

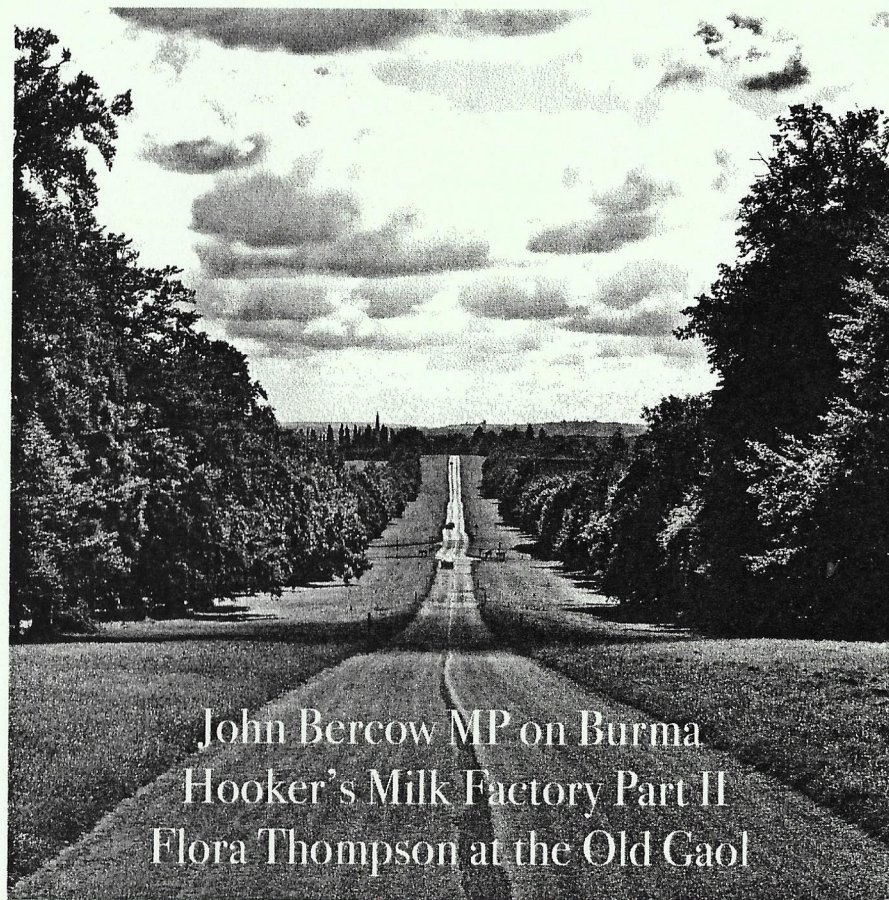


The Buckingham Society Magazine

Issue 2007/2 August

Summer Issue

Price £1



John Bercow MP on Burma
Hooker's Milk Factory Part II
Flora Thompson at the Old Gaol

the
civic
trust

ANTAS
ASSOCIATION OF NORTH THAMES AMENITY SOCIETIES

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The Buckingham Society
is a Registered Charity
Number 268503

The Buckingham Society is *your* local civic amenity society

A voluntary group of people who care passionately about our surroundings and campaigning to enhance and improve our Town.

Members of The Buckingham Society share common aims:

- Promote the distinctive character of our town
- Set high standards of design and sustainability
- Celebrate and safeguard Buckingham's heritage
- Find solutions to environmental problems
- Improve the quality of life in our community
- Inspire sensitive changes within the places we cherish
- Create and consolidate effective partnerships between community, business and local government.

The Society is registered with the Civic Trust, one of 850 Civic Societies in England, and is a member of the Association of North Thames Amenity Societies (ANTAS) and the Association of Small Historic Towns and Villages (ASHTAV).

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Chairman's Report

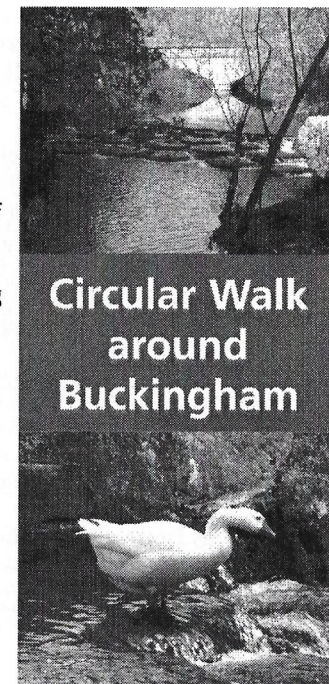
■ **David Peevers**

Circular Walk Nearly Completed

I am pleased to report that works on the new Buckingham Circular Walk are well under way and scheduled for completion during the summer. New paths have been laid in the Heartlands and alongside the playing fields of Buckingham School to connect the Railway Walk to the London Road at Badgers.

The last construction project will be the installation of a security fence to alongside this latter path. New seating, litter bins and dog bins are also being installed along the 3½ mile walk. The official opening of the walk is pencilled in for late morning on Saturday 22 September. Further details will be announced nearer the date.

The Buckingham Society has long supported the plan for a circular walk and first proposed the idea several years ago. But credit for the completion of the project has to go to the Buckingham Community Plan which was able to raise the considerable resource required for the project which has been funded by SEEDA, BCC, AVDC, BTC and the Buckingham and Gawcott Charitable Trust. The Buckingham Society heartily thanks all involved for making such a positive contribution to the People of Buckingham.



Editorial & Cover Picture

■ **Warren Whyte**

Summer is here at last, but until a few days ago you would never know it, with rain and temperatures trying to fool us into thinking autumn had arrived early. Despite the weather, this is still our

summer issue – and it is the biggest we have issued for a few years. The cover picture features Stowe Avenue and the tree dominated skyline of Buckingham as seen from the Corinthian Arch.

