third son of Sir Henry Norrys of Speke (d. ca 1437). The second son, John, supposedly married Millicent Ravenscroft and from whom John Norris (d 1466) who built Ockwells Manor house is said to be descended. John Norris of Ockwells acquired Yattendon in Berkshire by his marriage to Alice Mer Brooke and it was inherited by his eldest son, Sir William Norris. As William could not be his own great-great uncle the reference to *Sir William Norrys of Yatindin, Barks* has to be incorrect.

However, this pedigree obviously did not worry the people involved. Henry Norris of Rycote died in 1601 and his grandson appears to have commissioned the enormous monument in Westminster Abbey (of an almost full size four poster bed on which lie Henry and his wife surrounded by their sons, all famous soldiers who died young). At the end of the four-poster is a stone shield (see photo below) that has the Norris of Speke coat in the dominant position (top left) with next to it that of Ravenscroft for Norris and then Mer Brooke. Henry was descended from the first marriage of John Norris to Alice Mer Brooke.

There appear to have been misgivings about this shield when it was put up. It has been suggested that it may have been the cause of an order to sculptors in 1618 to submit designs to the College of Arms so that the heraldry could be checked, and a strong protest was made against pretenders to the science of heraldry!



*The shield of Lord Henry Norris of Rycote (d. 1601) on his monument in Westminster Abbey. Note Norris of Speke coat top left. (Copyright the Dean and Chapter of Westminster)*

Edward Norris of Speke (d. 1606; son of William who d. 1568) rebuilt parts of Speke Hall ca 1598 and probably was responsible for putting up stained glass to both Norris families (see examples below).



*Edward Norris of Speke (d. 1606)*

*(Pictures courtesy National Trust)*



*Norris (Ravenscroft quartering Mer Brooke) of Ockwells*

These armorials still exist at Speke Hall (in the blue drawing room) and are so similar that they must have been put up at the same time. Edward's coat bears two stars (molets). A molet indicates a third son though he is said to be the second son of a second wife. A similar coat, though with the quarters transposed, occurs on a remaining bench-end in the nearby church at Childwall that he presumably gave. There seems to have been sloppy blazoning of this coat in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. You

will see the quarters are transposed on the bench-end and this follows the description of the coat in the 1567 Visitation. The coat on the Westminster Abbey armorial and at Speke Hall has the usual Norris of Speke coat.



*Edward Norris (d. 1606) coat on bench-end at Childwall Church*



*Ockwells Cup with Norris of Speke coat - a historian's nightmare*

The coat with transposed quarters has obviously got into some armorial catalogue so that when the Ockwells Cup was commissioned by the Cox Green Community Association in 1989 not only was the Speke rather than the Ravenscroft for Norris coat used but it was the incorrect version and with an extra molet. This will confuse some poor historian in the future!

Apart from the Speke and Ockwells families of Norris, that of Fifield also believed they were related to the Norris's of Ockwells. The Fifield cadet line definitely descended from the Norris's of Speke, their coat is the same together with a crescent for difference. The contemporary of Henry Norris of Rycote (d. 1601, and an Ockwells Norris) and Edward Norris of Speke (d. 1606) was William Norris of Fifield (d 1591).



*Left: Monument of William Norris (d 1591) in St Michaels, Bray. Right: Shield of William Norris on monument (Norris of Speke coats top left and bottom right with crescent indicating descent from a second son). See [www.braystmichael.co.uk](http://www.braystmichael.co.uk) for a closer look*

His marble monument (recently restored) in St Michaels, Bray, shows him in robes reflecting his position as Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, an office within the Order of the Garter based at St Georges Chapel, Windsor, though he was not a Knight of the Garter. This office he held jointly in 1554 with a John Norris. They were both Controllers of Works at Windsor castle. It would be interesting to know whether this John was an Ockwells Norris. William's monument, now on the north wall of the Norris chapel in St Michaels, was originally on the east wall of the chapel, the chapel that John Norris of Ockwells left money in his will of 1465 to "make new". The coat of John Norris (Ravenscroft for Norris) still occurs on corbels in the chapel and on two stone tablets embedded in the east wall.



*Left: Shield of John Norris d. 1466 (Ravenscroft for Norris) on corbel. Right: Shield of John Norris with sea otter supporters, both in St Michael's Church, Bray.*

Two things on the monument of William Norris indicate a presumption that he was related to the Norris family of Ockwells. Firstly the inscription on a separate tablet under William's monument (see photo above) includes the phrase that he "*is interred by his ancestors*". Secondly under the central armorial shield on the monument is the motto "*Faithfully Serve*" (sic). This same motto - *ffeythfully serve* - occurs in most of the windows containing armorial glass at Ockwells Manor.

But were the Norris family of Ockwells related to those of Speke and Fifield? Probably not.

