

THE HARBORNE SOCIETY

Number
Fifty-Two

Summer 2004

NEWSLETTER

harbornesociety@hotmail.com



HARBORNE SWIMMING POOL HEADING FOR CLOSURE!

Unless drastic action is taken urgently by the City Council in the next few months Harborne Swimming Pool seems certain to close. This is the unpalatable news that has emerged from the Society's continuing representations to the Council.

Last Summer's Newsletter reported on the history of Swimming Baths [opened in 1923] and the Society's campaign to secure much needed improvements. The Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre as it is now known is extremely popular and provides a whole range of personal fitness activities in addition to public swimming. It caters for all ages and includes aquaflexibility fitness classes for older customers suffering from joint pain as well as sun beds, a gym and a power/strength training centre. 18 different schools use the pool. The free swimming pass scheme for all school children under 16 has just been re-introduced.

The initial concerns were about the state of the frontage and the misuse of the car park by non-patrons but it emerged that the City Council was in fact looking at a major refurbishment of the whole site, although nothing would happen until Northfield Pool re-opened following its multi-million pound makeover. Some

improvements to external signs and maintenance of the billboards were undertaken and the rotting tree stump, which was such a long-standing eyesore, has very recently been removed.

On 10th April, 2003, the City Council stated that "a major refurbishment is still planned for this site and work will begin when repairs to the roof have been undertaken and after Northfield Pool re-opens". Following the re-opening of Northfield this April, the Society immediately pressed the Council to progress the plans for Harborne but quite astonishingly these plans have disappeared down the plug hole without trace, indeed there seems to be great doubt whether any genuine proposals ever existed at all. The Council has disgracefully misled the local community.

But there is worse news. A major problem has come to light that threatens the complete closure of the swimming pool. The pool tank is the original from 1923 and its condition has deteriorated to such an extent that water is penetrating the concrete resulting in degradation of the metal reinforced concrete. Life expectancy of the tank is now measured in

months and closure of the pool seems inevitable within the next year, possibly sooner, unless action is taken urgently. It is clear that this problem has not just arisen but has been known about for some years. The Pool was actually closed for several weeks over Christmas 2002 to enable concrete core samples to be taken for testing but despite the test results the Council has apparently just sat on its hands.

Last April the City Council adopted a major change in the way it works, referred to as "going local", which has devolved some powers to new District Committees [based on Constituencies] with an entirely new officer structure for each District. Responsibility for the management of the Swimming Pool now rests with the Edgbaston District Committee but, surprise, surprise, the Committee does not have control of any capital budgets. The Chairman and the District Manager have been made aware of the issue and its flawed history. Meetings have been held with the District officers who have declared their total commitment to making the case for the capital funding for the refurbishment or even complete replacement of Harborne Pool as a top priority. Lifestyle, fitness, obesity and other health issues are now high profile concerns and the facilities at Harborne can play a significant part in dealing with these issues.

The Council's oft repeated aim is to respond to community aspirations and deliver services which are influenced by local people and contribute to creating flourishing neighbourhoods ~ Harborne Swimming Pool will be a good test of their sincerity and of the new "local" management arrangements. The Society is working with the District Management Team to do everything possible to pursue the issue and we fervently hope that the recent change in the political control of the City Council will lead to urgent consideration being given to this matter.

Phil Stokes

The Technical Officer's Annual Report 2004



At last year's **AGM** I reported on four items which were giving the Society much annoyance, these were:

- The ongoing matter of two storey side extensions, which are gently eroding the ambience of the village.
- The continual ignoring of the revised retail frontage policy for which we fought so long and hard.
- The continual inability of Planning Enforcement to address the flouting of planning decisions.
- The inability of the Birmingham City Council to follow its own rules regarding the sale and use of land.

I am happy to report that a document entitled 'Extending Places, a Home Extension Design Guide' is now in the final throes of its birth and, hopefully, its implementation by Planning Officers. Although this remains to be seen.

I am unhappy to report that the revised Retail Frontage Policy is still being continually and systematically ignored. In fact we were informed by a Planning officer that it was 'not worth the paper it was written on.' Which does not give us a lot of confidence for the future of the High Street.

Planning Enforcement should, we feel, have its name changed to Planning Do-As-You-Please-But-Don't-Ask-Us-To-Do-Anything-About-It. They appear on sites and enforce nothing, partly because of the BCC horror of spending legal fees to enforce the planning laws of this country. One such was Café Nero. Opened last August, Enforcement Officer called out, no action taken. Planning Application this January, report to Committee March where it was recommended for approval until the Harborne Society decided to speak out. Subsequent site visit arranged at which the Chairman took it into her head that we were against Café Nero per se and therefore Approval was granted. I would refer you to item two here. The Retail Frontage Policy. We are losing our retail units in the High Street at a rate of knots. There have been 25 Changes of Use approved in the past four years alone from Retail to Professional. Pretty soon the only things which you will be able to purchase on the High Street will be a house or some food.

The Varsity got approval to extend into two retail units last May. We knew that this was going to happen when the units were built as one unit. We even called in the Enforcement Officer!!!! I will not go into the complexity of the four units which turned into three, one of which was for business use, where Blockbusters hang out or even mention the MFI site.

349-353 High Street is an example of the final point in the list. We have fought hard and long to get the premises Listed. Our last piece of the history of Harborne Town. English Heritage state that because the windows have been replaced and the chimneys truncated then it is not worth listing. Chris Upton does not agree. As he stated in one of his articles in the Birmingham Post 'never believe that any historical building is past redemption.' We asked him if he would help us and he produced a poignant article, again in the Birmingham Post, laying out the facts about our rapidly declining village.

