

# THE HARBORNE SOCIETY

Number  
Seventy Three  
Summer 2011



## NEWSLETTER

[www.theharbournesociety.org.uk](http://www.theharbournesociety.org.uk)

### **COUNTDOWN TO NEW SWIMMING POOL**

The countdown to the new swimming pool and fitness centre has well and truly started. The building contract is bang on target for completion and hand over to the City Council on the 28th November representing an immensely successful outcome for the Harborne Society's long and sustained campaign which started in May 2002.

The worst winter for a great many years with very heavy snow falls and sub-zero temperatures caused major problems ~ quite literally freezing up the two hydraulic cranes ~ yet it failed to knock the project off schedule for too long and just about everything has gone like clockwork. Harborne owes a great debt of thanks to Waites Construction and especially to their Project Manager, David Squires, for the way the contract has been managed with such minimal disruption to the traffic in Lordswood Road and for the great consideration shown to their immediate neighbours. Following demolition of the old building over 98% of the rubble, timber and metal was recycled with all the old brickwork crushed on site and reused as hard core. Solar heating is to be used to contribute towards heating the water for the pools and 'grey' [waste] water from the site is to be reused in the toilets. Water displaced from the pools will be cleaned and recycled. The 'living' roof has already been installed with sedum which retains water and attracts wildlife, bees and butterflies. Tree planting will take place later in the year principally on the adjoining land by the bus stops which will also be tidied up. The successful public open day on 20th May attracted much interest from residents including organised parties of children from local schools. School children were



also invited to take part in a picture competition based on fitness, swimming or the new centre.

The Council intends to call the new building the 'Harborne Leisure Centre' which seems misleading given that it won't have squash courts nor a sports hall for badminton, basketball, five-a-side football, tennis, netball, volleyball etc. Neither will the pool have slides or chutes or a wave machine. We never sought these things given the restricted site and from the outset campaigned only for a new pool and fitness centre which is exactly what we have got. We asked the Ward Committee to reconsider the name and they agreed to retain the existing name 'Harborne Pool and Fitness Centre'.

The Society had one major misgiving, namely responsibility for the future management and operation of the new facility. Despite the Council having 160 years' experience of operating public swimming pools the Council is to appoint a private sector operator who in turn will establish a non-profit making trust to oversee the management and operation of the facility. The operator is to be chosen after a tendering process due to end

in early August. The very detailed tender specification will ensure that the Council's policies and operational requirements are secured fully and the Society is now satisfied on this point. Following evaluation of the tender submissions the operator will be appointed in October and consequently details of the trust will not be known until later. The transfer to the private operator of the former Harborne pool staff and especially on what terms and conditions has also been a concern to the Society. We have been reassured by the knowledge that employees will transfer on terms and conditions which are in no way to their detriment. Additional staff will have to be recruited as the new larger facility will need significantly more than previously.

**Allowing for a period for the recruitment, familiarisation and training of staff with the new building following the handover we are looking forward with ever growing pride and anticipation to the official opening of the new facility very early in January next year and to the many years of pleasure it will give to us and future generations of Harbornites** Phil Stokes



## Technical Officer's Report - Ann Yorke

This has been, as always, an interesting and yet often a frustrating year for us. The Clock Tower is now up for sale. Perhaps with some judicious planning and selling strategy it may yet succeed in re-encompassing the functions which we have used and appreciated for a long time. It is sad to see this building in the heart of our community in such a dreadful state.

Thomas Attwood may yet come home. I did a sketch showing the relative height of the combined statue and plinth compared with nearby buildings and, yes, it does look large. Whether he needs Planning approval for his re-positioning and whether there will be opposition is quite another matter for speculation.

And then, just when the High Street was getting some much needed works carried out, we unfortunately lose not one but two Village Centre Managers. The High Street still needs help. I do acknowledge that some effort is being made to cover up the fact that there are so many empty premises – the Village Centre Partnership has fixed heavy duty transfers over the fronts of two empty shops, giving the impression of occupied use.

The devastating fire at Harborne Primary School has [literally] cast a dark cloud over the village but let us hope that some benefits will result from this opportunity to improve facilities in the new building. Meanwhile, some of the children are being taught in the historic environs of Harborne Hall.

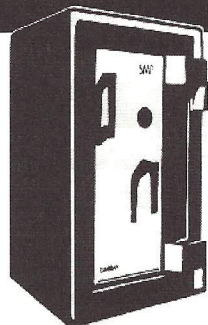
The Technical Sub-Committee has worked hard and has looked at 196 new planning applications for Harborne over the last 12 months making comments or suggestions in over 70 of them and in our view there have been

some sensible decisions made on refusals and approvals. The supply of paper copies of Planning Applications to the Library has now ceased despite the fact that it was so well used in Harborne. We have tried to persuade Planning to keep sending paper copies but they are adamant that the saving of a whole £45,000 a year is essential. How anyone can now read, and comment on, the planning applications in which they are interested if they do not possess a computer I do not know.

If you need to see a Planning Application but do not have a computer at home you may access Planning Online in Harborne Library. If you are not a member of the library already you will need to join to do so. You will need to show proof of name and address. Use of computers is free to members.

# F.J. DAWSON

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Some guidance on how to access the drawings on line is attached below but if you get confused let me know.

Then there was the matter of the blue lights around Kendal Tower. I thought that when the Planning Officer stated at the Ward Committee meeting that 'none of the residents in the Kendal Tower had objected' to the proposal to light up a large part of Harborne with bright blue lights I was going to have to go and lie down quietly in a darkened room. We locals had believed that the lights were to do with the landing of helicopters at the new QE. Silly us!!!

But, once again, to finish on a joyous note, we have a Community Notice Board!! And I have a key!! I am regularly contacted to put up notices and it is creating a great sense of community. Keep the Notices coming.

### BIRMINGHAM PLANNING APPLICATIONS ONLINE

*[To view application plans on your computer, you will need Adobe Reader software, which if you do not already have it can be downloaded from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html> ]*

To access Planning Online, type [www.birmingham.gov.uk/planningonline](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/planningonline) into your web browser and click enter.