Ann Darracott

## HERITAGE CENTRE NEWS

### MAIDENHEAD AND THE MOVIES - until 26<sup>th</sup> February

Sponsored by Oakley Court Hotel

What a varied cinema history we have, with Hammer films and Gerry 'Mr Thunderbirds' Anderson having started locally, and an attempt in Cookham to rival Disney with charming cartoons called "**Animaland**". And of course the "Carry On" films used Maidenhead Town Hall, the old Library and other buildings as sets. As part of the exhibition you can watch a special compilation tape of many scenes shot on location here, see a film about Gerry Anderson's puppet-making career, and even see a documentary about amateur film-making in 1950 – starring Luke Over as a youthful 'good guy' detective. All wonderfully entertaining escapism!

## **ANTIQUES VALUATION DAY - Friday 25<sup>th</sup> February, 11am – 3pm**

With expert valuers from Bonhams. Admission £3 including light refreshments and valuation of one item. Additional items £1. No large items or jewellery please.

## **MAPPING OUR HISTORY - 1 March – 16 April**

Centuries of local maps tracing the development of our town

## **MAIDENHEAD AT WAR - 19 April – 21 May**

An exhibition to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II

## **RIVER THAMES HISTORICAL CRUISE - Wednesday 25 May**

Our ever-popular 5-hour cruise from Maidenhead to Temple and return, with full commentary en route. Bookings being taken now. The same cruise will be repeated on 6<sup>th</sup> September.

Maidenhead Heritage Centre is open Tuesday – Saturdays  
90 Moorbridge Road, Maidenhead SL6 8BW, ☎ 01628 780555  
[www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk](http://www.maidenheadheritage.org.uk)

# **PLANNING DIGEST**

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Planning Group met in November, December, and January to review the plans for some 30 applications that had been selected from the weekly listings for October, November and December. All the sites were visited and reviewed in detail. Comments were submitted to the planning department on 20 of the applications and the full text of these can be seen on the Society's website.

The applications included retirement apartments in Bridge Avenue, more blocks of flats in Shoppenhangers Road, a block of flats at the bottom of Altwood Road and a telephone mast at St. Marks; a block of 8 flats in Braywick Road, a block of 89 flats on the Delta Motor site in Grenfell Road and a block of 110 flats as an alternative to the office block as part of the Sainsbury's development on Market Street. There is also an application to revise the scheme for the progressive working and restoration of Sheephouse Farm quarry by Summerleaze.

Nigel Cockburn

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Just before Christmas Nigel Cockburn and I, together with our local MP Theresa May, met a representative of the owner of the dilapidated building in the High Street known as Cresset Towers. It is all too clear, with such high land values in the town that an owner might feel that a site in the town is worth so much that generating an income stream from it also is not worth the bother. This ignores the visual impact that lack of use and maintenance brings and is wholly unacceptable in a civilised community. Speedy remedy for this in terms of Council action seems to be long-winded and legalistic but we are not without hope that something will be done soon.

John McIntosh

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2005  
**Talk** by Mr. D. S. Embling

“The History of English Furniture”  
Methodist Church Hall, 8 p.m.

Wednesday 16 March 2005  
**Talk** by Mr C. Hawkins

“Three Chestnuts – The story of Avenues and Parks”  
Methodist Church Hall, 8 p.m.

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2005  
**Outing**

The Bluebell Railway Line & Saint Hill Manor, Sussex

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2005  
**Talk** by Ms Frances H. Watkins

A talk on aspects of flowers/plants – details to be confirmed  
Methodist Church Hall, 8 p.m.

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2005**

**45<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting**  
Methodist Church Hall, 8 p.m.

## CIVIC SOCIETY OFFICERS

President	Richard Poad, Hollyhocks, The Common, Cookham Dean, SL6 9NZ	484298
Acting Chairman	John McIntosh, 26 Harvest Hill Road, SL6 2QQ	633259
Vice-Chairman	Vacancy	
Secretary	June Churchman, 20 Chiltern Road, SL6 1XA	638546
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## COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2005

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

12<sup>th</sup> January, 9<sup>th</sup> February, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 13<sup>th</sup> April, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 13<sup>th</sup> July, 14<sup>th</sup> September, 12<sup>th</sup> October,  
9<sup>th</sup> November, 14<sup>th</sup> December.

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2005 in the Wesley Hall at the Methodist Church at 8.00pm.

**The closing date for copy for the next issue  
of the Newsletter is 15<sup>th</sup> April 2005.**

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(Unless otherwise acknowledged, photographs taken by Ann & Brian Darracott using  
the Society's digital camera purchased with a grant from the Kidwell's Trust)

**News Editor**    **Brian Darracott**  
                    **6 Medallion Place, Maidenhead, SL6 1TF (01628 620280)**