

# Number THIRTY-ONE

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Summer 1996

# The Harborne Society NEWS

## HARBORNE PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE - EXTRACTS FROM THREE DIARIES

*Ann Yorke and Eric Abbott*

### June 1898

**5.30 am** Pigeons woke me - early sunshine promised well for the great day. Fancy the great Sir Henry Irving coming to visit Harborne Village again 20 years after opening the Institute! Smelt fried bread - got dressed - not Sunday best 'til this afternoon. A bit stiff having blacked the fender, relit and backed up the range for Mam last night. Down to the kitchen - Mam in a fret because iron wouldn't heat up enough to iron Pa's Sunday shirt - Beatrice in trouble, she hadn't cleaned the brasses. Pa came in from the lavatory, said I'd done the reins and harness really well! Helping him to coal up at the station this morning for the first time. Victoria sent down to field to feed Charger - ate our fried bread and drank our tea.

**7.00 am** Helped Pa get horse gear from back of our Cottage, 161, High Street - harnessed Charger in Mr Hunt's field. Waved to Mrs Newey at shop as we went down Wentworth Road. At railway station went down new ramp - specially built for loading building materials and coal near cattle pen. Weighed out and loaded up, signed bill and shook hands with the collier. Charger only just made it to the top, sprayed gravel everywhere. City end of platform by signal box used by Chad Valley Toy Company for unloading timber and metal sheet for jigsaw puzzles and toys. Asked for wind up drummer for Christmas - too expensive!

**8.00 am** Went long way round with heaviest load first to Wentworth Road, Pa still calls it Wellington, then Lordswood Road, Gillhurst Road and Lower Ravenhurst Farm. Cook's name is Sally. When we'd tipped coal into cellar she gave me a hot muffin straight from the range. Pa gave me a big grin and said, "You'll be alright there lad!"

**11.00 am** Charger found it easier down

the steep and narrow Ravenhurst Road - back up the High Street - Charger had long drink of water at trough outside Junction Inn - Pa had large ale inside!

**12.00 pm** Got home, washed Charger down - 3 butts of water! - Mam had copper full of warm water for us - luxury! Pa and I had a scrub down in the scullery and put on Sunday suits. Beatrice home from St Peter's school, already in her new dress, Victoria and Mam had new blouses - pin tucks down the front. Mam used up lots of

the Nettlefold workers - going to be some central shops and a hall, with a village green by the pool. Lots of clapping - local farmers wanted to know the exact position for this scheme and who owned the land! Chairman said that rest of the day was to be a general celebration - events taking place in Church field.

**4.00 pm** Arrived at the field. Band playing - adults had sit down meal under the tree. We had bread and jam, lemonade and cake. Played all sorts of games, ran



*Pa and Charger*

candles getting them finished. Material came from Annie Taylor's (I said, "What a suitable name!" Mam boxed my ears) 121, High Street, hats from the Harborne milliner, Mary Cox at 143, High Street.

**1.30 pm** Arrived at Institute, tethered Charger in nearby field. Children sent to sit on the floor at front and told not to speak. Sir Henry Irving came in with the Chairman - looked very stern. Chairman welcomed us all. Said that 20 years ago Sir Henry had laid foundation stone saying that "the Institute would be a great literary and scientific asset to Harborne." Sir Henry congratulated everyone on the continuing success of the Institute. He later spoke about new radial housing proposed in the area, possibly by the Moor Pool, for

races, Beatrice brought her shuttlecock and battledore - Victoria kept walking round with Patience looking at the boys 'til Mam made her sit down! There were boards laid down on the grass - Mam and Pa danced the waltz really well! There was a concert - lots of songs and recitations including the one about the girl would "couldn't recite if you gave me the world," and a brass band chorus, 'It is our opening day.' Liked the barebacked wrestling best.

**10.00 pm** Bed. Great day. School tomorrow.

### June 1998

**6.30 am** Switched off alarm. Radio reported that ozone layer could be topped

up! EU to endorse - what about the rest of the world? How lucky I am to be an architect living in Harborne with my own car!