From Happy Hookers To United Dairies

Ed Grimsdale

Part II of Hooker's Milk Factory

By all accounts, Hooker ran a happy factory. Men and women spent their whole working lives there. Conditions of service were good. There were 21 acres of grounds with the land alongside Station Rd and the "Flosh" beautifully planted, a [Chandos] Bowls Club, and a guarantee of work if you were young, fit and ready to play for Buckingham Town Football Club.

"Sid" Bunce, once a driver for the firm, now a Thornborian remembers asking for support to establish a cricket term, his prayer was affirmatively answered. Frank Blake informs me that when the Choral Society (BDMS) fell on hard times, Major Hooker, who was not a singer, bailed it out. Above all, he was a generous Grenville Lodge Freemason, and they met in Hunter Street opposite Buckingham's first Industrial Park – all owned by Hooker & Co.

So far I've not mentioned Hooker's Malted Milk – available in tablet or powder form. Hooker was an early food technologist and his laboratory created a formula for what we now call "Horlick's" at the same time as several other firms produced rival products.

It would need more research to establish whether Buckingham can claim to have invented this popular drink. What we do know is that Hooker's variant was a leading brand, particularly in the 1920's

when even The Times carried large adverts for our product.

You will notice a second trade mark in this next ad. "U.D." – the Tesco of its time. [Wiltshire] United Dairies started in Trowbridge but it became aggressively expansionist after the First World War. It gobbled up all the opposition across southern England from dairy outlets to medium-sized producers such as Hooker's.

Soon, United Dairies owned 600 shops in Greater London alone and the firm

ensured that its factory product stocked their shelves. Own-brand goods ruled and United Dairies, like Tesco today, seemed unstoppable. It created a romantic rural myth shown by this advertisement:

Major James Henry Hooker died in December 1936 aged 75 after a life well spent. He was unmarried and had lived for some time with his sister, Ellen, at Rotherfield House now the Sixth Form Centre of the Royal Latin School. After a

COUNTRY MILK FOR LONDON TOWN PASTORAL SCENES IN THE WORK OF UNITED DAIRIES LTD.



THE sun has been up an hour or more. Already the cows have been milked—Queenie and Mab, Pixie and Bess, and all the rest—and they have marched back again with swinging tails into meadows where the last of the dew still lingers on the grass.

The morning's milk is now in the churns, which, after cooling, are trundled along to the lane outside the farm, where with a heave and a swing they are lifted up to a miniature platform of planks, built into the hedge.

Here, under the shade of a hawthorn bush, they will bide safe and cool till the coming of the milk-collector's motor lorry. . . .

There is not long to wait. In a countryside so quiet it is easy to catch the distant rumble of the "U.D." lorry. Its load of churns, close packed and clattering, the morning's milk of a district, give a strange motley of notes as they bump along the lanes—a jangle which grows louder and louder till it drowns the chatter of the hedge-sparrows and the morning song of the lark overhead.

The motor-lorry runs alongside the hedge-platform with the exactness of a liner making dock, and in a minute hefty arms swing the churns from platform to lorry—to join the heavy freight of churns, all bound for the Milk Collecting Depot.

A whirr of the engine, a change of gear and soon the clang of the churns is a waning sound—remote and more remote till the lane is its silent self again. . . . Country silence. . . . No sound but the sparrows and the fluttering lark. . . .

This is the sort of scene you may light upon in many a lane of Bucks or Oxon, Wiltshire or Hants, Derby or Staffs, these summery mornings—a tiny fragment of the vast scheme of milk collection conceived and stage-managed by United Dairies in a score of English counties.

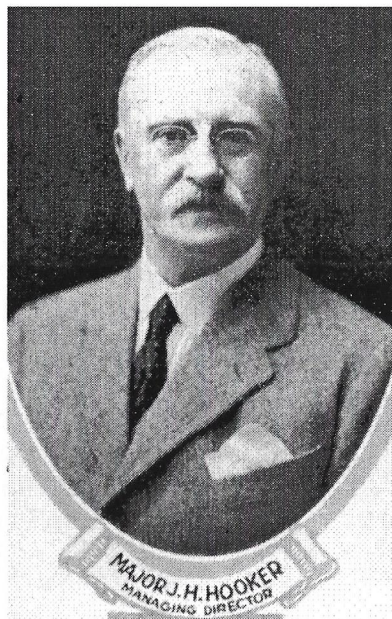
And all tending to one end—that you in London and other big cities may have the best and freshest of milk in amplest supply.

few bequests, his estate was split three ways between our Parish Church, Buckingham Hospital and the Grenville Lodge of Freemasons. The Major is buried in Buckingham Cemetery.

Hooker's diversified into pig production – when I first came to Buckingham the mouldering remains of a saddleback pig cast-iron shanty town occupied what are now the grounds of the University of Buckingham down by the Great Ouse. The factory belched onwards into the 1960's and its cloying malty, caramelised odour hung over the Chandos Road area of Buckingham.

Markets changed and the Milk Factory closed silencing its steam whistle that had woken all in Buckingham at 8.00am each day. Bill Howkins remembers the time that it became a store for Cementone's paint materials.

