



**Maidenhead
Civic Society**
Estd. 1960

NEWS

Issue 2/21

May 2021



What's been happening on Guards Club Island?

See page 15

Visit our website: www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

The Chairman's Page

Eighteen months ago housing minister Robert Jenrick vouched to wipe out 'ugly or thoughtless' development, by making it a reason for planning refusal. Communities would help to decide by agreeing design codes with their local planning authorities.

However, more recent proposals to streamline the planning process suggest that once a development aligns with the codes it will be fast-tracked for approval without any opportunity for further scrutiny by councillors or the community. We have objected.

In February, in a decision delegated to a planning officer, our council determined that five blocks of flats in Bridge Road, including one of 10-storeys with bland architectural elevations, should form the eastern gateway to our town opposite the police station. We had objected.

Prior to their meeting in March we wrote to councillors on the planning panel to underline our submitted concerns about aspects of the 25-storey Nicholson redevelopment. No-one replied. At the hearing, a lone voice raised the issue of heights but it was not debated.

In recent weeks residents have complained on social media, in the *Advertiser* and elsewhere about the design and appearance of the stuff being imposed on us. "Maidhattan", "Cell Block H" and "Soviet-style" are phrases typifying the reaction.

At the time of the application for the flats on York Road by the town hall, the Civic Society said it was "a generation-defining opportunity which falls short of expectations, especially in architectural style." Our comments, sadly, fell on deaf ears. But a town hall official last month said: "They're very nice inside."

Is anyone in there listening?

If we are to create attractive, successful places and spaces, there has to be community engagement, early in the planning process and throughout it.

There's a glimmer of hope. The draft Vision & Charter for Maidenhead, which has been on the stocks since March 2019, is set to emerge post-pandemic. And this includes the promise of a "town team" comprising resident representatives, so we shall see...

Meanwhile, take a look at our items on Making Maidenhead A Better Place (page 9) and our recruitment drive (page 3) and help to swell our groundbase of support. Heaven knows, we need it.

Bob Dulson

Subscription Reminder

We would like to remind our members who pay by cheque that your subscriptions are due on June 1st. If you would like to change the way you pay to a Standing Order the details are: Lloyds Bank, Sort Code 30-95-36, Account Number 00277876. Subscriptions have not changed for the coming year but could you please check that your Standing Order is for the correct amount as listed below. Your prompt payment would be appreciated as this helps the Society carry out its good work on behalf of the members and to the benefit of Maidenhead.

If you have any queries please contact me on joyce@delasalle.me.uk or telephone 01628 637342.

Single membership	£15.00
Family Membership (2 members at one address)	£20.00

Membership Drive

In last month's News we explained why the Society needs to recruit new members. This is not just so that we can secure our future – new blood, new ideas, new ways of working – but it is essential if we are to maintain our position as the respected voice of the community on planning and the environment in Maidenhead.

Recent decisions on the way the town is moving – e.g. the high-rise blocks of flats that seem to be the new norm – show that as never before it is important for there to be a meaningful consultation process in place. That process is better served by the Civic Society being at its heart. And being able to demonstrate that we continue to have the support of the community in number is vital.

And so we ask you – our current members – to help in this. We'd like you to try to recruit at least one new member each. To assist you, you'll find a four-page pull-out membership form at the centre of this edition of the News. Please use it! Tell your new recruit that their first year's membership will be free. And as a little "thank-you" to you, we will enter all the names of those who have signed up a new member into the hat for a draw for the prize of a bottle of decent champagne.

Alongside this we will also be mounting a mail-shot campaign, hand-delivering hundreds of letters to homes in selected areas of Maidenhead where we hope the Society's efforts will be most immediately appreciated.

Planning Matters

In recent editions of our Newsletter there has been much focus on the **Nicholsons Quarter** redevelopment that lies at the heart of our town. Generally, the attempt to rejuvenate our town centre at street level was welcomed together with the reintroduction of some of the place names and personages associated with the historical background of the town. However, there was concern expressed about losing a shopping centre that offered cover from the elements which was to be replaced with wind tunnels and little shelter. To fund the redevelopment it was necessary to introduce hundreds of flats in buildings up to 25 storeys high and new office blocks, combined with the demolition and relocation of the existing multi-storey car park. The scheme has been granted planning permission by the Panel who have delegated the “detail” to the Head of Planning. We were disappointed at the lack of scrutiny and examination of the proposals – especially the height of the scheme which is not supported by the adopted Tall Buildings Strategy. The future success of Maidenhead town centre now rests in the hands of a third party, and the potential disruption could last up to five years. All of this sits alongside the current uncertainty associated with The Landing project.