**7.00 am** Left for office with fax, telephone, newspapers and breakfast for the journey. About 1 1/2 hours to get to Five Ways usually. Residential traffic calming completed but High Street still not started. Temporary hold up part way down High Street gave me a further chance to ponder on the mixture of styles we are now surrounded by - 1930's cinema, 1950's hyperbolic concrete roofed filling station, pseudo Victorian pub and pseudo 30's car showroom. Glanced at model of the early Free School and Police Station jutting out from the latter in a glass box. What did the planners think they were doing? Further on noticed that group of five buildings which had been a bank, building society, travel agency etc still unoccupied. Much work now done by fax, telephone and VDU. Heard news flash that Harborne Fire Station to become a nursery school and small museum if funding can be obtained from the National Lottery. Fine chance! Stopped again by the Clock Tower - steeple jack putting rejuvenated finial on spire - got out and took a photograph. Ate breakfast. Got back in car.

**8.00 am** Stopped at the Green Man traffic lights. Could just see the ten storey office block in the distance. To think that Edgbaston was almost a green belt a few years ago! Read Fax, money has been granted from EU for a feasibility study for the experimental parking scheme behind where I am sitting! First car park of its kind for a suburb - policed by shops - modular steelwork to permit adaptation for different usage - on four levels to span over the road - wish they would consider the underground version.

**9.00 am - 4.00 pm** At office worked on geodesic dome for sports arena.

**6.30 pm** Arrived home and walked down to the Institute in Station Road to see how work was progressing on the renovation of the halls. Most of rotten timbers now replaced, roof to large theatre finished with anodised aluminium. Sample plaster and glass fibre cherubs in place and looking good. It will be wonderful to have the place back in use.

**10.00 pm** Into bed. Must get my eight hours sleep ready for tomorrow's travel.

## June 2098

**9.00 am** The great day at last!!! Got up, checked modem. Friends due at 10.00 unless the Land's End Shuttle late starting or interoute guidance and coupling (G

& C) fails. Thank heavens for Interoute 56. Parents only coming from London so they are going to call in at a couple of other places on the way. Noticed VDU wall - weather to be good - ozone layer thickening up at last!

Called up information for our visit to events in Harborne - booked via wrist computer as access likely to be crowded.

NB Must get air and water purifiers topped up next month.

**11.00 am** All present - put house into vacant mode - solar panels retracted, access points locked - set out for Harborne Heritage Centre via Albany Road entrance, walked up avenue past domestic animal fields; excellent electronic signboards set up by Harborne Society regarding origins, habits and rarity. Some breeds have not been seen at such close quarters for over fifty years, especially the cows, which we used to eat apparently. Ugh!

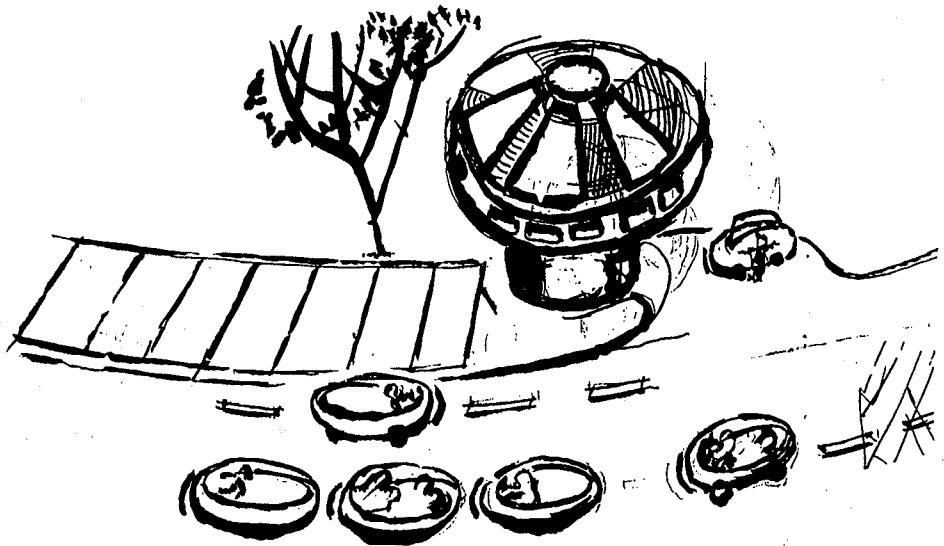
Science and Technology Institute had a very good hologram of Sir Henry Irving laying the foundation stone in 1878 -