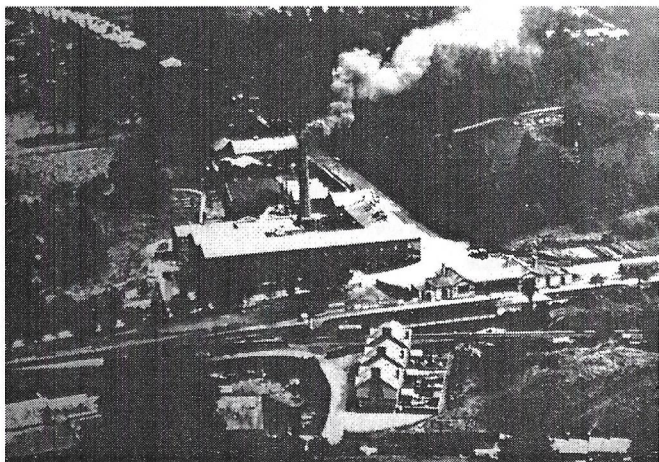
Later, of course, it was modernised in a most sensitive manner to become the Chandos Road buildings of the



University of Buckingham. It remains an alien amongst Buckingham's buildings a fossilised piece of industrial history and a

memorial to an over-reaching inventor – Thomas Rickett and a highly successful food technologist: Major John Henry Hooker.

Ed thanks The Old Gaol Museum, Buckingham that has recently acquired a 1921 article about Hooker's Milk Factory.



Developments at Stowe Landscape Gardens

David Peevers

The National Trust is planning a major reorganisation of the entrance to the gardens. The plan is to revert to the original garden entrance at Lord Cobham's New Inn located near the Corinthian Arch. This listed building will be sensitively restored to act as the Visitor Reception and to provide catering facilities for the gardens. The project will take about four or five years to complete.

September Society Event

Richard Hill, the National Trust's New Inn project manager, will be briefing the

Buckingham Society on this exciting project at our next open evening meeting on Wednesday 19 September. The venue is Room MB1 in the Mason's Building in Hunter Street, University of Buckingham.

Stowe House Restoration Awarded

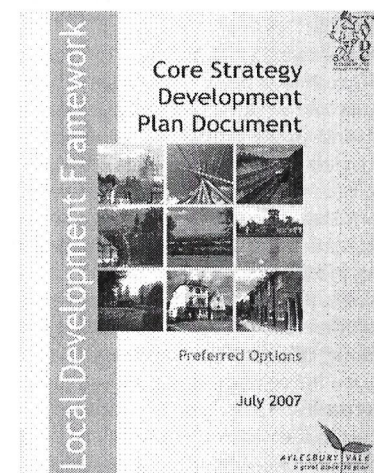
On 17 May the Royal Institute of British Architects announced at the regional RIBA awards evening held at the Oxford Said Business School that the Stowe House Restoration (Phase Two) by the London based architects Purcell Miller Tritton LLP won a RIBA South Regional Award.

New District Plan Consultation

Warren Whyte

The district council has launched the consultation on its preferred options for the "Core Strategies – Local Development Framework". There are twelve core strategies, all well meaning but without substance or much vision. At least the council is trying to engage with the town with a door-to-door leaflet drop and a visiting trailer in the town centre to tell us about the new proposals.

A detailed strategy for Buckingham itself will not be prepared until next year at the earliest. The Planning SIG will be reviewing this over the next few weeks.



Their Name Liveth For Ever More

■ Jack Steggle

Rudyard Kipling chose these words to appear on Sir Edwin Lutyens' Stone of Remembrance ninety years ago when the Imperial War Graves Commission was established under the patronage of King George V. The idea grew out of disgust at the deplorable state of graves of British soldiers killed in South Africa. Now of course the word Commonwealth replaces Imperial in the title.

The Commission is a tribute to 1,700,000 men and women of Commonwealth forces killed in the two world wars. It provides and maintains 2,500 cemeteries and plots, erects headstones over graves and inscribes names on permanent memorials for those unidentified bodies *Known Unto God* – another Kipling phrase.

More than a million casualties are commemorated at military and civil sites in 150 countries but it is those in Belgium and northern France that bring a huge lump to the throat. On the road from Calais to Paris pause near Béthune at the estaminet for coffee and croissants. Then wander across the road to the cemetery there and wonder at this last resting place for so many of our forebears. Before you leave look across at the other side where the German graves lie, different in appearance but the same in human terms. During World War II both sides agreed to avoid damage to the cemeteries as far as possible.

From the start the Commission decided that headstones should be uniform and make no distinction on account of rank (civil or military), race or creed. As well as the great names of Lutyens and Kipling we should thank their friend Gertrude Jekyll for insisting that horticulture should be an essential part of the design. Kew Gardens gave advice on the choice of species to be planted. Where possible they chose plants native to the casualty's country to enhance sentimental associations with home.



There is no paving between the rows of headstones, only grass walks. In arid areas dry landscaping together with the choice of suitable species help to conserve water.

Carnage in 1917

At the moment of the Commission's inauguration the Kaiser ordered his defensive line back to the fortified Hindenburg Line. It was a clever move

that cut 25 miles from the Front but it left villages and farms on the allied side in ruins as the retreating German army destroyed them. Soon afterwards Commonwealth forces took Messines and Wytschaete, but Passchendaele was to prove a different story. The three week plan to take the village finally took three months with 500,000 dead, wounded or missing on both sides. It was the biggest slaughter of the war surpassing even the Battle on the Somme in the previous summer.

Tombois farm

The action to take this salient on 16/17 April 1917 was typical. The 1/1st Bucks Battalion was part of the South Midland Division commanded by Major General Sir Robert Fanshawe. His task was to press the enemy making him feel that the Hindenburg Line on our Front was in danger.

Advanced posts in front of the line had been captured and a footing gained in his outpost covered by a belt of wire south of Tombois Farm. On this night the object was to gain this line of wire and the fortified outposts along it on the rest of the Division's front. The weather was frightful with wind and rain driving toward the enemy line, almost enough to delay the action. Tombois Farm lay about a thousand yards from the Battalion's nearest sentry post. Captain N S Reid of A Company took over the outpost line, relieving B and C Companies for the attack. Two other regiments, one each side, were to attack neighbouring farms. C Company under Captain J B Hales had orders to direct

their attack south and south-east of Tombois Farm. B Company under Lieutenant M Bowen was to attack to the west and north of the farm. D Company under Captain R Gregson-Ellis was to proceed in echelon behind C Company, occupying the trench in front of the farm until the leading companies had attained their objectives.