Harborne Parish Lands want to sell their retail properties in Harborne. Again, the same as the BCC, for profit. Prince's Corner that doyen of Harborne is sold to an, as yet, unknown buyer, Albert Walk has died a painful death, our Georgian terrace looks as though it will go the same way. Try counting the number of old buildings that are left in the High Street. A three-toed sloth comes to mind.

When is some enlightened person going to step forward and undertake to save the vibrant village in which we live? When is someone going to realise that estate agents, mortgage companies, banks and restaurants do not form the heart of a place in which people wish to live? Edgbaston no longer has a heart are we to follow the same path? We have an excellent developer who does care but he is stymied at every turn. Look what he has done for the old Fire Station and Techno House.

Now, further sad news, South Street Methodist Church is to close at the end of September. What future for this Grade II Listed building?

Other examples come to mind.

The Society has been asked to assist with the work involved in getting the Greenfield Road Conservation Area up and running - remember that this has now been 'on the cards' for at least twelve years - and have, since last November consistently not sent the necessary basic information on how this should be tackled.

St Peter's Church is looking for development on the Glebe field. Fortunately they have involved the parish in decisions but it is almost inevitable that yet another area of open space is to be lost at some stage in the next few years.

And, despite our attendance at various developers 'meet the locals and have a glass of wine' evenings, they are still insisting on producing Victorian pastiche elevations. However I was informed by one developer that this was a requirement of the Planning Officer!!!! I despair.

More facts. There have been 251 planning applications for Harborne in the last year. I have gazed in horror at a lot of them, written letters of objection on many of them, and received letters stating that they have been granted for almost as many. I have a feeling that this is a lot to do with those dreaded initials NPI, National Performance Indicators. There were 414 Householder applications in our area, Edgbaston Constituency, for the year ending 31 March this year. Of these 348 were dealt with within the statutory 8 weeks - 84%. BCC gets money for planning purposes the higher their percentages. What would you do if you were the Planning officer?

Last July I wrote to the Chief Planning Officer complaining about various items which were being mis-dealt with by the planning officers. I was sent for and harangued. I did not budge one inch and I will not do so in the future.

To finish on a high note, Hoopers Bookshop closed and reopened as Bonds, the Plough is up and running very successfully, Techno House, which is now Harborne West, is full of tenants, and we have a dedicated couple of parking officers which is saving me and lots of other people money on the purchase of films. And, what is more, Subway is now the subject of an enforcement notice so all is not quite lost.

Ann Yorke - Technical Officer



Prince's Corner 14th March, 1939

PRINCE'S CORNER UPDATE - Phil Stokes

Members will be aware from the Spring Newsletter of the 'double whammy' that first came to light last November that threatens the whole future of Prince's Corner, the gateway to Harborne.

Firstly, Harborne Parish Lands Charity sold the large block bounded by High Street, Albert Road and Harborne Park Road to still unnamed property developers. The Charity considered that the site "had scope for complete redevelopment", particularly if the City Council owned properties in Albert Walk could also be acquired, and consequently the Charity cashed in on the situation leaving one of Harborne's most notable landmarks to the mercy of the property speculators and the planners. The action taken by the Charity together with its stated policy of trying to reduce its holdings in Harborne gives the Society grave concern as to possible future action by the Charity in the area insofar as its land and property holding is concerned. If Prince's Corner can be sold, what next?

Secondly, the Georgian buildings opposite the 'Kings Arms' pub were the subject of a planning application for demolition and the erection of a five-storey block of 24 retirement apartments with underground parking for 14 cars. The Society was immensely concerned at the possible demolition of the properties in view of the very significant place that they have in the history of Harborne prior to its transition from a rural community to a significant residential area. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the whole focus of Harborne was centred on the 'Kings Arms' and the area now called Prince's Corner. Following bomb damage to part of the Georgian terrace in the Second World War the three properties are quite literally the last remaining houses from the heart of the original Harborne Town. The Society vigorously opposed the planning application and to that extent was successful as the application was refused

by the City Council on 27th April but another planning application seems inevitable. Unfortunately the Society's attempt to secure the national Listing of the properties was not approved by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, largely because of the fairly recent removal of the original windows [replaced by UPVC windows] and the original chimneys having been truncated. The City Council owns the freehold and, irrespective of planning permission, redevelopment would require the freeholder's consent. It remains the Society's ardent view that the Georgian properties, though undeniably in need of some conservation and renovation, are a landmark that contributes positively to the townscape and should be saved from demolition because of their special character and local history. They are part of the heritage of Harborne that should be preserved for future generations. The properties have great potential and an imaginative company prepared to renovate them sympathetic to their architectural and historic roots could achieve much. Consequently the Society continues to urge the City Council as freeholders to grasp the nettle and to take appropriate steps with a view to offering the properties on the open market and inviting bids conditional upon schemes for their retention and renovation in keeping with their Georgian heritage and architecture.

The whole future of Prince's Corner is in jeopardy but the Society will do all it can to try and achieve a sensible outcome that is first and foremost to the benefit of Harborne.