jubilee of Hugh Grant's debut when next they visit us.

**1.00 pm** Walked down Station Parkway, gardens and glazed market gardens on the left. Excellent old fashioned lunch at Fire Station Hotel and Restaurant. Some suites are in what were fireman's cottages at rear - look out onto new spinney with Moorpool conservation area in the distance. Enthralled by cottages filled with genuine Conran and Habitat timber furniture.

**2.30 pm** Returned on narrow newly cobbled Station Street to High Street Walkway travelator - sat and watched a group of players dressed in genuine 1890's clothes demonstrating how horses and carts were used for the delivery of coal (used for heating!) into cellars of a row of cottages in Bull Street. What a noise!

**3.30 pm** Visit to Clock Tower Museum and Art Gallery - some really old maps show where 'buses' used by the public used to drive up High Street Walkway before it was landscaped with trees, stream and sitting areas. Apparently



*First three shuttles form 'train' by magnetic coupling, fourth in manual mode.  
Note Solar Panels*

many exhibits of artefacts from 1990's. Lager cans, McDonald's polystyrene containers, Safeway shop till and scanner - people used to go to shops to buy food, clothes and so on, how exhausting! Even fixed public telephone booth!

Moved on to Theatre and Drama Centre surrounded by paved terraces and small restaurants. Outdoor rehearsals in progress in the Drama Centre for a production of 'Charley's Aunt'. Took programme of old single dimension films to be shown in the Royalty cinema this month - a short walk across Greenfields from the Drama Centre. Our visitors want to see the memorial film from diamond

people used to park shuttles (cars) there too until the awful 60's to 80's buildings were demolished west of the Green Man. York Fields beautiful in the summer with fishponds avenues and lawns leading to Clock Tower. Gentle walk home along part of the High Street Walkway - looked at some of the refurbished Victorian shops - turned through new wrought iron gates into orchard and flower garden created behind Greenfield House, once residence of David Cox, painter, now a craft centre.

**5.00 pm** Home and good rest.

**7.30 pm** Left by local tramshuttle from

Abbey Gate to get to Grove Park for good old fashioned party. Met old friends, danced and sang under the stars.

2.00 am Everyone gone. Turned satellite modem onto select, tuned in visitor computer, sent video record to parents and friends and went to bed. Wonderful bicentenary day!

## The Madeline Aston Memorial Award

Winning entry by Katie Trewin of St Peter's Church of England Junior School

Greenfield House, Greenfield Road  
Harborne, Birmingham, England

Monday, 4th September 1843

Dear Ma,

You wouldn't believe this place where I'm working at the moment, it's enormous! It's got at least twenty rooms and two floors! My new master is a gentleman called Mr David Cox. He's a painter, a water colour artist. I think he might be quite well known in this area, he must have a lot of money because he lives in this big house! He has lots of his paintings scattered all over the house. There are lots of pictures of the country side - they remind me of home with you.

I thought I was going to be the only servant, but as well as me, they've got seven other servants.

You'll never believe, they've got this really modern thing, it's called a flushing toilet. One day I sneaked into the bathroom and I sat down on the toilet without lifting my dress up. I pulled the chain and I got the biggest shock of

### FACT OR FICTION?

You may not agree with our prediction of the future but one thing is certain - Harborne village will change!

