

# The Harborne Society

Summer 2016 Newsletter – Issue 88

From Marcia Meyer, Chairman

This Summer 2016 issue of the Society's Newsletter marks its **35<sup>th</sup> birthday**, the first two pages being shown below. It goes, as usual, to over 8000 homes in Harborne. In this way we aim to introduce new residents to the work of **The Harborne Society** ([www.theharbornesociety.org](http://www.theharbornesociety.org)): Why not join us?

Harborne is still known to most of us as "**the Village**" - and we foster this spirit of community with our monthly meetings. Anyone is welcome to attend, to hear an interesting talk (the programme is on the back page) and to learn of changes and developments in the Village. We hope you will come along and make your voice heard.

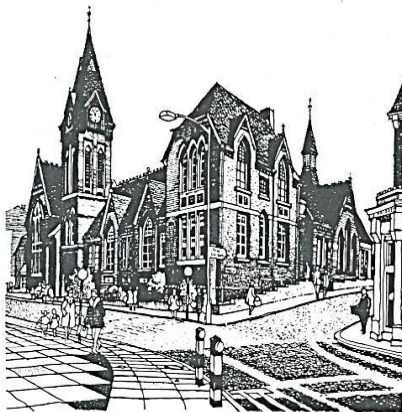
**Phil Stokes** has retired from the committee having worked tirelessly for the Society for nearly twenty years. We are indebted to him for the enormous contribution he has made as Honorary Secretary. He has written extensively for the Newsletter and kept us up-to-date on many matters relating to Harborne. We thank him most sincerely.

I look forward to meeting you in September when our new season begins. See the back page for how to **join the Harborne Society and make it even stronger**. Note that the next issues of the Newsletter go to members only in December and the Spring. You may even consider joining the committee.

## Thirty-five years ago ...

Number  
ONE  
September  
1981

## The Harborne Society NEWS



THE CLOCK TOWER, Harborne's Community Education Centre  
Drawing by James Pridley R.B.S.A., S.G.A., F.R.S.A.

### LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Harborne Society was founded twenty-one years ago with the dual aim of encouraging the spirit of community and ensuring that Harborne developed in the best possible way to serve the community.

We have already made considerable progress in representing the interests of Harborne Village and its immediate neighbourhood to those responsible for planning our environment. Much work still needs to be done. Effective liaison has only been achieved by the active participation of nearly 500 members. We are

currently engaged in work on the city's preferred plan for this area and we need all your ideas and help with this vital project.

There is an opportunity for everyone to make their contribution to Harborne. Monthly meetings and social events give our members the chance to make friends and keep up to date with local issues. You may, however, prefer to offer more active help. If you are a busy person one bright idea per year could play an essential part but if you wish to become more involved why not consider serving on one of our working parties which examine and make positive proposals on current events?

### GREETINGS FROM THE PATRON

The Rt. Rev. Hugh Montefiore

I send my greetings through The Harborne Society to all those whom this newsheet reaches. I hope that like me you enjoy Harborne and will support the work of The Society in retaining the character of our 'village'.

*Hugh Montefiore*



Make your voice important to the future of Harborne by filling in the application form on the back page now.

Yours sincerely,

*Marcia Meyer*

Chairman Harborne Society

### THE HARBORNE SOCIETY

Founded 4th May  
1960

Read on if you care for Harborne.

More than forty people worked in groups during the summer of 1980 to produce OUR LOCAL PLAN – A Response to the City Planners Harborne District Centre Plan – Issues Report.

Based on local knowledge and requirements the plan put forward recommendations and proposals for the High Street, Car Parking, Princes Corner, Amenities and Open Spaces. It was published in September 1980 and attracted widespread praise from local Press, Radio and planners.

As The Birmingham Post commented in a Leader: "There is every reason for the residents and traders of Harborne to want to protect the village atmosphere of their High Street. Most of us can think of examples of "planners' blight" which have resulted in streets which were once attractive being transformed into characterless stretches of glass and concrete"

Other projects in which the Society is involved at the moment include the Hugh Morton Memorial Garden in front of the Clock Tower; tree planting; making representation against the new improvement lines at Princes Corner and the substantial demolition of property this scheme would entail; the retention of the Park Hill Railway Bridge and the development of the Harborne Walkway.

The Society has played a big part in retaining the Clock Tower as a Community Centre in Harborne and endeavours as far as possible to see that all new shopping developments in the area cater for the small trader.

Mrs Jill Knight, M.P., wrote in her Foreword to OUR LOCAL PLAN: "Vandals come in all shapes and sizes. They are not only weird, wild, stupid and undisciplined louts. Some of them are polite and

pleasant men from the Ministries or Council Departments wearing respectable suits and quiet ties who come along and measure the roads and look at the vista through instruments, returning to their offices to make neat maps, plans and suggestions that sound so reasonable that they get through Committees with no trouble at all."

So we need your active membership. Take this opportunity and join The Harborne Society now!



MEMORIAL GARDEN TO DOCTOR HUGH MORTON – a scheme to improve the entrance to the Clock Tower and to enhance the High Street  
Promoted by The Harborne Society,

## Review of Ward Boundaries

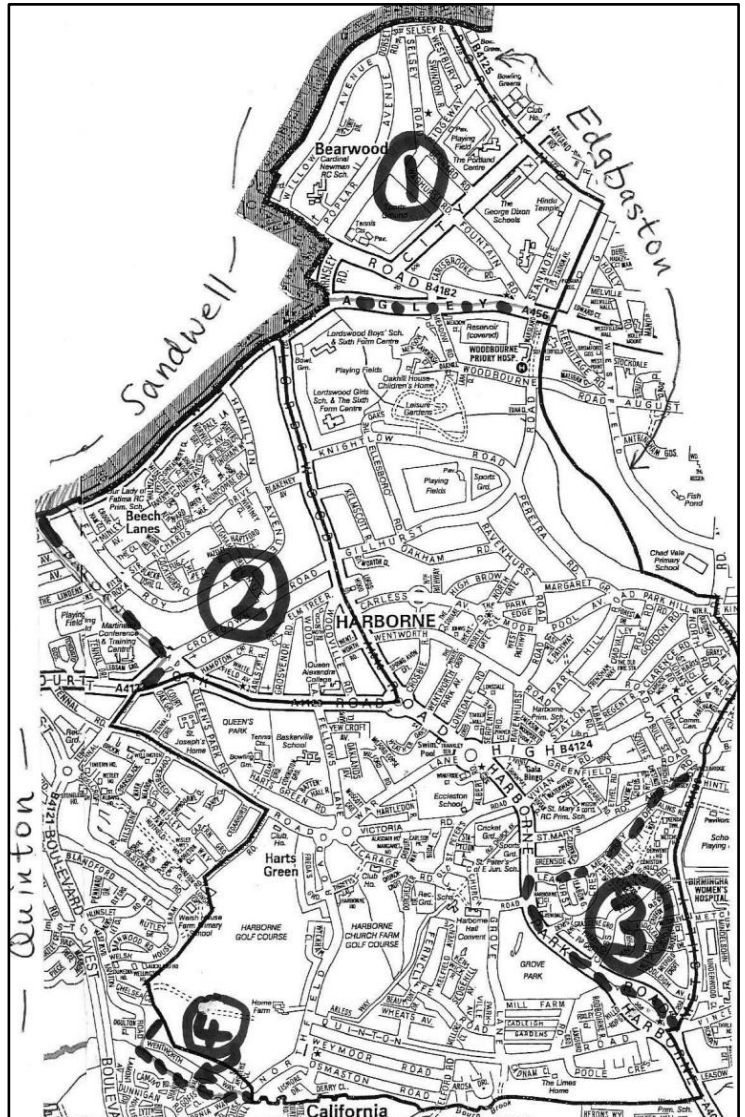
In July 2014 it was agreed that a review of the governance and organisational capabilities of the City Council be undertaken by Sir (now Lord) Robert Kerlake. His report that December included the recommendation that the number of councillors be reduced from 120 to 100 and the existing forty Wards be replaced by smaller Wards with just one councillor each. In addition, elections of the whole Council every four years should replace elections for one third of councillors in three years out of four.

