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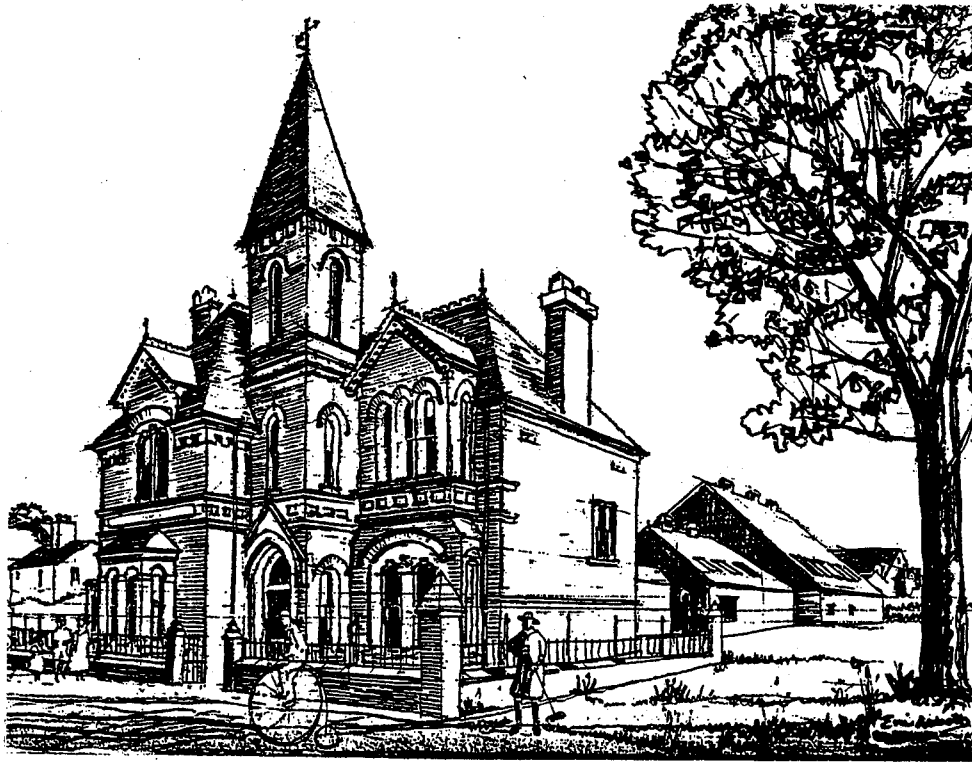
Summer 1992