It is your responsibility on behalf of your children, and your children's children, to ensure the change is for the better.

my life. All this water went all over my dress, I looked down at it, I wondered where it had gone, so I rushed downstairs to see if it had gone into the room below. It hadn't you know, it's magic I tell you, it really is!

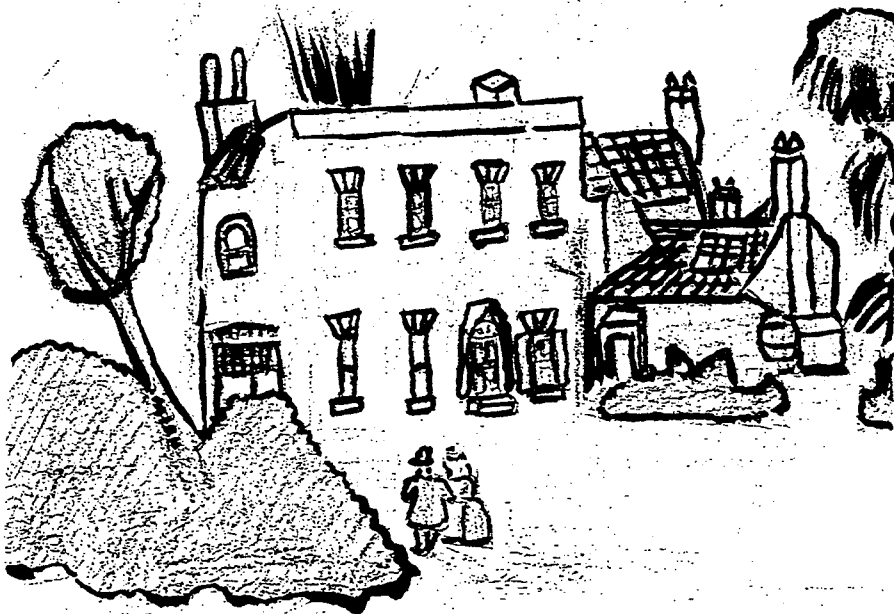
Oh yes and there's this thing called electricity. You press a button on the wall and the whole place lights up. I wish you were here, it's wonderful, it's really grand and fancy.

All the ladies wear crinolines to make their dresses wider and corsets to keep their tummies in. Did you know, the funniest thing happened when they were having dinner. The mistress of the house broke her corset and the chambermaid had to fix it.

The Master never reprimands me, he's very nice, although I am always tired when I go to bed. I work quite hard but I do get plenty of food and rest. Mr Cox goes out a lot because of his painting. I hope you are well.

With lots of love from

Emilyn Moon  
xxx



David Cox's House by Katie Trewin

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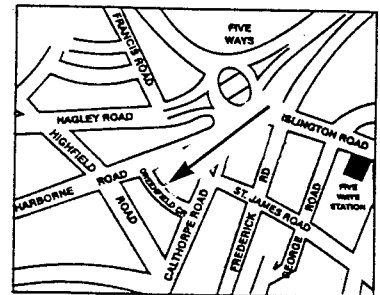


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## Chairman's Letter

I hope that all of you have found something to interest you in this Newsletter. The Harborne Society has now been in existence for thirty-six years and has, I hope, done much to further its two main aims, that of encouraging good development in the village and keeping alive a spirit of community.

But the Society needs more people to take an active part. Surely there are those among you who would be prepared to give some of your time. We need more members for the committee and more people who would be interested in joining working parties on individual projects.

Let me just mention some of these working groups we would like to see set up.

Harborne has very little nursery school provision. The fire station is now unoccupied and on the market. We have been trying to interest people in both the public and private sector to consider using it as a Nursery School. We need to pursue this further.

Birmingham and District Theatre Guild were unable to go on with their plan to restore the Harborne Institute to a working theatre. We still feel that there is a great opportunity here.

We would like to see plaques set up round the village to commemorate well-known people who have lived here or sites of buildings of note.

Eighbaston Rotaract have given and do give valiant help with our Green-Up campaign but we still need local residents' participation.