Parliamentary Orders were made directing the Council to hold whole Council elections from May 2018 and requesting the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to conduct an electoral review, firstly to determine the number of councillors and subsequently the number of Wards and their boundaries. There could be a mix of Wards having one, two or three councillors. (Currently all have three.) In July 2015 the Commission said it was minded to recommend a 100-councillor model and invited interested parties to submit proposals for Wards which as far as possible reflected community interests and identities.

The Society responded. It is our strong belief that local democracy is best served by all the electors of Harborne having the right to be represented by, and to relate to, councillors who can have a direct and meaningful influence on **decisions which materially affect the community in which they actually live**. This is not currently the case with many electors living in Harborne being in Quinton Ward. We proposed a two-councillor Harborne Ward with a boundary which removed all the area north of the Hagley Road (marked **1** at the top of the map) and, broadly, replaced it by restoring the area bounded by Hagley Road, Wolverhampton Road South (part), Balden Road, Court Oak Road and Lordswood Road.

The Commission's draft proposals last December were for 101 councillors across 77 Wards and the boundaries for these Wards. Public consultation followed with final recommendations to be published in May. For Harborne there was great news and bad news. The great news was that the Society's proposals had been adopted save for the Commission's drawing the western boundary of the Ward down the middle of Balden Road rather than of Wolverhampton Road South (**2** at the map's left). The bad news was the Commission's proposal to transfer to Edgbaston Ward the Metchley Grange area (**3**, at its right, bounded by Metchley Lane, Abbey Road, Malins Road, Metchley Drive and Leahurst Crescent up to Harborne Park Road and then down to Metchley Lane). This was based on a claim that this neighbourhood had unspecified "linkages" with the "wider hospital and university site". The claim was made in the Birmingham Labour Party's submissions. The area largely comprises the Metchley Grange Estate which is a late pre-war / early post-war municipal mixed housing development including four tower blocks of flats, one of which is exclusively for elderly tenants. In our view the "linkages" claim was a false premise, spurious and misleading. Overwhelmingly the residents' every day focus of community life, community interests and community identity is with Harborne and does not link or relate to the QE Hospital site or to the University of Birmingham, let alone to Edgbaston.

The proposal defied common sense and ran counter to our belief that electors have the right to be represented by **councillors serving the community in which they actually live**. Ward boundaries are also to be strong, easily identifiable and readily accepted by the local community. This is precisely the current case of Metchley Lane which for hundreds of years had been the boundary between Staffordshire and Warwickshire and is still recognised by residents as the clear boundary between Harborne and Edgbaston. The Society objected to the proposal.



The proposals caused a furore in several parts of the City, and there were numerous objections. These included submissions from the Council Conservative Group who wanted Welsh House Farm Estate west of Harborne Golf Course (as well as Metchley Grange Estate **3**) to be in Harborne Ward. This was to be achieved by keeping area **2** (west of Lordswood Road) in Quinton Ward! The Conservative Group misleadingly referred to this area as "the Quinborne area of Quinton" and "Quinborne area around Fitzroy Avenue". This is pure fiction ~ it is the historic Beech Lanes area of Harborne plus Balden Road, Court Oak Road and Lordswood Road etc, and there is no area, neighbourhood or community of "Quinborne". They also contended that "Lordswood Road is a well-known barrier between [the] Harborne and Quinton communities". Balderdash!

The furore led the Commission to decide to re-draw some Ward boundaries and publish new plans for the whole city on 10<sup>th</sup> May, to be followed by further public consultation with the outcome being announced in September. These revised proposals keep 101 councillors but with 71 Wards. **We are immensely pleased to report that the Commission accepted our arguments that the Metchley Grange Estate area (3) remain in Harborne Ward and that they also adhered to their original proposal for the Beech Lanes area (2) to be in Harborne Ward.** An additional revision was the inclusion in Harborne Ward of Wentworth Way, St Andrews Close and Vale Close (**4** at the map's south-west corner): now the whole southern boundary runs along Bourn Brook.

The Commission's final recommendations are due in September but we remain confident of the outcome.

**Phil Stokes**

### **Next: Review of parliamentary constituency boundaries ...**

A review of parliamentary constituency boundaries by the Boundary Commission for England (not to be confused with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England), was abandoned in 2013 when proposals were blocked by the Liberal Democrats after disagreement with the Conservatives over House of Lords reform.

A new review has now been initiated with the aim of reducing the number of English constituencies from 533 to 501 in time for the 2020 General Election. In 2013 the constituency boundaries could extend beyond the principal local authority and a **new constituency of HARBORNE** was proposed which included the Old Warley Ward in the Borough of Sandwell. Birmingham was to have nine Members of Parliament instead of ten. The new review aims to reduce the number of constituencies in the wider West Midlands from 59 to 53 and Birmingham is again likely to lose out. Initial proposals are to be published in September.

Interestingly, in early June (just after the above paragraphs were written), households in Area 2 in the map opposite were approached. (Is this also true of people elsewhere in Harborne?) They received through their doors an unattributed and undated leaflet called "Do you want your property to be in Harborne or Quinton?" It says "Some parties are proposing that your property be part of the Quinton Ward." But these properties are in Quinton Ward (unless the above ward boundary changes take effect in September as Phil Stokes expects). It goes on that "to keep your property in the Harborne Ward make your views known to the Election Boundary Commission." There is no such body, however, and all the contact details given are for the Local Government Boundary Commission.

