

The Cookham Society



PHOTOGRAPH - Bellrope Meadow' by Barry Weare

Registered Charity No. 257224 | messages@cookhamsociety.org.uk

February 2020 Newsletter

SPECIAL AGM EDITION:

- 2020 AGM Agenda on the back page
- Borough Local Plan
- Battlemead Common

THE AGM SPEAKER THIS YEAR IS PAUL SEDDON

Paul Seddon is a management consultant who lives in Stubbings and is Chairman of the Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society.

He is working with others to increase the flow of new archaeological research in East Berkshire and has enlisted the support of the world-class Archaeology Department of the University of Reading to develop new archaeological investigations in Cookham.

His talk at the Society's AGM is entitled, "Raking up the past -



Cookham from the Ice Age to the Domesday Book".

Paul Seddon

TOM DENNIFORD, THE SOCIETY'S CHAIRMAN ASKS, "IS THE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN FIT FOR PURPOSE?"

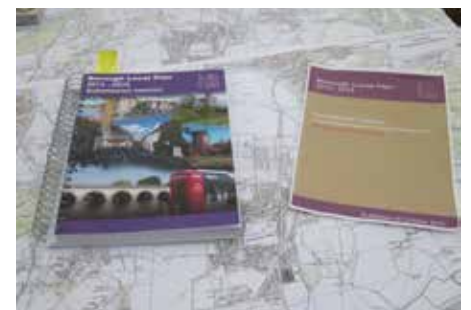
Planning legislation requires local authorities to prepare Local Plans for their areas, with the intention that new development is plan-led rather than being at the whim of developers. Local Plans have to be kept up-to-date and they are now expected to look forward 20 years.

The reality in the Royal Borough is somewhat different. The existing Local Plan became time-expired in 2006, 14 years ago, and since then, successive councils have struggled to bring in a replacement. 18 months ago, a new plan began the first stage of its public inquiry amid accusations from many quarters, that it did not comply with government guidance. Unsurprisingly, the inquiry soon came to a halt, after the inspector had indicated there were several fundamental issues, which needed to be resolved, if the plan was to be considered 'sound'.

Some of us may have thought, that after a few months, the Royal Borough would have dealt with the inspector's concerns and the inquiry would have resumed. How wrong we were! Last October the council published, what was in effect, a complete revision, running to more than 360 pages and accompanied by

33 supporting documents and invited further public input. Since our previous comments can still be progressed when the inquiry resumes, on this occasion we chose to make representations only on four specific policies: (1) to continue our support for the identification of the Poundfield as a Local Green Space; (2) having discovered that the Royal Borough will now have a surplus of land for housing, to restate our objections to development of land at Lower Mount Farm and Strande Park; (3) the diminution of Green Belt protection for Cookham Dean; and (4) a new policy for tall buildings, which might be damaging to Cookham Rise. Our full representations can be found on the Society's website.

We now wait to hear the inspector's views on the Borough's position and to learn when the inquiry will be reopened.



Picture by Tom Denniford

DESIGN AWARD

The Society's President, John Bowley presents last year's Design Award winner, Karina Mellinger, with her specially cast blue plaque. The award was in recognition of the imaginative alteration and modernization of Chapman's Orchard.



Picture by Tom Denniford

BRIDGE NORTH OF STRAND WATER

The Green Way footpaths run southward from Cookham Moor on either side of the Fleet Ditch and Strand Water. They are Rights of Way (ROW) and are much used by locals and visitors. Just north of Strand Water, there is a short link track between the eastern and western paths. This track is not a ROW but over the years has been extensively used by walkers as it creates an attractive circular walk from the Moor.

Last summer, it was unexpectedly blocked by the new farmer taking over the management of the land. Following representations from the Cookham Society, the



Blocked Strand Bridge, by Barry Weare

land-owner, (Summerleaze), has now installed a gate adjacent to the bridge and re-opened this track this as a Permissive Path. To ensure that this route is never blocked again, the Society is supporting a claim to have the link formally declared a Right of Way.



Strand Bridge Gate, by Barry Weare

HORSING AROUND

Cookham's bucolic charm has long been enriched by its thriving equestrian life and the Society has fought long and hard to support Cookham's stabling and its horse population. The Society staged a determined battle to try to prevent Woodlands farm, which supported a livery and small offices, from being converted into executive housing, but the Borough chose to give permission for redevelopment. Cannons Court Farm was also converted from livery to housing. That, along with closure of the stables at White Place Farm, has seen a marked decline in local livery provision. In truth, the problem is really an economic one. We try to help where we can, but landowners can make more money out of redundant farm buildings by converting them to housing or commercial properties, than they can from running them as liveries.

LOWER MOUNT FARM

Borough Throws out Huge Equine Centre Plan

When Lower Mount Farm applied for a change of use to the large field south of Long Lane from "agricultural" to "the keeping of horses", we were supportive, although we made it clear that if subsequent stables were required, we would expect redundant farm buildings to be used, rather than new structures being erected in the Green Belt.

Happily, the RBWM Panel turned down a recent application for a very large building in the open paddock. The application proposed the erection of a new building nearly 23 feet high and covering more than 15,600 sq.ft.

It would have led to more horse traffic using the narrow lane, with no direct connection to the local bridleway network.

We are delighted that the openness of the Green Belt has been protected.



View towards Lower Mount Farm, by Tom Denniford

DEFENDING THE DEAN

Cookham Dean's unique character comes partly from the loose and wide spacing of its houses. It differs from its near neighbours, such as Bisham and Burchetts Green, which enjoy defined settlement boundaries under the Borough Local Plan, but the Dean is "washed over" by the Green Belt with no determined boundary.