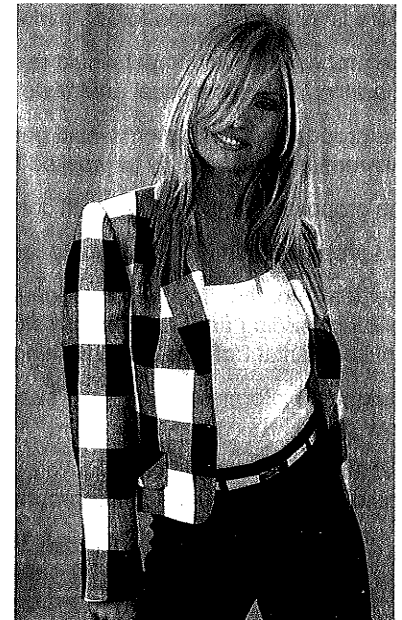
'SUPERLOO'



I hope that many of you have noticed that after several years' of campaigning by the Society the public toilets in the passageway alongside Attwood House in High Street have been refurbished.

The arrival of the 'Superloo', however, is a little way off. The 'Superloo' is to be located on the Council owned forecourt fronting 'Iceland' and will be available at all times which is important as the toilets by Attwood House will be closed in the evenings but at the time of writing the date for its "official opening" remains uncertain. The groundwork and foundations started in late June and the 'Superloo' is due to become operational by mid August but the later stages of the works very much depend upon the water and electricity companies.

Phil Stokes



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Planning Applications



Harborne is presently buzzing with building applications. The boxes of Planning Applications at Harborne Library bulge with the paperwork, as quickly as we return the out of date plans another set comes zooming in to replace them. With this in mind we have asked **Ann Yorke**, our Technical Officer, to write a guide for you to refer to if you feel that you wish to comment or complain.

Sometimes it can be difficult to hit on a precise term or description. I'm sure that Ann's guidelines will prove very valuable to anyone engaged in making a response to the planners!

Mary Worrall

How to Object to a Planning Application

**Examine the plans at the library as soon as possible as there is only a limited time in which to object
Look at the relationship of the proposal to the property in which you have an interest both on plan and the elevations
If you feel that this is unacceptable take the following action:**

- Write down the planning application number - this will be after the fashion of S/00000/04/FUL
- Write down the address of the application
- Write down the description of the proposal
- Write down the date by which letters must be received by the Council

The following points may be relevant but do not use them unless they are:

- The means of access is inadequate
- The proposal would introduce an additional residential unit which would lead to reversing movements on the highway becoming a source of obstruction and danger to other highway users
- The proposal would adversely affect the amenities of occupiers of dwellings/premises in the vicinity by reason of nearness
- The proposal would adversely affect the amenities of occupiers of dwellings/premises by means of overlooking
- The proposal conflicts with the Supplementary Planning Guidance Policy, 'Places for Living', adopted by the Local Planning Authority as Supplementary Planning Guidance and included within the provisions of the Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan [UDP] 2001
- The proposed development by reason of its scale, mass and design would be detrimental to the architectural appearance of the building and would adversely affect the visual amenity of the locality contrary to the Birmingham UDP and the Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan
- The proposed development, including by reason of garden loss, would be out of character with, and detrimental to, the visual amenities of the area, contrary to the Birmingham UDP and the Deposit Draft UDP and 'Places for Living', which has been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance [SPG]
- The applicant has failed to demonstrate how the dwelling could be adequately accommodated on the site
- There is insufficient area for the parking of cars relevant to the number of inhabitants proposed
- The proposed development would result in the loss of trees or other natural features which would be detrimental to the character/ambience/visual amenity of the environment/area
- The proposed development would generate noise/disturbance/smell/pollution which would be detrimental to the environment - this reason would mostly be applied to cafes, restaurants and pubs
- The proposed Change of Use will constitute the loss of yet another retail unit within the agreed Retail Frontage Policy for Harborne
- The proposed use will be inappropriate to a residential area and would contravene the Birmingham Draft UDP for land use
- The design of the proposed development is unsatisfactory and would be detrimental to the architectural appearance of the existing building and would adversely affect the visual amenities of the surrounding area, thereby being in conflict with Environmental Policies of the Birmingham Draft UDP and policies of the Deposit Draft UDP
- Inadequate information has been submitted to assess [whatever it is that has been your chosen objection if none of the above your purpose]
- And any other reasons of which you can think BUT they must be relevant planning grounds. Things such as the effect upon the value of your house are not appropriate and will not be taken into account

When writing NEVER be emotional, facts are the only thing which will sway a decision

For further guidance you can examine the copy of 'How to Stop and Influence Planning Permission' which the Harborne Society has placed on deposit at the Library and which is available for inspection at the reception desk.

When you have decided which reason/s you wish to use send a letter by the due date to:

**Birmingham City Council Planning
Alpha Tower
Suffolk Street Queensway
BIRMINGHAM B1 1TU**

Or fax it on **303 3510** or **303 4715**,

Or e-mail it on:
planning.enquiries@birmingham.gov.uk

Harborne Ironmasters - by Mary Rose Salmon

Harborne benefits to this day from Birmingham's eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Ironmasters who wished to live a comfortable distance away from the smoke and grime of their foundries and factories. Harborne census returns give interesting details of households round St Peters Church and the surrounding farms.