The Harborne Society

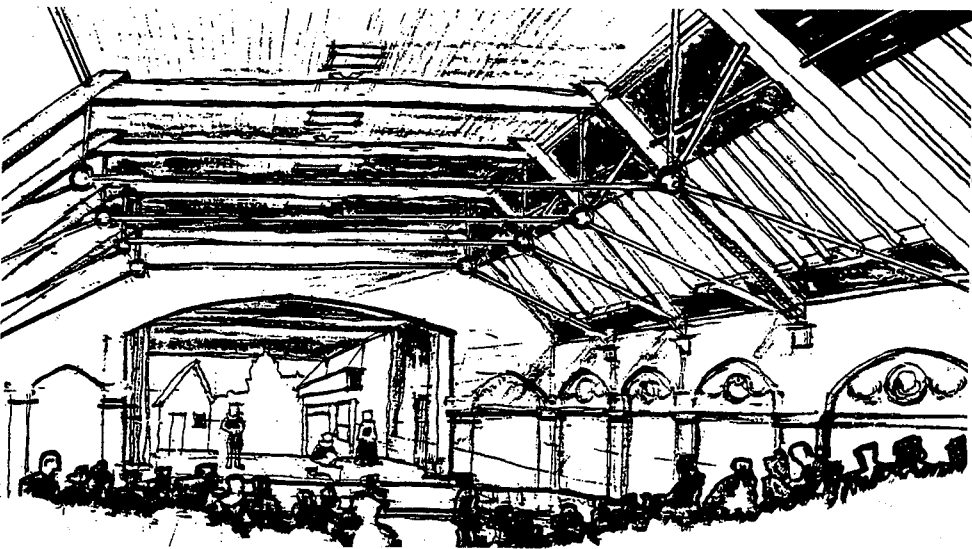
# NEWS

## THE HARBORNE AND EDGBASTON INSTITUTE

By Andrew Brooker-Carey



*The Institute in Station Road c.1878; note the two theatres at the rear.*



*Internal view of the larger theatre. Drawings reconstructed by Eric Abbott*

The centenary of "The Institute" passed uncelebrated some 15 years ago, and similarly its closure as a public building went largely unremarked upon some 75 years ago. In a rather understated way, the Institute reopened to the public 18 months ago (as "The Old Bakehouse at The Institute" - an antique shop), and so, as the building seems to engender a lack of regard for anniversaries, perhaps now is as good a time as any to reflect on one of Harborne's more grand surviving Victorian edifices.

When first opened in 1878, the Institute stood imposingly alone in Station Road, a rather jolly Gothic revival two-storey building with a tall tower and railings to the front. Today, bar the railings and tower, it remains remarkably unaltered, although now it is somewhat less notable, being set back amongst the later Victorian terraced houses.

The Institute was born as a result of that grand Victorian tradition of encouraging artistic development and educational endeavour within the local community, and it was one of several similar Institutes within Birmingham. In those days one senses there was a determination to make things happen - an idea was raised, committees formed. The £4,500 construction costs were raised from the gentry and business classes of Harborne and Edgbaston, and within a remarkably short space of time a building was finished, which contained two theatres (with an 800-seat capacity), changing rooms, a reading room, library, cloakrooms, classrooms, rehearsal rooms and accommodation for the caretaker.

Continued on page 2

With much pomp and circumstance the great Victorian Shakespearean actor of the day, Sir Henry Irving, laid the foundation stone. He and the entourage arrived from the City via a specially-commissioned train to Harborne Railway Station, a mere stroll away. There was bunting; there were crowds and music. Irving's speech, the music that was played and the full guest-list are all recorded in great detail, as is the complete list of subscribers' names and addresses. Many of these will be familiar to local residents today.

From this point on so very little is known about the Institute. We are told that "every season the Committee spared neither time, trouble nor expense to secure an attractive programme of lectures and entertainments". This was the hub of

social and artistic life in the community and we can pick up snippets - a "café chantant" in 1915 in aid of wounded soldiers, Hilaire Belloc giving a lecture, the first movie film shown in Birmingham, well-subscribed art and educational classes, "facilities for the young of the town". Generally, though, there is precious little detail with no surviving photographs, theatre programmes, reviews or annual programmes. Why did it really go bankrupt in 1916, who was the caretaker, what was the name of the first movie, and where are all the records? There are a lot of questions to be answered.

On its closure the building was sold to the Chad Valley Toy Company and used as their print works; a local newspaper reports at the time "From now on the walls that have echoed to the laughter and

applause of concert audiences will resound to the sounds of commerce; truly, its glory is departed". A number of local residents remember this period of use well.

When I took over the property in 1991 it was derelict and in a sorry state. Remarkably a lot of its internal detail has survived in superb condition - the caretaker's kitchen (now the café) is virtually unchanged, all doors and windows are original (sadly, only one of the many grand fireplaces remains). "Sam's Garage" next door was the coach-house, the car spares depot is housed within the theatres. It would be nice to see the whole complex being granted some statutory protection. I plan to replace the railings and mount a permanent exhibition of the building's history.

## Chairman's Letter

Dear Harborne Resident,

Once again we present a newsletter intended for all Harborne residents in the hope that you will find it interesting and may perhaps be encouraged to join us.

What is The Harborne Society? It is an amenity society which aims to reflect local environmental and community interests. We are a voluntary body composed of people who give their time, expertise and energy to looking after Harborne.

You will see from the technical report how we monitor planning applications for new buildings and developments. We aim to make constructive criticism and to represent all of you in a collective voice. We watch over our listed buildings and our conservation areas hoping to increase their number when possible - this year has seen the listing of Harborne Fire Station. We are also here to advise and help the residents who need us.

