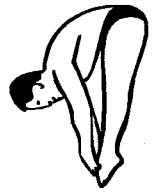


# THE HARBORNE SOCIETY

Number Sixty Seven  
Summer 2009

## NEWSLETTER



The **HARBORNE SOCIETY'S** sustained seven year campaign to secure the redevelopment of the swimming pool and fitness centre on the existing site in Lordswood Road is seemingly heading for success! All being well contractors will be on site by the end of January 2010.

Last Summer's Newsletter reported the position following the meeting of the Ward Committee in May 2008 when the recommendations of the consultants, Capita Symonds, were accepted, namely that the existing site was the most appropriate location in Harborne for the new pool and fitness centre. This was the major leap forward that we had been fighting for and a real turning point.

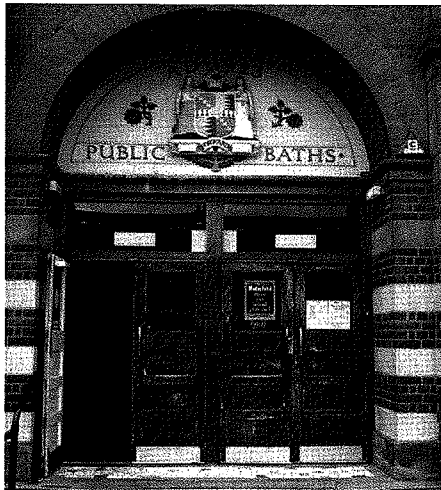
It seemed an eternity for the project to work its way through the Council's procedures as it became caught up in a major review of sporting facilities culminating in a strategy report on swimming pool provision to the Council Cabinet on 15th December last. To our absolute joy the Cabinet gave approval in principle to the redevelopment of Harborne Pool on the existing site [together with schemes for a 50 metre Olympic standard pool complex close to the National Indoor Arena and the refurbishment of Stechford Cascades]. That approval authorised funding to develop the scheme to the detailed planning application stage along with work on securing the full £12m. funding as well as on the detailed design and ground condition, environmental and transport assessments. These were to be presented to the Cabinet for approval prior to the planning application being submitted. The Society immediately requested a report to the Ward Committee in January as to whether the timetable for the scheme was to be revised. There was an immediate hiccup when Opposition Group members of the relevant Scrutiny Committee sought to have the Cabinet decision "called in" for review but thankfully that was speedily dismissed.

However, to our utter astonishment the report to the January Ward Committee stated that Harborne Pool would not be a stand alone scheme but would have to "align" with the other two approved schemes and "be developed in parallel" and, furthermore, the required reports would not be presented to the Cabinet until September, some nine months away. None of this had been in the

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

## NEW SWIMMING POOL

### UNDER STARTER'S ORDERS - AGAIN!



Cabinet report of 15th December and no satisfactory explanation was given for the "alignment". The Cabinet's decision called for detailed reports on each separate project and did not tie them all together nor did it specify September. The "corporate centre" had intervened yet again causing more delay. Were we right to be sceptical? Was there some hidden motive?

The Ward Committee was informed that the several months delay would be made up so that the original target dates for the contractor going on site [25th January 2010] and the hand over of the new facility [19th December 2011] would still be achieved. Quite how was not explained. As the design and planning of Harborne Pool was miles ahead of the other projects we pressed very strongly for the planning application to be submitted as soon as possible after the 15th June date previously indicated whilst work continued on the various studies for the report to the Cabinet in September. We are pleased to say that common sense prevailed and that by the time you are reading this the planning application should have been, or is just about, to be lodged. By chance we discovered that the project is to be submitted to the Cabinet at the end of July but we have been assured that this is simply to confirm that the planning application can be submitted in advance of the detailed considerations in September. A further "final" approval by the Cabinet in December has mysteriously also crept into the timetable.

Details of the latest design presented to the Ward Committee on 11th May should form the basis of the planning application.

These designs varied from those presented in May 2008 to the extent that the 6 lane, 25 metre pool had been turned round so that it went east to west across the rear of the new building [rather than from north to south] and the learner pool became a separate entity. All the facilities previously indicated would be provided.

The Society has always pressed for a community pool and fitness centre and has never sought a grandiose facility although we have always recognised that by far the greatest income is derived from the "dry" rather than the "wet" facilities and that is reflected in the enhanced fitness facilities for adults and juniors. The planning application process includes further public consultation. Incidentally, many will be pleased to know that, as requested by the Society from the outset, the new building will incorporate the coat of arms etc. from the existing entrance plus the opening plaque from 1923 and the Civic Society's Blue Plaque commemorating W. H. Auden.

The Society is committed to supporting public service leisure facilities, maintained, managed and operated **by the City Council**. Such major facilities can never be run at a profit and are rightly subsidised by the council tax payer. The move to free swimming for children and more recently for the over 60s will clearly impact on income.

**The Harborne Society reiterates its appreciation of the momentous decision by the Council to redevelop Harborne Pool which will result in the most exciting and significant development in Harborne in the last fifty years and fulfil the local community's hopes and aspirations. Given the political will already demonstrated for this project are we right to be confident that the Cabinet's approval in September will be forthcoming or will there be another unwelcome sting in the tail from the officers and consultants as has happened before?**

**Stop Press** - Start on site now slipped from 25th January to unspecified date in February 2010.

**Phil Stokes**

# TECHNICAL OFFICER'S REPORT FOR JUNE 2008- MAY 2009

This is taken from the report delivered by Ann Yorke, Technical Officer for the Society's 2009 A.G.M. summarising the activities and concerns of the Technical Sub-Committee since last year's A.G.M.