At 11.45 pm the enemy opened with machine gun and rifle fire, sending up many lights from the farm and its neighbouring trenches. They also put up a barrage behind the Battalion's attack. A thick belt of wire in front of the enemy positions was strongly held so that C and D Companies had to re-group. All D Company's officers had become casualties. B Company on the left had attracted rather less fire than the other two and had succeeded in getting through a thinner belt of wire, enough to penetrate the enemy trenches.

Communications were difficult so that three platoons of the 1/5th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment moved onto the farm. Finding B Company in possession, but the orchard to the south still in enemy hands, they worked to free this.

Tombois Farm was taken. Thirty dead Germans were found in and around the farm. Nine prisoners and one machine gun were taken. But the Bucks Battalion losses were heavy too with one officer, Captain R Gregson-Ellis, dying from his wounds and four other officers wounded. Of other ranks, eighteen were killed and forty-eight wounded.

New Flora Thompson Exhibition – Old Gaol

Tony Webster – Old Gaol Museum

Flora Thompson, the writer of the semi-autobiographical trilogy, 'Lark Rise to Candleford', died in Brixham, Devon, aged 71, in May 1947. Although the book for which she is best remembered, her evocation of life as a child growing up in the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire countryside in the late nineteenth century, was written and published only in the last ten years of her life, she wrote prodigiously for most of her adult life and published many hundreds of stories, articles and poems, most of them unknown to the general public.

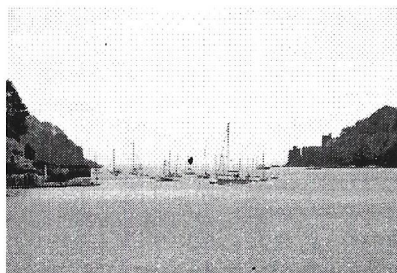
In the book she chronicles the daily lives of farm workers and craftsmen, friends and relations alike and is a precise and enduring portrayal of country life long since vanished. She used real life villages and communities as her inspiration and freely admitted that 'Candleford' was based on Buckingham and Banbury and, of course, 'Lark Rise' and 'Fordlow' are Juniper Hill and Cottisford. She clearly enjoyed her numerous trips to Buckingham visiting her father's relatives, the Timms family, who have been continuously associated with the town for hundreds of years.

It is fitting, therefore, that the Old Gaol Museum of Buckingham should mount a permanent exhibition of her life and works, as a themed museum, 'The Home of Flora Thompson'. The exhibition, which the Museum Development Service called, 'of national importance', was

formally opened on May 25 2007 to coincide with the sixtieth anniversary of her death.

The exhibition, which is the only permanent, viewable exhibition of Flora Thompson memorabilia in the world, comprises photographs, pamphlets, early and first edition books, letters written by Flora, together with a number of personal items. The typewriter on which Flora and Betty composed much of their work is a major attraction.

Also on display is an extremely fine collection of books (including audio books, music, records, magazines, plays, articles, etc.) and other ephemera by, about and connected with Flora from the 1920s to present day, comprising to date over one hundred and twenty items. Our working bibliography of these items has been said to be 'the most comprehensive listing of Flora Thompson books ever produced', and which, together with the books and other items in our collection, is available for social historian and bona fide student research.



The display features two life-sized display 'dioramas', one showing Flora at home in Dartmouth, in her office, in front of her typewriter and books, where she wrote most of her best known works whilst the other portrays a scene from her early life as a child in the poor rural hamlet of Juniper Hill (the 'Lark Rise' of the book) illustrating, with agricultural artefacts and model animals, what life was like for a poor country family in

Oxfordshire in the late eighteenth century, with emphasis on accessibility to the artefacts, and 'touchability', particularly for children.

Breaking news is that it has just been announced that the BBC are currently producing a major ten part drama series of 'Lark Rise to Candleford', starring Dawn French, to be aired in the spring of 2008.

River Great Ouse – River Rinse 2007

Members of the Society often support this Town event to help tidy up our river. This year the rinse is on Sunday 16 September from 10am to noon. Check the Buckingham Advertiser nearer the time to find out which section of river will be chosen this year.

SIG Report: Green Spaces

Ted Farmer

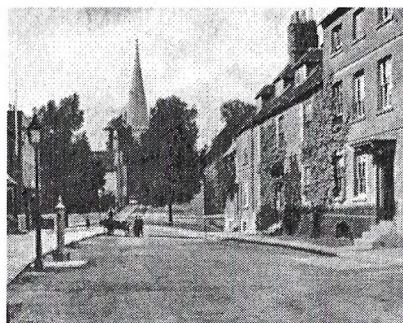
After all the delays and missed dates, Cornwall's Meadow bridge painting was finally completed late in April. It remains a utility bridge but looks much better for a full coating of paint which hopefully will prove durable. With lush spring growth freshly trimmed by John O'Conner, AVDC ground contractor, the prospect from the car-park was very attractive. Alas, not for long.

As part of the Circular Walk in the Community Plan, a contractor set about building the tarmac path providing an alternative route between Stratford Fields and Cornwall's Meadow bridges. Rains early in May softened the ground; machines caused severe rutting and surface damage from the entry and delivery point by the skate board park, and along the length of the path. The damage was buried under copious quantities of top soil which has proved irresistible to feet, twos and fours, and bicycles - and then came the tree contractors with their vehicles and chipper machine. Water-filled ruts and footprints now scar a large area. To say this is a pity understates my feeling.