And what about the Art Exhibition in October and the renovation of the Dr Hugh Morton Memorial at the Clock Tower? The list is never ending.

Please contact me or one of the committee if you are interested in helping however small the contribution you can offer.

Yours sincerely *Mary P. Abbott*

Mary Abbott, Chairman

## The Harborne Society Art and Craft Exhibition 1996

At The Clock Tower, High Street, Harborne  
Friday and Saturday, 24 and 25 October 1996

The Harborne Society has now mounted several very successful exhibitions of original artwork by local residents, the last one you may remember in 1994.

This year we are planning a similar event and would welcome entries of paintings, drawings, collage, sculpture, ceramics, embroidery, bookbinding and other similar exhibits from local people. We are also planning to have several "hands-on" demonstrations during the course of the exhibition.

If you wish to exhibit, or if you know of other local residents who might be interested in taking part, please complete the tear-off slip below and return it as soon as possible to Mrs Mary Worrall, the exhibition organiser.

Exhibition space will be limited, so although we hope to display the majority of items offered, we reserve the right of selection where necessary.

We very much hope that as many of you as possible will be able to come along during the day on Friday 24 and Saturday 25 October (half-term week) and enjoy the wealth of artistic talent that exists in the Harborne area.

To Mrs Mary Worrall, 91 Wood Lane, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 9AY

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Address .....

Telephone number .....

Number of exhibits .....

Type and size of exhibits .....

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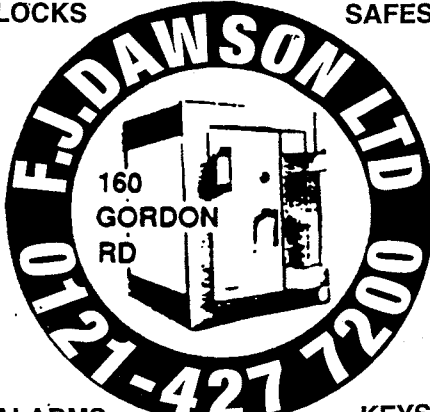
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## Celebration at St Peter's School



Mary Abbott  
(Chairman)

Matthew Breen

Andrew Taylor

Katie Trewin  
(Winner)

Hannah Paddock

Alice Wilkinson

Katherine Davis

Friday, 28th June was the patronal festival of St Peter. To celebrate the occasion the School held a flower festival and well dressing. The arrangements were a joy to behold and much admired by parents and visitors.

It gave The Harborne Society an excellent opportunity to present two awards.

The winner of the first Madeline Aston Memorial Award is a pupil at St Peter's School. Mrs Mary Abbott presented Katie

Trewin of year 5 with a certificate and prize of £25 for herself plus £25 for the School. Her winning entry is published in this Newsletter. Five other certificates were also awarded. The winner of our 'Preserve our Trees' competition last autumn was Mr N Bozic of York Street. His prize was to be the planting of a tree near the well at the school. Unfortunately he was unable to attend so the tree was duly planted on his behalf. A small plaque with Mr Bozic's name on it will be set beside the tree at a later date.

## A walk round Harborne with Edward Chitham

So many of us enjoyed our walk with Edward Chitham last year - in spite of the thunderstorm - that we have persuaded him to lead another one - this time taking in the Moorpool estate and the area round Station Road and the High Street.

Mr Chitham will lead the walk on Sunday, 15th September, lasting for a maximum of

an hour and a half, to celebrate National Heritage Day.

All are welcome to join him. The party will leave from Park Hill Road bridge at 2 p.m. whatever the weather, so bring an umbrella.

Do not miss this chance of learning more about Harborne and its history.