**Things have been happening in Harborne. Many of you would say that 'things' are always happening in Harborne, to which I will reply 'but these are unexpected things'. Nay, these are exciting and unexpected things. In fact it is a bit like waiting to see if you have won the lottery: most of the time you are disappointed, then you go and win a tenner which gives you the stupid idea that you will do it again next week.**

However we are more sensible and, having won so many tenners over the years, when we finally heard, on 23 February, that, after twenty years campaigning, Greenfield Road Conservation Area, where I live, had been ratified we were sensible enough to know that it was a fairy tale. Almost exactly three months later, I received two innocuous pieces of paper which, amongst other exciting information, casually informed me that I now had a 'relevant location' attached to my dwelling house. We are also now the proud owners of a Schedule 1, Classes A - H and a Schedule 2 Classes A - C and if anyone can tell me why they cannot be compressed into one statement I would be interested to hear. Also the fact that there is little left to conserve does tend to take a lot of the excitement away, but we must be grateful for small mercies I suppose.

**So there is the first 'exciting and unexpected' thing.**

The next is the news that South Street Methodist Church, which, to be fair, has been more of a hobbyhorse of mine, as I am a neighbour, rather than of the Society, has been sold. I like to think that my Saturday morning chore of clearing out the gutters finalised the sale. As you know someone, in their wisdom, got the Church Listed after plans had been drawn up for the re-use of the Church as a community centre. The Conservation Officer then became adamant that the hall to the rear could not be demolished. This decision of course precluded any possibility of the site being developed as there would be no parking on the site. A funny story is the fact that we Greenfield Road residents heard a rumour that Metro GP, who were inter-

ested in buying the site, wanted to buy 5 metres off the ends of our five gardens which backed on to the rear part of the site to form an enlarged car park. However we have heard nothing since we all agreed enthusiastically to sell providing we got £25,000 per metre. Since then we have done serious research to find out if the Listing Notice includes the rear hall. If it is not then it can be demolished which makes the whole site viable for development.

**Another 'exciting and unexpected' thing.**

**And other matters are also going on:**

We are waiting now for the Enforcement Officer to give us a shock and enforce something. We have stopped caring what he enforces but for him to do so would be wonderful. We have, and are still, pressing hard on the heels of Planning for some answers to the question of exactly what an Article 4 [2] means in terms of excruciatingly awful extensions being constructed despite both Planning and Appeal refusals. We have put the whole matter into the hands of Councillor Mike Whitby and are waiting with baited breath to see if the Enforcement Officer or the Conservation Officer or the Planning Officer or any officer at all is going to come to the Ward Committee meeting to explain themselves and show us how they earn the huge salaries which we pay them.

I am now a member of Planning Aid and have put all of the relevant information into the Library - matters such as how to obtain professional assistance on planning objections or how to set about putting in an application - actually I have put the information into the Library twice as some idiot decided to remove the whole package. If it goes missing again I will not replace it.

We had been chasing a revised list of Harborne Tree Preservation Order's for about nine months when, to my joy and amazement and further to eight e-mails to Planning, I received an A4 map with some green areas shown on it. No list of addresses, no designations of trees but, my goodness, someone in Planning had sent some information out so that presumably they could fill in a form to say that they had 'dealt satisfactorily with the public.'

I am also on the Birmingham City Council Householder Planning Forum and Building Control Customer Panel - do you remember the days when we were 'customers' of large stores and 'passengers' on British Rail? - but I digress - so I am normally fairly au fait with new leg-



islation, however, I was fairly gobs-macked the other week when we were informed, via a conversation on another subject entirely, that from August there will no longer be any paper copies of planning applications available for the general public to view at the libraries. Just how many of you can read drawings on a screen without a perceptible scale and some so small that there is no way you can see what is going on? We are following the matter up.

Whilst on the subject of Planning I think that I have explained that Householder Permitted Development rules and regulations have changed. Put simply: householders had the right to construct certain cubic areas onto their houses, providing that they did not breach the forty five degree rule, without planning approval. This has been changed basically into being able to put on rear extensions of certain depths and heights. To complicate matters, different Planning Authorities interpret the rules in different ways so we are constantly having to contact Planning for enlightenment, which removes one of the very reasons for the changes in legislation - to ease the burden of Planning Officers in having to talk to lots of members of the public. Interestingly enough the numbers of planning applications did drop in the early days but are picking up now as agents find that they cannot bend the rules as easily as they thought - it doesn't stop unscrupulous builders however, but then the old rules didn't either. So no change there.

We were delighted when the crane was finally removed from over the Greenfield Road/High Street site - I honestly thought that there was a body hanging on the end of the arm - and that the project is now going ahead albeit with a revised planning application for town houses in lieu of apartments on the Greenfield Road façade.

**It has been an interesting year, we seem to be getting somewhere with our attempts to improve the Village.**

**We can assure you that we will keep on trying.**

**Ann Yorke**

## THOMAS ATTWOOD STATUE

Last Summer's Newsletter carried an article relaunching the Society's long campaign to secure the relocation of the statue of Thomas Attwood to Harborne once it has been restored. This raised a lot of interest and support and we have continued to press our case.



Last September we were astonished to learn that the then Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture had indicated his preference for the statue to be located at some little known area recently named Attwood Green which did not have one iota of connection with Thomas Attwood. This, mark you, despite his assurance that the chosen location would have "provenance rather than just convenience". Thankfully, Councillor Mike Whitby, Leader of the Council and Harborne Councillor, quickly put paid to that bizarre notion! However, at his request, the Society willingly undertook to make a formal submission to the City Council stating the case for the statue to be brought home to Harborne.

Subsequently, the Harborne Village Centre Partnership endorsed its support for the Society's campaign by agreeing to the statue being located, if at all possible, at the very high profile position at the corner of High Street and St. John's Road as part of the Partnership's intended scheme for the enhancement of the forecourt along the 'Iceland' frontage, which is owned by the Council. This enabled the Society to finalise our case and to submit it to the Council at the end of February along with letters of support from the Partnership and local councillors.

That is where the matter stands. Originally it was indicated that a decision would be taken early in the new year but that has now slipped to an "in principle" decision later in the year. The statue is currently at the conservators for safekeeping pending a decision and securing funding for its restoration, estimated at £70,000. The statue is Grade II listed and consequently English Heritage will have to approve the new location.