The sound of chainsaw and chipper have been very noticeable during June. The AVDC tree contractor has been working on an extensive schedule of summer maintenance, felling some dead and damaged trees and pruning branches, including two trapping flotsam in the river, which have been of concern for years. I am told there is more to come;

there are certainly a number of dead or damaged trees marked in Maids Moreton Avenue.

Regrettably one of Buckingham's most prominent trees, the big copper beech which dominated the London Road - Chandos Road junction area, has had to be felled. It was found last year to have a fungal disease in the root and was deemed to be unstable and potentially hazardous. It is a condition that it be replaced with an ash - which will not have the commanding presence of the copper beech.



The previous Cutterne Elm around 1905, taken from a contemporary postcard.

The Cutterne Elm, an historic tree from which Elm Street got its name (as shown on John Speed's map of 1610), is to be replaced. A test hole on the site at Castle Street, indicated no services in the way and a planting pit with stone surround is planned be built in late summer and the tree planted in November/December.

SIG Report: Planning

Hélène Hill

The revised plans for the major development on the former White Hart car-park site have been submitted and were approved at AVDC's planning committee on 28 June. We were pleased to note the several sustainability features, a first for Buckingham; solar-powered lighting for the communal stairs, collection and use of rainwater and sedum roofs. We also welcomed the linear, more open, aspect of the slightly reduced plans, giving a less hard and dominating edge when viewed from the river and when entering the town.

AVDC send us plans of most major developments, especially those concerning listed buildings or in the conservation area. Some that we were very interested in were for the first steps in re-generating Fleece Yard. Henry Scrase very kindly invited us to look round the site and discuss the plans in detail with his architect. The plans were refreshingly innovative and bold to make better residential use of a sad but historical part of the conservation area. We are pleased to note that the plans were approved.

The saga of the block of garages for the new terrace behind Stratford House, High Street goes on. The developer is trying to squeeze in more dwellings on the site by fitting flats in the roof space of the garages. One of our members spoke at the AVDC planning meeting against this, and the latest plans were refused.

We, especially Carolyn and Warren, continue to read, digest and comment on the never ending stream of government consultation papers. The latest "Changes to Permitted Development: Consultation 1 - Permitted Development Rights for Householder Microgeneration." This covers solar, wind turbines, heat pumps, Biomass, combined heat and power and Hydro.

Much as we welcome renewable sources of energy production, we felt the government's proposals to relax Permitted Development Rights rushed and ill thought-through, more likely to cause confusion and - at worse - a series of miscalculated intrusions into an historic townscape than lasting benefit. In our view, the role of the planning system should be directed towards the most effective solutions for existing communities and to ensure that new developments adopt best practice in microgeneration techniques.

Historic tree news

In a copy of Hillier's Almanack for 1939 in the lengthy historical introduction is the following statement: "Alongside the carriage-drive approach from Stowe Avenue to Castle Fields, Buckingham, stands a venerable oak tree bearing an inscribed notice that here, in the 17th Century, King Charles hid among the spreading branches."

The Woolpack Six

Ed Grimsdale

The Woolpack Inn stands at the original main entrance to Buckingham from the London direction. The substantial, stone-built "Sheriff's" bridge took travellers over the Ouse at the spot which is now called The Old Ford. The bridge is mentioned in Samuel Pepys' Diary and Celia Fiennes (who travelled across England on a side saddle) commented in 1697:

"Thence I went to Buckingham Town 7 mile, a very neate place and we passed the river Ouse (sic) over a very high bridge tho' the river seemed not then so very full, but it swells after great raines which makes them build their arches so large."

The Woolpack Inn is probably the longest surviving public house in Buckingham and food and drink have been served there for at least five hundred years. A time there was when the Lord of the Manor leased the Inn to Katharine Agard at a rent of two pence per annum for a period of 2000 years, although we suspect that the present tenant pays rather more!

The Woolpack's name reminds us that Buckingham was a centre for the wool trade – packs of wool were made up and transported for weaving. Hides from sheep and other animals were turned into leather in Prebend End and the widow of a tanner, Mary Evans became the Inn's proprietor in 1693 and handed the business on to her son, Samuel Evans

who also ran his father's tanyard.

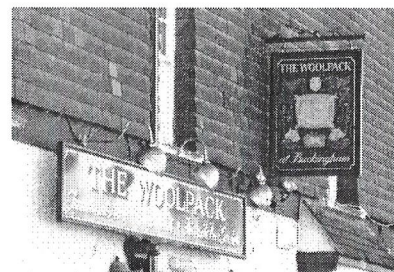
In Victorian times, the Inn's yard was a busy place where people and their freight would gather to catch regular carrier services to East Claydon, Bicester, Fringford, Barton Hartshorn, Brackley and Banbury. Well Street outside The Woolpack was the site for Hog Fair. In those days, you recycled or perished and the pigs' facial hair was sent up Hog Lane (Elm Street) to Bristle Hill where it was turned into paint brushes.



Until World War II disrupted Buckingham's rural idyll, the raised pavement outside Buckingham Fish Bar provided the perfect arena for buyers at "Horsefair": the horses were tethered to the retaining wall below and horse-dealers and customers could lean over the railings discussing fine fetlocks before popping over the road to The Woolpack to shake hands on the deal over a pint of best ale.

One of Buckingham's annual ten Fairs was called after the Landlord's wife "Ann

North" and "her" Fair occurred every New Year's Day.



The Woolpack's key position attracted other establishments. On the opposite side of the track to the Old Ford, The Bull opened around 1836 and within three years The New Inn was established to serve the hot, thirsty workers of Buckingham Gas Works on the other side of the Ford. Cross river rivalry led to an annual Tug of War between teams from the The Woolpack and The New Inn, a tradition that was revived by The Buckingham Society in 2004 when an inter-Pub Tug of War competition was mounted during the Buckingham Big Bash.