Click on **Access Planning Online** (blue bar).

If you know the application number, click on **Application Number Search** on the left of the screen, then enter your number and click **search**,

or if you would like to see the last month's applications for Harborne, click on **Main Application Search**. In the Search Criteria box, choose **Edgbaston** from the **Constituency** drop down list, and Harborne from the **Ward** drop down list.

In **Date Search** further down the page, click the **Search Dates by Months** button, and leave the number as 1 (or alter it if you would like to see more than 1 month's applications).

Click **Search**. After a short while you will see a list of applications.

Clicking on an **Application Number** will then show information about that application.

Click on **View Related Documents** at the bottom of the page.

This is where you can see the various plans and site maps.

Having opened a plan, hover your mouse pointer towards the bottom of the screen, and a **grey bar** will appear, allowing you to zoom in or out (+/-), save, or print. Alternatively, you may right click on the plan (with your right mouse button), to give a greater menu choice, including rotating the plan.

Once you have zoomed in on a plan, to print that enlarged view, click **Print**, then **Current View** in Print Range, then **OK**.



## A Letter from The Chairman ~

Dear Harbornite,

Members of The Harborne Society receive newsletters at Christmas, Easter and the Summer and it is the summer edition that we seek to deliver to every home in Harborne (over 8,000) to keep residents abreast of what is happening in Harborne and also to inform them of the work of The Harborne Society.

Founded over 50 years ago the Society, an entirely voluntary body, aims to encourage the spirit of community and promote interest in the history and the future of Harborne. It is 120 years since the village was incorporated into Birmingham but Harborne, we hope, retains its individual character. The Society represents the interests of Harborne residents by supporting suitable conservation, opposing unsuitable development and putting forward proposals for the future of Harborne to the Local Authority, with whom over the years we have developed a good working relationship.

We hold monthly lecture meetings on a variety of topics, many with a local dimension such as "The Story of Birmingham's Romanies" and "Notable Victorian Houses in Harborne", but equally last year you could have learned the art of bee keeping! Do come along one evening as a guest. The programme is printed on the back of this newsletter.

The Annual Dinner is always well supported and the Heritage Walk in September is extremely popular. Edward Chitham, a mine of information about Harborne, leads informative and entertaining themed walks, be it lost farms of the area, Harborne schools, or pubs past and present.

For over 50 years lots of people have contributed to the success of The Harborne Society. If you are interested in its future then do come and join us. We need your voice.

Yours sincerely,  
**Marcia Meyer**

## VILLAGE CENTRE MANAGER

After the Society's public meeting in July 2005 to consider the plight of High Street one of our principal demands, namely the appointment of a Village Centre Manager, was achieved in February 2007 with the appointment of Bob Flack albeit on a fixed term contract ending 31st March, 2011. Bob subsequently moved into a coordinating role and was succeeded by Chris Gregory in June 2010. However, Chris's contract was with the Harborne Village Centre Partnership and not the City Council. Funding for the post has never been from the Council's mainstream budget but has relied on Government funding programmes which is also the case with nearly all of the 11 similar posts in suburbs across the city. Latterly the post was funded from the Working Neighbourhood Fund which ended on 31st March. The Society has consistently argued for the funding to be met directly from the Council's own budget as an indication of their commitment to the principle of town centre management but that has never happened.

The future funding of the Council's town centre management strategy had to be considered last year in the light of the Government's declared intention to reduce the funding to local authorities. Naturally there was uncertainty as to the retention of the posts after the 31st March, 2011, and very understandably some post holders sought alternative employment. It was not until late February that the Council announced that it had found funding to extend the contracts of the town centre managers until 31st October but unfortunately by then Chris Gregory had secured another post with a longer contract and he left on 31st March at the end of his contract.

The Society has been extremely pleased with all the efforts made by Bob Flack and Chris Gregory with such limited resources available to them and in the face of the *carping* criticism and hostility they were subjected to by an extremely small minority. The Council has recognised the value of town centre management to local centres but has yet to find sustainable long-term finance. In the meantime Harborne has been left without a Village Centre Manager. The Village Centre Partnership is endeavouring to find a way forward but at the time of writing the outcome is unknown.

**Phil Stokes**

## GROVE PARK & QUEEN'S PARK TREE PLANTING



Vice-Chairman Roger Miles  
plants a tree in Grove Park

When the City Council carried out a comprehensive 'clean up' of the trees in Queen's Park and Grove Park during 2010 the Society successfully requested the Harborne Ward Committee to commit itself to funding £3,000 a year for each park for three years for new tree planting. The first plantings using this funding took place in March with 32 trees being planted in both parks. At Grove Park members of the Society joined Birmingham Trees for Life and children from our local primary schools in assisting with the tree planting.

Ann Levitt Chartered Architect  
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# GROVE PARK COACH HOUSE

The Society has campaigned for the rebuilding of the Coach House in Grove Park since it was badly damaged by arsonists in 2006. It is not a Listed Building but it is located within the Harborne Old Village Conservation Area. It was hoped that the restored building would be used as a proper base with toilet facilities for the Park Warden [shared with Queen's Park] and a mess room for the grounds maintenance staff.

The Ward Committee supported the rebuilding of the Coach House but it took until late 2009 to identify funding and for a scheme to be drawn up. The scheme included the demolition of the long closed toilet block which had been vandalised and was an increasing source of antisocial behaviour. The toilet in the rebuilt Coach House will be available to children's groups using the park during the hours that the Park Keeper is on site. Planning delays were compounded by the need for structural surveys and subsequent intrusive surveys which disclosed the existence of blue asbestos which had to be removed. Negotiations with the contractor were needed to bring the scheme within the available budget and then, at a very late stage, further asbestos was identified. As a consequence, construction did not start until early March and will be completed by late July. It is also hoped in the near future to improve the surface of the adjoining car park area.

As mentioned above the building will be the base for the Park Keeper, rather than a Park Warden as previously. The Park Keeper is provided through the grounds maintenance contract and the duties are to carry out routine grounds maintenance, site safety checks and litter picking as per the agreed site programme but also to

interact with park users, provide a point of contact and regular onsite presence. Added value is provided by carrying out additional works such extra litter picking and feathering and suckering of trees.