Harborne's case is overwhelming ~ it is the logical and rightful location. We fervently hope that Thomas Attwood's very long association with Harborne will prevail despite a prominent local historian being intent on the statue being in the Jewellery Quarter which already has more than its share of the city's heritage to be going on with.

**Phil Stokes**

## Letter from The Chairman



*What does Harborne mean to you? Is it a good place to live and are you happy living here?*

*My answer to these questions is 'yes' it is a good place to live and I am happy living here.*

*I have been a member of The Harborne Society for nearly fifty years and I should not like to move away. I have made many friends during this time, a lot of them through the Society. When I walk down the High Street I am constantly meeting people I know and I enjoy this contact and chance to chat. My daughter-in-law refuses to walk with me as my progress is constantly delayed. A friend asked me recently if I was ever lonely living on my own.. My answer was 'No'. I have too much to occupy my time here and too many people to see.*

*One of the Society's aims is to bring people together and, to this end, we have monthly meetings with a speaker and we tell you what has been happening in Harborne and you can tell us your concerns. We have a Heritage Day Walk, an Annual Dinner, an occasional outing and we produce three Newsletters per year, the summer one being distributed throughout Harborne. In this way we aim to give you a chance to join in and to meet people.*

*Our other aim is to represent the interests of our village by encouraging suitable conservation, opposing unsuitable development and putting forward proposals for the future of Harborne to the Local Authority. When you read this Newsletter you will realise how much has been done by the committee during the last year and what has been achieved - for example the agreement to building the new swimming pool on the present site. We should appreciate more help from members in this work.*

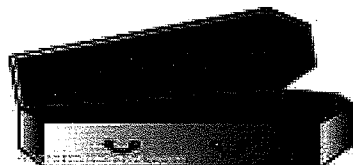
*Harborne is our inheritance and our responsibility. Not only should we maintain but also improve it. We should all have a high level of concern for our environment. Looking after a village such as ours is a continual process. We still know Harborne as 'the village' and it would be very sad if we lost this name. Harborne is a friendly place to live - long may it remain so.*

**Mary P Abbott Chairman**

## Birmingham Conservation Trust

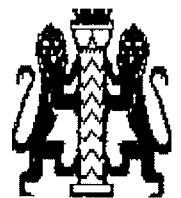
As you know I represent the Harborne Society on the Birmingham Conservation Trust and our next project is Newmans Coffin Fittings Factory. Those of you who went on the Society's tour of the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter will know what I mean when I say that this is going to be another time warp museum - but of a very different product. Newmans made all of the coffin furniture for both Churchill and the Princess of Wales coffins, they were well known world wide but it was Heath and Safety which closed them one day in 1999. It was truly eerie when we first went in there - work lay where it had been put down, even the kettle was still on the stove. We hope to raise funding and get started in the New Year.

**Ann Yorke**



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\*\*\*\*\*  
CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN  
REALISTIC FEES THEREAFTER

\*\*\*\*\*

A local Harborne Architect



# QUEEN'S PARK and GROVE PARK IMPROVEMENTS



Since last year's Summer Newsletter the new children's play areas at both **Queen's and Grove Parks** were completed and came into use in autumn. The very well equipped play areas have been extremely popular but it is sad to report that the local morons have seen fit to spoil them both with graffiti, within three days of opening in the case of Queen's Park. The surfaces of the slides have also been damaged. The graffiti has been removed but the attacks continue, indeed Queen's Park has seen large areas of the paths, the litter bins, dog bins, benches and even the lodge vandalised in this way. At least we know that two people were arrested in connection with this matter. The area in Queen's Park damaged by use as the contractor's compound has finally been repaired and seeded.

There is still no positive news on the Society's attempts to secure modifications to the "improvements" carried out in **Queen's Park** early in 2007 despite the undertakings given at a site meeting held on **7th June, 2007**. At that meeting officers expressed their willingness to consider the suggestions made and to draw up estimates but very disappointingly detailed proposals have yet to appear. However, I have recently been assured that the issues have not been forgotten and that progress can be expected. Any modifications would be funded using monies ["Section 106"] provided by developers as part of Planning Agreements for several residential developments in Harborne in recent years which were available at that time. The further footpath resurfacing works, also long promised and again using "Section 106" monies, have still not materialised but we remain optimistic. We hope that this funding earmarked specifically for Queen's Park has not been siphoned off to other projects as other Harborne Ward "Section 106" monies have been. Last



**Planting Trees in Queen's Park  
Roger Cobley and Phil Stokes.**

year's bids for capital funding for the provision of multi use games areas in both parks were unsuccessful but officers are continuing to try and secure funding.

The drainage problems at **Queen's Park** remain despite the installation last autumn of a type of land drain across the main park area and surface water is still a fairly constant problem. However, the first steps towards the proposed "water meadow" conservation area finally got under way in March with the planting of 12 rare black birch trees and 3 more common willow trees as part of the 'Birmingham Trees for Life' scheme.

In recent years **Grove Park** has also shown signs of increased surface water flooding and this has been more evident following the de-silting and restoration of the pool in March last year and the opening of the Kenrick Care Centre. There have been concerns about run off into Mill Farm Road, the existing drainage systems and newer areas of surface water,

especially after sustained rainfall. Spot fixes have previously been used to address individual locations but they have not been of significant or lasting benefit. Unlike Queen's Park, a more strategic approach is being adopted to confront the whole problem. A feasibility study has been commissioned from drainage specialists to provide an overview and to recommend a systematic method of dealing with specific concerns as and when resources are identified. When the new Kenrick Care Centre was built a significant financial contribution was promised, but has not yet been received, from Social Services towards improvements in Grove Park. That issue is being pursued.

On a positive note, 8 new benches and 6 litter bins were installed in Grove Park in April, mainly around the pool and the play area, but the question of the future of the Coach House drags on. It was severely damaged by fire in 2006. Local residents and the Society were consulted at the end of 2007 and our view is that it should be brought into use as [day time] toilets and accommodation for the Park Warden. Our councillors also want to retain the building as a base for the Park Warden but the cost is likely to be significant. In the meantime the Council continues to pay out for the scaffolding and security fencing. Talking of the Park Warden, where is she/he? The Park Warden who arrived in June 2007 and is shared between both parks left in January. Very disappointingly the post was caught by a recruitment freeze and there seems little prospect of it being filled in the immediate future.