In 1790 Thomas Green, Ironmaster, bought the manor and demesnes of Harborne. It itemised twelve farms, various houses, cottages and tenements within an area of 1460 acres 350 yards in a circumference of 6 miles within the County of Staffordshire. He rebuilt the manor house (now Bishop's Croft) in Georgian style and in 1796 built Harborne Hall, south east of St Peters, for his daughter and her husband George Simcox owner of a brass foundry in Livery Street. This house was radically altered in 1884 by the architects Martin and Chamberlain for Walter Chamberlain whose family wealth was based on the wood screw trade. Nearby Grove Farm was also transformed by John Henry Chamberlain into a Neo Gothic mansion for William Kendrick, Ironmaster, who was married to Walter Chamberlain's sister Mary and it is due to their generosity that the grounds and site of the house were donated to the city, in 1962, to become Grove Park.

Along the edge of Park Lane (now Harborne Park Road) large houses were built with ample grounds. The earliest and most spacious called 'The Park' was owned by Nailmaster, Theodore Price. Perhaps many of his suppliers lived nearby in the nailer's cottages of the village. In 1841 'Lea House' in Park Lane housed Edward Cresswell and William Heaton, Ironmasters, followed in 1871 by Walter Jones, Ironmaster, whose widow Ann Jones moved up the road to 'Field House' in 1881. When Jones left, Henry Arthur Wiggin moved in having left his family mansion in Metchley Lane where Henry Samuel Wiggin had bought a large estate in 1856. Both father and son refined and sold nickel from a factory near Icknield Port in Birmingham. The Wiggin family built and maintained six small houses off Margaret Road for the 'deserving poor'. (Now known as Wiggin Cottages).

Back at Harborne Hall in 1868 another father and son carried on a successful business designing and making ecclesiastical and artistic ironwork. Both were called Charles Hart. Charles junior organised the Harborne Volunteer Fire Brigade and was an active soldier in the Warwickshire Rifle Volunteers. In 1891 Harry Heaton a retired Ironmaster was in residence at the Hall.

Close to St Peters in 1871 Walter McCoy, engineer and Ironfounder, lived in Elmley Lodge followed in 1881 by Edward Steer, Master of Ironworks, and his family. A short distance up the road Thomas Griffiths lived in Stayplton House. He was a manufacturer of wrought holloware and employed 1500 workers, a fact he was proud enough to put in his census return.



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Harborne's Local History Groups

Those of us in the Harborne Society are all too often in the position of having to explain exactly what our Society is and what it does for, and within, the local community. Obviously I'm not about to reiterate our role in this article as, for once, I'm writing about what we are not! (But are often believed erroneously to be...)

And that is a local history group!

Anyone interested in Harborne cannot ignore the fascinating history of the area and we in the Society are as interested as other people in the past of our 'village' as well as its present and future. If you are interested in finding out more about the history of Harborne and meeting people to discuss your research and exchange information why not join one of the groups currently running in Harborne?

At present there are two local history groups in the area. Both meet monthly, one at the Library and the other at the home of one of its members. The Harborne Library group has been running for some years and has access to the excellent Don Wright Collection of photographs, articles and printed ephemera at its meetings. You can find out more about this group by looking at the entry for Harborne Library on the Council's Libraries web site or by ringing the library on 464 1596.

The other group - run by Mary Rose Salmon - grew out of a course run by the University of Birmingham and its members continue to meet and write articles, one of which I've included here for you to enjoy. It might perhaps entice you to join them or find out more about courses available at Birmingham University.

**If you are interested in this group
contact Mary Rose Salmon on
427 1708.**

Birmingham University Courses are advertised in Harborne Library. You may take away a leaflet with details.

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0121 429 2628
for more information

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ISSUES/HIGH STREET

The arrival last February of a Traffic Warden to operate full time in High Street and adjacent roads has been a great success, which is exactly why the Society campaigned so hard and long for the Traffic Warden. Initially the post was funded for only six months from the Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Supplementary Allocation for Harborne Ward. The Society has pressed for the funding to be extended to cover the full financial year as originally intended and we are hopeful that this will be approved.



Despite continuing representations by the Society the City Council is totally unwilling to implement any further elements of the Harborne Traffic Management Study which was adopted in 1997 with a commitment given to its phased implementation, subject to funding. For all intents and purposes the remaining Study proposals seem to have been abandoned but without actually telling the public. The Council's latest pronouncement in June said the "Study is still extant although no further works are programmed at this time". For example, Phases 3 and 4 of the Study included proposals and estimates for the installation of traffic signals at three junctions on the Outer Circle Route, namely [1] at Court Oak Road/Lordswood Road, [2] at Lordswood Road/War Lane/High Street/Harborne Park Road and [3] at Harborne Park Road/Vivian Road/St. Peter's Road. Modifications were also proposed at the existing signals at the High Street/Metchley Lane junction. Contrary to the findings of Traffic Engineers in 1997 the War Lane/Lordswood Road etc. scheme is not now considered feasible. Although the Outer Circle Route is being improved as part of the much vaunted Outer Circle Bus Showcase project the other traffic junctions are deemed to have low priority. Incredibly, the Council has intimated that the city centre to Harborne bus corridor is being considered for a future bus showcase!

Congestion in High Street is still an issue. The City Council steadfastly refuses to implement the Study proposals for road widening along the frontage to the shops roughly between the Pelican Crossing at the Clock Tower to 'Iceland' to enable parking bays to be constructed. It is glaringly obvious that this is necessary to resolve the specific problem but, rather than do this, the Council has been considering a number of minor changes to the existing traffic regulations. The Society was consulted and one of the Council's tentative thoughts was to prohibit parking along most of this very frontage, which would result in the loss of about eighteen parking spaces. Faced with the Council's total refusal to carry out road widening the Society, with the utmost reluctance, intimated its support for the idea as the congestion at this point simply cannot be allowed to continue. The Council's ideas are likely to be published in July for initial public consultation and, in the light of that consultation, firm proposals will be published for formal statutory consultation.