Not a scam as such, but a very strange anonymous circular to receive, bound to worry some residents.

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## A record? Over 85 years in the same Harborne house!

*Born in 1930 and Harborne Society member since 1963, Joyce Cheadle has lived all her life at the same house in Wood Lane. "Bright as a button", she shares some of her memories with us.*

In 1903, my mother Alice Williams, then eleven years old, moved into the house next door to this one with my gran Mary and her husband James, her three sisters (who all slept in the same bed this with her) and her brother. At that time, not many more than half the houses now in Wood Lane existed.

In 1923, my mum married my dad, Bertram. He was a silversmith who'd served as a naval artificer in the Great War and lived way over the fields in Smethwick. For their first year, they had rooms in Grosvenor Road; then this house became available so they moved in, next door to my gran's.



*Aged 7 or 8 with Mum and old Darkie*

I was born in October 1930, and christened Joyce Alice Mary; I never had any siblings. There was no bathroom in the house in those days: Friday night was bath night, using a long tub in the kitchen, topped up every so often with hot water from a small tub on the gas cooker. We didn't have electricity until the mid-1950s; that was roughly when we bought the house – before then we had to post the weekly rent for both houses to the landlady in Devon.

When I was young, [what is now the brick site – see Pages 6-7] had what we still call the Blind School on Court Oak Road, and most of the rest of the site was playing fields. Where what is now Queen Mother Gardens were buildings for learning shoe repair skills, basketry, and so on.

Before the War too, 1 Wood Lane was Nancy Durkin's, our corner shop; I recall it had a cool cellar for keeping butter, ham, and so on before being cut up for the customers. Durkin's also had another shop at the other end of Elm Tree Road, on Lordswood. The latter became derelict after the war. 39 Wood Lane

was the road's only detached house; in those days a bottled milk supplier worked from there. Number 53 had an archway to the back; the vegetable seller's horse and cart stayed at the back overnight.

And then came the War. My father went off to work at Longbridge building Spitfires. The Blind School playing field over the road became allotments; I remember my father grew horseradish and strawberries amongst lots of vegetables on his. Someone brought us a box of day-old chicks every so often; we used to raise them by the kitchen fire, then move them to the back garden, swapping some of their eggs for sugar. Later, we made a little pond for ducks at the top of the garden, but the eggs were very hard to collect. Meanwhile, the Territorial Army barracks at the bottom of our road became a very busy bomb disposal unit: we often met soldiers in the shop buying their cigarettes while we were getting our sweets, and of course the local boys loved looking over the fence at the defused bombs.



*Court Oak Barracks (Wright Collection, Harborne Library)*



Maybe Wood Lane became less interesting after the war? Still, from the early 50s, Den Caney's "Harborne Motor Bus" service operated from here; they moved further out in the 70s when parking started to become a problem. I also recall Ziggy the friendly Pole who hanged himself in the 1970s after his divorce, and there was even a murder at the top of the road, in the mid-90s I think!

Most of my working life, 32 years, was spent in the magnificent M&B headquarters building in Cape Hill. I retired in 1990; after that I helped Birmingham Council for Old People in what was then Onnelly House [now Hollingworth House]; after the war, Onnelly House, then a block of flats, had replaced the barracks there. I also joined Halesowen's University of the Third Age, and was for a time chair. Still, I do like it here in Wood Lane: this has always been an interesting community, with a lot of change in my life-time....

## Parking Review *Finally* Being Implemented

At last, after approaching four years, schemes approved as a result of the parking review have been implemented. Work should be complete when you read this. This sorry saga started in November 2012 following the lamentable unanimous decision by Harborne's councillors to take no further action on a possible permit parking scheme throughout most of central Harborne - despite 60% of residents and landlords responding to the consultation having supported the principle. As a sop, our councillors, whilst recognising that parking was a serious problem, merely proffered a workshop for residents to suggest ideas for improving specific parking related issues including road safety. The shambles that followed has been reported in every *Newsletter* since.

Delay upon delay ensued every step of the way until a formal consultation was undertaken last December on a paltry six schemes (the Society had submitted 31) which Council officers, based on informal consultations, recommended as having sufficient support to progress. The *principal* schemes were for parking restrictions in St Mary's Road; double yellow lines on the north side of Abbey Road and on both sides of Lordswood Road between the Pool & Fitness Centre and the Court Oak Road / Crosbie Road junction; and proposals to align the parking restrictions in St John's Road with those operating in all the other side roads off High Street.

Unfortunately, despite the extensive consultation and revision of the Lordswood Road proposals there were two objections to that particular scheme which resulted in delay to all the schemes in the proposed composite Traffic Regulation Order. Attempts to resolve the objections failed. Consequently a report on the objections had to be considered and determined by the Council's relevant Cabinet Member. To avoid further delay Lordswood Road was removed from the Order, to be dealt with separately. However, the Cabinet Member then approved this scheme's proceeding thus enabling it to be added to the contract.

The contract for the works was let but disappointingly did not start until late April with the aim of all the schemes being completed by the end of June but this was not achieved owing to the extremely wet weather throughout June which greatly disrupted the works. At the time of going to print only one scheme had been fully completed but I remain confident that all the schemes will be completed in July.

**Phil Stokes**



### Do you remember?

This photo of the Harborne Post Office is kindly supplied by Lincoln Boffey (though the provenance is not known). Can you recognise the site? Or roughly when the photo was taken?

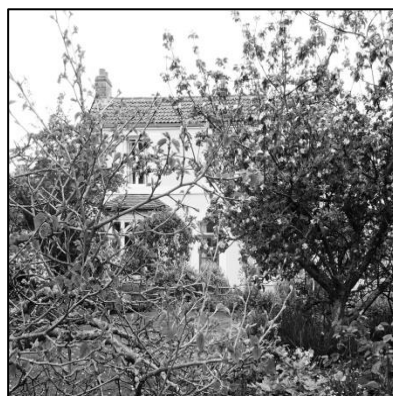
Meanwhile, **do you know** that Harborne's current Post Office, as one of the country's remaining few Crown POs, is one of the six to close in November? See the next to last page for details and of the sort of **consultancy about the plan**, closing 3 Aug.

**Do you know** where in Harborne these places are? See the foot of next page but one.

*The Harborne Club*



*Our only farmhouse (c 1750)?*



*Our only village centre graveyard?*



And **Do you know** that Googling "**Phyllis Nicklin Harborne**" gives you some wonderful Village photos from the 1950s and 1960s? Phyllis taught geography at the University in those days and produced thousands of colour slides of Birmingham to illustrate her lectures.

## Technical Officer's report

As always, my thanks go to members of the Technical Sub Committee for their diligence in helping to ensure that Harborne remains the unique "village" that we all know and love.

