



# Henley Society Newsletter

October 2012

Editor:

Sandra Moon

I hope you all had a lovely summer, with so much going on in the country, the Queen's Jubilee, the Olympic and Paralympics Games; there was much to keep us all busy.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS



### HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY MUSEUM AND CHURCHILL WAR ROOMS 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2012

The visit will start with the Changing of the Guard by the Household Cavalry following by a conducted tour of the Museum. We will then move on to the Churchill War Rooms, where there will be an opportunity to have lunch and then view the War Rooms at leisure. Booking Forms for this visit is included with the Newsletter.

### CHRISTMAS LUNCH BADGEMORE PARK GOLF CLUB - 8<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2012

### FAWLEY STEAM TRAIN AND RAILWAY MUSEUM – 16<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2013

## Obituaries

It is with regret that I have to announce the death of Sir William Barlow and Capt Nic Rutherford.



Sir William Barlow died on 19<sup>th</sup> May. He was Vice President of the Society from 2002. He was President of the Academy from 1991 to 1996, and may be best known to the public for his role as Chairman of the Post Office where he oversaw its division into two separate corporations, The Post Office and British Telecom.

Capt Nic Rutherford died on 5<sup>th</sup> September. Once he had landed onshore from Captaining amongst other ships the largest oil tanker, he became the Secretary General of the International Federation of Shipmaster's Association (1981-1991) and locally a Town Councillor. Shortly after joining the Society he was elected to the Committee in 1991 as Hon. Secretary a position he held till 1998, when he took over as Chairman, standing down in 2006, although he continued to stay on the Executive Committee. He will be sorely missed.



Our condolences to Lady Barlow and Pat Rutherford and their families.

## House of Lords



In March to celebrate our golden anniversary thirty-six members of the Society were very honoured to enjoy a visit to the House of Lords sponsored by the Rt. Hon Dr. the Lord Gilbert who is a close friend of one of our members. The visit began with a tour of the Great Hall and the House of Commons. As the House was not sitting we were able to view the surroundings in detail, sit on the cross benches and also to stand at the Dispatch Box. This was followed by a delicious lunch hosted by Lord

Gilbert who proved to be a very amusing host. We should also have enjoyed the company of one of our Vice Presidents Baroness Buscombe, who unfortunately had to cancel at the last minute due to ill health. The highlight of our visit was when Lord Gilbert arranged for us to sit in the gallery of the House of Lords where we were able to take in the opulence of the building and also watch part of a debate. As our visit ended the division bell rang and we were held back from leaving as the Members rushed in to cast their votes - another highlight of our visit.

## Highclere Castle



In dull weather a group of members visited Highclere Castle for the day and spent time looking at the castle and the Egyptian Exhibition and also they had time to explore the Gardens and Park.

Major rebuilding works by the Carnarvon family and Sir Charles Barry transformed the house into a mansion. The television series Downton Abbey was filmed here and portrays life very much as it would have been like here. The First Lady Carnarvon transformed the castle into a hospital during the First World War. The castle reverted to a private castle. In 1922 the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter discovered the Tomb of Tutankhamen. A most interesting exhibition of the findings is on display and was well worth seeing.



A good food offering was available in comfortable surroundings and were indeed being used by the Earl and Countess.

Errol Facy

## The Gardens at Highgrove House

The Henley Society summer trip on the 31<sup>st</sup> July (for those who missed out last year) was to Tetbury and the gardens at Highgrove House, home of HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall. The coach left promptly at 9.30 and after a pleasant two hour journey we arrived at the small Cotswold town of Tetbury. Tetbury is typical of the Cotswolds with its sandstone buildings, narrow streets and market hall at its centre. After a gentle stroll around the town with my trusty companion Dianne Browne, lunch was taken in a pub on the outskirts which specialized in sourcing all its ingredients within a 30 mile radius. The meal was delicious!



After a small hiccup with the coach we were on our way to the main purpose of the day – a visit to the gardens of Highgrove House. The obligatory security checks out of the way we were all gathered up by our knowledgeable and friendly guide and the tour commenced. The gardens are simply stunning with interest and wonderful vistas wherever you look. Of course, His Royal Highness has the ability to command the very best in design but the vision of the garden is his and he has made something very special over 30 years.