It is also hoped that after nearly four years the exact location for the Puffin Crossing, to be funded by 'Marks & Spencer' as part of the Planning Agreement for their foodstore, will have finally been settled by the time you read this. The date for implementation, however, still remains a mystery but it must be within the next twelve months.

Finally, one small, but welcome, improvement has been the provision of cycle stands on the island outside 'Safeway' and the forecourt areas outside 'W.H. Smith' and 'Cancer Research'.

The Society will not give up on pressing for implementation of the Traffic Management Study and perhaps the recent change in the political control of the City Council just might see a change in Council officers' attitude towards this matter.

Phil Stokes

'HOMEWORKS!'

Any casual glance at a street map of Harborne will immediately tell you that much of our 'village' evolved during the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. Row after row of terraces. Some small and some larger - but all much of an age. With that age goes a series of special delights and problems. Those of us lucky enough to own these Victorian properties must wonder from time to time why we chose houses from this period rather than a nice easily maintained semi built in the last fifty years!

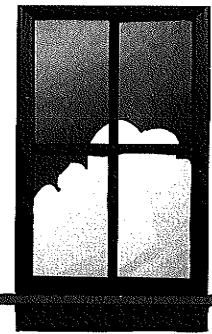
Probably the answer is that we chose to live in Harborne and that is what living in Harborne is often 'about'. In a sense we are caretaking architecture.

With this in mind we are publishing an occasional series of articles from a local 'sympathetic' builder. He believes strongly in appropriate care and renovation and has some interesting tips and advice, which we in the Society feel you might all find useful and thought provoking, even.

Windows are a topic dear to many of us. The curse of the UPVC double glazers and their endless unsolicited phone calls, is a blight upon our century almost before it has had a chance to begin!

My advice to you is just say NO! From personal experience I know that 'proper' craftsman made wooden windows - double glazed - cost almost exactly the same as the 'plastic alternative'! So read on....

Mary Worrall



Windows

PVC-u : don't get me started. Aagghh - I appear to have started

Most Victorian wooden windows were built with excellent quality slow-grown softwood, full of resin which is a natural weather-proofer and defence against rot. Leaky gutters and poor maintenance eventually lead to cracks in the paint skin, water gets trapped behind the skin, much like render on a wall, and then the rot sets in. If you are unfortunate enough to inherit such windows, where the sills have rotted and the rot has begun to climb up the sides of the sash boxes or casements, don't

panic. PVC man (it usually is a man) will come round and stick a spike into the cill and tell you that your windows are rotten. This is false. Only the bottom 10% is normally affected - which is what you would expect as water has a tendency to move with gravity. A skilled carpenter will strip out the rotten wood and splice in new timber. Be careful to specify redwood, as the fast-grown whitewoods are not sufficiently rich in resin, and too dry to do the job properly.

Where the (wet) rot has moved up the frame, usually in an arched shape (it travels up the end-grain of the timber most easily), it should be carefully stripped out with a sharp chisel back to good wood. An excellent 2-part resin product is available from Windowcare Systems. Unlike polyfillers, this material can be easily worked on vertical surfaces, bonds to the old and new timber, and remains imperceptibly flexible. Most woodfillers are too hard - as wood expands and contracts with the seasons, a crack appears, water gets in and the whole process starts again. The resin will move with the wood, yet it can be sanded, planed and painted just like the timber. I have saved countless Victorian windows this way otherwise destined for the skip.

Double-glazing can also be achieved without the use of plastics. PVC uses high levels of energy in production and is extremely toxic in both manufacture and disposal. Contrary to claims, they do require maintenance, the finish does decay, and often they cannot be repaired. On fixed timber frames, there is usually enough room to put a double-glazed panel into the existing window-frame. For sliding sash windows, a more bespoke solution is required; consider approaching specialist sash repair companies such as Ventrolla if you want to go down this route as there are complications with the counterweights. This company also installs an excellent draught-proofing system for Victorian sash windows if that is the main source of concern.

If you are bold enough to replace a plastic or poor-quality wooden window with a faithful reproduction of the original, bear in mind that there have been significant improvements in paint technology. Factory-finished windows have a better paint coverage than site-finished windows and microporous paints, which allow wood to breathe, could make peeling paint a thing of the past.

'Bodger' - Bodger is a building consultant specialising in the restoration of old buildings and the design of eco/green buildings.

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HARBORNE LIBRARY - Phil Stokes

Start, stop, start, stop! Last Autumn, when tenders were about to be sought, the scheme for the modernisation of Harborne Library was surprisingly delayed for a major re-think about the concept and design and how it fitted in with Library Services city-wide strategies and corporate image. In addition, a suggestion was made that the Children's Library should be transferred down stairs to the current Adult Library. That delayed the scheme by several months. The outcome of that review resulted in a decision in April that the scheme should be examined even further, this time with a view to seeing whether or not it is feasible to extend the upper floor into the area above 'shop' reception, potentially providing more space. This was one of the original suggestions made by the Society in January 2000 but was previously ruled out because of the technical problems arising from the significant difference between the floor levels of the 'shop' and the Library. This latest review could apparently give more options about where to locate the lift to the upper floor although in the Society's view the existing proposal to locate the lift more or less in the space occupied by the old entrance is the most sensible. The review is also looking at the possibility of an extension in the small yard at the rear of the Library. Currently it appears doubtful whether the budget provision would be sufficient to cover both of the latest additional possibilities.