Twelve months on from my previous report and much has happened in Harborne....

... Except, that is, for the development of the eleven-acre former **Ravenhurst Playing Fields** off Knightlow Road which continues to be beset by delays. However, the end of the saga is in sight. The first application for 121 dwellings in October 2014 started a merry dance caused by residents' objections, badgers' foraging



*Your Editor remembers cows here a few years ago.*

areas and loss of the (unused) playing fields. The latest situation involves an application for 63 dwellings and 5.5 acres of public open space. I am unsure whether the developers would have been able to go much further before the project became financially unsustainable. At the time of writing the application has been approved, although this is subject to a Section 106 Legal Agreement whereby the developer agrees to pay almost £1,100,000 towards affordable housing, an on site children's play area and off site compensation for the loss of the unused playing fields. The deadline for completion of this agreement has been extended to early July. Harborne desperately needs houses and we await developments with interest.

**The School Yard**, long supported by the Society, has received another award, this time for the striking apartment block to the rear, described by the judges of the RICS West Midlands Awards as "stunning". As winner of the Residential Award, the project will be considered for the national awards in October. The School Yard has already received many accolades including two RIBA Awards and the 2014 Civic Society Renaissance Award. Something for Harborne to be proud of!



After a period of neglect following a serious fire which destroyed the old pub, the **Huntsman**, formerly the King's Arms, is finally the subject of a planning application for demolition and redevelopment - as fourteen apartments. The Society is pleased that this important and historic site, the gateway to our High Street, is to receive an attractive and sympathetic design set back from the pavement behind a low wall and railings. But we have been forced to lodge an objection, not to the development, but to the totally inadequate parking provision, comprising just two spaces. This will have the inevitable effect of increasing demand for on-street parking in the area, which is under tremendous pressure as it is. In addition, there is the intention that refuse vehicles will stop on Harborne Park Road to load. Residents and commuters will be well aware that this will cause unacceptable and dangerous congestion on the double junction which is, without doubt, the busiest in Harborne.

You may have heard that an application for permanent change of use to enable **Comida Tapas** in Gordon Road to continue as a restaurant has been refused on the grounds of the adverse effect on residents by way of noise, smells and general disturbance. The two year temporary change of use had to be allowed under "permitted development" laws as the restaurant was less than 150 square metres. The owners are understandably upset but it seems to me that they took a gamble which did not succeed. Let's hope they are able to find more suitable premises soon.

Finally, a use for the long vacant, derelict but Grade II listed **Royalty Cinema** has been proposed. This potential rescue of a sadly decayed Harborne landmark deserves a separate account - it's on the opposite page.

**Andy Peet**

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**Do you know** that this September marks the tenth anniversary of Harborne's **first Farmers' Market**? The Society is proud of our leading role in starting this. The Market was an instant success and is now a permanent fixture, despite the recession. It's on the second Saturday morning of every month. See the middle of the next page but one for the dates.

## Fit for Royalty?



Opened in October, 1930, Harborne's Royalty was a magnificent art deco picture house. Designed by the important cinema architect Horace Bradley, it opened during the first wave of full length moving, talking films. The opening film was *The love parade*, whose star was the great French actor Maurice Chevalier. Harborne's cinema closed in 1963, to start its second life as a popular 1500-seat bingo hall. With that closing in 2010, it is since most remembered for the cannabis farm found inside the roof in 2012, and the active hand car wash service still running in the car park. Meanwhile the sad decay of this Grade II listed building continues....

However, at a public consultation exhibition in April, attended by more than 150 people, outline proposals were displayed by the owners which would result in the provision of some sixty apartments

for the over-55s, together with an underground car park and various facilities which "may" be available to other Harborne residents. It is proposed that as much of the listed structure and architectural features as possible are retained but the massive auditorium itself is a problem. The building also contains asbestos and is prone to flooding.

The front block would be retained to form an attractive entrance to the seven storey apartment block behind. This causes concern to the residents of Vivian Road who back onto the site. However, as the current building is the equivalent of six storeys, it is perhaps not unreasonable. A separate three storey "mews" block would occupy part of the present car park, along the City side.

The project needs to be commercially sustainable (which some people think is doubtful, as it stands) and, having researched alternative uses, the owners are convinced that their solution is the most appropriate. Full *community* use is proposed by the Royalty Preservation Trust ([www.theroyaltyharborne.co.uk](http://www.theroyaltyharborne.co.uk)); however, the Harborne Society is not persuaded that the plans proposed are feasible.

Town planning advisers Pegasus Group appear to have led on the consultation; already commissioned are, apparently, technical studies to assess the impact on heritage, ecology and transport. Following the consultation (which closed a week after the exhibition), they say, "a planning application will be submitted in summer 2016 to Birmingham City Council."

There is still a long way to go and, as the building is listed, the approval of both the City planners and Historic England is needed. The Society is broadly in favour of the proposals but we await the submission of detailed plans before coming to a final view. Meanwhile, find an entrancing collection of photos, old and new, inside and out at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2916807>. Those on this page are from Harborne photographer [bobboucher44@gmail.com](mailto:bobboucher44@gmail.com).





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**Did you know** where in Harborne those places (Page 5) are? **The Harborne Club** ("Harborne's best kept secret", looking for new local members, by the way): Albany Road; the **1750 farmhouse**: Greenfield Road; the (tiny, but – as you can see - still used) **graveyard**: St Mary's Priory, Vivian Road

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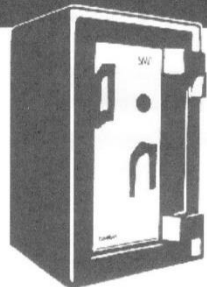
## Farmers' markets, for the rest of 2016

The markets are the second  
Saturday morning each  
month:

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August  
Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September  
Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October  
Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November  
Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December



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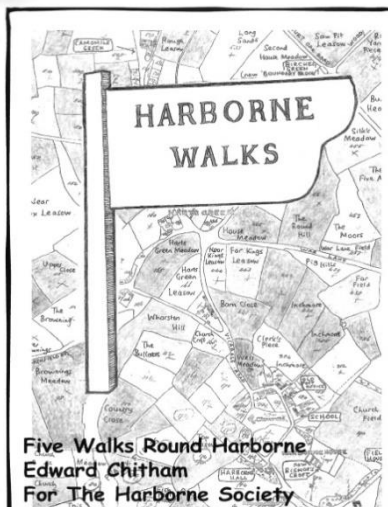
## Our Heritage Walks are no more, alas

The Society has taken part in the national Heritage Open Days scheme since it started 22 years ago, but with great regret we have withdrawn.