So where does that leave Queen's Park which previously shared the Park Warden post? After representations by the Society it has been agreed that a Park Keeper will be on site on a broadly similar basis to the Park Keeper in Grove Park and hopefully with some cover at weekends as well. It is noted that currently both Park Keepers have to supplement the mobile ornamental planting gangs which means that they cannot be at the parks for a hundred per cent of their time.

The Society has long sought to have a full-time traditional Park Keepers at both parks with vandalism, graffiti and other abuses regrettably still an issue. The tree plantings referred to elsewhere in this Newsletter were within a few days followed by a number of new trees being damaged or tree stakes being stolen. It is imperative that some degree of oversight and protection is afforded to both parks but given last year's "restructuring" of the Parks Service [i.e. significant staff & budget cuts] and the Council's current financial position, it is reluctantly accepted that what is being put in place is the best that can be achieved currently.

Phil Stokes.

**If you would like to email  
The Harborne Society our  
address is  
harbornesociety@hotmail.com  
We read all our mail so feel  
free to contact us for informa-  
tion and enquiries.**

## Queen's Park Bowling Club Harborne

**Looking for a new hobby? Why not try bowling at Queen's Park, Court Oak Road, Harborne?**

The residents of Harborne and surrounding areas are still fortunate to have a parks bowling green which needs supporting. The park has six acres of green space which opened over a 100 years ago to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

Three new benches have been put in place for a better view of the action! The newly mowed green awaits us.

**We welcome both novice and experienced players, young, old, male and female. This is a hobby giving gentle exercise and companionship in the fresh air - if you are interested come along any Saturday afternoon between 2pm - 4.30pm. or contact Carol Mason 427 4548.**

## Harborne Rugby Club

Harborne RFC has just completed their most successful season to date. The 1st XV won promotion from Midlands 4 at a canter whilst also getting to the Midlands Final of the RFU Junior Vase. The leadership of Andy Healey saw the 2nd XV finish mid table in the GB Merit league which was a sizeable achievement after playing teams sometimes 2 leagues above them.

Harborne got a 3rd and 4th XV on the field which allowed the club to offer social rugby to members who play for fun.

Supported by local businesses like The Dilshad, Baldwin Events and The Walkabout, Harborne are always looking for new support both on and off the field and on the back of the Rugby World Cup 2011 they want to grow the club which is based at Harborne Cricket Club. They offer both Playing and Social Membership.

For more information contact [generalenquiries@harbornerugby.co](mailto:generalenquiries@harbornerugby.co) or call Nick on 07882 917 891

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## **THE CLOCK TOWER ~ THE CURRENT POSITION**

The Society's concerns in recent years about the deteriorating condition of the external fabric of The Clock Tower are well known as was our campaign to try and secure action by the City Council long before the serious events of March 2010 when a large and heavy finial fell from the roof on to the new seating area then under construction. Last year's Summer Newsletter gave a detailed account of the emergency action taken by the Council to protect the public and site users and of the problems and complex issues surrounding The Clock Tower and of the action immediately taken by the Society to pursue the issue.

Events moved on. The adult education courses ran to completion before the Council in early August decided on safety grounds to close the premises and relocate the new courses starting in September to alternative venues with the staff all being redeployed within the Adult Education Service. A structural survey of the external fabric of the whole building was completed and the findings were that substantial works were required to bring the fabric of the Listed Building up to standard. The Society was able to offer advice via a member with a lifetime's experience as a heritage architect.

The Council rightly had to consider all options as to possible uses of The Clock Tower but a pledge was given in September by Councillor Mike Whitby, Leader of the Council and Harborne Councillor, that the building would not be demolished. Following a city-wide strategic review of the Adult Education Service the Council in November announced its proposed way forward for dealing with the long-term future of the building. The Clock Tower would not reopen as an Adult Education Centre and the site would be put up for sale on a long-term lease with the condition that the new owner would be required to maintain the character of the Listed Building and to bring it up to standard. Weighting would be given to any bids which provided some form of community use. The Council initiated public consultation on this last aspect

between 17th December and the end of February and asked the public to respond bearing in mind that the new owner would obviously be likely to want to use part of the building for their own purposes.

The Society's stance on the future of The Clock Tower and response to the consultation was that our fundamental priorities, irrespective of ownership of the building, were ~

[1] The retention of The Clock Tower as Harborne's iconic High Street landmark and the carrying out of all works necessary to bring the Grade II Listed Building back up to standard.

[2] To secure an acceptable use or uses ~ public and/or private sector ~ for the building which will be of benefit to Harborne and which will secure the long-term future of the building.

[3] If at all possible to retain some element of community use of the building.

The Council's way forward if successful would secure the first priority. Given the assurances by the Council that the final decision on bids would not be based solely on price and that future use should if possible seek to suit the aspirations of local people, we are optimistic that the second priority will also be secured. As to possible community use it was noted that weighting would be given to bids which proffered some element of community use. There are various interpretations of what "community use" means. Certainly since the war, and possibly prior to that, The Clock Tower has never been available as a matter of course to the public at large for widespread general use by the local community in the way that a community centre or village hall would be. In the Society's view it was premature to list possible uses until it is known how much space, if any, might/will be available. As the major condition of purchase will be renovation of the building to Listed Building standards, undeniably at significant cost in addition to the cost of purchasing the lease, a commercial enterprise might well be reluctant to proffer any of the building for community use.

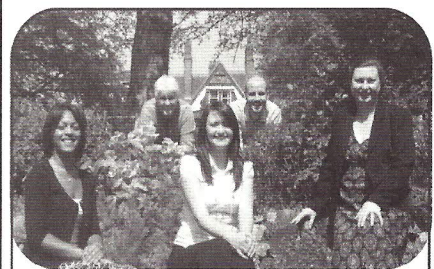
Marketing particulars were drawn up on the basis of a 125 year lease and in mid-April were sent to all parties on the Council's Property Services marketing database, advertisements were published in the 'Estates Gazette' and the 'Birmingham Post' and a 'For Sale' banner was erected on the building. The closing date for the submission of sealed bids was 24th June but in view of the level of interest received it has been extended to 22nd July. An intensive evaluation of the bids, including the scheme details and drawings, renovation proposals, business plan and funding arrangements of each bidder, will be undertaken. It will inevitably take some time before City Council officers can submit their findings and recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Member or Cabinet Committee for final decision.