The Woolpack has not always been the peaceful retreat by the river that it is today. In November 1823, a serious disturbance broke out at The Woolpack. It started with an argument between a soldier and a drover. The soldier called to five of his comrades to help him out. Soon, there was a pitched battle with soldiers attacking

customers using whatever came to hand. The soldiers "won", whereupon Buckingham folk rallied to defend the town's honour. When the town's people entered The Woolpack, they were met by soldiers with fixed bayonets! Eventually, the soldiers retreated upstairs where they were later arrested by their commanding officer. His first thought was to lock the culprits in the town Gaol (now The Old Gaol Museum), but he realised that without a strong guard, the building and its lone gaoler might be overrun by the incensed crowd.

The report in the Northampton Mercury suggests that "many were wounded but no lives were lost". During the fracas, Mr White, of The Three Cups had his watch stolen and, as he grabbed the soldier who did the deed, Mr White's arm was smashed by a shovel. The Commanding Officer threatened to turn that culprit over to the baying mob. To escape from rough justice, the soldier indicated where he had hidden the watch. Finally, the Commanding Officer marched his troops off to safe quarters in Aylesbury, flogging The Woolpack Six en route!



Heritage Open Day Literary Lunch

Carolyn Cumming

Sunday 9 September, 12.30 for 1.00 pm
at
**Akeley Village Hall, Church Hill,
Akeley MK18 5HA**

As part of this year's HODS, The Buckingham Society and The Swan & Pen Literary Society are co-hosting a literary luncheon.

This very special event is being held to launch the fourth Swan & Pen anthology, *"Echoes of the Past"*, which – appropriately – will be published in this the 60th anniversary year of Flora Thompson's death.

Her famous trilogy documenting rural life, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, is, of course, one of the most renowned and best loved local literary achievements but did you know that Enid Blyton was a Buckinghamshire lass? Or are you familiar with the work of Mary Leaper, another local lady whose literary fame spread beyond her native environs?

We are honoured to have Dr John Clarke (President of the Swan & Pen Literary Society; Professor of History at Buckingham University and Honorary Editor of *Records of Buckinghamshire*), and Amanda Nicholson (contemporary novelist and Vice-President of the Swan & Pen Literary Society) to talk about these fascinating ladies, whose talents should also be recognised as part of our local literary heritage.

Tickets for this event will include a two course luncheon, a glass of wine and coffee. The cost is £15.00 per head.

Akeley Village Hall is a splendid new addition to the village of Akeley and offers a spacious venue with ample parking approximately three miles north of Buckingham on the A413 Buckingham – Towcester Road.

Tickets can be purchased from:

Pat Phillips,
Secretary of the Swan & Pen Society;
Email: patt@phillips57.fsnet.co.uk
Tel: 01280 821191

Carolyn Cumming, Vice Chair,
The Buckingham Society;
carolyn.cumming@googlemail.com
Tel: 01280 816226

The Old Gaol Tourist Information Centre
in Buckingham;
Buckingham.t.i.c@btconnect.com

NB

Please apply for tickets at the earliest opportunity. Closing date Monday 3 September.

Why not also take the opportunity to see the new Flora Thompson exhibition at the Old Gaol? See Tony Webster's article on page 10.

Letters to the Editor

Tony Coult

Further to our recent request, Mr Coult has kindly sent us a CD of some of his childhood photographs he took when he lived in Buckingham. Please consider sending your photos in of everyday life in the sixties, seventies and eighties to add to our fledging archive.

We lived in Moreton Road until my Dad got promoted to be manager of the Westminster Bank in c.1959/1960 when we moved to live above the shop. My room was on the third floor nearest the Town Hall so when Beat Music hit the culture in c. 1963, I used to hear bands thrashing out covers of the Swinging Blue Jeans and Kinks as the backstage area was near my window. I was too young and shy to actually go into one of these events.

My Dad was always an independent-minded Tory who, unusually for the

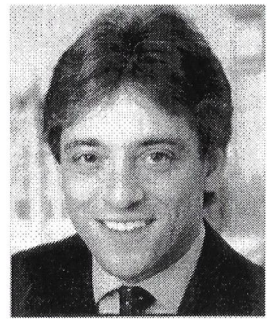
times, refused to join the local Masons like his other Bank manager mates. He was treasurer of the Rugby club and his night off at the boozer was the weekly RUFC meeting at the White Hart. My mum was a Labour supporter from time to time. I famously remember the day Robert Maxwell got elected in Buckingham - 1965 was it, why didn't I photo that? – he did some kind of grandstanding speech in the square and she went and stood with the cheering hoi polloi rather than the shocked Tories that had never guessed that the Westminster Bank could shelter a leftie. She used to work as a Night Sister at the National Heart Hospital in Maids Moreton.

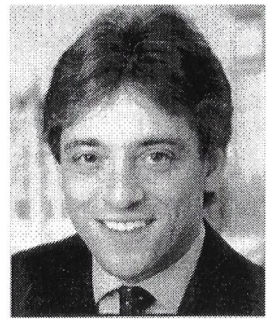
I went to school at Maids Moreton primary, now a private house, then went to Akeley Wood as a day-boy (it was a prep school). I think the plan was that I should go to Stowe but I failed some exam or other and ended up in a minor public school in Northampton.

I did a bike trip round Buckingham a couple of summers ago – perhaps the nicest thing was to discover that Scotts Lane in Maids Moreton, where 50-odd years ago I used to walk to primary school is barely changed.



Guest Writer

 **John Bercow MP**



The Buckingham Society invited John Bercow, Member of Parliament for the past ten years, to write about some of the

work he does both inside and outside the constituency.