Harborne is still known to most of us as the 'village'. We foster this spirit of community with our monthly meetings and social events. Our speakers for the coming year are given in this newsletter. I am sure there must be something to interest you. Why not come along? You will have the opportunity of telling us your views. Surely we should all take an active part in the protection and appropriate development of our village?

It is with great regret that I have to report the death of our first and only President, Miss Madeline Aston, on July 6th. She will be greatly missed by all of us, both for her support and

advice and for her friendship. To many of us she was The Harborne Society.

Yours sincerely  
*Mary Abbott*  
(Chairman)

## Miss Madeline Aston 1910 - 1992

"Fear no more the heat of the sun  
Nor the furious winter rages,  
Thou thy worldly task hath done  
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages."

We were privileged to know Madeline both as a friend of our family and one of our greater family, The Harborne Society.

Madeline, along with Charles Parker and others, gave much thought to the nature of a community and thus The Harborne Society was born in 1960.

Madeline died peacefully on 6th July. Her funeral service took place at St. Peter's Church, Harborne on Friday 17th July 1992. So strong were our memories that to those present, in a packed church, it was more of an affectionate adieu than a sad occasion.

Peter Miles recalled that whilst watching 'Cymbeline' at Stratford Madeline was reciting certain verses under her breath. She commented "What a wonderful speech for a funeral!" This inspired the reading of the above quotation.

The Reverend C. J. Evans gave the address. He said that Madeline was a much loved and respected person who died with dignity. She had such

personal calm and sense of purpose that she was able to choose the hymns for her own funeral service. He recounted Madeline's working life in education and her many involvements in City organisations. She was a true daughter of Harborne and had worked hard for the community. Everyone could paint their own picture of a long and purposeful life.

In describing her life, the Reverend Evans said that two words sprang immediately to mind, dignity and rapport. She was a fine no-nonsense Christian, with deep theological insight.

As a great lover of Shakespeare it is fitting that her ashes will be scattered on the river Avon.

The Society has sent a donation on behalf of us all to the Friends of the Museum and Art Gallery as was Madeline's wish.

We should like, however, to see a more permanent memorial in Harborne and would welcome your suggestions.

The Society intends to publish a biography in a future newsletter. Any contributions would be welcome.

*Eric and Mary Abbott*

# RECOLLECTIONS OF HARBORNE (Final Part)

By Harold Edwards

## Harborne Horse Show

It is a surprising fact that when harking back to the "old days" I have never heard any of my contemporaries refer to Harborne Horse Show. I don't remember for how many years the Show existed but I certainly went once. It was held in the field belonging to the two Misses Bullows in Metchley Park Lane, now Metchley Park Road and the main approach road to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It was then a tiny lane which led to Follows's farm, the yard of which was just about where the Hospital begins.

The Misses Bullows were sisters and horsewomen of some repute, one of them being probably the Pat Smythe of her day. In later life she married Lord Chief Justice Wright. The sisters' house and stables were in the apex between Somerset Road and the lane, and I'm pretty sure her house was named "If not".

There was also a "Best turn-out" for local tradesmen's horses and carts. There was keen competition here between bakers, milkmen, coal merchants and Corporation entrants too. Powell's the bakers were a strong fancy. Happy days!

## Personalities of Note

Mr Shaw, the chemist, and family were held in great esteem, especially by people living at the lower end of the village. Cut fingers, boils, burns, fainting turns, etc., were treated across the counter, with, very often, no charge being made.

Charles Scarf and family were also very much respected. People came quite a distance to buy Scarf's noted bacon and Lickey eggs.

No history would be complete without some tribute to Dr. Hugh Morton. He arrived in Harborne in the 1920s, and his love of children was well known. He had an elderly two-seater coupé car with a small "dicky-seat", and I have seen him walk hand in hand with several kiddies, torn breeches, runny noses and all, and pile them all into his car for a short trip up the road. He was the junior partner to Dr. Middleton, and after the latter's retirement he was joined by Dr. Sherwell.