The darker the blue, the taller the building. Note the Town Hall for comparison.

So now the focus moves on to the redevelopment of the **St Cloud Way** scheme on the site of the Magnet Leisure Centre and the Tenpin Bowling Alley. This is a joint venture between Countryside and RBWM. The fruits of such a collaboration are evidenced by the St Ives Road and York Street/Park Street blocks of 7/8 storeys

which were unveiled in March. At best, public opinion on the design of these blocks is mixed. On the St Cloud Way site we are destined for more of the same – except that emboldened by the permitted height of The Landing and Nicholsons Quarter the proposed buildings on the north side of St Cloud Way have been increased to eleven storeys compared with a more modest 5/6 storeys originally indicated. A total of 439 dwellings are proposed, but parking provision for the new residents is inadequate, whilst visitors to the Wilderness Centre (two doctors’ surgeries and a pharmacy) lose any facility of public parking. On the positive side there will be 30% “affordable” dwellings and there is a shift in mix towards 3-bed flats, which is an acknowledgement that there are too many 1- and 2-bed flats in town. In design terms the blocks have rectangular and unattractive elevations with recessed balconies. Some variety is introduced through the use of different building materials. It is to be hoped that the total number of dwellings will be reduced, building heights brought down to 7 or 8 storeys and more “design” introduced into the elevations, including stepping back the top two storeys to reduce the visual impact. The more detailed comments on the scheme are reproduced below.

There are three ongoing applications that have been featured in previous Newsletters. **Land adjacent to 33A The Crescent** is an infill plot ripe for development. There have been a number of unsuccessful applications to erect a block of 9 flats on the site, and one dismissed appeal. We have previously objected to overdevelopment of the site with yet more flats and inadequate parking. There was an alternative proposal for two detached houses with parking, but this has also been refused because of risk of damage to existing trees/ root systems. We have written to support a reapplication for two detached houses on the site and are hopeful that the tree issue can be resolved. The planning saga with the infamous **Zaman House** at Church Road in The Fisheries continues. There have been several previous application attempts to demolish and replace with a block of 8 flats. There is a resubmitted application for a reduced number of 7 flats on the site. However, our objections remain as before: Overdevelopment of the site, with a flatted scheme that is out of character with the neighbourhood and the ongoing oversupply of flats in the housing mix. The former convenience store at **Best One, 3A Altwood Road** has also re-submitted a refused application to convert the retail space and storeroom behind into 6 studio flats. There is little change in the proposals and the dwellings are seriously undersized, with little natural light and no amenity space or car parking. They offer substandard accommodation and an unsatisfactory addition to our housing stock.

Last year, we successfully saw off the appeal against the refusal of change of use and conversion into residential flats of **Thames Riviera Hotel**. It is good news that there are two planning applications to enhance this prime riverside leisure facility. Firstly, a scheme to provide improved open access from the dining area with bi-fold doors onto an upgraded riverside balcony. This has been permitted. Secondly, an extension to the kitchen area is proposed to better service the restaurant and alfresco dining area. Mindful of the setting in a Conservation Area, we welcome any investment that reinforces the retention and improvement of the hotel as an ongoing leisure asset alongside the River Thames.

There has been a refused application to demolish **Devonia, 13 Braywick Road** to be replaced with a block of 8 flats. We objected on the basis of overdevelopment in height, bulk and mass, lack of parking and amenity space and the ongoing oversupply of flats. The reasons for refusal were twofold: The scale, massing and resultant roof form were out of character, and the application did not take into account the likely effects on the “Air Quality Management Area” (AQMA). This is an ecological policy that has not come up before and it will be interesting to see how it is applied in the future. In the next Newsletter it is hoped to have more information on how many such areas there are and where they are; what are the regulations, and how does a planning applicant conform to them? There has always been an ecological cost in demolishing perfectly good homes like Devonia and even Zaman House. However, it has never stopped redevelopment to date. Would Shoppenhangers Road have been redeveloped into hundreds of flats if AQMA legislation applied? How does AQMA sit alongside the construction of multi storey blocks in the town centre?