## HARBORNE ON OLD POSTCARDS

by Andrew Maxam

'Yesterday's Warwickshire' Series, No 12, £3.50  
Obtainable at Hooper's Bookshop, High Street  
Margery Elliott

I find this book fascinating. Though many of the buildings have not altered very much since the postcards were issued (between 1902 and 1937), the costumes and street furnishings look very different. Several buildings which have since been demolished are shown, and there are even some pictures of country lanes in Harborne, with no traffic. Andrew Maxam

has researched the photographs with care and has written interesting captions to them. He also gives details of the publishers of the cards. The standard of reproduction is better than in similar books which I have seen, and so is the standard of accuracy (I found only one spelling mistake - Camomile Green, surely, not Cammophile).

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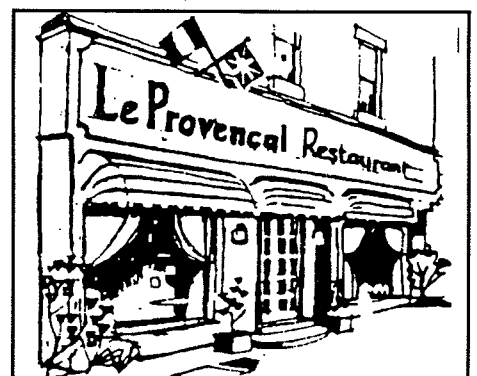
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# REPORT OF THE TECHNICAL OFFICER to the AGM of the Harborne Society (*abridged version*)

*Duncan Smith*

As the retiring Technical Officer of the society it is my pleasure to report on the work of the technical committee during 1995 and 1996.

We have had a busy year, having reviewed over 75 detailed planning applications. Many of them have not warranted comment. In fact the majority of our investigations result in no further action. Most of these applications have been notified to us by the City, but there were also a number where we were asked to look at particular applications by our members or local residents.

Of the year's activities, I feel that I should mention the following

(i) The site at the end of Ravenhurst Road/High Street occupied us for much of the summer of 1995. Bovis Homes have made an application to build a sheltered housing development. We had an initial meeting with them at which we discussed the design and ways in which we felt they should consult with the local residents. They took up our idea of a public meeting (which many of you may have attended) and welcomed our input into the overall design for the site. Eric Abbott and Ann Yorke spent many hours with their architects refining the plans - which were subsequently accepted by the planners. One of our major concerns was that the original design would take retail units away from the High Street. Ann and Eric were able to work with the architect and incorporate 4 shop units into the scheme. Only the final legal agreements now remain to be signed.

(ii) We worked hard alongside St Mary's Road Residents Association in objecting to the Bryant Homes plans for the Lowood site. As well as retaining the listed building, Bryant wanted to put 6 luxury detached homes on the site. We felt that this was too intensive a use of the site. This plan was thrown out by the City's Conservation Committee. A second application for 5 homes proved more acceptable and was eventually passed after resiting of the properties and the access points. We were pleased that several TPOs were ordered on the site.

(iii) For a long time the society has been pressing for a third Conservation Area to be established in the village.

Over 5 years ago we pressed the case for the Greenfield Road/Bull/South/York St/High St area to be given conservation area status. This was then accepted by Birmingham City Council and included as a firm commitment in the Unitary Development plan.

Since that time we have lost more of the High Street frontage (a case of the City fiddling whilst the High Street burns?). We are assured that their commitment remains, but that the lack of funds is the major obstacle to carrying it out. Obviously a man (person?) made beach at Spaghetti Junction to attract the tourists is a much higher priority than saving the city's existing heritage!

The need for conservation area status is becoming more and more urgent and we will continue with this fight.

(iv) The traffic management public consultation exercise on which I reported last year is still in progress. As you are all aware the City Engineers have taken the residential plans to public consultation and have recently contacted us about plans for the High Street. As I write (end of June), the Engineers are to meet with the Society with their proposals. I understand that, once these plans have been finalised, the City are confident that they have a high chance of securing early funding.

(v) The Old Police Station

You will recall that last year I reported on the demolition of the old police station by John Leek.

Recently, plans have been passed for the redevelopment of the Rover dealership on this site. Eric and Ann looked at the plans and made several comments as to the architectural symmetry of the designs. Some of their points were conceded - although not enough of them for Eric's satisfaction. The resulting design is not of the best quality and resembles a 'glass shed topped with a squashed wedding cake'. It is

a shame that for such an important site the planners have accepted a second-rate scheme that could have so easily been changed for the better.