Dr. Middleton was a little too early for me to

record much about him, but one instance I do recall. On leaving school, I went as office boy to a local coal merchant. One day the doctor called in to settle his account. It seemed that he had a house build in St. Mary's Road, which was a bit unorthodox in design. My boss remarked on this, saying "That's a funny-looking house you're building". The response came very quickly - "It's not a house, it's a retreat for lunatics!"

To the left of the Salvation Army Hall were several small cottages which lay back a little to the present building line. In one of these lived Mr. Cutler, a self-employed property repairer. He had a ruddy face on which he sported a droopy yellowing moustache. With respect, he liked a tippie, which perhaps accounted for the fact that his dusty, ageing bowler always had a dent in it. I remember him coming to the house one day to do a roof repair. His gait was rather unsteady and my mother sent him home, to come again another day.

## "Tale" Enders of the Twenties

Mr. Dingley selling BP petrol from 2-gallon cans, via a large funnel, at 10d (about 4p) per gallon! What price fire precautions or storage in those days!

Small herds of cattle or flocks of sheep being driven up the High Street to Grigg's and to Mason's, the butchers. Slaughtering was done behind the premises.

Many local girls worked at Cadbury's at Bournville. They were nicknamed Cadbury's Angels. But they had to walk to and from Somerset Road Station for there were no Outer Circle buses then.

Newsboys had to meet the train at Harborne Station, collect the allotted papers which were rolled in bundles, take them to their respective shops and wait whilst they were being sorted, then make their deliveries. All this before school, and again in the evening.

I myself worked every evening except Wednesday, and on Saturdays, delivering boot and shoe repairs, for the princely sum of three shillings and fourpence (17p). My first full-time job brought me ten shillings (50p) a week.

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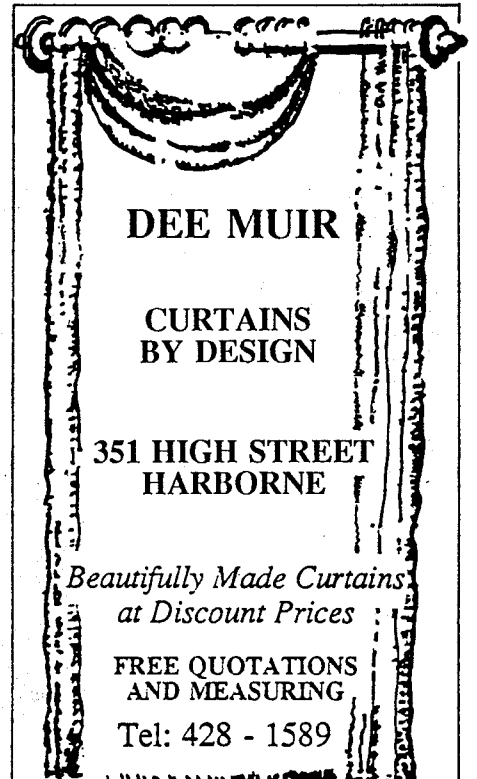
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# THE ART AND CRAFT EXHIBITION, AUTUMN 1991

By John Pratt

As its contribution to the village's celebration of 100 years in Birmingham, the Society held an Art and Craft Exhibition in the Clock Tower at the end of half-term week, open to invited guests on the evening of Thursday 31 October and to the public all day on Friday and Saturday, 1 and 2 November. Our aims were to interest people of all ages, to provide an active environment, and to develop the craft side. We had invited every Infant and Junior School in Harborne to submit a collage, and most of them did.

From previous experience we knew that good and early publicity was essential. Financial support was secured, and help was provided by the staff of the Recreation and Community Services. Entry forms came in slowly at first, but eventually we had to turn away entries from those who had left it late to apply. A number of people were asked to demonstrate their crafts, and we were delighted that so many of them agreed to do so.