**Phil Stokes**

**New play area in Grove Park being used by local children - a welcome addition to the park.**



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# TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND PARKING ISSUES

**[A] Margaret Grove/Moorpool Avenue [part] One-Way System** - The long desired and repeatedly promised one-way system was all set to go ahead subject to completion of the statutory public consultation which finally took place in October last year. The scheme had been agreed, yet again, in May 2008 following informal consultation with residents who had again given very strong support for the proposals adopted by the City Council as far back as June 1997 as part of the Harborne Traffic Management Plan. Despite the long history of support by local residents four people objected and as consequence a report is having to go through the interminable Council red tape and the appropriate Cabinet Member for decision. The outcome is not known at the time of writing but we are hopeful that at long last final approval will be given. Funding has already been secured for the scheme.

**[B] Harborne Primary School ~ Wentworth Road & Station Road** - The Safer Routes to Schools Programme aims to improve pedestrian safety within the immediate vicinity of a school. At the end of last year a scheme was implemented which included 20mph speed limit school zones in Station Road, Wentworth Road and Emerson Road with speed cushions, improved signs and road markings. However, following further consultation with Harborne Primary School and the Police amendments to the parking restrictions in Station Road and Wentworth Road have been drafted and were put out for informal public consultation at the end of May and will in due course lead to final proposals for formal statutory consultation. The opportunity has been taken to remove the parking restrictions on part of the south east side of Station Road which was missed out when the Traffic Regulation Order was revised in 2001. It is also proposed to create more on street parking in Station Road by the School outside school hours.

The proposals are supported by the Society but the outcome of the consultations is not known at the time of writing.

**[C] St. John's Road, Harts Close and North Road** - The farcical problems of illegal parking in St. John's Road continue despite the best efforts of the Enforcement Officers [formerly Traffic Wardens] and the Police, who are the only ones able to take action for obstruction by Blue Badge holders. The issue is now a priority for action and proposals have finally been drafted which also embrace Harts Close and part of North Road. The major proposal is for the double yellow lines between High Street and

the car parks in St. John's Road to become a "No Waiting and No Loading" Traffic Regulation Order which removes the exception for Blue Badge holders parking on the double yellow lines and would allow fixed penalty parking tickets to be issued. This is strongly supported by the Society. The draft proposals emerged at the end of May for informal public consultation and will in due course lead to final proposals and formal statutory consultation. The outcome is not known at the time of writing. Funding has been secured for this financial year.



**[D] Redevelopment of St. John's Road Car Park Rear of Iceland etc.** - Did you know that Harborne has a surplus of public car parking for the High Street? This was the preposterous claim by the developer who submitted a planning application for the redevelopment of the car park in St. John's Road rear of the Davenport/Iceland row of shops. The application was for a shop fronting St. John's Road and 14 flats in two blocks. In support the developer submitted reports on transport and highway issues which absurdly claimed that the loss of the 66 car parking spaces would "not have any material/adverse impact in terms of car parking" and that the car park was already "actually surplus to requirements". Do you agree? The Harborne Society certainly doesn't but quite unbelievably the Planning Department has swallowed this complete nonsense and granted planning consent.

As part of the public consultation the Society submitted a strong rebuttal of the applicant's claims and of the seriously flawed statistical information submitted about the use of public car parks in Harborne. They claimed for example that the car park at Marks & Spencer was a main public car park when everyone knows that it is for M&S patrons. Even the basic information about the number of public parking spaces available at other car parks, including the Council car park in York Street, was incorrect. The applicant falsely certified that they owned the site and that no other party had a legal interest when in fact the freehold is owned by the Harborne Parish Lands Charity. This and several other incorrect statements were identified to the Planning Officer but totally ignored and the Planning Officer even dismissed the concerns raised as to how Iceland's articulated lorries would be able to manoeuvre and deliver to the rear of the

store. The Council's decision to approve this planning application is a total farce. We just hope that the Harborne Parish Lands Charity, as freeholder, might intervene to stop this development.

**With the planners' current mentality will York Street be the next car park for redevelopment?**

**[E] Residents' Parking Schemes** - 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 on and off for several 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.

A Working Group established by the Edgbaston Constituency Committee has been looking at parking and transportation problems throughout the Constituency including parking issues in residential roads in Harborne. Central Harborne largely comprises 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 expensive to implement and parking permits reflecting those costs have to be purchased annually. A single road cannot be considered in isolation and 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 the businesses in Harborne that require parking for both their staff and customers.

The first course of action, strongly supported by the Society, is to secure accurate data about parking in the roads concerned which can then be analysed with a view to considering whether a residents' parking scheme would be viable and, if so, which type of scheme. The Ward Committee approved funding for a detailed parking beat survey to be carried out. The results will be analysed and in due course the findings of the study and any recommendations arising from it will be the subject of public consultation.

Phil Stokes

**Have you a story to tell or a personal interest in Harborne's history that you would like to share? We are always interested in receiving reminiscences or articles for our Newsletters especially the Summer Edition. Contact [maryworrall13@hotmail.com](mailto:maryworrall13@hotmail.com)**

# Recycling Old Railways

Articles about the Harborne Railway are not new to the Harborne Newsletter. In our members' Newsletter of Easter 1990 we had a nice piece about the ending of passenger service in 1934 with goods transport continuing into the sixties.

Passenger services on the Harborne Railway line existed between 1881 and 1934 with the track being removed in the eighties and the line being purchased by Birmingham Corporation for the princely sum of £15,000.

In the 1982 summer Newsletter we discussed the change of use of the railway to a walkway which had been officially opened in 1981. During the eighties The Harborne Society vigorously supported the continued maintenance of the bridge over Park Hill Road. In our members' Newsletter of 1992 the Society was able to report the possibility that, as part of a new housing development to the south of the bridge, the walkway could be extended over the bridge. It is just a pity that there was no possibility of extending the walkway up to Rose Road.