At the time of writing there has been no intimation of when a decision on the final scheme is likely to be made although it is believed that a meeting to discuss the matter is scheduled for early July. Despite the request from the Society for public consultation and for the plans to be put on display no such assurance has been given ~ so much for local services being influenced by local people.



POST OFFICE CLOSURES - Phil Stokes

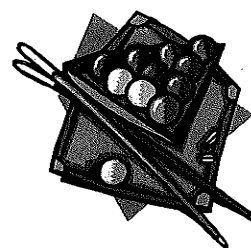
On 8th November last year the Prince's Corner Branch Post Office was closed despite fierce opposition from the local community. Less than four months later Post Office Ltd. announced plans to close a further 29 branch offices across the west/south of the city including those at Harborne Lane 'Stars' newsagents [opposite the 'Golden Cross'] and at Moorpool [The Circle], notwithstanding that Post Office Ltd. had proffered Moorpool as an alternative for Prince's Corner!

Post Office Ltd. published consultation documents that were virtually identical and utterly bereft of specific arguments directly pertinent to the two Branch Post Offices to justify the closures. It was simply a matter of money. As with Prince's Corner, the statements about the availability of "several other suitably located" alternative Post Offices were incorrect and demonstrated the fundamental lack of knowledge of the make-up of the two areas affected and in particular the extremely different nature of the communities served by each Post Office.

The Society objected vehemently and wrote challenging the inaccuracies in the documents and seeking detailed information relating to each Branch. Yet again the responses from Post Office Ltd. were long on waffle but woefully short of detail. The factual errors were glossed over and customer information could not be supplied as "specific figures relating to customer footfall are not available for individual branches", despite claiming to monitor all branches on an on-going basis.

As with all the other proposed closures across the south of the city, the proposals for Harborne justifiably brought immense opposition, not only from customers but also from residents greatly concerned about the serious 'knock on' consequences of the closures for the communities in the immediate vicinity of the two Branch Offices. Sadly, it was clear that in reality the consultation exercise had once again been a complete charade and Post Office Ltd., as fully expected, announced its decision on 14th June that the Moorpool and Harborne Lane Post Offices would close although at the time of writing the dates for actual closure are not known. It is emphasised that although the Moorpool Post Office is to close the shop will remain open but regrettably 'Stars' newsagents will close.

SECRET SNOOKER



Harborne Tennants Snooker Club must be one of Harborne's best kept secrets. Very few residents seem to know about it and its future is now threatened because of low membership.

Club officials are looking to attract new members to create greater financial stability and ensure the club's future.

Situated on the Moorpool estate (Moorpool Hall), the club offers a wonderfully peaceful setting to enjoy playing this compelling and skillful game. We know the first club championships took place in 1947 and the clubroom retains many of its original features.

New members and local historians are fascinated by the pulley system for cue chalks at each end of each of the club's three full size tables.

The club is non profit making and is run by the members for the benefit of the members. Membership and table fees are a fraction of the cost normally charged by commercially run snooker establishments.

Membership is open to all regardless of ability although the under 18s should be accompanied by an adult member. So whether you are an ex champion, a budding Ronnie O' Sullivan, or a complete novice you will be welcomed.

If you are interested in becoming a member or want more information, give Bob Boucher a ring on 427 4200.

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The Harborne Society Art Exhibition

As the 'Co-ordinator' of the Harborne Society Art Exhibition - as well as Editor of this Newsletter - I have been asked recently if we are 'doing the Exhibition' this year? In response to this enquiry my answer has been, "Read the Summer Newsletter thoroughly!"

So in reply to those of you who have already enquired - and those of you waiting to see if our usual instructions as to how to enter your work, dates of the Exhibition etc. are here - the answer is NO!

During last ten years or so it has been our practise to hold the Exhibition every other year. We now feel the time has come for a rethink on the advisability of this. Anyone who has run an exhibition themselves, or been involved in any way putting one together, will I'm sure, appreciate the enormous hard work and effort that goes into it. We feel that in view of this we are looking to take a longer break this time before we embark on another event. This means we will be back in full swing next year and really intend to make it a 'Super Show' we can all be proud of.

Art Exhibitions are currently rather the 'flavour of the moment' with various groups and churches offering the chance for artists to show and sell their work. This has not in any way discouraged us but we do feel that an extra year might give us all the time we need for new ideas, inspiration and indeed new pieces of work. Few of our exhibitors are able to work full time on their artwork and we hope next time to attract both very fresh new work from our 'regulars' and also some new entrants from the area.

So please don't feel we've abandoned you - a year can pass very quickly - and we look forward to seeing you all with armfuls of new pictures etc. next year.

Mary Worrall



Notice to Non-Members of The Harborne Society

This Newsletter comes to you as a free edition as we would like the whole community to know something of what we are doing and hope to achieve for Harborne.

The Harborne Society has been in existence for over forty years and is still committed to keeping Harborne a pleasant, safe and attractive place to live in - promoting useful developments, encouraging new initiatives and conserving our historic past.

Members receive two further newsletters at Christmas and in the Spring. There is also an exchange of information at our monthly meetings.

If you would like to support and encourage us then please consider joining The Harborne Society and letting us have your views.