We produced some 80 posters which were displayed around the village, and contacted Radio WM. As an eye-catcher, we hung a banner outside the Clock Tower. This had been a double sheet, given to us by Mary Abbott, which had been cut into two lengthwise and the pieces joined end to end. Sixth form students at Hillcrest School did the lettering; hems to hold cords were made at the top and bottom, and the banner was erected, not without difficulty. It looked marvellous, stood up to wind and rain, and certainly brought people in.

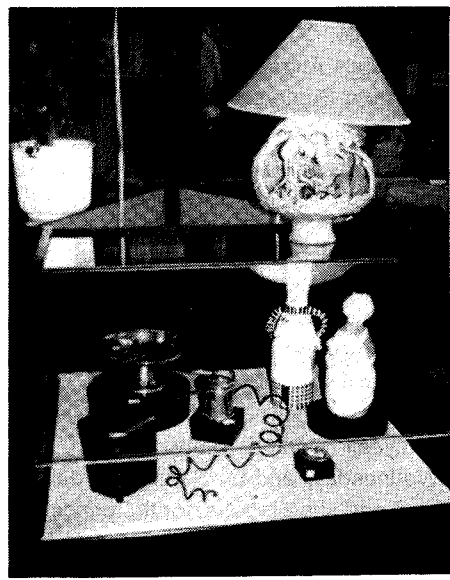
Gill Mallett, a Harborne jeweller and silversmith, agreed to organise the displaying of the craft exhibits. As she attends many exhibitions to sell her work, she owns display cases, curtains, etc., which she kindly lent to us. These gave the crafts room a very professional look.

Alf Pendleton helped to put wooden rails up on many of the Clock tower's walls, to make the hanging of paintings easier. These will stay as a permanent feature.

Voluntary helpers worked hard all day on Thursday, and by 5 p.m. all the exhibits were in place. Despite a dreadful storm that evening, the invited guests all arrived, and the Exhibition was officially declared open by Councillor Mrs. Renee Spector. The guests were served afterwards with wine and refreshments.

In all, over 720 people visited the exhibition during the three days. The demonstrations of such crafts as pottery, calligraphy, and pressed flower arranging were very popular. Many enthusiastic comments were made both in our visitors' book and verbally. Across all age ranges the degree of skill and craftsmanship was outstanding, and it was good to notice that many people were entering exhibits for the first time.

There are too many people involved for me to thank them all by name, but to all who helped in any way, thank you. The exhibition was a great success, a credit to our Society, and a marvellous note on which to end the Centenary celebrations.



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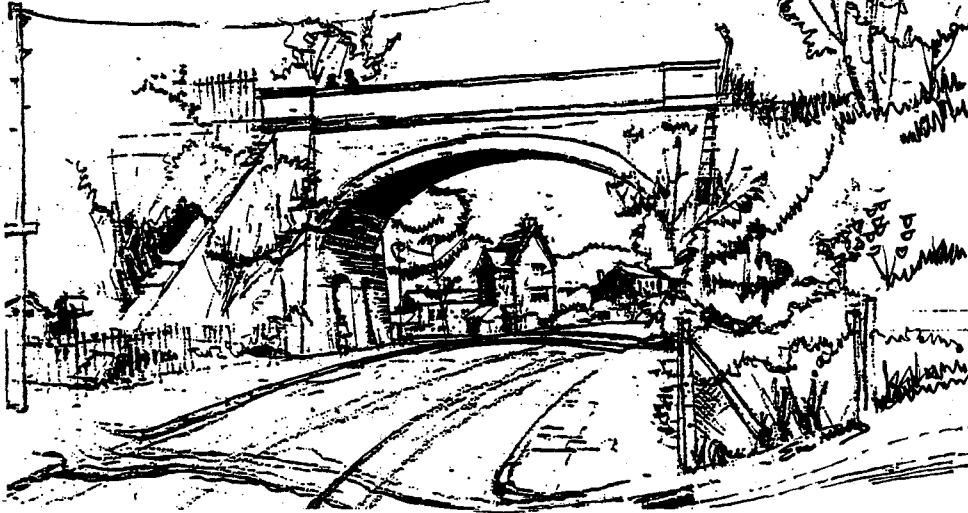
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# HARBORNE RAILWAY BRIDGE

By Steve Middleton



The Bridge, Park Hill Road

The old railway bridge in Park Hill Road is very much a landmark of Harborne. It has stood unused for a considerable time but now looks set to gain a new lease of life.