Now as part of Birmingham City's rights of way improvement programme the walkway has been upgraded with a hard surface which in the main eliminates most of the quagmire areas.

Let's hope that Birmingham City Council can find the money to complete the upgrade at some time in the near future. A nice walk is to take the walkway from Harborne to Summerfield Park with a pleasant detour to and around Edgbaston Reservoir (which is now nearly full after the refurbishment of the overflow slipways) using the minimum of road travel. Just great for children! Also remember that you can continue by foot via the Birmingham Canal system into the centre of Birmingham. Then have a coffee and take the bus home as we did recently.



## Upgrades to the Harborne Society's Web site

As part of the annual site update in August I am hoping to place some photographs of this walkway together with photos of the upgraded path via the Harborne flash flood reservoir (California Way to Harborne Park Road). Other updates in August will include the new social programme and improvements to the other pages showing useful information.



**Harborne Walkway Path**

The website is aimed at providing information to the residents of Harborne about the activities of the Harborne Society and of Harborne itself and as part of the upgrade I am hoping to add copies of as many of the old Newsletters as possible dating back to our very first letter in 1980. The site already has all the Summer Newsletters from 1990 to 2008 with their many interesting articles and photographs which chronicle our ever-changing environment.

**I am always interested in ideas and positive comments regarding improvements and additions to the web site.**

**Ray Le Gallais**

## 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**

## Harborne College

I was very interested in your description of the Heritage Walk in your Christmas 2008 edition of the Harborne Newsletter and the earlier piece on Leighton House School in the Summer 2007 Newsletter. On seeing the photograph of the Leighton House premises I realised that this was the building occupied by Harborne College where I went to school from 1936 to 1941.

At that time we lived in High Brow and later in Oakham Road and from a very young age I would walk to school coming home to lunch every day. The headmistresses were Miss Kathleen Lee who had a physical education qualification and a Mrs. Worth. The school consisted of classrooms in the main house, a classroom block behind and a quite well-equipped gym with a playground behind that.

From 1939 onwards we were at war and I do remember having to go down to the cellar when the air raid siren sounded where we would take our knitting making squares to be made up into blankets later on.

Our uniform consisted of maroon blazers and berets with a badge with H.C. on it and I remember in the winter wearing a black velour hat with a colourful hat band round it.

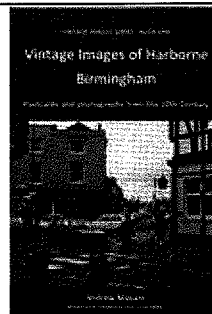
The school closed in 1941 when I moved to Garry House School in Fountain Road, Edgbaston for two terms where I managed to pass the exam for King Edwards High School.

Leighton House School must have moved into the Harborne College buildings in 1943.

It would be very interesting to hear from any other old Harborne College pupils if they have any memories.

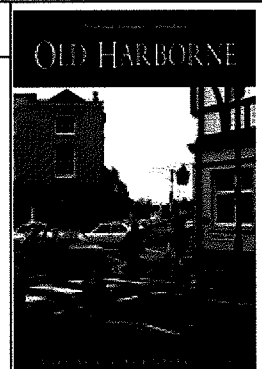
**Gill Wight (nee Smith)**

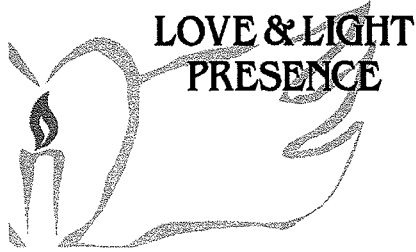
## OLD HARBORNE VILLAGE CALENDAR 2010



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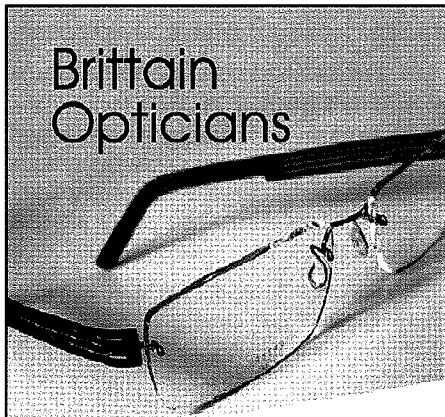




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## HIGH STREET STANDING FIRM

The recession has had a very severe impact on high streets up and down the country resulting in many retailers closing down and premises remaining empty. So it is pleasing to see that, despite the severe trading conditions, our High Street is standing firm against the trend and the number of vacant retail premises compares favourably with similar high streets in the rest of Birmingham.

In the last eighteen months or so we have for a variety reasons seen the closure of MFI bathroom, kitchen and bedroom store, Infinity Kitchens, Harborne Cobblers, Cunningham's shoes and Lights Etc. Most recently, Birthdays greetings card shop closed in June as a result of being put into Administration by its parent company Clinton Cards who already have a shop on High Street. In addition, Davenports ladies' fashions is set to close at the end of July upon the retirement of the owner and, as we have known for some time, Bonds Books, the last independent non-specialist book shop in Birmingham, is also due to close at the end of July, a victim of internet shopping. At the top end of High Street, La Di Da/Romantic Rooms is to close at the end of their lease. Thankfully, some of these retail premises have been, or are about to be, reopened for new businesses. Raag furniture and furnishings opened in the MFI premises, Dilusso Kitchens opened in June in the Infinity premises, Second Time Around fashions and accessories opened in the Harborne Cobblers premises and Cunningham's has become the second expansion of Ruddell's jewellers which does, however, further reduce the "retail offer" of the High Street. The vacant Cardfair shop is believed to be opening as [another!] sandwich bar. Happily, Klick photographic shop has survived going into Administration.