In this first article, he invites us to look at the plight of the Burmese people, an issue that, in his capacity as a member of the International Development Select Committee, he has been able to explore in depth.

As a parliamentarian, I think it is my duty to take up local, national and international matters. It is my great privilege to represent the people of Buckingham and to do whatever I reasonably can to stand up for their interests.

However, we all have a duty to think about the world beyond our borders. For my part, I am a member of the International Development Select Committee. It is in this capacity that I travel to some of the poorest countries in the world. I am also Chairman of All Party Parliamentary Groups on Genocide Prevention, which works on issues such

as Darfur, and on Burma.

I have a long standing interest in the plight of the people of Burma. For too long, they have suffered repression, torture and hardship. I first visited the Thai-Burma border in April 2004 with Christian Solidarity Worldwide. With them, I crossed covertly into Burma itself. I was deeply moved by the experience. Since then, I have campaigned both inside Parliament and out, to highlight Burma and to call for a more effective international policy towards it. I feel passionately that the world must do more to help ease the situation in Burma and to foster the transition to democracy.

The International Development Select Committee has just completed an inquiry into the Department for International Development's policy towards Burma. We travelled to the Thai-Burma border and were horrified by the conditions there. We met with numerous groups that are active both on the border and in Burma. We also took evidence and held inquiries with campaigning groups, charities and representatives of exile groups. Our report was published in July and it called on the Government dramatically to improve its policies.

Burma suffers a political, human rights and humanitarian situation as grim as any in the world today. The country is run by an utterly illegitimate government which spends 50% of its budget on the

military and less than a \$1 per head on the health and education of its own citizens. The thugs and impostors who rule the roost practise some of the most egregious human rights abuses known to mankind. Rape as a weapon of war, extra-judicial killings, water torture, mass displacement, compulsory relocation, forced labour, incarceration of political prisoners, religious and ethnic persecution, the use of child soldiers and human minesweepers, and the daily destruction of rural villages, especially in eastern Burma, are all part of the story of savagery that has disfigured Burma.

The scale of need is huge. People lack access to food, water, sanitation and the most basic health and education provision. Twice over the last three years, I have met just a handful of the 500,000 internally displaced people in Eastern Burma and the 100,000 living in refugee camps in Thailand, victims of the wanton savagery of the Burmese Army. My encounters with these remarkable people rank amongst the most profound experiences of my adult life. Harrowing accounts of children dying from malnutrition, women perishing in childbirth and people succumbing to HIV, malaria and tuberculosis will remain indelibly imprinted upon my mind if I live to be 100. Most shocking of all was the experience of meeting children who told me they had seen their parents shot dead before their eyes and parents who witnessed their children's summary execution while they were forced to watch.

There is much that we can all do to bring about change in Burma. The All Party Group does excellent work. We regularly

host meetings in parliament, have laid down parliamentary motions and have met with ministers and officials from other countries and the UN. Each year, we host a reception to mark the birthday of Aung San Suu Kyi, the elected leader of Burma who has been held under house arrest for more than eleven years.

Personally, I have pledged not to travel to Burma officially until there is democracy. At present, there is a burgeoning tourist trade. The hotels in which western tourists stay have been built with forced labour and the profits go straight to the military junta, not the people. The Burma Campaign UK has produced a 'Dirty List' of companies which trade with and profit from Burma. Wherever possible, I try to avoid using these companies. I have written to a number of them to urge them to reconsider their policy which props up the regime. I also do what I can to support people by sharing my experiences.

This month, Shang Pun, a Burmese refugee living in Thailand who was in Britain for three months to intern with the Burma Campaign, spent time work-shadowing me so that he could learn about parliament and democracy. Such experiences are essential to capacity building. They will help people in community based organisations to campaign for democracy and to help to run the country when the transition occurs.

I am in touch regularly with local Amnesty Groups within the constituency and with other concerned individuals who take an interest in Burma. I would

urge those who are interested in this matter to do what they can to support the campaign for democracy in Burma.

Whether it is pledging not to travel to Burma, to avoid companies on the Dirty List, to write to a company or a minister, to write to a political prisoner in Burma or to attend Burma Campaign events,

there is much that we can all do to support the people of Burma.

*This is an abridged version of John Bercow's article – for those who would like a copy of the full essay, with more details on the issues in Burma, please email the editor:
warren.whyte@buckinghamssociety.org.uk*

Too many signs. Too little landscape design

Warren Whyte

On a recent stroll up Western Avenue and through the woodland area behind Castle House, I was surprised at how one can hardly see the wood for the signs. Is this the best we can do for one of our treasured green spaces?



Society Executive seek new members

Play an active part in the Society!

At the last AGM, the Executive was delighted with the input and ideas discussed at the workshop session. The Society also announced that 2007 would be its "Year of the Tree".

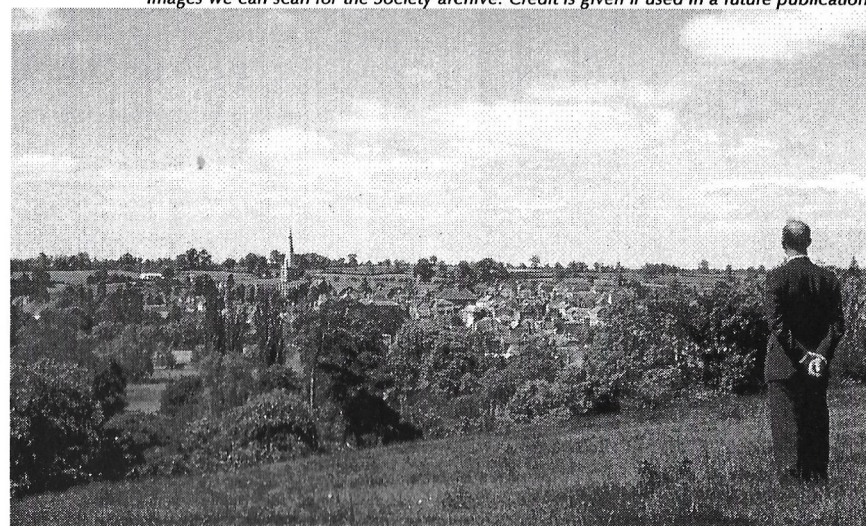
Some members may be wondering what we have done so far. The year started with great intention and a very heavy workload, but the Executive has suffered a number of set backs with ill health and work related pressures. We have maintained our planning and green spaces interest groups, taken a major role in the Community Plan Circular Walk, and our events programme restarted this

month, but the planned special projects haven't progressed as planned.