Although founded in 1866 the Harborne Branch railway was not opened until 1874. It joined the main Birmingham to Wolverhampton line near Monument Lane Station, Ladywood. In the early part of this century it suffered financial difficulties. Its Sunday service was stopped following complaints from Hagley Road residents, and the service itself was slow. One lady relates a tale from her childhood of picking daisies from the carriage window whilst travelling along at full speed!

Despite attempts to improve its efficiency and competitiveness, the passenger service stopped in 1934, although some goods trains ran until the sixties. The line was bought by Birmingham City Council and developed as a walkway. It was

officially opened in 1981. The bridge in Park Hill Road was left and was expected to be demolished. At this time the Harborne Society was amongst those who campaigned vigorously to save it.

With the present housing development under way to the south of the bridge there are proposals to extend the walkway across the bridge and into the site. The Council's Planning Department is seeking a derelict land grant from the Department of the Environment to help renovate the bridge. The developer, McCarthy & Stone, has had to pledge a sum of money towards landscaping and opening up the southern end of the bridge as part of its planning approval.

(The Editor, who used to travel to school on the "Harborne Express" in the early 1930s, has many happy memories of it, such as the day when the train accidentally included a corridor coach!)

## STOP PRESS

### Multi-Faith Centre Garden Party at Harborne Hall

This event was very successful in spite of the weather. Many people toured the beautiful Victorian Hall.

The Harborne Society 20 questions on how well do you know your Harborne was won by  
1st Prize - Mrs Hawkins,  
9 Cadleigh Gardens  
2nd Prize - Mr G. Grainger,  
66 Hamilton Avenue.

Prizes were kindly donated by The Harborne Traders' Association.

### Society Vice-Chairman

Our Vice-Chairman, Mr John Pratt, will be working away from Birmingham during the week in future and, although remaining on the Committee, is resigning his office. John has done valiant work for the Society and we are pleased that we shall still have his support.

His place as Vice-Chairman will be taken by Dr Mary Lambourne, 35 St. Peter's Road, B17 0AT, 426 1523.

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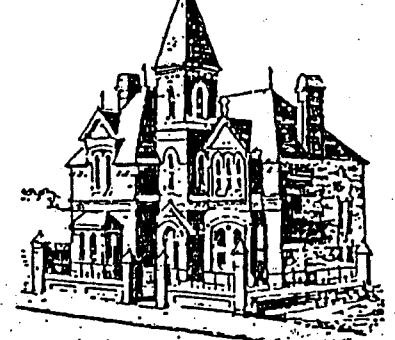


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# TECHNICAL OFFICER'S REPORT

By Raymond Hackett

A brief note from a very green Technical Officer:

I am very conscious of the history of wisdom, devotion and hard work offered to the Society by successive Technical Officers - and particularly my immediate predecessor, Michael Perraudin.

I am also very conscious of the great pressure in some quarters to prefer, for obvious reasons, what is drab and utilitarian in building to what is more in sympathy with the tone of Harborne.

We will try, in every way we can, to encourage all those who strive for the conservation of what is important historically in Harborne and other areas. We will try and look constructively and sympathetically at any plans that try to combine the proper needs of modern life with the timelessness of many of our buildings.

Since I am so new in office I am asking that John Pratt's report given at our recent Annual General Meeting, covering a year when Michael was in this seat, a fairly warm one, is published as the summary of the work of the Technical Sub-Committee up to that time.

I hope any members and others interested in Harborne will feel able to ring me on 427 6159 about technical matters.

## REPORT 1991/1992

(Michael Perraudin and John Pratt)

This is in three separate parts.

1. Developments on or close to the High Street.
2. Developments in other parts of the village
3. Other technical matters.

### 1. Developments on or close to the High Street.

1.1. Application recently received to build on vacant and occupied land between the High Street next to the Salvation Army hall and Metchley Lane. Office block and landscaped car park.