Devonia, 13 Braywick Road (east side), behind the wall

Finally, a word on the latest response from the Planning Inspector on the emerging Borough Local Plan. Questions are asked about the height of the new development proposed on the footprint of Maidenhead Railway Station. With a variety of versions the number of storeys could reach 22. The inspector feels that this could be excessive and would potentially dwarf and swamp the surrounding low rise buildings. The question is asked whether this is compatible with the Tall Buildings Strategy. It is a matter of regret that this input from the inspector has come so late in the day when developments such as Nicholsons Quarter have been given the green flag by our planners.

Planning Group Comments on St Cloud Way Redevelopment Proposals

This application is the next stage in the delivery of Maidenhead’s “Flat Mountain”. We are pleased to observe that the scheme has two positive elements. Firstly, the provision of 30% affordable homes (though shared ownership). All other town centre developments have conveniently been excused this requirement by RBWM. Secondly, we welcome the switch to provide more 3 bed/5-person flats with a total of 165 (38%) of the total units. This is a small move towards providing family homes

with some townhouses included. The proportion of 1- and 2-bedroom flats – of which there is gross oversupply in the pipeline – has been reduced.

However, the scheme as a whole is unsatisfactory. Building heights have been increased from the 7 or 8 storeys originally put forward to 11 storeys. There are two blocks of this height along the St Cloud Way frontage of the site. Being to the south of the site these higher blocks will reduce sunlight to the rest of the scheme and create a visual barrier restricting the visual aspect. The Tall Buildings study did not propose high rise to the north of the ring-road, and we were pleased to see the height of the permitted St Cloud Gate development being reduced before permission was granted. We fail to understand how 11 storeys can be deemed acceptable. The overall density does not require such high rise building – the renowned award winning scheme in Norwich achieved a higher density than this proposal without resorting to tower blocks. We would like to see many more town houses, low rise maisonettes and a greater variety of dwelling type within the scheme.

The design of the blocks is utilitarian and uniform with little architectural merit. The elevations of the buildings are generally flat-faced with little surface relief. The blocky character of the architecture is exaggerated by the unrelenting use of right angled corners to each block with recessed balcony spaces, which are used throughout the scheme. These balconies will get restricted sunlight and reduce the daylight levels in each living room. This will especially be the case on north facing elevations.



Architect's impression, looking west, of a walkway within the proposed prison – sorry! – residential blocks

From the floor plans it appears that most flats are restricted to a single open plan living space, with a kitchen, dining and sitting area opening onto a “balcony”. The only variety within the design is the use of different brick/facing materials. Finally,

the setting of the listed building known as The Wilderness Centre is swamped by this development to the north and east, having already suffered with the earlier approval of the St Cloud Gate block to the south.

The public areas and landscaping are restricted to paved walkways between the blocks interspersed with a few trees. These green links appear to deliver permeability for pedestrians throughout the site rather than amenity space to be enjoyed by residents. With 350 parking spaces between the 439 flats there is a provision of 0.8 spaces per flat, which is an improvement on the parking levels provided in the completed Countryside developments on St Ives Road and York Road. Nevertheless, in spite of the proximity to the town centre, the reality of car ownership would suggest that the parking will be inadequate. It is unclear how the parking will be allocated and/or managed when demand exceeds supply. In addition, the Wilderness Centre, which houses two doctors' surgeries and a pharmacist has its own dedicated car park, which is used entirely by the staff. Visitors and patients have historically used the public car park associated with the Magnet. As this area is now incorporated in the new development there is no parking provision for those visiting the ongoing medical businesses.

With a potential 1500 residents in the development there are concerns about the pedestrian accessibility to and from the town centre. The ring road carrying the main A4 presents a significant physical barrier. The loss of the pedestrian footbridge from the Hines Meadow car park is regrettable; an upgraded footbridge would be preferable from the Sainsbury's store. The alternative proposal of a "toucan" crossing from the Premier Inn to Kidwells Park has the disadvantage of requiring a further road crossing over Cookham Road. Upgrading the existing subway appears to have been dismissed as an option.