It has been a couple of years since the Executive was joined by new blood. So there is a great opportunity for someone who has a little spare time, and maybe an interest in tress, to join the Executive.

Interested members should send their details and interests to the Chairman (details on the inside cover) and the successful candidate will be able to stand for election at the November AGM. We are also in need of an Honorary Secretary.

Another photograph from Tony Coult showing the view of Buckingham taken in the sixties. Where are your photos of the sixties and seventies? Get in touch with Warren Whyte if you have some images we can scan for the Society archive. Credit is given if used in a future publication.



Town & District News

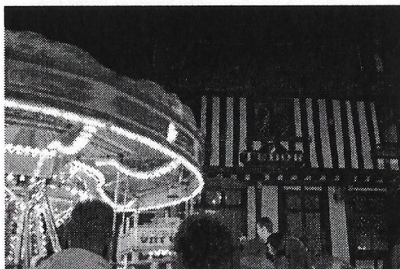
Warren Whyte

Buckingham's New Mayor

Following the local elections in May, the Town Council elected Howard Mordue as the new Mayor for 2007. The formal Mayor's Reception, known as the Mayor Making, was held at the Buckingham Community Centre on 1 June.

Charter Fair

The annual Charter Fair comes to Buckingham on Saturday 13 and 20 October. In this day and age, it is a delight to see something so idiosyncratic in our town centre. The traffic diversion is a small price to pay for the whole of Buckingham to have an excuse to come into town!



Buckingham Summer Festival

Due to the rains and the resulting flood in Chandos Park, the Society was unable to have its stall this year. If there is anything you wanted to buy, or talk about, do please contact any of the Society Executive – details on the inside

of the front cover. There are also back copies of some of the magazines available if you are missing any issues!

New Tree Wardens

Buckingham Town Council nominates the town's Tree Wardens and due to the recent elections in May, a new list has been issued: Councillors T. Bloomfield, H. Cadd, D. Isham, H. Lewis, R. Newell and R. Stuchbury.

Theatre Naming Competition

As work begins on the new theatre in Aylesbury, the District Council is holding a competition to see who can come up with a name. The closing date is 31 October 2007. If more than one person suggests the winning name, those people will be entered into a draw for the prize. Email your entry to: newtheatrecompetition@aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk

New Buckingham Town Trail

Preliminary work is under way for the new edition of the Society's town trail leaflet as stocks of the current one are depleted. We are advised by the Tourist Information Centre at the Old Gaol that it is a popular publication so the new edition is a priority. We will take the opportunity to add some sights that missed out in the last edition. Look out for the new issue later this year!

Notes & Queries

Editorial Information

Articles are commissioned by the editorial team: David Peevers, Ed Grimsdale and Warren Whyte.

As well as keeping members of the Society informed, the magazine is also a chance for you to write about something that interests you about our town. Suggestions and ideas for articles are always welcome. Contact: warren.whyte@buckinghamssociety.org.uk david.peevers@buckinghamssociety.org.uk historian@buckinghamssociety.org.uk

Next Issue

Submissions and article ideas for the Winter issue should reach the editorial team by end of October 2007.

Letters on topics raised in the magazine are always welcome – email the editors.

Copyright Information

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Charity Details

The Buckingham Society is a registered charity (number 268503).

The Society's mail address is: c/o The Dragon Gallery, 19A Market Hill, Buckingham MK18 1JX

Further Information

Civic Trust: www.civictrust.org.uk
ANTAS: www.antas.org.uk
ASHTAV: www.ashtav.org.uk

Design & Layout

Design and layout by Warren Whyte at whytedesign.co.uk.

Abbreviations

As a matter of editorial policy, I keep abbreviations to a minimum. Sometimes few will slip through. Some of the most common ones are:
AVDC: Aylesbury Vale District Council
BCC: Buckinghamshire County Council
BCP: Buckingham Community Plan
BTC: Buckingham Town Council
SEEDA: South East England Development Agency

Latest News

The web site is updated regularly: www.buckinghamssociety.org.uk

Website Advertising

Advertisers and sponsors are invited to help support the website on a monthly or seasonal basis. Please contact the Editor for details.

AGM Advanced Notice

The 2007 Annual General Meeting is Thursday 29 November.

Corporate Members

We are pleased to receive support from these corporate members:

Aerodex-Floyd

www.aerodexfloyd.co.uk

Buckingham Nurseries and Garden Centre

www.buckingham-nurseries.co.uk

Dragon Gallery

19A Market Hill, Buckingham MK18 1JX

Phillips Print & Stationers

Ford Street, Buckingham MK18 1AQ 01280 812692

If your business is interested in becoming a corporate member of The Buckingham Society please contact the membership secretary listed on the inside front cover.

Next Event

Wednesday 19 September, 7.30pm

Developments at Stowe Landscape Gardens

A talk by Richard Hill, the National Trust's New Inn project manager.
Room MB1 in the Mason's Building, Hunter Street, University of Buckingham.

Address Label

www.buckinghamssociety.org.uk