Our members are our strength and we are a voice for you, attending meetings and monitoring local news and developments on your behalf.

Membership fees are modest - full details on the back page.

We look forward to welcoming you as a Society Member.

HERITAGE DAY GUIDED WALK

~ 12th SEPTEMBER

The Society will again be participating in the Heritage Open Days, co-ordinated by The Civic Trust, with another of Edward Chitham's extremely popular guided walks. Edward is devising a completely new walk largely centred on the routes of the Harborne Walkway and Harborne Nature Walk and will, as usual, embrace the local history of the whole area. The leisurely walk will take place on Sunday 12th September starting at 2 p.m. from the 'Green Man' public house and should last about two and a quarter hours. The walk will return to the starting point but please note that the pub car park is not for general use but for its customers. Part of the walk is over slightly rougher terrain than usual and could be muddy depending on the weather but it will take place whatever the weather, so be prepared for the worst! Everyone is welcome.



Phil Stokes

Toys in Your Cupboard?

Can anyone out there help one of our readers? Recently I had an enquiry about Noddy's House - and even in the library I don't get many of these! The lady who rang me needs a 'plan' to build the home of the little nodding man. (No jokes about Bob the Builder please.) She has a Chad Valley kit from the 1950's but it is without instructions. If anyone can point her in the right direction please get in touch with me on the email address for the Society or call in the library.

Remember if you ever have any old unwanted Chad Valley toys or memorabilia the library will be happy to add them to the Local History Collection.

Mary Worrall

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What a Picture!

One of our members, Graham Bradshaw, has contacted the Newsletter to ask us if we might be able to help him out with some Family History research.

We were so taken by this wonderful photograph we've put it in this Summer Newsletter so that you can all enjoy it.

Like so many old photographs it is a bit of a mystery.

Graham dates it as 1889 and understands that it was taken in a back garden near what is now the Sportsman Public House. He knows that the lady with the baby is Louisa Brown nee Walker, his grandmother, and thinks that the baby is his uncle. The bearded gentleman behind Louisa is his grandfather. He would like to know if any longstanding Harborne residents might recognise anyone else from their family photographs. Was the occasion a wedding or May Day perhaps? Everyone seems to be wearing a flower. He is sure that the group is from the Walker family so does this ring a bell with someone?

Graham is happy to be contacted if you think you might know something about his family group. His no. is 427 4511

METAL DETECTING OF HARBORNE CRICKET AND HOCKEY CLUB

The object of detecting the outfield pitches was primarily to remove the many scrap iron objects which the groundsman, Trevor Townsend, hit when he spiked the pass thus injuring his wrist! This objective was very successful and several protruding old posts from the barrage balloons of World War II were located and removed.



The historical artifacts located by metal detecting were a bonus, so to speak. Nothing of a high monetary value was found but the varied objects, I am sure, will be of interest to local Harborne people.

The actual pitches and footpath through the middle are known to be of medieval age. This was verified nicely by the finding of a solitary silver penny of Edward I (1300), Nothing else of this early period was found but it is a great dating tool.

Several 17th Century musket balls were found; someone must have had a shot at something or somebody all those years ago!

A small 'hawking bell' was found, an interesting thought that birds of prey flew over the field.

The Georgian period is much in evidence as quite a few worn cartwheel pennies (George HI 1797), buttons, several worn Rose Copper Company tokens (1817) from the Copper Works located adjacent to the field, were also found.

It is the Victorian period and beyond which represented the most activity. Church fetes were held on the fields during the late Victorian period (1880's) and large numbers of worn Victorian pennies and half-pennies were found.

It is hard to visualize horses walking around the fields, but in Victorian times this was the case as horse shoes, buckles and belt decorations have been found.

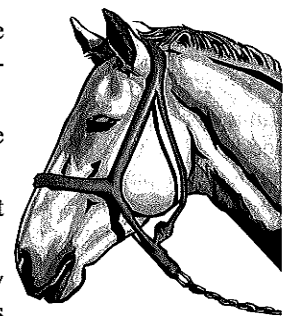
A Victorian lead seal off a sack of grass seed from Webbs & Son - Seed Suppliers to the Queen - might be of interest to cricketers.

The Edwardian period to the present day is represented by many pre-decimal copper coins. Very many people must have sat and played on the fields, certainly more so than in the present day. Some badges including a Scout, Head Boy and Lancaster Army badge have been found, broken toy cars and soldiers, studs from sports boots, an early sporting whistle (1920 -1930) and finally, modern currency, has also been found.

As mentioned before, evidence of the last War was found - some shrapnel (several bombs fell on Harborne apparently), a few bullets and the barrage balloon posts.

Two sheets of lead, approximately 6' x 3', were discovered and, as instructed, these were left untouched. It would not have been acceptable to have desecrated what may have been consecrated ground. The whole of the surrounding area was declared 'out of bounds' and not detected.

No gold, little silver, no rings, nothing of monetary value, but such interesting objects which show the history of the fields which I would be delighted to share with anyone who would like to know more.



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BOB BURTON - BOB'S OLD BOTTLES

The Harborne Society Website

A gestation period of 12 months the Harborne Society website is at last up and running! Perhaps 'up and walking' would be a better description at present because it is still in its infancy as far as content and sophistication are concerned. The site contains a historical perspective of the society together with contact details and the social calendar.

It is intended that the website will offer hyperlinks to the websites of the many local businesses which support the Harborne Society by advertising with us. This will be an exciting opportunity for us to help our local businesses reach a wider audience.