At the time of writing the empty shops are the Olan Mills photograph studio, EBS mobile phones, Greggs old shop, Lights Etc, Birthdays and Harborne Village Sandwich and Potato House. The long empty unit which was half of the former McDonald's restaurant could change to retail use without planning permission as could the vacant Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society and the Beneficial Finance premises.

The closure of Davenports is the sad loss of another long-standing independent Harborne trader. The current owner, Mary Hawthorne, is retiring after 26 years but there has been a Davenports on High Street since 1944, originally trading as Bond Smith Limited at No.179, now Johnsons dry cleaners. By 1955 the trading name had changed to Davenports, but still under the same ownership, and in the late 1960s they moved to the new parade of shops built lower down the High Street.



Harborne High Street showing Davenports occupying premises now Johnson's dry cleaners.

I always remember the original shop as one of a very small number of shops [Bradshaws stationers was another] which had shop windows angled back either side of a central glass display pillar and customers walked around it to reach the shop door which was set back.

Our High Street can only survive with your help. "Use it or lose it" has long been the cry but it is truer now than ever before. The Society again urges everyone in Harborne to please think local ~ buy local.

Phil Stokes

# Voluntary Service Overseas and Harborne Hall

Many of you will have driven past the gates of Harborne Hall and noticed the large brass sign saying "VSO Training Centre, Harborne Hall", but it seems that relatively few people know what VSO is, nor what goes on inside Harborne Hall! This article hopes to give you a brief introduction to VSO, as well as the many ways in which you can support our work.

VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) is an international development charity working through volunteers. This means that instead of sending food or money, we send people who want to make a real difference in the fight against poverty.

Our volunteers work in partnership with communities to achieve positive change together, in the areas of education, health, HIV and AIDS, disability, helping people to secure a living and encouraging people to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Volunteers come from all over the world, including developing countries, and this international approach brings a range of perspectives to VSO's work.

Since 1993, VSO's volunteer training centre has been based at Harborne Hall. All volunteers from the UK and Ireland come here before the start of their overseas placements to prepare them for the challenges of life as a VSO volunteer.

The majority of our volunteers are skilled professionals - the average age of a VSO volunteer is 41 - although there are also youth programmes for 18 to 21 year-olds. Volunteers live and work in local communities sharing skills and changing lives. Some are engaged on a long-term basis, whilst others are on short-term, specialist assignments, designed to complement VSO's longer-term work.

Helping VSO make a real difference to people's lives can be as simple as making a quick donation, or as life changing as becoming a volunteer. Here are some ways in which you can support VSO:

Make a donation - VSO needs to raise £10 million each year in the UK in order to continue our vital work, and donations can be made online, by direct debit, by cheque or by leaving a legacy to VSO.  
<http://www.vso.org.uk/donate>

Take part in one of VSO's major fundraising events, such as the Three Peaks Challenge, or organise your own event such as a pub quiz or cake sale.  
<http://www.vso.org.uk/act/fundraise>

Get involved with a VSO Supporter Group - there are over 50 in the UK - campaign, fundraise, and get to know and support other VSO volunteers.  
<http://www.vso.org.uk/act/supporter-groups/index.asp>

Become a school or community champion and work to end poverty by drawing attention to VSO's work.  
<http://www.vso.org.uk/act/active-communities>

Volunteer to take on a long or short-term placement overseas.  
<http://www.vso.org.uk/volunteer>

If you have any further questions about VSO, please contact Ella Stewart (VSO Community Appeals Manager) on

[ella.stewart@vso.org.uk](mailto:ella.stewart@vso.org.uk)

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## HERITAGE DAY WALK ~ 13th SEPTEMBER

Once again the Society will be participating in the national Heritage Open Days, now co-ordinated by English Heritage, with another of Edward Chitham's very popular guided walks.

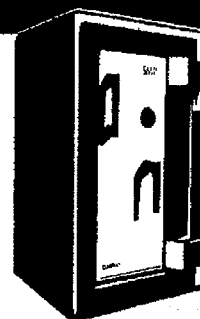
Edward's walks over the last thirteen years have covered just about every aspect of Harborne's history so this year's walk will be based principally on an entirely new theme, namely 'Harborne Pubs: Past and Present'. The leisurely walk will take place on Sunday 13th September starting at 2 p.m. from the 'Green Man' public house and should last about two and a quarter hours. The walk will also finish at the 'Green Man' so, if appropriate, you may park at the pub as it now operates a Pay & Display car park at a very modest fee. As always, the event will take place whatever the weather so be prepared for the worst! Everyone welcome.

Don't forget, Edward's widely acclaimed book 'Harborne: A History' can be purchased from Harborne Library and W. H. Smith. Phil Stokes

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## HARBORNE VILLAGE CENTRE MANAGER - Bob Flack



This is an ideal opportunity for me to inform everyone on the progress that is being made locally in Harborne. As you may be aware, a Business Plan was prepared by myself on behalf of the Village Centre Partnership some twelve months ago with a number of recommendations attached.

Basically, this was divided into a number of categories, i.e. Access, Development, Environment, Marketing, Safety & Security, and Business Support. Every individual facet is important to maintain a vibrant village feel.

However, two things particularly stand out for me. Everything in relation to the Harborne Pool development seems on track, which was highlighted at the Ward Committee meeting in May. This is great news for all residents and visitors to the Pool, particularly the younger generation who will be able to enjoy fantastic facilities in the future.

Secondly, the public realm improvement works along the High Street are nearing reality. In essence, the work concerned outside the Clock Tower and across the road outside Iceland is due to commence shortly. This will be the culmination following consultation with various internal Council departments, so we will be able to see something positive resulting. New timber seating, improved street furniture, new bollards, cycle stands and litter bins will be in evidence. All in all this will provide tangible changes and improvements for residents and visitors alike.

Looking at basics, the most important aspect to me of a visit to Harborne revolves around "first impressions", and that means access to car parking, pricing policy, and a cleanliness regime. I believe that the forthcoming new Traffic Regulation Order for St. John's Road will provide far less disruption in that area which will free up the High Street itself. The cleaning of the High Street is usually of a high standard and any graffiti can be removed quickly by our Hit Squad.