Our objections to this proposed redevelopment are summarised as follows:

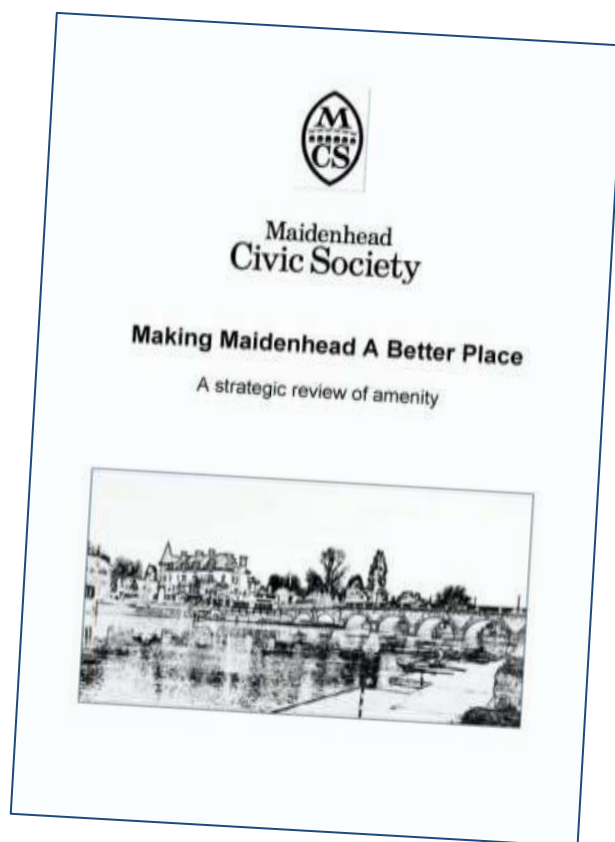
- The height of the blocks up to 11 storeys is unacceptable.
- The density, bulk and mass of the scheme is excessive.
- The visual impact of the high rise blocks facing St Cloud Way is intrusive.
- The blocks are poorly designed with unattractive elevations.
- A similar density could be achieved using low/mid-rise dwellings.
- There should be more variety of housing type.
- There is a lack of amenity space within the development.
- Parking provision is inadequate, even allowing for the central location.
- There is no parking provided for patients visiting doctors' surgeries.
- The blocks will adversely impact the setting of the listed Wilderness Centre.
- Poor pedestrian accessibility over the ring road.
- Although some town houses are included in the scheme, this proposal will add yet more flats to Maidenhead's housing stock.

MAKING MAIDENHEAD A BETTER PLACE

The Civic Society is preparing to revise its Strategic Review *Making Maidenhead A Better Place*.

Our Review was based on over a hundred ideas from Society members. First published in 2004 and revised in 2009, it paved the way for the Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) in 2011 which incorporated many of its ambitions. (You can read the 2009 version on our website in the Publications/Publications & Reports section.)

The document put forward ideas for planning, housing, transport, leisure and the environment, among others. A number of them have been realised – notably the Waterways restoration, the sympathetic redevelopment of Taplow paper mill and Skindles and the new footbridge at Boulters – though many more haven't.



And now the AAP is being superseded by a controversial Borough Local Plan. So, we plan to re-state our aspirations in a second revision of our Review with the aim of ***Making Maidenhead A Better Place***. In the following paragraphs, our chairman, Bob Dulson, and Tony Monk, an architect who recently joined our planning group, look at some of the issues.

The revision is being undertaken by our Planning Group, which has been augmented for the purpose. Our considerations cover a spectrum of issues but a key one, tall buildings, featured recently in the publication of the Planning Inspector's response and modifications to the Borough's emerging Local Plan.

As part of this, Louise Phillips, the Planning Inspector, has set out her overall aesthetic standard as a general directive that "*tall buildings should be exceptional and should fit into the area*". Her conclusions apply, therefore, to all tall buildings within the vicinity, though not, sadly, to permissions already granted.

Turning to specific sites, Ms Phillips sees the ambitions for the Railway Station as over-development, saying that buildings up to 40m (13 storeys) would be, "*utterly dominant and incompatible with the surrounding buildings*". She also questions the

suitability of St Mary's Walk for housing and the potential loss of some heritage assets on St Mark's Hospital site. And she clearly expects these indicative plans to be amended accordingly.

We were pleased to see the Inspector being critical of dominating heights that could seriously damage the historic character and unique appeal of the town. With few exceptions, existing buildings in the area do not exceed 6 storeys.

If Ms Phillips' directives were applied to the recently approved plan for 139 flats, with a 10-storey block, at Moorbridge Court opposite Waitrose, it would have failed all criteria. (We are at a loss to see how it complied with either the AAP or the emerging Local Plan.) It's a pity that her amendments can't be applied retrospectively. Unfortunately, in England & Wales a planning permission cannot be overturned by a third party – although the lawfulness of an approval can be challenged within three months by judicial review.