The tour took about two hours as there are numerous gardens within gardens to explore. We started at the Lily Pool Garden. However, your eyes are drawn beyond the Pool to a long path bordered with colourful plants and beyond that here is a magnificent view of the house. Next was the Stumpery, where HRH has established a new National Collection of large leaved hostas. Also in this area is the Temple of Worthies



where there is a bronze relief of HM The Queen Mother and further on a thatched tree house, where the young Princes played as children.

The Walled Garden is laid out in the shape of the flags of St George and St Andrew (the borders are defined with box hedging) and within the planting areas are numerous fruits and vegetables, which supplies the house the year around. Further on is the arboretum and sanctuary, the latter being a cob building used for private contemplation. All around the gardens there are sculptures and artifacts given to or purchased by the Prince which enhances its beauty. Nearer to the house there are more formal beds and terrace. Our tour ended with a look into the Carpet Garden. The Prince of Wales took his inspiration for this garden from a Turkish-style carpet and this particular garden won a Silver Medal at the 2001 Chelsea Flower Show. There is much more to see however, and is well worth the trip. Bill Hoskins

### **AGM 30<sup>th</sup> March**

This was held at Sacred Heart and was well attended. This was followed by a talk from Valeria Alasia, Chairman of the Henley Archaeological & Historical Group about the Workhouse, which is part of the now Townland site.



### **Report by the Chairman of the Planning Committee to the AGM, 30 March 2012**

The planning committee has met on 18 occasions since the last AGM and has considered a total of 270 planning applications. Despite the changes in the economic situation, the number of applications has been relatively constant between about 250 and 300 for at least the past 8 years. The great majority of the applications were for house extensions of various sizes, a few were for the change of use of premises and a few were for new buildings. Many of the applications went through without any comment or objection on our part, though some of the proposed developments were considered to be over-intensive in relation to their plot size or because they were too close to, or overlooking, neighbours. And a few were thought to be of poor design or were inconsistent with the guidelines for conservation areas.

So, in terms of planning applications and actual building, the situation in Henley was relatively stable over the past year. However, a number of potentially unwelcome changes are looming.

A major change that could still occur is the redevelopment scheme for the Market Place Mews and Kings Road car-park. No work has been carried out here since permission was first granted in December 2007, but, as mentioned last year, the developer has obtained a time extension, and this enables the project to start at any time until October 2013.

A second development that could have an unwelcome impact on Henley is the proposed large extension to the gravel quarry at Sonning Eye. This may sound fairly remote from Henley, but the proposal involves constructing a new link road for lorries travelling to and from the quarry, and this would emerge on to the Henley – Caversham road, presenting the drivers with a rather invidious choice. Our response to this application was to recommend that if the quarry extension were approved it should be dependent on providing a rail link rather than a road link.

For Henley itself, the main future challenge will come from the SODC Core Strategy, which will set the pattern of Henley's future development for the next 15 years. This Strategy has been going through a process of negotiation and redrafting since it was first issued about 3 years ago, and is still not finalised. As has been reported in the Henley Standard, the latest draft takes into account the input of a government inspector, and it states that Henley should accommodate 450 new houses. In addition, SODC and the inspector have said that houses that may be built on various potential sites cannot be offset against this number of 450. For example, sites such as the grounds of Townlands Hospital and the Market Place

Mews area are apparently excluded because they were approved in principle before the Strategy was launched. And the inspector has said that smaller 'windfall sites', such as garden plots and the conversion of commercial property to housing, cannot be included either.

So it is hard to envisage where 450 houses might go without having a serious impact on the character of Henley and on traffic in the town. It's also hard to see how 450 houses could be fitted in without contravening planning policies that already exist, policies that are designed to protect the Chilterns AONB and the Thames floodplain. The Core Strategy also fails to fully acknowledge Henley's special place as a national visitor attraction, and the fact that the town and its surroundings are much appreciated by visitors from around the world. So, for these various reasons, we have again expressed our view that the number of 450 houses is excessive.