One key change has seen the introduction of Poppy Brady, whom many of you will know, as our website co-ordinator. Poppy is with us for one day per week and the [harbornevillage.co.uk](http://harbornevillage.co.uk) website is already looking far better with regular news items appearing there. We are looking to source more hits on the site and encouraging links to other local sites. So please have a look at the site and please let me know if you have any ideas on how it could be improved further.

The hanging baskets are again providing splendid colour along the length of the High Street and are always well received. Given that the hot weather continues, the flowers are an added bonus.

On the safety side, I have managed to source 30 brand new digital radios for businesses, which means that contact between retailers and pubs is greatly enhanced. Coupled with excellent coverage by the local police team, we are keeping Harborne at the very top as "the safest place to visit". Indeed, we are also about to see new improved CCTV cameras appearing as well.

Finally, I am confident that we are all collectively moving in the right direction, but we must not be complacent as there are always challenges just around the corner.

## Farmers' Market Dates

8th August  
12th September  
10th October  
14th November  
12th December 10th January



## CHURCH FARM GOLF COURSE



Yet again the future of Harborne Church Farm Golf Course in its present form is under possible threat. According to press reports in the middle of June the City Council is undertaking a major review of its golfing provision across the city because of falling income and that very radical changes can be expected. The Council operates six 18-hole courses and one 9-hole course, namely Harborne Church Farm.

Unsurprisingly this has raised a furore as it seems that only two of the 18-hole courses are likely to remain in their present form and remaining courses are to become a mixture of 9-hole, 6-hole and 3-hole courses with pitch and putt facilities and driving ranges and something branded as "GolfXtreme" with measures aimed at increasing participation, particularly amongst younger people, women and the city's ethnic population.

Unfortunately, specific proposals for each course have not been announced which naturally makes it difficult to comment but according to the press reports the new Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture has declared that the golf courses cannot survive as they currently are.

This is the third time that Church Farm has been under possible threat but at least on this occasion no mention has been made of actual closure of any of the golf courses or the use of land for housing. We believe that Church Farm will escape "radical" changes but if any firm proposals are published the Society will as on previous occasions fight to retain the full golfing facility.

**Phil Stokes**

## Let's get Arty at the Varsity! - Varsity Art Evenings

Chris Birdsell the Landlord of the Varsity Pub is hoping to launch an interesting event in the pub on a regular basis and The Harborne Society is happy to support and publicise this new lively initiative.

If you are interested in showing your own artwork or buying exciting originals by local artists keep your eye open for posters and publicity advertising this new opportunity. Chris hopes to run an 'open evening' for local artists on a regular basis where people may show their work, demonstrate their skills and sell. The whole idea is to provide a free showcase for local artists. No commission will be charged on sales and there is no fee to have a space at the evenings.

For further information contact Chris at the Varsity in person, or Rachel who is the co-ordinator on **07544636837** or email her at **[louvainer@aol.com](mailto:louvainer@aol.com)**. We hope that by the time you get this Newsletter the first evening will have happened and been a great success. The initial thinking is that the event will be quarterly throughout the year, but obviously much will depend on how things progress. **A great new 'Art Venue' for Harborne and a positive and exciting idea for 'the Village'!**

**Mary Worrall**



# REPORT OF THE HARBORNE SOCIETY A.G.M.



The 49th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 20th May, 2009, at Harborne Primary School and with an improved, but still disappointing, attendance by members.

Reports from the Chairman, Technical Officer and on behalf of the Honorary Treasurer demonstrated the continuing high level of activity during the year on behalf of Society members and the wider local community.

The overriding issue had remained the Society's continuing campaign for the redevelopment of the Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre on the existing site which looks like it is heading for a successful outcome. However, that was not at the expense of other significant issues in particular the attempt to secure the relocation of the Thomas Attwood statue to Harborne and the continuing campaign for improvements at Queen's Park and Grove Park, concerns about the decline of retailing on High Street, securing improvements to High Street as advocated in the Harborne Local Management Framework which have now been taken up by the Harborne Village Business Partnership, planning issues, especially the lack of enforcement of the planning regulations, and at long last the declaration of the Greenfield Road Conservation Area 21 years after first being proposed by the Society. Membership had fallen slightly and in response a new membership leaflet had been produced. Nevertheless, the Society continued to be in a sound financial position notwithstanding our continued financial support for the Christmas lights and the purchase of items donated to Harborne Library.

Andy Peet stood down from the Committee but the remaining members of last year's Committee sought re-election and were duly appointed, which worryingly leaves three vacancies. Please contact the Chairman if you are now willing to consider serving on the Committee. The full list of Committee members and officers for 2009/2010 is on the back of this Newsletter. Finally, the revised Constitution was adopted.

The meeting concluded with a presentation to Mary Abbott to mark her eightieth birthday. The formalities were followed by refreshments and a quiz which was won by Margery Elliot.

Phil Stokes



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## Lead an Orchestra from September 2009

The Harborne Orchestra is currently seeking a replacement for their current leader who leaves in September. This amateur orchestra rehearses weekly in school term time, on Friday evenings in Queen Alexandra College, Harborne. It prepares one public concert each term, with occasional extra engagements. Recent repertoire has included Beethoven 1, Mozart 40 and Clarinet Concerto, Schubert 5 and Unfinished, Bach Concerto for Oboe & Violin and several Haydn Symphonies. The post is unpaid, but is an excellent opportunity for a strong violinist wishing to extend their experience.

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Thanks to the advertisers who placed adverts with us in this Newsletter. We only take advertisements in our Summer edition. Their contribution helps to fund the Summer Newsletter, our biggest issue, distributed free to homes and businesses in Harborne.

If you are interested in advertising in next Summer's Newsletter our deadline for advertisements is the end of June and Ray Le Gallias is our advertisement co-ordinator on 427 6887.