Then there's the issue of housing growth. This is '*the elephant in the room*', trampling on the town with densities more suited to major cities rather than the narrow streets and traffic patterns of Maidenhead. In our 2009 Review we said: "Imposed housing targets, if pursued, could seriously affect Maidenhead's character and lifestyle." And look at what's happening.....

Today these densities are being met by tracts of the town centre being given over to tower block housing without adequate on-site parking or amenity space. But where is the demand for this type of housing? And what is the justification for the high percentage of 2 bed-flatted accommodation and the dearth of family units? The result seems set to be an oversupply of flats and one large traffic jam.

An up-to-date, demographic assessment of housing requirements is urgently needed, especially in the wake of the pandemic.

The Society's Review will set out what we judge to be the requirements of our historic Thames-side town; to insist on the best, to build on the example of the Waterside Quarter at Chapel Arches, which sets a good standard of civic design, and to contribute constructively to a brighter, safer, more human, more attractive and enjoyable town.

NB: What do you think should be included in our Review? Send your ideas by email to chairman@maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk with 'Strategic Review' in the subject box.

Martin McNamee and Bob Dulson

A large, light blue watermark of the Maidenhead Civic Society logo is centered in the background. The logo is a shield-shaped crest. At the top is a large, stylized letter 'M'. Below the 'M' is a depiction of a classical building with a pediment supported by several columns. At the bottom of the crest is a large, stylized letter 'S'.

**Feel strongly about what's
happening to Maidenhead?**

**Ask the questions and
be part of the answer**

Join us!

**There's a place for you in
Maidenhead Civic Society**

(Enjoy FREE membership for a year)



Civic group's 'square deal' supported

Town needs regeneration says May

By Susan Crowley-Jones

MAIDENHEAD'S MAY TOWN COUNCIL has agreed to support the plans of the Maidenhead Civic Society to create a public square in the town centre. The society has been campaigning for a new, more vibrant square to replace the old market place.

MAIDENHEAD: The town centre, with the new square.



Improving Maidenhead

Maidenhead Civic Society is looking for new members.

A respected voice in the community for over 60 years, the Society stands up for high standards in the built and natural environment. We aim to make Maidenhead more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive.

Is Maidenhead your home, with a character and atmosphere you appreciate? Are you interested or concerned about its future?

You have received this leaflet because it's thought you will want to join us – and help to make a difference. As an extra encouragement, we are offering you free membership for a year.

As well as planning, our activities include amenity, environmental and heritage projects, campaigns and social events. Members receive regular updates through our quarterly Civic Society News.

Maidenhead Civic Society, a registered charity, is apolitical and entirely independent.

**If you live in Maidenhead and love it,
you'll be at home in the Civic Society.**

How to join

Please complete this form and send it to our membership secretary:

Joyce Delasalle, 7 Laxton Green, Cox Green, Maidenhead SL6 3HW

If you'd like more information about the Society, please visit our website at:
www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

This form entitles you to one year's free membership of the Society with our compliments. Our financial year starts on 1st June. Your first subscription will therefore be due on 1st June 2022.

Our subscription rates are shown below. If you'd like to make an additional donation that would be most welcome; we are a voluntary charity.

Single membership **£15**

Family membership (two members at one address) **£20**

Names(s)

1. _____

2. _____

Address _____

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I/we would like to add Gift Aid to any subscription/donation made in future ☐

SEND NO MONEY NOW

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Bankers Order Form

To _____ Bank plc

Address _____

Please pay on 1st June 2022 (Two Thousand and Twenty-Two) and on 1st June in subsequent years, until further notice, to LLOYDS BANK PLC, Maidenhead (Sort Code 30-95-36) for the account of MAIDENHEAD CIVIC SOCIETY (A/c 00277876) the sum of £_____ debiting the following account:

Account No _____

Name _____

Address _____

Date _____

Signed _____

**Maidenhead
Civic Society**

Preserving the best – improving the rest

Registered Charity No. 272102

Visit our website - www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk

Projects

THE CHAPEL OF SS ANDREW & MARY MAGDALENE & CIVIC LIFE IN MAIDENHEAD

The Chapel was once outside the Bear Hotel. Civic life in Maidenhead started here in 1451 when a guild was established in the chapel with responsibility for the *maintenance of the bridge of Maydenhith over the Thames, whereby divers lieges of the king cannot pass without peril at certain times of the year through floods and the weakness of the bridge.* The chapel was expanded in 1724. Now known simply as St Marys, it was relocated to its present site in 1824 as the original chapel was causing an obstruction to coaches.