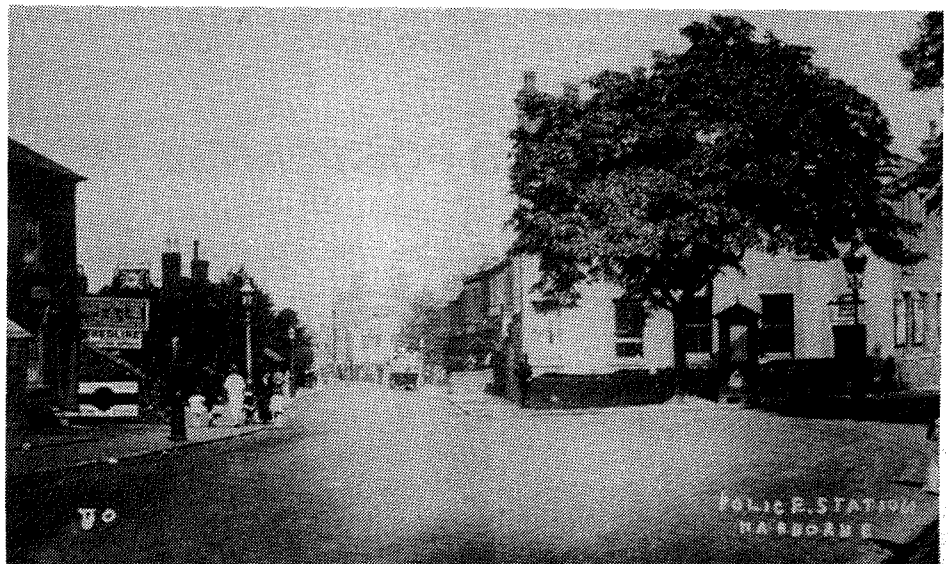
Before I hand over to my successor, I must report on one piece of unfinished business.

Over the last few years we have been concerned as to the fate of the fire station when the fire service moved to their new premises in Bartley Green. As you will know from Eric Abbott's newsletter article, it is a superb and quite rare example of its kind.

We contacted the West Midlands Fire Service who were uncertain as to the future of the site, and even less clear as to the listing details. The building itself was grade 2 listed several years ago but there appeared to be some confusion as to the extent of the preservation order, particularly in relation to the cottages at the back. Mary Abbott has pressed the conservation committee for clarification of the listing details and received confirmation that the order covers the whole site.

This has been passed on to the Fire Service.

We want to see the site put to use for the community. Mary has written to the Chief Education Officer suggesting it as an ideal site for a nursery school. Perhaps it could be used for a fire museum? The site is up for sale currently and we want to form a small group to investigate ways in which it might be used for the benefit of Harborne. It might be possible to bring together interested parties and buy it ourselves. Anyone interested in joining in with this please contact the Chairman.



*A 1920's view of the old Police Station - now sadly demolished.  
Picture from Andrew Maxam's book of postcards*



## Governors needed for local school

Fiona Watson

Chad Vale Primary School on the edge of Harborne, beside the Chad Brook, has several governors who feel that, after 10-16 years service, it is time to make way for fresh blood. Could you be the person we are looking for? Interested in education, like to get things done, in tune with children, a little time on your hands, wanting to do something for the local community! We are not in search of any specialist skills but would rather welcome any new ideas people have to offer. If you think this might be the thing you're looking for, call for a chat with either Ms S Thorne, Headteacher (455 7329) or Mrs Fiona Watson, Chair of Governors (420 4328).

## THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Jenny Buchan

The 36th Annual General Meeting of The Harborne Society took place on Wednesday 15th May 1996 at 7.30 p.m. in the Conference Room at Harborne Junior School.