Except for one year, our annual event has been a guided walk led by **Edward Chitham**, renowned local historian and author - but he is no longer able to continue. The hugely popular walks have featured Harborne's lost schools, farms and pubs; the railway; notable local personalities; and so on.

We are enormously indebted to Edward for his unstinting efforts. We've published a £2.50 little selection of Edward's walks, photos and maps. Buy this from Harborne Library.

By the way, **Do you know** where to find copies of Edward's wonderful book, *Harborne: A history* (Phillimore 2004)? People say it's becoming sadly rare....



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## Downsizing in Harborne? A Harborne estate agent tells all...

The property market in Harborne has recently experienced a boom time - investors from around the country, especially London, have been taking full advantage of everything our "village" has to offer. Also, the fast growing Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Birmingham University, as well as our proximity to the City Centre, have all had a huge impact. Then again, the announcements of major banks and corporations - including Deutsche Bank, HSBC and even the HS2 operation - moving large offices into Birmingham have had a positive effect on Harborne and our immediate area.



But what about people who have lived in the area for many years and now hope to downsize? They could be £2 million property owners seeking a less demanding £800 000 home, or £250 000 terrace-dwellers looking forward to life on one level in a

£125 000 flat - or anything in between. However, they all face one common dilemma and it remains the most frequently asked question: at what stage should you put your current place on the market?

The good news, of course, is that - with property values rising - there's a positive effect for a sale; on the other hand, there's a relative rise in a future purchase though at a lower price. The current problem is the shortage of available properties in Harborne - and therein lies a catch 22 situation. If you try to sell now and get a rapid sale, you could alienate your buyer if your own onward purchase proves difficult and time drags on. But if you delay putting your home on the market then find an ideal property to buy, you could lose out to someone who is in a better position to make an offer.



An approach that may work is to take advantage of the current buoyant market to sell your own home then move into a rental property whilst looking for your onward purchase. Now the pressure of simultaneous sale and purchase goes and you're in a very strong position when making offers. However, with two major moves within a relatively short period, this is not for everyone.



Anyway, Harborne really has much to offer downsizers. There are lots of little pockets of properties in excellent locations throughout our "village" that many Harbornites just don't realise exist. The **Moor Pool Estate** (Photo 1) offers plenty of good opportunities, from spacious four bedroom houses to compact two bedroom cottages. There are peaceful character-filled little properties in byways such as **Moor Pool Terrace** and **Tudor Terrace** off Ravenhurst Road, **Somerville Terrace** (Photo 2) off Harborne Park Road and **Frankley Terrace** near the Leisure Centre (Photo 3). North West Harborne has properties of various sizes and prices on the **Beech Lanes Estate**. And of course there's a huge variety close to the High Street with its great range of shops, bars, coffee shops and eateries.

What a conundrum! Of course, my advice is to talk with an experienced agent who can advise you on the saleability of your own property and realistic timescales. Register your onward purchase interest with as much detail as possible and maintain contact with the agent to ensure you hear quickly about new properties coming to market. Communication is everything in these situations and your agent will help make downsizing a more stress-free transaction for you.

**Andy Thomas: Director, Hunter's**

## High Street Rollercoaster Still Running ...

The rollercoaster that is High Street is still running and the face of High Street continues to change. Whether or not the changes are for the betterment of Harborne is open to question but they are certainly fulfilling the predictions of Mary Portas and other retail experts that high streets as generations have known them - mainly retail centres with many independent shops - are well and truly at an end.

During the last twelve months, September saw the opening of **Gem Box** independent jewellers and the **Cats' Protection** charity shop, the fourteenth charity shop in High Street; the popular **Butchers' Social** pop-up restaurant closed on New Year's Eve and work is under way on converting the premises into the **Harborne Kitchen** restaurant which was always the intention; in January the first Harborne branch of **Coral** betting shop closed as did **Shoe Zone** which was replaced in March by **The Works** discount store and **Harborne Beauty Studio** opened opposite the old Royalty; **Caspian** hot food takeaway opened in February; at Easter **Turkish Golden Scissors** opened, making eight gents' hairdressers on or immediately adjacent to High Street; in June **Miss Louise** jewellers opened and **York Street coffee house** is due to open at The School Yard. At Prince's Corner the once semi-derelict shop corner of Albert Road has opened as a **Peel & Stone** community bakery and basement bar / restaurant featuring local speciality beers, but that was immediately followed by the shock closure of the branch of **Rice Chamberlains** estate agents almost opposite (Chamberlains chartered surveyors around the corner in Serpentine Road remains open). Also, the nearby **Springfield Lettings** closed in February after just eight months. Nearby, in Lonsdale Road, **Havill & Travis** (fine art and photography gallery) closed last September to relocate to the city centre. Best news of all was that **Joe Richards** fruiterer and greengrocer did not close as seemed likely at one point but the new owners (following the sudden death of Joe Richards) were able to reach agreement as to a new lease and also on the display of goods on the privately controlled forecourt in front of the shop.

Disappointingly **Home Bargains** new store has still not opened and at the time of writing that looks to be a few weeks away – but it will be a major boost for High Street. Home Bargains has been a real success since arriving in November 2005.



High streets nationally have seen a sharp decline in the growth of independent shops, according to a report in March by the British Independent Retailers' Association. New independent stores have fallen from eleven a day in 2010 to just one a week in 2015. The overriding threat to Harborne High Street's retail future remains online sales which continue to grow at an alarming rate and are even impacting on national supermarket chains; these have closed large stores or even not opened newly built ones in order to concentrate on opening local convenience stores and online shopping. Figures reported in April by analysts Mintel claim that 48% of people are currently online supermarket shoppers while 11% now buy groceries without visiting a store at all. The four days in November from Black Friday to Cyber Monday which in 2014 saw frenzied crowds in stores, literally fighting in some cases to buy goods, was hit by much reduced crowds but boosted by online sales which increased to a staggering £3.3 billion. Black Friday alone accounted for £1.1 billion or £763 000 every minute.

All this is reflected in our High Street. The 81 retail premises on High Street itself (ie not side streets) now comprise just 50% of the 162 commercial, business or other premises. But are all these 81 "retail" premises shops as generally understood, shops where you purchase manufactured goods or freshly grown / farmed produce? In planning regulation terms hairdressers, beauty parlours, opticians, dry cleaners and funeral directors are classed as retail uses.