1.2. **Lingfield Court** proved to be a headache for developers as the leases offered on the shops are not being taken up quickly and the flats are going more slowly still after considerable modification. The arches have turned out to be a complete design disaster.

1.3. **146 High Street** (old Radio Rentals/Barnardo's) A pitched roof is being added and the Britannic Assurance is to move in.

1.4. **Rock Candy Mountain** Demolition has taken place. Rebuilding has started; the front is to remain. Coral's is to move in to one part. We are concerned about the South Street elevation, and the site will be watched. A lot of work by many people saved what we have.

1.5. **Michelle's** Now the Abbey National Building Society, but we have had some influence on the front of the building.

1.6. **King Edward's site (from the Abbey National)** We talked to a conservation architect who produced some good plans, but, as yet, this has been taken no further.

1.7. **All-Electric Garage** John Leek, who owns the car business, has shown several Committee members round his site and given us an idea of some plans about developing it. Unfortunately this is likely to involve the demolition of all buildings on the site, with the exception of the old Police Station. We have commented on the provisional outline, welcoming the opportunity to do so at an early stage. We now wait with interest to see what happens next.

1.8. **King Edward's Serpentine Road site** The developers have withdrawn, supposedly due to the recession, and as a short-term measure an open market has been proposed for Friday and Saturday. We have objected on the grounds of car parking, traffic congestion, danger to pedestrians and increased litter. Many residents are against the proposal and are requesting a public meeting to discuss the proposals by the Council. *(This scheme has now been withdrawn - Ed).*

### General

We have seen a loss of important retail

outlets that are being replaced by commercial enterprise. In the last year the balance has gone too far.

### 2. Developments in other parts of the village.

We have received information of numerous plans and have commented unfavourably on some. The main areas concerned are:

2.1. **Park Hill Road** The building of houses has been going on for some time and the developers are to contribute towards the completion of the Harborne Line Walkway.

2.2. **Birmingham Royal Institution for the Blind / Queen Alexandra College** All available land has now been developed. Although we have had planning details we have not objected. The planners have told the College that they will accept no more development on the site.

2.3. **Milford Road** This is a site behind Milford Road and extending into private land at the rear of Doré House and Hewson's garden centre. Two plans have been narrowly rejected, but a further Outline Application has been received and the indications are that it will be passed. Detailed plans will undoubtedly reveal more.

### 3. Other Technical Matters

3.1. **Unitary Development Plan** Following our submissions on the draft UDP we were very pleased to see a number of changes in the final version. We still had objections and these were put forward by Michael Perraudin at a public enquiry in December 1991 and followed up by an extensive written report.

3.2. **Traffic** A report was completed in June 1991 which covered the traffic problems of the main part of the village as we saw it. Copies were widely distributed and many people were in general agreement with the content. As a result the consultant traffic planner spent an evening with the authors and was informative about his brief and methodology, as well as complimentary about our report.

3.3. **Queen Elizabeth Hospital site** As far as we know there has been no further development, but now the political paths have been cleared we are expecting developments soon. This topic will generate a great deal of interest and we have considered meetings with other interested groups or an open meeting.

3.4. **Harborne Church Farm Golf Club** We are glad that this matter seems to be happily resolved. The old



professional has been paid off, and the acting professional has a permanent contract.

**3.5 Green-Up** The last twelve months have seen two of the three sites cleared up and we think much improved, but more helpers are required. The work is not too hard, but co-ordination is needed. Particular thanks to Mr and Mrs Barnett.

**3.6 St. Peter's Junior School** We have given some advice to the Action Group and are keen to support where we can.

We have continued to be as active as possible on the technical side. Much of the excellent work was masterminded by Michael Perraudin, who has now moved to Moseley.

The message must be that pressure is currently needed through quantities of individual submissions. The Committee will continue to present its views and the Society's views, but you can play a part too. When you hear about an issue, check the position with the Technical Officer,

Raymond Hackett, 427 6159, or with any Committee member, and write your own letter. This is, we consider, the best way to ensure that the views of individuals, as well as those of the Society, are known.