The site is set up to provide some basic information on 'The Harborne Society', its history and activities, however we will be delighted to receive ideas from readers of The Harborne Society Newsletter as to how we can further develop the website. In particular the whole Society welcomes the possibility of encouraging new members through this 21st Century medium!

Keep in touch at
www.theharbornesociety.org.uk
harbornesociety@hotmail.com

Vice-Chairman's Letter

Dear Members,

The AGM was well attended and after the business meeting there was some lively discussion amongst those present. Clearly most members are keen to help the Society in protecting the ambience of Harborne and are willing to assist in writing letters of objection to the City Council when the Harborne Society Technical Committee which scrutinises all planning applications finds bona fide grounds for objecting to a development. Individual letters from residents have more weight than a single letter from the Society - it's the number of letters that counts.

It was suggested that members sign an attendance book at all meetings so that newcomers can be identified and made especially welcome.

Of the three newsletters circulated annually by the Harborne Society this one, the Summer Newsletter, is delivered free of charge each year to all residents whether they are members of the Society or not. If you are new to the area then do consider joining the Society and learn about Harborne on the guided walk planned for Sunday 12th September which will explore the Harborne Walkway and the Harborne Nature Walk. You may not always be able to attend our meetings but our newsletters will keep you abreast of developments in the village and interesting articles by Harbonites will inform and entertain. Harborne is mentioned in the Domesday Book and there are many tales to tell!

As I write this we are enjoying a mini heat-wave. Long may it last! Enjoy the summer and if any of you can find a little time to help the Society please indicate on your membership renewal form next Easter.

Marcia Meyer, Vice-Chairman.

REPORT OF THE A.G.M.

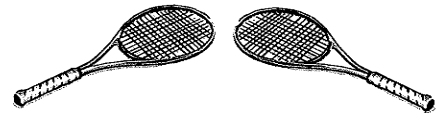
The 44th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 19th May, 2004, at Harborne Primary School with nearly fifty members in attendance.

Reports were presented by the Chairman, Technical Officer and Honorary Treasurer. As always, the reports gave a very clear indication of the continuing high level of activity undertaken by the Society on behalf of its members and the wider community. The major issues of the year were the ever increasing pressures for residential development on back land and in rear gardens, the serious threat to the whole of Prince's Corner including the possible loss of the Georgian properties and the continuing erosion of retail shopping in High Street. Membership had been maintained and consequently the Society remained in a very sound financial position.

Graham Parker and Leslie Blennerhassett retired from the Committee and appreciation was expressed for all their work. The remaining members of the Committee stood for re-election but very disappointingly there were no new nominations leaving three vacancies on the Committee. With over 700 members there really ought not be any difficulty in securing people willing to take an active role in the Society to continue the work of the last forty-four years. Please contact the Chairman if you are now willing to serve. All candidates were elected and the full list of Committee members and officers for 2004/2005 is on the back page of this Newsletter.

The formal meeting was followed by a Members' Forum at which the opportunity was taken to assess the operation of the Society and review a wide range of issues relating to membership, communication with members, the Newsletters, encouraging greater participation by members especially in relation to planning issues and making use of the expertise that undoubtedly exists within the membership. The comments and suggestions made will be considered by the Committee as the year progresses.

Phil Stokes



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Sentamu,
Bishop for Birmingham

Chairman

Mary Abbott,
'Victoria Lodge',
1 Victoria Road, B17 0AG.
427 1378

Vice-Chairman

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

Honorary Secretary

Phil Stokes,
4A Queen's Park Road, B32 2LA.
426 1289

Honorary Treasurer

Brenda Durbin,
28 Hart's Green Road, B17 9TY.
427 3170

Technical Officer/Chairman Technical Sub-Committee

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

Membership

Secretary/Chairman Social Sub-Committee

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

Newsletter Editor

Mary Worrall,
91 Wood Lane, B17 9AY.
426 6467

Committee Members

Michael Darby
427 1916
Raymond Le Gallais
427 6887
Roger Miles
426 2577
Thelma Osbourne
John Tobias
429 6130

THE HARBORNE SOCIETY Programme of Meetings 2004-2005

2004

- Wed 8th September** The Lure of the Lakes - The Magic of the Mountains
David Burton-Pye
- Sun 12th September** Heritage Day Guided Walk -
led by Edward Chitham and centered on Harborne
Walkway and Harborne Nature Walk Meet at
"The Green Man" public house at 2-00pm
- Sun 19th September** Picnic in Warley Woods Park
For details contact Jenny Buchan
- Tues 12th October** The Birmingham Whistle
Simon Topman
- Wed 10th November** The Birmingham Back to Backs
Simon Cleaver
- Tues 7th December** "Yes Minister" from the inside
John Tobias

2005

- Tues 1st February** Birmingham - A City in Music
John Smith
- Wed 9th March** The Finishing Touch of a Button
Tony Kelly
- Tues 5th April** The National Memorial Arboretum
Speaker to be confirmed
- Wed 18th May** **AGM**

All meetings begin at 7-30pm.

Tuesday meetings are held at Onneley House, Court Oak Road;
Wednesday meetings are held in The Conference Room,
Harborne Primary School, entrance in Wentworth Road.

In addition to the talks the meetings have a short business section so that
members can be kept informed of local news and committee activities and
also can raise issues of local concern.

We look to forward to seeing you.

Non-members are most welcome on payment of a fee of 50p.

THE HARBORNE SOCIETY

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