**For Harborne's sake the health and viability of High Street must remain an absolute priority as it has always been for the Society. Change is inevitable so the challenge continues to be ensuring that changes are for the better, relevant to customers' needs and changing shopping habits, to create a strong vibrant High Street as a destination that people will still want to visit.**

Phil Stokes

## Harborne High Street's Christmas lights

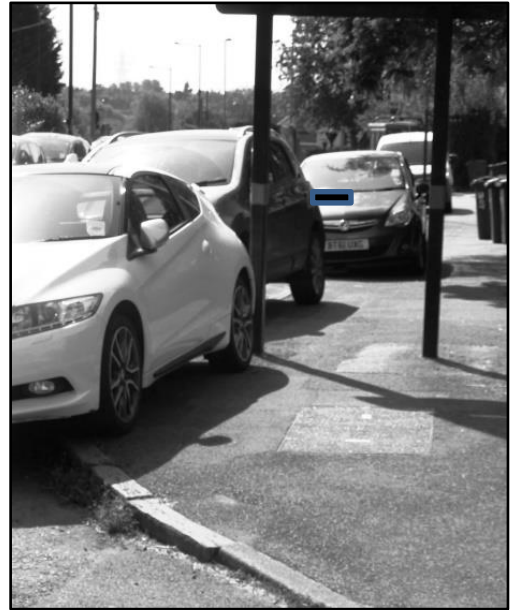
Last year we reported that the High Street's Christmas 2014 lighting would be the last funded by the City because of the on-going cuts. The Harborne Business Association tried to raise the funds from members and High Street businesses, but sadly were unable to deliver lighting. However, they *did* arrange a Christmas tree - switched on by Father Christmas following carol singing led by St John's Church and hot mulled wine and mince pies courtesy of Fallen Angel Bakery. The tree was generously provided by the Plough and funding for its lighting came from Rudell, Cherry Tree Interiors, Sainsbury's, EDG Build, Bath Store and McPherson's Appliances.

The Association hope to provide some festive lighting this year; we plan to support them as usual.

## Harborne Park Road Cycle Lanes etc Bombshell!

Last October the Council published their Highway Improvements Scheme for dealing with inconsiderate parking and speeding traffic on Harborne Park Road, especially on the southbound carriageway towards Selly Oak. Major elements were the closure of the existing gaps in the central reservation opposite St Mary's Road and Old Church Road together with the introduction of mandatory cycle lanes on both sides of the dual carriageway.

The Society entered into discussions with the Council and made several suggestions which were reflected in revised proposals published in November including retaining the right turn from the northbound carriageway into St Mary's Road. However, a major concern remained, namely that the proposed mandatory cycle lanes, whilst resolving the inconsiderate parking in front of residential properties, would displace many cars to roads in the immediate vicinity: **motorists should not drive or park in mandatory cycle lanes.**



Vehicle counts show that some ninety cars are parked on this road each weekday, overwhelmingly by staff from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital campus. We suggested that the mandatory cycle lane along the Grove Park frontage be set in the grass verge alongside the pavement thereby allowing on-street parking for at least fifty cars to continue on that stretch of the carriageway. This was rejected on cost grounds which included lowering the cabling / pipes in the grass verge of seven utilities companies. Subsequently we proposed a possible option of putting this cycle lane within the Park, avoiding the need for the underground services to be lowered. This was investigated but rejected as not being feasible.

A public consultation session was held in December following which the scheme was further revised to incorporate some on-street parking as we had sought from the outset. The principal changes were the retention of the gap opposite Old Church Road with southbound vehicles continuing to be able to turn right - but vehicles leaving Old Church Road would have to turn left and not cross straight over. This is to comply with Department of Transport requirements (as already proposed for the gap opposite St Mary's Road). The mandatory cycle lanes remained *except* for that part of the northbound carriageway fronting Grove Park and a very short part of the southbound carriageway near to Metchley Lane junction where it was now proposed to provide parking bays with a buffer zone between parked vehicles and proposed advisory cycle lanes on the carriageway.

Solving one parking problem by pushing it on to other residents in the immediate vicinity without any attempt to mitigate the consequences was never acceptable to the Society. The revised proposals were therefore strongly supported as they met our aim of reducing the number of parked vehicles displaced whilst resolving the problem of inconsiderate parking for residents and addressing their safety concerns.

The final scheme was supported by residents and the Ward Committee in March ... but then came the bombshell. The scheme, which clearly provides cycling infrastructure as well as highway measures, had always been intended to be compliant with the Birmingham Cycle Revolution Project (BCR); as stated at Ward Committee meetings this was to be the source of the funding (about £90 000). However, in May the BCR steering group refused funding as, they said, the scheme did not meet with the aspirations of the city-wide project. Councillor James McKay, then Ward Committee Chairman and ardent cyclist determined to get this farce sorted and instructed that senior officers attend the 4<sup>th</sup> July Ward Committee to explain their actions. They did not do so. Instead an email to Councillor McKay received that day which sought to justify the BCR decision was read out to the meeting. It indicated that, whilst BCR had allocated £20 000 for development and design of a traffic management scheme which would include some cycling features, no undertaking had been given to fund implementation of the scheme. The scheme would now be included in further bidding rounds for the Local Growth Fund but given the many competing projects there could be no guarantee that funding would be secured.

Our three councillors and all members of the public attending were incensed at the outrageous decision taken by officers and their failure to attend the meeting. The Ward Committee is committed to doing everything possible to pursue the matter and secure implementation of the scheme.

Phil Stokes

## Birmingham Institution for the Blind → QAC The first 150 years

*The Still Waters Community mainly comprises the three roads north of Court Oak Road around what is now Queen Alexandra College (which many Harbornites still call the "Blind School" but which is probably Harborne's largest employer). At a recent Community meeting, one of the Vice Principals, Angela Litchfield, gave a presentation on QAC's history. This account follows on from that presentation and also draws on other sources (in particular, Patrick Baird's One hundred and fifty years, Brib 1996). The historical photos (all, alas, undated but probably late Victorian) come from QAC's archive, with many thanks.*

Blind people's education and training in Birmingham date back to **1847**. Then the Misses **Elizabeth Bache Harrold** and her friend **Mary Elizabeth Badger** (pictured) took a small house in Ruston Street (just north of Five Ways) for the education of six blind boys. The rent was a reasonable six shillings [=30p] a week, and the first pupil was ten-year-old John Dale; the son of a tobacco-pipe maker living near Holloway Head, he had lost his sight through smallpox. He and the other boys were taught to read using the Lucas system of embossed type.



Demand for places was such that the school soon moved to larger premises in Ryland Street, and then Broad Street. By now, the subjects covered included arithmetic, history and geography, as well as some vocational skills, such as basket-making. They moved again, in **1848**, to a bigger place in Broad Street, now with 25 children (a few of them boarders); at the same time, it became a public charity with the name Birmingham Institution for the Blind and "family worship" and RE were added. The first chairman (and treasurer, until **1874** in fact) was **Thomas Goodman**, a tobacco pipe maker (whose great grandsons included two bishops, of Lichfield and Winchester).