Reports detailing the activities of the Society, the involvement in planning and traffic issues and the state of the finances were given by the Chairman, Mrs Mary Abbott, Technical Officer, Duncan Smith and Treasurer, William Curr respectively. All paid tribute to the hard work put in by members, particularly committee members, in making it a successful year once again.

However, a word of warning was put to members by one of the present committee, Keith Campbell. Four committee members were resigning but only one new nomination had been received. He urged members to consider carefully whether they might be able to help on

the committee or in other ways as, without sufficient man (or woman) power, the Society could not continue to flourish. Hopefully all members will consider this.

A proposal to raise Ordinary and Family Membership Subscriptions from 1st April 1997 was put to the meeting. To the amazement of the Committee, members from the floor suggested, and unanimously passed, that concessionary membership subscriptions should be raised as well. The new rates, therefore will be

Ordinary **£5.00** Family **£7.00**  
Concessionary **£3.00**

Four resignations from committee had been received - Adrian Ball, Margery Elliott, Mary Lambourne and Duncan Smith - but the remaining eleven members were all willing to stand again. Mr Graham Parker was the only new nomination. The committee for '96-'97 consists, therefore, of only twelve members. (See list on page 8).

Dates for future monthly meetings were given out but, due to a lack of support, no summer outing had been arranged. The evening finished with coffee and informal discussions between members.

*The*  
**Field House**



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1 Victoria Road, B17 0AG  
427 1378

## Vice-Chairman

Mr Roger Miles,  
21 Oaklands Avenue, B17 9TU.  
426 2577

## Hon. Secretary

Mrs Jenny Buchan,  
50 Margaret Grove, B17 9JL.  
426 4854

## Hon. Treasurer

Mr William Curr,  
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427 4084

## Technical Officer

Mrs Ann Yorke,  
98 Greenfield Road, B17 0EF.  
604 7364

## Chairman Social Committee

Mrs Jean Curr,  
23 Vicarage Road, B17 0SN.  
427 4084

## Committee Members

Mr Eric Abbott  
Mr Leslie Blenner-Hassett  
Mr Keith Campbell  
Mr Michael Darby  
Mrs Lynda Donaldson  
Mr Graham Parker

# PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS

## 1996-97

*Jean Curr*

The Harborne community has a great store of talent and erudition, and the Harborne Society looks forward to savouring some of this during next season's programme of talks.

Roger Brown's reputation extends far beyond the boundaries of the village as he continues the family business in Lonsdale Road, and his talk should get the season off to a lively start. Those who loiter beside the window of a certain bookshop will have seen displays of Judith Cutler's novels - now beginning to appear in paperback, and another author, Conall Boyle, will give the talk that was snowed-out in February ... and more ... have a look at the programme. We look forward to seeing you.

## 1996

**Wednesday, 11th September:** "Values of Organic Meat". Mr R Brown  
Harborne Junior School

**Tuesday, 8th October:** "The Gunpowder Plotters in the Midlands".  
Mr C Boyle. Onneley House

**Wednesday, 6th November:** "Garden Design". Mr T King-Farlow.  
Harborne Junior School

**Tuesday, 3rd December:** "Sophie Rivers Life of Crime in Harborne"  
Mrs J Cutler. Onneley House

## 1997

**Tuesday, 4th February:** "The Queen Alexandra College"  
Mrs S Moorehead. Onneley House

**Wednesday, 5th March:** "Cricket". Mr Dennis Amiss  
Harborne Junior School

**Tuesday, 15th April:** "Quaker History". Miss M. Gayner  
Onneley House

**Wednesday, 14th May:** Annual General Meeting.  
Harborne Junior School

All meetings begin at 7.30 p.m.

## CREDITS

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## JOIN THE HARBORNE SOCIETY

Subscription Rates:- (1st April 1996 - 31st March 1997)

ADULT £4 per year

FAMILY £6

CONCESSION £2.50 (*Student, Unwaged, Senior Citizen*)

Write your NAME, TITLE (Mr, Dr, Mrs etc), ADDRESS and  
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