Drawing of 1813 of Chapel Arches showing the east end of the 1724 chapel

The late Michael Bayley produced this lively drawing of the chapel. The view is from the corner of the High Street with St Ives Road and shows the bridge in the distance



The Calendar of Patent Rolls licensing the guild in 1451 recorded: *The members of the gild would elect wardens annually with the chaplain and his successors being surveyors of the gild, the surveyor, wardens and members be capable of acquiring possessions, and of pleading and being impleaded in any court, having a common seal and able to meet to make statutes; grant also that they may acquire lands, rents and possessions not held in chief to the value of 10 marks a year for the repair and maintenance of the bridge and other premises; grant also to them of pontage for ever, and of the whole water under the bridge and for 50 feet on either side thereof on either bank with the soil and fishery thereof.*

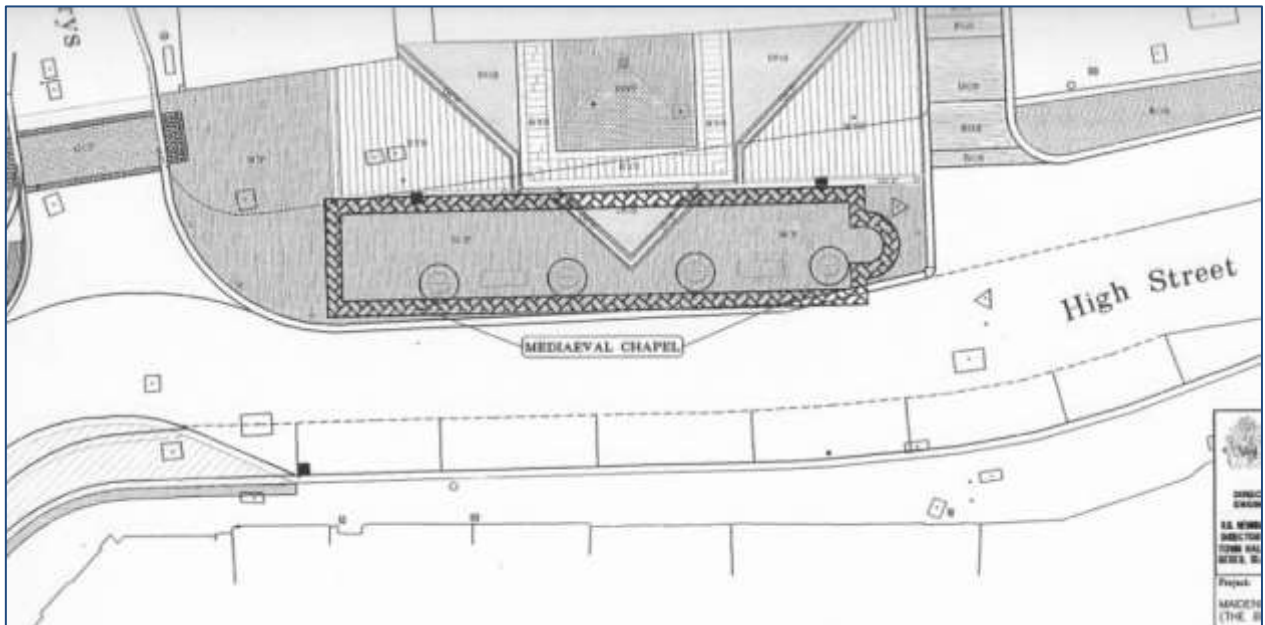
This collection of “pontage” became the tolls that lasted until 1903!

Until about 2005, when the new mayor was made, councillors would process to St Mary’s Church led by two people, often members of the police, carrying the Bridgemasters’ staves.



The new mayor and council processed from the town hall to St Mary’s, the Borough Church, for the mayor making ceremony

In 1995 when work was being done to extend the pavement outside The Bear, the chalk foundations of the chapel were found. The Civic Society funded a plaque to mark the site which was unveiled by the new mayor in 1997. At the same time the Royal Borough placed a number of brass marker studs in the ground to demarcate the chapel foundations.



1995 RBWM engineering dept. drawing of the 1724 Chapel Outline based on a diagram produced by Brian Boulter and Pam Knight. According to Elias Kupfermann the dimensions were: length 19.8m; width 3.4m.