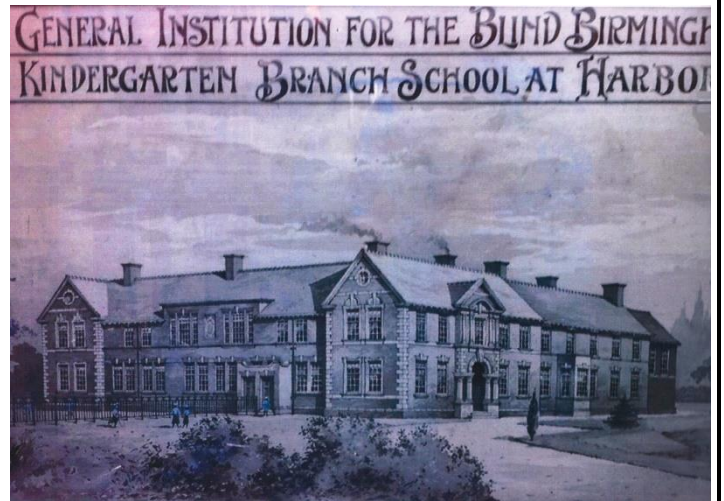
**Mary Badger** stayed on, retiring as Honorary Lady Superintendent in **1893**, though she died the year after, aged 75; one of QAC's houses now bears her name. But does anyone know what happened to her friend and co-founder other than that she was still around in **1848**? After all, it was her merchant father **William Harrold** who had the idea originally: she took it on after he died.

The Institution's amazingly fast growth continued, and by **1849** a two-acre site in Carpenter Road was leased from Lord Calthorpe (later the President) for building a new school. That opened in July **1852**, cost £7000, and now called the General Institution for the Blind. Both the organist and the choir at the opening service in St James's Church were chosen from the pupils of the school, music being a strength. Indeed, piano tuning training was started then – and still continues as one of the main trades taught. Also, in **1854** the first pupil from the school got a music-based job, at £20 a year, and many others followed. A year later, another pupil got a job ... to be the school's first blind tutor. That year, too, saw the start of home teaching for blind adults, with about eighty home tutors. (That number had increased to well over 1200 by **1947**.) The school's growth in its first decade is also shown by their adding a library and enlarged vocational training workshops to the teaching space. Again, a house for the Master opened in **1859**.



So time passed, and the institution continued to strengthen. By **1880** the use of Braille had been introduced; invented in 1829, it was far less hard to read than embossed type. A Royal Commission carried out an "inspection" in **1887**, and were "well satisfied"; HM Inspectors followed this a few years later with "excellent". The new General Superintendent, **Henry Stainsby**, invented a system of Braille shorthand in **1899** and a Braille typewriter soon after. Shorthand typing was growing fast as a career; now blind people could, and did, this work too. **Henry Stainsby** left in **1908** to become Secretary-General of the National Institute for the Blind, now RNIB. (This was not founded until **1868**, then under the name of the "British and Foreign Blind Association for Improving the Embossed Literature of the Blind". The name became yet longer the year after that.)

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee - and the school's golden one - in **1897** were marked by a major fundraising effort led by Lord Calthorpe. As a result, in **1898**, the current site off Court Oak Road – then a large field “in the country” – was bought for setting up a kindergarten branch. The cost was more than £15 000 – and the new school (delayed by the Boer War) opened in **1904**, now called the General Institution for the Blind. In **1909**, King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra came to the college and became royal patrons. The Carpenter Road site became the Birmingham Royal Institution for the Blind, while that at Harborne became the Queen Alexandra Harborne Kindergarten Branch.



The next year, in **1910**, the school decided to allow partially sighted children to join it; fifty such children came onto the roll in that year. They were taught to read and write using standard methods, the idea being that they would later transfer to standard schools. In **1913** there was a new department for girls throughout the whole school; such subjects as cooking, housewifery and massage were added to the curriculum. The next year, when the Great War started and the male staff joined up, all of the classes in the school became mixed. After the war, the Education Act **1918** made education costs chargeable to the local authorities; donations could now be put towards resources. Other relevant Acts made life easier for blind pupils and adults generally, despite the hard times in the country in the 1920s and 1930s. Notable events during those decades included the following.

**1922:** the junior choir wins a major prize in the Midlands Musical Festival

**1924:** various miniature objects accepted for the Queen's Doll's House

**1926:** new workshops in the Harborne grounds opened by Neville Chamberlain (Minister of Health)

**1938:** new technical education section at Harborne completed

**1939:** all kindergarten children evacuated to Wolverley, with Carpenter Road commandeered by the army

**1947:** BRIB Centenary celebrations, with by now Harborne and Carpenter Road fully open again, and new premises in Calthorpe Road, Easy Row, and Lickey Grange (near Bromsgrove)

**1951:** the Festival of Britain, marked, among other things, by a BRIB brass band performance at the Central Hall

**1961:** a hugely developed Lickey Grange School opened by the Queen Mother, who arrived in the grounds by helicopter



**1970:** a pre-school peripatetic teaching service for visually impaired infants, first in the country, set up

**1981:** the Education Act emphasises that special educational needs are not best met in special schools

In **1996**, brib, by then called Brib rather than BRIB, celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. By that time QAC, with an excellent range of resources, was recognisably in place for 150 learners and trainees with a variety of impairments. Also Queen Mother Gardens, named after and opened by **Queen Elizabeth**, the Institution's patron since before the War, had been (since **1991**) providing care for elderly people with impaired sight at the north end of the site. **1991** had also seen the opening of the Low Vision Centre and the Elizabeth Gunn Centre.

**Do you know** that this unique piece of Harborne architecture is to disappear this summer?



**Do you know** that on the 1<sup>st</sup> April the Council's increased parking charges at **York Street Car Park** from Mondays to Saturdays came into effect? Also, for the first time there are charges on Sundays. The increase is the first for several years.

However, the car park remains free at night, on Christmas Day and on public holidays.

## Harborne War Memorial - Update

The names of Harbornites killed in the Second World War had never gone onto the Memorial in St Peter's Churchyard; the plan was to add the twenty known names to the plinth of the newly restored memorial by last Remembrance Sunday.

The delay followed checking that brought to light other people which had to be researched and verified by St Peter's Chris Hargreaves. Eventually Chris identified thirty-one, listed below. The War Memorials Trust had kindly granted 50% of the cost of the restoration. (The Society donated £250.) With more names to add, the cost has increased: any contribution will be welcome at St Peter's Parish Office.

Meanwhile, it's pleasing to record that the restored monument now has Grade II Listed status (Historic England 2<sup>nd</sup> February).