**Phil Stokes**

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# A Tragedy for Harborne

**On Wednesday 27th April a devastating fire destroyed a large part of Harborne Primary School and saddened a great many people for whom the school has played an important part in their lives.**

The school started on the present site in 1902 as a Board school for boys only, with the girls and the infants being in the High Street in what is now called The Clock Tower. In 1912 the Infants (numbering 500) moved to the present site to join 500 boys while the girls stayed in the High Street. Another change took place in 1931 with the High Street becoming a Junior Mixed school and Station Road keeping the infants and becoming a Senior Mixed, later called a Secondary Modern.

Harborne Hill Secondary opened in 1952 and in 1957 the Secondary School at Station Road closed thus allowing the Juniors to move there in 1958. Until 2000 the Infants and Juniors were separate schools but were then amalgamated and became Harborne Primary School.

Many of our members have been recalling their memories of the school and we thought other members would like to share in them too so here are some from various decades.

**January 1931** - a 5 year old takes the first steps into the academic world - Harborne Infants School here I come. Rather overwhelming - a very austere white haired lady sitting at a huge desk to welcome a group of apprehensive children. Within minutes we were shepherded into the first classroom to be greeted by a (to me) rather frightening Reception class teacher. On reflection perhaps her bark was worse than her bite, but all a bit daunting as she was moved from Reception to "Top Class" just as I got there. However that did not alter the fact that I enjoyed every minute of my time there - enough to tell all my relatives that I was going to be a teacher when I grew up and would be at Harborne Infants. Did I really mean that? Fast forward to student days - yes back in Harborne - very different - war time teaching - painting on newspaper, but I never was an artist - and perhaps even more noticeable - very few dads around.

**1940's** - Talking of wartime teaching we know of one war time pupil who enjoyed playing Chinese Whispers in the air raid shelters and also remembers cushions hanging up under the blackboard for children to take into the shelters so that they would have something to sit on.

**1950's - 1951: Norma Mason.** My first

recollection of Infant School was being fascinated by the inkwells which clicked back and forth on the corner of the wooden desks and I was so proud to report to my Mom and Dad that I'd been given the very important job of 'Ink Monitor'. This involved checking the inkwells every morning to make sure they were full, but as I managed to get more ink over myself (and probably everyone else) I was quickly re-assigned to the duties of 'Milk Monitor'. Crates of milk (each bottle containing one-third of a pint) were delivered to the school daily and it was the job of the milk monitors to collect the right amount of bottles for each member of class. The milk could be either slightly 'off' if the weather was particularly warm, or frozen solid in winter with each bottle resembling a little stalagmite elevating its cap a good inch above the bottle, but we were made to drink it, whatever the condition.

There were 42 children in my class and we were known as 'The Victory Babies'. This apparently had something to do with the fact that all our Dads had come home from the war at the same time but, of course, none of us really understood why! Every Monday each child took one penny to school for 'School Fund' and something for the nature table which could be anything from a leaf to a whole branch, but Friday was the highlight of the week as the girls were allowed to take their prams and dolls to school and the boys whatever toy they wanted to play with.

Dancing round the Maypole was a big occasion and I can remember the coloured ribbons entwining themselves as we skipped round and then magically untwisting again when we danced the other way. Harvest Festival was another special event with all manner of vegetables being donated and we sang 'We plough the fields and scatter..' at the tops of our voices. My Dad, being a keen amateur photographer, came along to the first Harvest Festival to take photos of the rather splendid display and as he was setting up a loud voice echoed down the hall 'Is that little Geoffrey Wood?' It was my teacher Miss Kamuf who had recognised him straight away as being a little boy she had taught many years before. She never forgot a child and he still jumped to attention.

The school seemed so big then, but when I returned later with my own two boys (the third generation to attend from our family) I remember being utterly shocked at how small everything was. Being back brought such happy memories of those wonderful years and of the friendships made, some



of which happily still exist to this day.

**1960's** - My association with Harborne Primary began at the age of five, as it did for a great many other children in Harborne, but for me it only ended at the age of sixty-nine, after approximately thirty seven years as a "dinner-lady", or, as the lovely headmistress at the time, Miss Dunnet, said "Supervisory Assistant dear, Supervisory Assistant". I enjoyed every one of those years, looking after the children in the playground and supervising them during their lunchtimes in the canteen. Meal times could be quite a challenge as each new school year usually produced one or two children who had no intention of eating a morsel!

On really wet days we had the children in the Hall or, if it was convenient for the teachers, in their own classrooms. The latter was better to deal with as reading to a class of thirty was easier than trying to contain two hundred and fifty lively five to seven year olds. Over the years the children provided us with a great deal of amusement, not always intentionally, as they often divulged secrets which their parents would not have appreciated.

We were always included in the yearly school outings, the trips being to a variety of different destinations from London in 1977 to see the decorations for the Queen's Silver Jubilee to Twycross Zoo, Birdland at Bourton on the Water, Southport and many more.

My full time at Harborne Primary ended at my retirement which coincided with the amalgamation of the Infant and Junior schools in 2000. However, I was lucky enough to be called upon regularly during the next four years to fill in for absences, making my departure less abrupt.

I have so many memories of all the lovely children, even the rascals all had their redeeming features. "Happy Days"

**1970's** - The book cupboard in the infant school - that's the first thing I think of when asked about Harborne Primary. The colourful spines of the Rainbow book reading scheme lined up in order, culminating in the joy of the gold series (although to my eyes the silver spines were the prettier ones). And books again, sitting on the carpet in Mrs Alexander's office listening to her reading aloud. The



carpet luxurious compared with the wood block floor in the hall. We seemed to spend a lot of time on those wood blocks, what with assembly and nativity plays and PE. I suspect it wasn't just me who scratched at the dusty, flaky creosote between the wood blocks and picked at the varnish bubbles to relieve bored moments.