#### STOP PRESS

We are very pleased to report that some of our committee have met with representatives of the King Edward's Foundation and their agents.

A profitable discussion took place and future meetings are envisaged.

## THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

By Jenny Buchan

The 32nd Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on Wednesday 13 May 1992 at 7.30 p.m. in St. Peter's Church Hall, Harborne.

The many members who were present first heard a report from the Chairman, Mrs Mary Abbott. Mr John Pratt then gave the Technical Report, as Mr Michael Perraudin, who had been Technical Officer for most of the year, had resigned from the Committee. These were both very informative and brought members up to

date with what had happened during 1991-92. The Financial Statement was then presented in a very clear and detailed form by the Treasurer, Mr William Curr.

There had been three resignations from the Committee - Mr Andrew Brooker-Carey, Mr Michael Perraudin and Mr Bill Renouf - but also three nominations - Mrs Mary Hackett, Mr Raymond Hackett and Mr Steve Middleton. These three were duly elected with all the remaining members of the Committee as listed overleaf.

A framed print of St. Peter's Church in the mid-19th century was presented to Mr Perraudin in recognition of the immense amount of work he had done as Technical Officer.

The Secretary then gave dates for all the 1992-93 meetings and details for the summer outing to Moseley Old Hall, near Wolverhampton, on Saturday 12 September 1992.

After the Meeting closed, there was time for members to view and discuss a most interesting display which had been mounted by members of the Local History Group.

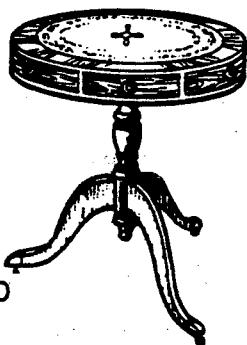
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## HON. SECRETARY

Mrs Jenny Buchan,  
50 Margaret Grove,  
B17 9LJ  
426 4854

## HON. TREASURER

Mr William Curr  
23 Vicarage Road,  
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426 4084

## TECHNICAL OFFICER

Mr Raymond Hackett  
40 Wentworth Road  
B17 9TA  
427 6159

## CHAIRMAN, SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Mrs Jean Curr  
23 Vicarage Road, B17 0SN  
427 4084

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr Eric Abbott  
Mrs Norma Bark  
Dr Homai Colabawalla  
Miss Margery Elliott  
Miss Ethel Ellis  
Mrs Mary Hackett  
Dr Mary Lambourne  
Mr Steve Middleton  
Mr Roger Miles

# THE HARBORNE SOCIETY PROGRAMME 1992 - 1993

By Jean Curr

## 1992

### 12 September - Saturday

Visit to Moseley Old Hall (see separate notice)

### 16 September - Wednesday

"Shrewsbury" Mr. A. Young St. Peter's

### 13 October - Tuesday

"Making Birmingham the Best  
Place in History" Miss. J. Legget Onneley House

### 11 November - Wednesday

"So you think you have  
problems" Mr. E. G. Reddie St. Peter's

### 8 December - Tuesday

"Stout and Oysters" Bill Canham reads a few of his poems  
St. Peter's

## 1993

### 2 February - Tuesday

"Book Plate Collecting" Mr. J. Wileyman Onneley House

### 22 February - Monday

Annual Dinner College of Food

### 10 March - Wednesday

"Justice of the Peace in  
Birmingham" Mr. F. L. Shaw St. Peter's

### 20 April - Tuesday

"An Environmental Ranger  
on the Canals" Miss. A. Simpson Onneley House

### 19 May - Wednesday

Annual General Meeting St. Peter's

All meetings, except the visit to Moseley Old Hall and the Annual Dinner, begin at 7.30 p.m. Onneley House is in Court Oak Road, St. Peter's Hall is next to the Parish Church.

## CREDITS

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## TIME TO RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION OR JOIN US (Year 1 April '92 to 31 March '93)

Make your cheque payable to  
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and send it to:

MR W CURR  
23 VICARAGE ROAD  
HARBORNE  
BIRMINGHAM  
B17 0SN

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