### **The Harbornites who gave their lives for us in WWII**

A Booth, R Bottrell, D J Caldicott, C H Casey, N Conrad,  
G Cox, V Cox, R Craven-Child, A W Davis, L Davis,  
A E Day, F Fielding, F Fisher, G Fisher, J F Flowers,  
T A Gilmore, F W Hamilton, D F Lamb, S Mason,  
A E Massey, I V McVay, J Murray, R A Nicholls,  
A Oldershaw, J Oldfield, F Phillips, R Ricketts, C F G Smith,  
R P Watts, E T West, and N Williams

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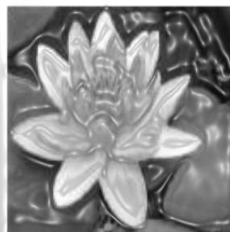
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**A local Harborne Architect**

## Report of the 2016 AGM

The 56<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of The Harborne Society was held on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2016, with sixty members in attendance.

Reports from the Chairman, Technical Officer and Honorary Treasurer demonstrated the continuing high level of Society activity during the year on behalf of members and the whole local community. For the last year the overriding concerns had been the Society's involvement in the conclusion of the Harborne parking review, in proposals for Harborne Park Road's cycle lanes and highway improvements and, in particular, in the review of Council Ward boundaries. However, these were not at the expense of other matters - notably a number of significant planning issues - including the future of the former Royalty cinema and concerns about Government changes in planning policy relating to "permitted development" without requiring planning approval. Membership had been maintained and the Society continued to be in a sound financial position.

Tony Whateley and I stood down from the Committee. Disappointingly, there were no nominations for new members of the Committee - which is a concern - but the remaining members sought re-election and were duly appointed. The list on the next page gives the details of the Committee for the coming year.

The meeting was followed by a talk, "Perambulating the Bounds", by esteemed local historian Edward Chitham on the ancient tradition of "beating" the bounds of a parish, in this case those of Harborne.

**Phil Stokes**

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## Future of High Street Crown Post Office

Since 2003 Harborne has seen four sub-post offices close: namely Prince's Corner, Harborne Park Road by the former Golden Cross, Moorpool Estate's Circle, and Court Oak Road at Earls Court Road. Government owned Post Office Ltd (POL) is responsible for managing the 11 500 branches (about 25 000 in the mid-1960s...), but franchise partners or independent sub-postmasters operate around 97% of these, with only 314 Crown Post Offices (CPOs) directly managed by POL.

In January POL published a list of 42 loss-making CPOs, three of which were to be closed with the remaining 39 offered for private companies to take over and run as a franchise. High Street branch is one of the 39. The loss of revenue at the Harborne branch is not surprising given that so many once traditional large volume transactions have gone. (Do you still renew your car tax or television licence at this Post Office or do you do it online? Do you collect your state pension or other benefits from there or do you have them paid into your bank account?)

The opportunity for a potential franchise partner was advertised. The interested parties naturally included WHSmith who already operate 109 post offices from their stores. So it was no surprise when on 21<sup>st</sup> June POL announced that it proposed to move Harborne CPO to the WHSmith store almost next door to be run by the store rather than by POL. The "new" branch will operate from a dedicated open plan area in the right-hand corner of the ground floor. It will have four serving positions and offer the same range of services as now - with longer opening hours: 9 am to 5.30 pm Monday to Saturday and 11 am to 3 pm on Sunday.

POL ([www.postofficeviews.co.uk](http://www.postofficeviews.co.uk), code 02320199; see also leaflet in the PO) offers a public consultation on the proposed relocation, ending on 3<sup>rd</sup> August; the principle of franchising is not part of the consultation. All feedback will be evaluated before finalising the plans, but the relocation is due to take place in November.

**Phil Stokes**

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## From the Editor, Eric Deeson

Here's a list of the aims of The Harborne Society (from the Constitution, as amended in 2015), to

- encourage the spirit of community
- promote interest in the character and history of Harborne
- represent the interests of Harborne and its immediate neighbourhood to civic and other authorities
- put forward proposals for the future of Harborne's environment
- encourage suitable conservation
- oppose unsuitable development

The purpose of this, the Society's *Newsletter*, is to inform the members - and, in this annual summer issue, all Harborne residents - what we're doing, how and why. And of course we hope we're doing that effectively.

Feel free to email any thoughts to [ericdeeson@aol.com](mailto:ericdeeson@aol.com).

*Please note that unattributed photos come from the authors of the pieces where they appear or from the Editor (used with the property owners' permission where appropriate).*

# The Harborne Society 2016 - 2017

[www.theharbornesociety.org.uk](http://www.theharbornesociety.org.uk) [harbornesociety@hotmail.com](mailto:harbornesociety@hotmail.com)

## The Harborne Society 2016-2017: Officers and Committee

*Many thanks to the Slug and  
Lettuce for hosting our meetings!*

### Patron

The Lord Bishop of  
Birmingham

### President

Mary Abbott (See front page,  
bottom left)

### Chairman (See front page)

Marcia Meyer  
17 St Mary's Road B17 0EY  
427 4356

### Vice-Chairman

Roger Miles  
21 Oaklands Avenue B17 9TU  
426 2577

### Honorary Secretary

Vacancy

### Honorary Treasurer

Brenda Durbin  
28 Hart's Green Road B17 9TY  
427 3710

### Membership Secretary

Jenny Buchan  
50 Margaret Grove B17 9JL  
426 4854

### Technical Officer / Chair: Technical Sub-committee

Andrew Peet  
14 Milford Road B17 9RL  
427 7923

### Editor

Eric Deeson  
[ericdeeson@aol.com](mailto:ericdeeson@aol.com)

### Other Committee members

Michael Darby  
Peter Lowndes  
Lindsay Smith

Bill Taylor

## Programme of meetings

All are welcome to join us on these evenings.  
We charge non-members £1, which includes refreshments.  
All meetings, Wednesdays 7.30 pm, are in the small hall at  
St Mary's Parish Centre, Vivian Road, B17 0DN.  
The entrance is the second door on the right,  
along the drive to car parks and school.

### 2016

#### 14<sup>th</sup> September

Birmingham Dogs' Home  
*Rachel Frost*

#### 12<sup>th</sup> October

A tale of two towers: The  
Eiffel Tower and Tower  
Bridge  
*Alan Hill*

#### 9<sup>th</sup> November

Conductive education for  
children and adults with  
neurological disabilities  
*Melanie Brown*

#### 7<sup>th</sup> December

The Birmingham Outer  
Circle No 11 bus route  
*David Humphries*

### 2017

#### 1<sup>st</sup> February

Moving men of stone: The  
statues of Birmingham  
*Stephen Hartland*

#### 8<sup>th</sup> March

The real Dads' Army  
*Ray Sturdy*

#### 12<sup>th</sup> April

Fisher House, Q E Hospital:  
A home away from home  
*Dave Watson*

#### 17<sup>th</sup> May

AGM (members only)

## Join the Harborne Society!

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