Mayor Cllr Eric Wiles unveiling the plaque outside the Bear in 1997, local historian Elias Kupfermann and Ann Darracott carried the Bridgemasters' staves – can you spot the esteemed patron of our Society?



However, in 2019, when the pavement was being retrenched as part of the Chapel Arches development, all the studs on the south side of the chapel outline were lost. Evidently both the planning department and the highways department were unaware of their presence as they had not brought the presence of the studs to the attention of the developer. We are grateful to Peter Humm, Senior Technical Manager of Shanly Homes, for sourcing new studs and organising their placement in March 2021. The studs on the south side of the chapel outline are in a new cycle lane. Other studs mark the approximate east and west extremities of the 1724 chapel.



The area in front of The Bear where the chapel once stood

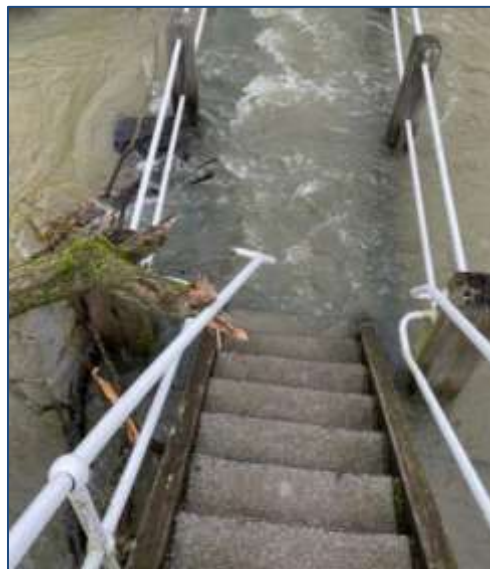


Replacement brass studs, and close-up, along the southern side of the chapel outline, now in the new cycle lane. I have suggested that the highways department be made aware of their presence to avoid any future problems such as road resurfacing.

GUARDS CLUB PARK & BRIDGE

In the last Newsletter we reported on the build-up of trees and other detritus trapped under the bridge that began in February 2020 and our attempts to get it removed. This became urgent when actual visible damage to the bridge became apparent in February 2021.

In an effort to expedite the clearance of the accumulated debris the Society was finally able to convince the Royal Borough to take action and Tony Ward of A W Woodlanders was appointed to undertake the work.



Left: Debris trapped by the bridge, 15 January 2021; right: pressure from a branch of the trapped tree damaged the handrail (3 February 2021)



Tony Ward removing one of the trees from under the bridge (31st March 2021)



Regular readers will recall that Tony Ward has previously assisted the Society in clearing a tree stump from next to North Town Pond, and also has worked with Maidenhead Waterways to clear fallen trees from the White Brook.

The accumulated trees, bits of decking, buoys, etc have now gone, thanks to a herculean effort by Tony and his team who worked on and in the Thames from the end of March till after Easter. Tony was for a lot of the time in the river up to his shoulders dragging trees onto the island!

We hope the foundations of the bridge have not been damaged and that the handrail can be bent back in shape. We have asked the Environment Agency, who took seven months to decide removing the trees was not their responsibility, to ensure that trees do not fall in the Thames from islands further upstream that they are responsible for.

The Society is grateful to the Royal Borough for financing this work which will help preserve the bridge. This is especially poignant now as the “Gaffer” (engineer Harold James) who oversaw the rebuilding of the bridge as a main part of the Society’s Silver Jubilee project, passed away in March this year (see obituary p18).

In the summer his widow Jacquie hopes to have a picnic in Harold’s memory in Guards Club Park so there will be the opportunity for you all to come along and observe the Gaffer’s handiwork which has been an even greater benefit to residents during the current pandemic.



The river in full flood in mid-February, clearly showing the build-up of damaging debris abutting the island end of the bridge



The same view, taken in mid-April after the remedial works to remove the debris

Ann Darracott

Harold James – an appreciation

Harold James, who died in March at the age of 94, really was a stalwart of the Civic Society. He had studied structural engineering at Queens College, Cambridge, where appropriately enough there is a famous ‘Mathematical Bridge’ built in 1749. Harold’s 20th century engineering skills were just one of his many talents. He played the organ and was a superb photographer with his own dark room at home. His photographs illustrated many a Civic Society exhibition. He was one of the early members of the society and its committee; by 1972 he was the membership secretary as well as a member of the planning committee which met every week in the bar at The Bear, poring over developers’ plans which Harold and the two Michaels (Bayley and Bowley) often had to explain to colleagues.