### HIGH STREET URINAL

Early last summer the Council agreed a scheme to refurbish and repair the internal area of the urinal alongside the 'Junction' public house. It included providing a polycarbonate roof, a new quarry tile floor, chemically cleaning the whole structure, cleaning and repointing the ceramic brickwork and overhauling the flushing system. Planning consent was obtained and quotes sought supposedly with a view to the work being carried out last September.

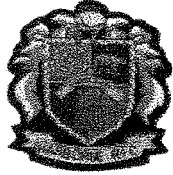
A year later and absolutely no progress.

Phil Stokes



## HARBORNE RUGBY CLUB

Harborne Rugby Club narrowly missed out on promotion from Midlands



Five West North last season, finishing a close up fourth with only a few points separating the first four teams.

Harborne RFC, who play their home games at Metchley Lane, have been going since January 1995, having been formed by members of the old GKN club that played at Thimblemill Lane in Smethwick.

Remarkably, they are regularly able to field three teams, meaning that they cater for wide range of abilities, from those seeking to play at their highest level to those who prefer to treat rugby as more of a social pastime.

Recruiting new players is seen as a priority for the new season, irrespective of ability, age or experience. They particularly want to supplement the 'muscle' department of the front row but will welcome players in any position, even those who are new to rugby altogether.

They have always enjoyed strong links with Birmingham University, helped in part by the fact that they share the University's facilities and often attract students who, having failed to get through the University trials, are seeking a local club.

But you don't have to play rugby to be a member of Harborne RFC. An interest in the sport is all that's required. They are currently seeking social as well as playing members, because the social side has long been regarded as a key element to the ethos of the club.

Social membership costs £35 a year (£50 for a playing membership), which compares favourably with fees in similar rugby clubs.

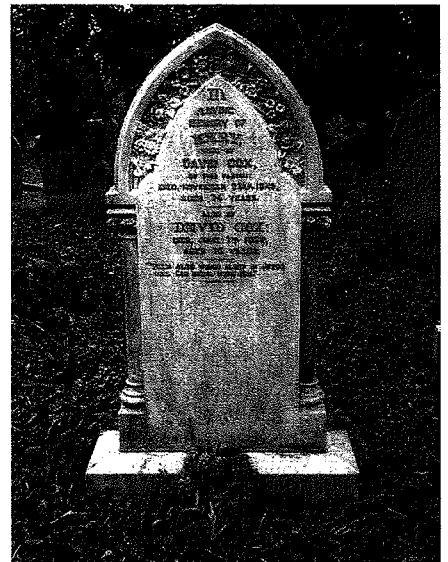
Harborne RFC are sponsored by Frankie & Benny's, who also offer discounts to members (as does Harborne's Café Rouge), but they are ever on the lookout for further local sponsorship, in particular someone willing to invest in the club, to work with them and raise their respective profiles.

Their desire is to actively promote themselves and be a part of the community. Team members can usually be found in and around Harborne's High Street on a Saturday night, so there's plenty of exposure for any potential sponsors.

If you are interested in playing rugby, sponsoring the club, or becoming a member, email [clubcaptain@harborne-rugby.com](mailto:clubcaptain@harborne-rugby.com) for further information. Chris Pitt

## The Harborne Society's Donations.

The Harborne Society has donated three items to Harborne Library over the last year. As part of the Madeline Aston Collection we purchased and donated a copy of the book published to co-incide with the splendid exhibition of David Cox's work in the Gas Hall of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. This is a most informative and beautifully illustrated account of one of our best known residents who lived in Greenfield House and is buried in St Peter's Churchyard.



We also purchased and donated a facsimile copy of the Life of Thomas Attwood by C M Wakefield, Attwood's grandson, for the Library's Local Studies Collection which was originally published in 1885. An appropriate gift considering our ongoing involvement in the resiting of Attwood's statue, which we are pressing to return to Harborne. (See separate article by Phil Stokes). This will most likely be kept as a reference copy in our Local History Collection. The David Cox book, Sun, Wind and Rain is a lending copy.

Our third donation has been a copy of an 1885 map showing the south part of Harborne. The Library had already a copy of this map but not in colour which greatly enhances the quality of the image. This has made a really useful contribution to the Library's map collection that forms part of the Local History Collection and is fairly extensive. Anyone wishing to see the new map or any of the other maps of old Harborne should ask staff as they are not kept on the open shelves.

Harborne Library is always grateful for donations of material that would be useful in the Local History Collection. If you do not wish to actually donate a photograph or treasured cutting or certificate to the collection the staff are always happy to make a copy so other people can see it and make use of it for research purposes.

Mary Worrall



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**N.B.** The Harborne Society  
email address for questions and  
enquiries is :-  
harbornesociety@hotmail.com

## THE HARBORNE SOCIETY Programme of Meetings 2009-2010

Wednesday 9th Sept. 2009	Roger Hailwood	Ireland - some unusual places
<b>Sunday 13th Sept. 2009</b>		<b>Heritage Walk with Edward Chitham</b>
Tuesday 6th Oct. 2009	Mary Bodfish	The Theatre Royal Fire Tragedy
Wednesday 4th Nov. 2009	Shani Ellis	The John Lewis Group - a history of the partnership
Tuesday 1st Dec. 2009	Eugene and Margaret Schellenberg	The Ifakara Bakery Group
Tuesday 2nd Feb. 2010	Maynard Tweed	Neville Chamberlain - a reassessment of the man
Wednesday 10th March 2010	Ina Taylor	The Four McDonald Sisters
Tuesday 20th April 2010	Fiona Tait	Charles Parker and the work of the Birmingham Archives and Heritage Service
Wednesday 19th May 2010		<b>The Harborne Society A.G.M.</b>

All meetings begin at 7-30 p.m.

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

## WARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The dates for meetings of the Harborne Ward Committee for the Municipal Year have not been fixed at the time of going to press so please look out for posters at Harborne Library.

## THE HARBORNE SOCIETY

Are you interested in Harborne? Do you value the area and community?

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By joining **The Harborne Society** you will be kept informed about all the issues that relate to Harborne

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To join send a cheque, payable to 'The Harborne Society' together with your name, address, telephone number, and email address, if appropriate, to  
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