And then the day in the infant playground that we got our first glimpse of Mr Kenny, the new headmaster of the Junior school, who appeared giant-like on the roof to retrieve a football and in future years would prove to be just as giant-like but far less terrifying than in that initial glimpse.

**A mum** - I can remember school mornings sometimes being a bit fraught. This was not because my daughter did not want to go to school. On the contrary she absolutely loved it and never wanted any time off. The problem was that she had to look right and this involved having pants and socks that matched her outfit! This was before there was compulsory school uniform. Oh, it would have made my life so much easier.

I also remember helping with the costumes for various school productions. "Could you make a dog's costume?" I was asked one time. Somehow we came up with a plan and it materialised. Much

easier were striped waistcoats for penquins - except that there were eight of them. I did enjoy it all though and felt a real part of things.

**1990's** - I was a pupil at Station Road Infant School and High Street Junior School in the 1940s and 50s. Both my children attended the two schools (by now on the same site and called Harborne Infant and Harborne Junior Schools) in the 1970s and 1980s. Later I spent fourteen years as a member of the joint Governing Body and "retired" soon after the amalgamation of the two schools to form Harborne Primary School. It was a very challenging but also rewarding time. I saw the introduction of "SATS" firstly called Standard Assessment Tasks not Tests and the introduction of a compulsory school uniform. I would spend an afternoon each week helping in the classroom with artwork, sewing or anything that needed an extra pair of hands. This gave me the opportunity to see for myself the school in action and an appreciation of the professionalism of the staff.

**2000's** - I have many fond memories of Harborne Primary over the last ten years, having had four children there and having been on the Governing Body myself. Despite it being a large three form entry school there has always been an intima-

cy and a real sense of community.

All our children have loved their time there and when asked about their favourite memories all talked about the residentials - Hannah remembered the raft race at camp where they all jumped into the freezing cold river at the end and Lucy remembered having to dance with the boys at Bilberry!

Freddie remembered playing football in the "long area" every playtime and the time when he and Roshan won the Christmas fancy dress parade dressed as "Mother and Daughter"

He and Hannah will never forget the words of "American Pie" as Mr Shelton played it to the class every day!

Arthur is still at Harborne and was there at the fire - he said he wasn't scared at all and they were all watching the footballs which were stuck on the roof being set on fire one by one.

We just hope he'll return to Station Road before he leaves in 2012.

**At present he infants are still in their normal premises while the juniors are now accommodated in Harborne Hall. This situation could last for eighteen months as the damaged part will have to be rebuilt. We shall keep you informed**  
**Jenny Buchan**

### ***Harborne Primary Update - Mary Worrall***

On the 27th of April the Birmingham Fire Service were called to Harborne Primary School to put out the first school fire in twenty years during a school day. Most fires in schools start during holidays or after the school has shut. Fortunately no one was hurt in the fire and though most of the roof of the hall and adjoining classrooms of the Junior School was destroyed, the Infant School was untouched. This left the Junior School so damaged that alternative arrangements had to be found to accommodate the 360 Junior pupils. The Infants were able to return to that part of the school quite quickly.

**Now the 'smoke has cleared' I went to speak to the Head Teacher Mark Slater to ask him how things were progressing.** At the time of my interview in late June, the school had just received the results of the structural survey and also had been visited by English Heritage to see if they felt the school had 'special architectural or historic interest'. Mr Slater was happy to report that most of the metal structural elements and nearly all the brickwork had been declared sound. They are now engaged in drawing up plans of how rebuilding could be done in such a way that the pupils might benefit by increased space being made available - subject to the Local Authority approving costing of such provision. Mr Slater said that it had been very difficult to organise alternative classrooms for so many children at such short notice and we discussed the options that had been considered.

The Clock Tower had been inspected and found unsuitable and unsafe. The Martineau Centre had not enough classrooms available, was in constant use as a venue for conferences and courses and was difficult to make secure. As a temporary measure the top juniors (who were about to do SATS) had been allocated three classrooms there so that they could still sit the tests. The general opinion was that this could not be a long term arrangement, even for the top classes, due to the constant use of the building by adults. It is not considered safe to use a building with adults constantly present attending courses and conferences. In fact the year six pupils were due to move into Harborne Hall on the 27th of June - SATS completed - and alterations having been made at the Hall to provide extra classrooms.

One option discussed was siting Porta Cabin temporary classrooms in a number of locations around Harborne. Harborne Academy grounds being one location considered. This is an expensive option for the Local Authority to maintain for the period of time needed. Eventually Harborne Hall was chosen as the most cost effective

option, providing a secure temporary base within reasonable distance from the Infant School. The location offered the option of sharing facilities with St Peter's Infant School and St Peter's Church Hall plus the added bonus of pleasant grounds. It seems that this arrangement could last at least until April 2012 and possibly longer.

Mr Slater was very appreciative of the generosity of local businesses in helping replace lost and damaged equipment and of all the help offered by other schools and the local community. A special assembly had been held by the children to honour all the 'Local Heroes' who had helped so much. I am sure all our readership will join us in hoping that the Junior Department of Harborne Primary School will rise out of the ashes very soon.

The Harborne Society will endeavour to keep you all informed of the situation as it develops regarding the rebuild and refurbishment of this much loved and respected school. Mr Slater gave me a copy of the English Heritage review of the school building and its history which I shall be placing in the Local History Collection at Harborne Library. We have realised that there are few photographs, old or recent, of Harborne Primary School buildings in the Library Archives - so we would welcome any donations.



## RESIDENTS PARKING SCHEMES

[CONTROLLED PARKING ZONES]

The question of the possibility of introducing residents' parking schemes in roads in central Harborne, particularly within the vicinity of High Street, has been raised over the years and was certainly one of the issues consistently raised by residents as part of the major public consultation in 1996 on the Harborne Traffic Management Plan. This issue has been pursued by the Society on and off ever since.