It was the Guards Club project where Harold really came into his own, first using the proverbial back of an envelope to calculate a project cost of £10,000 when the Society had less than £500 in the bank. Before the rotten bridge was dismantled, Harold (who was also a flood warden) donned his thigh length boots to measure up the bridge with his usual accuracy. The boots weren’t quite long enough, so he climbed into his wetsuit instead. He negotiated with timber merchants for Malaysian hardwood called Balau, with river contractors for pile driving and with a traditional foundry in the Forest of Dean for reproduction cast iron castings. Our visit there was a journey back in time. This really was Harold’s project (he was affectionately known as the “Gaffer”), yet as in all things he was very modest about it. The restored bridge opened in September 1978 and after a year’s break the project team reconvened to build the dinky little shelter which still stands in Guards Club Park.

In 1992 Harold succeeded me as chairman: one of his successes was to persuade the council to open Maidenhead’s first bottle bank – in the car park at the Magnet. He was also a long-time member of Burnham Rotary Club and his service to Rotary and the Civic Society are evidence of a highly developed sense of public duty, despite being a very modest, diffident but charming man. I’m sure that many ‘senior’ members will share fond memories of him.

Richard Poad

Events

Well, for obvious reasons we still haven't been able to consider firming up on any Society events. As you will have seen, we sent out a questionnaire to all our members for whom we have an email address sounding out their attitude to resuming our normal programme. Thank you to all who responded!

As one might have expected, the general feeling was one of "yes, as soon as we get the 'all-clear' and then we'll see how we feel." The Events Group has reluctantly taken the decision to postpone the Society's annual dinner event until next January at the earliest. However, in the hope that we will be allowed to meet up again face to face sometime in the summer, we will be looking out for opportunities to get out and enjoy ourselves in a socially-distanced manner. Fingers crossed!

News from the Heritage Centre

The centre's 40 volunteers can't wait to reopen on May 17th, assuming the lifting of restrictions goes according to plan. The Spitfire Simulator Experience is now available for booking and there will be a small reopening exhibition about the amazing people at WAMDSAD/Sportsable who has been carrying the torch for disabled people for 46 years, and whose athletes have participated in every single Paralympic games. Sportsable is closing down and has accepted an offer by the Heritage Centre to look after all its memories and memorabilia (lots of trophies and hundreds of photographs!)

In the first full year of the pandemic, the Centre was only open for 15 weeks. While visitor numbers took a tumble, a government grant and the introduction of online lectures from May 2020 has reduced the financial burden. 15 zoom talks have been given so far, with four more to be given before the summer break – one about Royal visits to Maidenhead being postponed due to the death of Prince Philip. The dates are May 5, May 25, June 16 and July 7 and full details are on the website <https://maidenheadheritage.org.uk/online-lectures> together with information on how to book.

Looking ahead to September, it is hoped to run the popular 5-hr River Thames Cruise on both September 3 and 7, subject to whatever social distancing measures are in force at the time. The dates will be confirmed at the end of June.

Dates for your Diary

CIVIC SOCIETY – KEY CONTACTS

Executive Chairman	Bob Dulson, Bryher, Islet Road, SL6 8HT	627130
Hon. Secretary	Eileen Goford, 6 Laxton Green, SL6 3HW	638238
Hon. Treasurer	Peter Child, 34 College Road, SL6 6AT	632300
Planning Group	Martin McNamee, 14 Lower Cookham Road, SL6 8JT	623203
Projects	Ann Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
Communications	Brian Darracott, 6 Medallion Place, SL6 1TF	620280
Events	Tina Sell, Marlborough, River Road, Taplow, SL6 0BB	628675
Outings Organiser	Mike Copeland, 14 Laburnham Road, SL6 4DB	634181
Membership Sec.	Joyce Delasalle, 7 Laxton Green, SL6 3HW	637342
Newsletter Distribution	Sue Ross, 3 The Chantry, 21 Boyn Hill Avenue, SL6 4EY	626849



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2021

All meetings are online via Zoom until further notice

12th January, 9th February, 9th March, 13th April, 11th May, 8th June, 13th July, 10th August, 14th September, 12th October, 9th November, 14th December

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 17th November 2021 at 8.00 pm

**The closing date for copy for the next issue
of the Newsletter is 16th July 2021**

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