As you may have seen in the Henley Standard, some people are advocating that Henley should prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, a new type of plan that is made possible by the recent Localism Bill. The basic idea is that if the majority of residents of a particular area can agree on the exact locations for new housing, then this decision can be made irrevocable. And, rather confusingly, the area for a neighbourhood plan need not coincide with town or parish boundaries. But a big disadvantage with a neighbourhood plan, as defined in the Localism Bill, is that it must conform, in terms of numbers of houses, to the District Council's Core Strategy. And the various Core Strategies around the country must conform to the government's National Planning Policy Framework. So localism has strict limits; and the numbers of houses within a planning district are, in effect, dictated by central government.

For Henley, it seems to me that if the 450 houses are to be enforced, there will be very little choice of sites, and so preparing a neighbourhood plan would be of little use. And to the extent that there may be a choice, isn't it likely that the process will result in one set of residents fighting another set? Blandy Road vs the Fairmile comes to mind. And what about the involvement of the adjoining or nearby parishes? On present evidence, Harpsden, at least, seems likely to object strongly to taking overspill from Henley. So, in my opinion and the opinion of other committee members, a neighbourhood plan should be treated with caution. In the absence of a plan, SODC will have to make the really difficult decisions, and local people will, presumably, still be able to have a say on their proposals. However, discussion on these issues will, I'm sure, continue for many months if not years to come.

Finally I would like to thank the other members of the planning committee for taking part in our deliberations and also thank the Town Council for making available their copies of the planning applications for us to consider.

Update, 17 July 2012

In relation to the one of the issues discussed above, no decision has yet been taken by SODC on the application for the quarry extension at Sonning Eye.

In relation to a 'neighbourhood plan' for Henley, readers will probably be aware that the Town Council has decided to begin the process of preparation. It is still at an early stage and some differences of opinion are already apparent, as shown by recent correspondence in the Henley Standard. The Society will no doubt make its own contribution to the consultations at an appropriate time.

We have proposed an avenue of trees to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee and Ian Giuliani is progressing together with other interested parties. Please go to our Website to see the proposed view.

## **Committee**

The Committee elected for the ensuring year is:

Errol Facy – Chairman

Ian Giuliani Vice Chairman

Nora Scanlon – Hon Secretary 01491 579619

Sandra Moon - Hon Treasurer & Membership Secretary 01491 573887  
David Whitehead – Chairman of Planning Sub Committee  
Jenifer Copeland  
Pauline Fleming – Events Organizer 01491 573261

Bernard Brook-Partridge has decided to step down and we thank him for his work on the Committee.

I would like to welcome the following as new members:- Brian Hill and Jill Farmer, Neil & Margaret Blake, Torill Evans, Hon Nadia Selkirk, Brian & Susan Triptree, and Colin & Sandra Wilson.

We unfortunately had to withdraw our stand from this year Henley Show. This is very sad as it is a great chance to show the public what we do and get new members. Please find enclosed an application form. We would be grateful if you would pass this on to a Friend/Neighbour.

If you require any more form please contact Sandra Moon on 01491 573887.

We are also looking for new Committee Members. If you are interested please contact Errol Facy on 01491 576969.

### **RIVER THAMES SOCIETY**

They have a lunch arranged for Wednesday 17th October 2012 with Lecture entitled "The Upper Thames Patrol" by Bill King, at Maidenhead Rowing Club by Maidenhead Bridge at 12 noon for 12.45pm. Tickets are £17-50 each.

As a matter of interest, the UTP was formed in 1939 with the objective of providing security for the Locks, Weirs and Bridges of the Thames and preparing the river for a defensive role in case of enemy invasion.

The members of UTP carried out their role 24 hours per day 365 days per year from the declaration of war until their stand down in November 1944.- sounds like a permanent fishing expedition to me!

Too late to volunteer, I'm afraid.

There is a walk and pub lunch on Saturday the 10th November being organised by Linda Humphreys-Evans - contact 01189-546192 or **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

If you haven't got a booking slip handy, please just post your cheque with a little note to me at the address below.

I am always happy to take your money.

Colin Howard, MTB Hon Treasurer, 179A Long Lane, UXBRIDGE, Middlesex UB10 9JW