A Working Group established by the Edgbaston Constituency Committee has been looking at parking and transportation problems across the Constituency including parking issues in residential roads in central Harborne. These roads largely comprise late 19th century terraced housing, often with relatively narrow frontages and virtually no provision for off-street parking. One possibility is the introduction of Controlled Parking Zones i.e. residents' only parking, but these are not necessarily the panacea that they might initially seem. There are several different types of scheme and they do not guarantee parking for every household even if they have only one car. Controlled Parking Zones are areas where special parking restrictions apply for specific hours of the day and days of the week. They are expensive to implement and parking permits reflecting those costs have to be purchased annually. One road cannot be considered in isolation as schemes normally have to cover a whole area otherwise parking problems are merely displaced to the adjoining roads. There are also other legitimate interests to be taken into account such as visitors and the businesses in Harborne that require parking both for their staff and their customers.

The first course of action, strongly supported by the Society which is represented on the Working Group, was to secure accurate data about parking in the roads concerned which could then be analysed with a view to considering whether a residents' parking scheme would be viable. With funding from the Ward Committee a detailed parking beat survey was carried out in June 2009 on two Tuesdays and two Saturdays on an hourly basis between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. in twenty five roads. Five other roads had already been surveyed previously. The volume of data was very substantial. Unfortunately there were major technical difficulties with the data analysis which delayed matters very considerably but it has eventually been completed.

The findings have been considered by the Council and the conclusions are that the evidence suggests that there is a parking problem at certain times and in certain areas in and around Harborne local centre which could be alleviated by the introduction of a controlled parking scheme. Further analysis of the available data and gathering of more information in order to work up a detailed proposal will be required but before that is done [subject to funding being available] it has been agreed to undertake an initial consultation with residents to ascertain the level of support for such a Controlled Parking Scheme in Harborne. Subject to funding being secured a leaflet is to be delivered to all households in the initial proposed scheme area setting out the issues, why it is believed that parking controls could be a solution, explaining in theory how controls could work and the process for taking a scheme forward. At least 60% of responses would need to be in favour of controlled parking. If that is the case there would in due course be further consultation on a detailed scheme.

**Phil Stokes**



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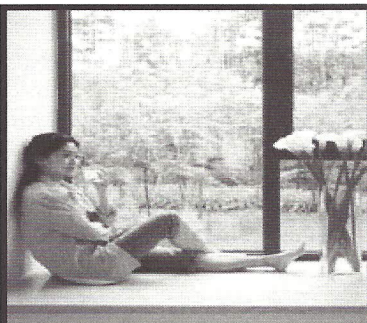
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## ENCOURAGING SIGNS OF REVIVAL ON HIGH STREET

Last year's Summer Newsletter noted the continuing loss of shops and other businesses from High Street but even then there were signs that new businesses were still prepared to invest in Harborne. Although five more businesses have closed since last summer, including 'Raag' furniture and furnishings and 'Nationwide' building society, the signs of an upturn have been very much more encouraging, especially so in the last few months. Since last July twelve new businesses have opened on High Street. 'Acotis' jewellers, "Feet Retreat" fish pedicures, 'Buyfeathers', 'Nook Interior Design', 'Fallen Angel' bakery/café, 'Global Care' charity shop, 'Vintage Beauty', 'Resonate' menswear and 'Moments' cards, gifts & children's wear are all new enterprises as is the reopening of the 'King's Arms' public house. 'Maison Mayci' bakery/café quickly superseded 'Philippe Du Bois' and 'MiMi's' ice cream parlour & cream teas has relocated from Gordon Road. The former 'Raag' shop is also occupied as a clearance store on a short-term basis. However, it is understood that one major shop is likely to close at the end of its lease. Several long vacant premises are back in use and the number of vacant premises is at its lowest for several years and at the time of writing two vacant units are being refitted and will open shortly. This is very welcome news and yet retail premises constitute only 57% of the businesses on High Street itself.

Is this improvement in our High Street a genuine and sustainable revival or a false dawn? Mary Portas, television's 'Queen of Shops', has been asked by the Government to lead a review of the future of the High Street aimed at halting the decline. Her 'Secret Shopper' series about customer service, or more appropriately the lack of it, was an eye opener and ought to have been made compulsory viewing for all retailers, large and small. As to her job for the Government she has commented that given the massive impact of internet shopping for all commodities, including food, High Streets can no longer be just about the independent shops. What shoppers want now might be very different from ten years ago as the decline readily shows that that is no longer working. The balance and diversity of the High Street has to be right - sentiments totally endorsed by the Society. I am sure Mary's findings due out in the autumn will pull no punches but will anybody take heed of what she says?

**Phil Stokes**

## THOMAS ATTWOOD STATUE

The Society's campaign to achieve our long cherished aim to secure the relocation to Harborne of the statue of Thomas Attwood has continued. This was first raised with the City Council way back in 1972. With the support of the Ward Committee and the Village Centre Partnership our case for Harborne was submitted in February 2009. It was proposed that the statue be in the high profile position at the corner of High Street and St. John's Road [near to 'Fallen Angel']. The statue is Grade II Listed and the consent to remove it from Sparkbrook into storage requires it to be back in the public domain within 3 years [2011] but that deadline could be extended if required.



The Council's initial response was that an 'in principle' decision would be made in 2009 but the final decision would be based on advice from a range of experts, consultation with key stakeholders and the availability of funding. The Society has continued to press the issue via the Ward Committee and it was revealed that Sandpits Parade/Newhall Hill was the Council's preferred location with the Head of Heritage Services dismissing our suggested location as being "a suburban street with a markedly 'domestic' feel to it". We say High Street is a busy place with a large number of residents, shoppers and visitors in the daytime and evenings who would be able to view and enjoy the statue and enhance its security unlike the statue's previous locations.

The Ward Committee, despite some reservation as to whether the monument might be too large for the site, reiterated its support for the Society's campaign. We have investigated all possible alternative sites in Harborne but none is as prominent or as accessible to the public as that advocated by the Society which is still felt to be the best currently available location. The relevant Cabinet Member has since confirmed that he accepts the principle of the statue being relocated to Harborne subject to the final location being agreed with Planning and the Head of Heritage Services and urging a target of two years for funds to be raised and the project completed.