If its character is to be protected, infilling and division of plots is to be firmly resisted. In 2017, we opposed an application in Job's Lane to subdivide the plot and turn it into



April Dene, by Barry Weare

two houses and both the Borough and the Inspector turned it down. Last year, we opposed a similar application to build two additional houses in the garden of April Dene on Warners Hill.

The Borough refused the application, but the developer has now appealed. We have sent a further objection to the Planning Inspector and are hoping to hear that the appeal is refused. We want to keep the Dean open and green.

BATTLEMEAD COMMON

Public Open Space or Nature Reserve?

It is now more than a year since this area to the south-east of Widbrook was bought by the Borough to add to its portfolio of open space. It comprises three degraded areas of farm-land and several parcels of scrub, all of which have significant ecological interest. Additionally, a section of the White Brook runs through it.

Our photos show its attractive location, with its views across the river up towards Cliveden with its historic associations with the Astor



Cliveden from Battlemead, by Barry Weare



Spring Cottage from the Thames towpath, made infamous by the Profumo scandal, by Barry Weare

family and the Profumo scandal of the 60s. Its position adjoining the towing path provides an opportunity for walkers to take advantage of the footpath network between Maidenhead and Cookham.

Local wildlife groups have expressed their concern about the potential conflict between people, especially those with dogs, and ecology on the site. Since much of the land has been relatively undisturbed for many

years, it now provides a habitat for a wide range of species, some of which are protected. From the Society's point of view the White Brook and the land adjacent to it are important, as part of the means by which water is returned to the Thames during floods and we would not wish to see this diminished. But the land is also an important additional area of public access in this part of the borough and it must be possible for an accommodation to be reached between nature conservation and public enjoyment.



East Field, by Barry Weare

BIRDS ON BATTLEMEAD COMMON

Local expert naturalist, Brian Clews, gives an insight into the rich birdlife on the site.

Years ago I wrote to the Royal Borough suggesting that the southern part of White Place Farm be obtained as a nature reserve due to the undisturbed wilderness sections it contained. How gratifying that this land is now owned by RBWM and re-named Battlemead Common. A significant feature is a natural wetland area which attracts some of the scarcest winter migrants.

The bubbling calls of Teal on these ephemeral pools reveal genuinely wild birds, birthed in such places as the Altai Mountains, seeking refuge before returning east to breed.



Buzzard balancing, courtesy of Gordon Langsbury

Hooting contact calls of Wigeon from North America reveal their presence, grazing the water's banks. Snipe flick in and out of surrounding vegetation and this winter, a fine Stonechat deserted its heath-land summer home to enjoy the peace of Battlemead.

Naturally, predators are drawn to this plenteous repast and a Peregrine was noted helping itself to one of these Teal, and Barn Owls raised young here in recent years, supported by its bountiful supply of voles. Buzzards produced young these past two summers in a significant pine whilst dashing Hobbies became hoovers of insects during the seasonal grassland mowing.

The coming springtime will see passage wading birds such as Common and Wood Sandpipers, Redshank and Ringed Plovers, and hopefully the regular mating of Oystercatchers here may at last result in young.

With the numerous resident species we are familiar with, some 75 species of bird have



Marsh Tit, courtesy of Mick Vogel

already been recorded. Do take a stroll sometime to take in this amazing avian haven.



Peregrine, courtesy of Gordon Langsbury

The Cookham Society

(Registered Charity No. 257224)



NOTICE is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at the Chartered Institute of Marketing, Moor Hall, Cookham, on Thursday 5th March 2020 at 7.30pm.

Prior to the formal business of the meeting

Paul Seddon, Chair of Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society
will give a talk entitled:

Raking up the past – Cookham from the Ice Age to the Domesday Book

A G E N D A

1. Notice convening the meeting
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the 53rd AGM
4. Matters arising
5. To receive the Reports of the Officers for 2019
6. To receive the Trustees' Report and the Accounts for 2019
7. To elect the Officers and Committee for the ensuing year (see Notes (a) and (b))
8. To elect a President for the Society for the coming year
9. To transact any business approved for discussion under Rule 13.8.9 (see Note (c))
10. Any other business

Tom Denniford (Chairman)

Refreshments will be available after the conclusion of the meeting

The Society would like to thank the CIM for kindly allowing the Society to use its facilities free of charge.

Notes

(a) The present Officers and Committee Members are: **Chairman**, Mr T Denniford; **Vice-Chair**, Mrs L Penston; **Secretary**, Mrs L Penston; **Treasurer**, Mr M Chapman; **Membership Secretary**, Mr O Wardell-Yerburgh.

Committee members: Mr J Kitching, Mr B Perry, Mrs L Peters, Mr D Scarff, Mr M Springate, Mr B Weare.

President: Mr J Bowley

(b) Rule 13.4 states: "Nominations for election of a member as an Officer or an ordinary member of the Committee must be made by two members of the Charity in writing, consent having been given by the nominee, and must be in the hands of the Secretary of the Committee at least 7 days before the meeting (ie the 26th February 2020). Nominees must declare any financial or political interest which is likely to be of concern to the Charity and such information shall be made available to the meeting". Nomination forms can be obtained from the Secretary (Mrs L Penston, 01628 473862, email: l.penston@yahoo.com).

(c) Members wishing to raise any matter under Rule 13.8.9 are requested to notify the Secretary (Mrs L Penston) not later than 26th February 2020.