This is a significant step forward. However, given the Council's current financial position, realistically the prospect of securing direct funding for the restoration and relocation of the statue is unlikely for several years. This is fully recognised and accepted by the Society and for this reason we have to put the matter on hold for the foreseeable future. We have been trying for thirty nine years so we can wait a little longer! However, in the meantime, the possibility of funds from local sources and trusts is an avenue that could be investigated by the Council. **Phil Stokes**

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## Moorpool Skittle Alley - 100 not out

One of Britain's most curious and unusual sporting venues - and undoubtedly one of Birmingham's best-kept architectural secrets - Moorpool Skittle Alley, in Harborne, has reached its centenary. One of only two surviving dual skittle alleys in Britain and the only surviving example of a round - or cambered - and flat - or level - alley combination, its exact opening date is uncertain, but is believed to have been in late January or early February 1911. Situated on the Moorpool Estate, an utterly charming and essentially intact example of 20th century social housing and the brainchild of John Sutton Nettlefold, a Quaker, industrialist and first chair of Birmingham Housing Committee, the alley is part of the community buildings erected by Birmingham architects Martin and Martin in 1910, the estate then being known as Harborne Tenants, with each household allowed a say in how it was managed.

Yet despite being located at The Circle, the epicentre of this still thriving community, the alley's presence is about as unobtrusive and obscure as is possible. Not visible from the public highway and with no signage to proclaim its existence, Moorpool Skittle Alley is unknown even to some of Harborne's residents and unvisited by many on the estate itself.

Birmingham's last surviving purpose built skittle alley, it has been home to the Moorpool Skittle Club since its formation in September 1913. Back then regional skittles games were enjoying a revival and the club joined the Birmingham and District Skittling League, whose members included the Chad Valley Skittle Club, thought to have been based at the nearby Duck Inn (now the White Swan) Harborne Road, and home to another dual alley. It's unclear whether one of these tracks was also round, locals who remember it are - perhaps surprisingly - divided (and the only available photographic evidence is inconclusive), but if one of the Duck's alleys was round that may help to explain why Moorpool's was constructed in such fashion. Or it may simply have been a cruel trick played on the skittlers of Moorpool by whoever designed their alley, installing an obstacle that thwarts players a century later.

Bowling a ball (or wood, as it is known) down the round alley and toppling a goodly proportion of the ten skittles positioned in a triangular formation at the end of its 49ft length can be devilishly difficult. Achieving the Round 30 - that is, knocking over all ten skittles three times in succession - is exceptionally hard, so much so that this feat has only been achieved by 11 people - and not at all for 16 years! Those who do so are honoured with their name on a plaque in the alley and two players at least appear to have had the knack - B.A. Fuggle (18 times club champion) chalked up 9 Round 30s between 1946 and 1965 with J. Stone (club champion 17 times) doing so on a staggering 19 occasions between 1961 and 1983! There was some achievement; as both novices and seasoned skittlers alike have discovered, the woods' have a nasty tendency to slide into the side gutter before reaching their target.

Despite their different characteristics, both of Moorpool's alleys share the same dimensions - 49ft long and 42" wide, made from a combination of maple and oak. The woods (made of *Lignum vitae*) come in three different sizes (5", 7" and 8.5" diameter, weighing 3lb, 8lbs and 14lbs respectively) with many thought to be original, though the skittles (which are nowadays manufactured in Asia) need replacing approximately every ten years. A larger ball scatters the skittles more effectively but even on the flat surface is prone to veer sideways as it traverses the alley, while the smallest ball runs faster, holds its line better but causes less damage. Until the 1960s, boys sitting at the end of the alleys would be paid to return the bowling balls and replace the skittles, a common practice, and from which it is believed derives the term 'earning pin money'.

Each player is allowed three woods (of any size) per end, on both flat and round alley (both of which are played several times during the course of a match) and the player with the highest cumulative score at the end of the contest wins. The season runs from October to April, though there's also a spring/summer competition, and the club's membership currently stands at around 25 (a Ladies section was formed only as recently as 2005). The club's oldest member, Ernest Connington, died recently aged 98, a sad loss for a club that is as much social as it is competitive (though this being a Quaker estate, there is no alcohol license and no bar).

Birmingham no longer has a skittles league and there are no opponents left for the Moorpool Skittles Club to play. Later this year the alley, which has barely changed since it opened (Mr Fuggle would recognise it in a thrice), is scheduled to undergo essential repair work. Meanwhile, discussions are ongoing which could see the Grade II listed building in which the alley stands handed over to a Trust Board, to be operated much as it was a century ago.

Like the woods on Moorpool's dual skittle alley, what goes around comes around.

**Steve Beauchampé**

## FUTURE OF FARMERS' MARKET SECURED

Last year's Summer Newsletter reported the possible threat to the continuation of the popular monthly Farmers' Market which is widely recognised as being a great success ever since it started in September 2006. The Society is extremely pleased to report that the future of the Farmers' Market has been secured.

Following discussions involving Sketts the market operator, the Village Centre Manager, the Society and the Managing Agent for the Harborne Retailers' Management Company Limited [HMRC] it was subsequently agreed by the Company that the Farmers' Market would be allowed to continue using the Company's part of the forecourt provided Sketts entered into a formal agreement on certain conditions including payment of a fee. A new 2 year agreement was signed with effect from 1st January this year for the monthly market to be held on the forecourt. This is a great outcome for all parties but most of all for the residents of Harborne. The Society expresses its appreciation to HMRC for its action and also for its continuing efforts to maintain the forecourt area to a high standard.

**Phil Stokes**

## FARMERS' MARKET

9a.m. to 2p.m.

13th August

10th September

8th October

12th November

10th December

## HERITAGE DAY GUIDED WALK ~ SUNDAY 11th SEPTEMBER

Once again the Society will be participating in the national Heritage Open Days with another of Edward Chitham's very popular guided walks.

This year Edward's walk will concentrate solely on Harborne Old Village Conservation Area. The leisurely walk will take place on Sunday 11th September starting at 2 p.m. from St. Peter's Church car park. The distance walked will be somewhat shorter than usual but nevertheless the walk is guaranteed to be as interesting and as informative as always. The walk will also finish at St. Peter's car park. The event will take place whatever the weather so be prepared for the worst!



## REPORT OF THE A.G.M.

The 51st Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 18th May, 2011, with fifty members in attendance despite the late change in venue. After last year's 50th anniversary celebrations the meeting returned to its normal pattern.

Reports from the Chairman, Technical Officer and Honorary Treasurer again demonstrated the high level of activity during the year on behalf of Society members and the wider local community. For the last few years the overriding issue had been the Society's long-standing and now hugely successful campaign for the redevelopment of the Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre. However, last year the whole issue of the future of The Clock Tower became the Society's top priority but that was not at the expense of other issues in particular the continuation of our attempt to secure the relocation of the Thomas Attwood statue to Harborne, the restoration of the coach house at Grove Park, our continuing concerns about the decline of retailing on High Street and the never ending planning issues with the lack of enforcement action by the Council being a particular issue. Membership had fallen slightly but the Society continued to be in a sound financial position despite the increasing administration costs. Financial support had again been given towards the High Street Christmas lights.

All members of last year's Committee sought re-election and were duly appointed. This leaves two vacancies. The full list of Committee members and officers for 2011/2012 is on the back of this Newsletter. Mary Abbott was elected President of the Society in recognition of her exceptional service to the Society and a presentation was made to her on behalf of the membership to mark the event.

The formalities were quickly concluded and were followed by a light-hearted display of photographs on the topic of 'Curious Harborne' being a mixture of photographs of odd or interesting curiosities and locations around Harborne several of which had not been spotted by any of the members attending.

Phil Stokes

## MARY ABBOTT ELECTED PRESIDENT!



In recognition of Mary Abbott's quite exceptional service to the Society over fifty years Mary was unanimously elected President of the Society at the Annual General Meeting in May. Mary has held several offices of the Society most notably serving a total of 28 years as Chairman and now she becomes only the second person to be made President.

Mary was presented with a silver bracelet and a bouquet of flowers to mark the occasion.

Mary expressed her delight at being elected as President and said that when she attended her first ever Harborne Society Meeting in May 1960 she never imagined that she would be hold this position some fifty plus years later. However, she did say that it was always her intention to live in Harborne for as long as possible as she had never wanted to live anywhere else. Harborne is home.

### THANKS PETER

In May Councillor Peter Hollingworth stood down as a councillor for Harborne after an amazing 51 years' service to our community. Peter was first elected on 12th May, 1960, just a few days after the founding of the Society on 4th May, and ever since he has been a true friend of the Society. In appreciation Peter has been made an Honorary Member of the Society.

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Mary Abbott

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

### Vice-Chairman

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

### Honorary Secretary

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

### Honorary Treasurer

Brenda Durbin,  
28 Harts Green Road, B17 9TY.  
427 3170

### Membership Secretary

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

### Social Secretary

Donald Bird,  
126 Gillhurst Road, B17 8PH.  
429 3588

### Technical Officer/Chairman

#### Technical Sub-Committee

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

### Publications Officer/Chairman

#### Publications Sub-Committee

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

### Committee Members

Mary Abbott	427 1378
Michael Darby	427 1916
Raymond Le Gallais	427 6887
Thelma Osbourne	
Lindsay Smith	426 5193

## THE HARBORNE SOCIETY Programme of Meetings 2011-2012

**Sunday 11th September 2011** Guided Walk - Old Harborne Conservation Area with Edward Chitham - Meet at St Peter's Church car park at 2 p.m.

**Wednesday 14th September 2011** **Annette Dickers J. P.** My Experience as Chairman of the Local Magistrates' Bench

**Tuesday 11th October 2011** **Joe Dyke** - Coins Through the Ages (including free valuations)

**Wednesday 9th November 2011** **Ken Reid** - Heritage of Highland and Iona Scottish Silver

**Tuesday 6th December** **Robert Stanyard**, Manager of the Pen Room Museum - The Birmingham Pen Trade

**Tuesday 7th February 2012** **Dan Dainty**- The Worcester Porcelain Lily Pattern

**Wednesday 7th March 2012** **Richard Simpson** - Four Birmingham Winners of the Victoria Cross

**Tuesday 3rd April 2012** **Caroline Hutton** - The Martineau Gardens, Edgbaston

**Wednesday 16th May 2012** **Annual General Meeting**

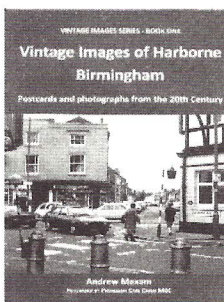
All meetings begin at 7. 30 p.m.

Tuesday meetings are held at **Onneley House, Court Oak Road.**

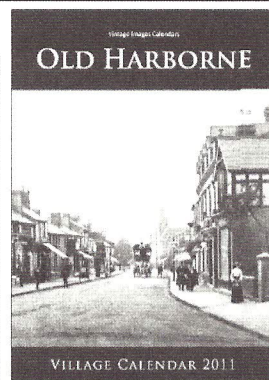
Wednesday meetings are held in the smaller hall at **St. Mary's Parish Centre, Vivian Road.** The entrance is the second door on the right along the drive to the car park. **Non members most welcome - entrance fee of 50p.**

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 can also raise issues of local concern.

## OLD HARBORNE VILLAGE CALENDAR 2012



Published September 2011, with 12 different views, price £5.99. On sale at: Harborne Library, Osbornes Stationers and Moor Pool News. See website for further details inc. how to order & other areas covered. Also, **Vintage Images of Harborne** book £5.99, 80 old views. **Pre -1960 old picture postcards bought and sold - good prices paid.** Maxam Publishing. 0121-429 6369



## WARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The dates and venues for meetings of the Harborne Ward Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year are as follows ~ 26th September at Moorpool Hall, 12th December at Lordswood Girl's School and 19th March at Moorpool Hall at 7 p.m..

## Delivering the Newsletter

We are very grateful to the people who deliver our Newsletter and are always in need of an extra pair of hands to spread the load even more. If you feel you could help and have a little free time to spare please contact **Jenny Buchan 426 4854**

## THE HARBORNE SOCIETY

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