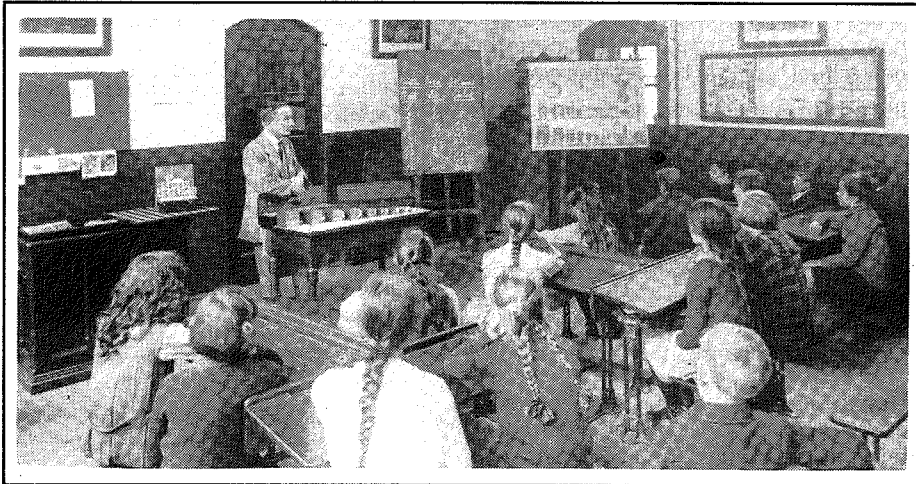


Number
Twenty-Seven

Summer 1994

The Harborne Society NEWS



St. Peter's C. of E. Junior School in earlier days

ST. PETER'S C. OF E. JUNIOR SCHOOL - THE NEW BEGINNING

by Laurie J. Fielding, Headteacher

Not since 1837, when the first pupils moved to the St. Peter's Schools from the Harborne Free School, then situated in the High Street on the site of the former Police Station, has the school faced such major disruptions in its daily life.

Perhaps it was because of the upheaval that the headmaster at that time, Mr. Samuel Bradley, was reluctant to move and was known to have commented, "Some powerful influence must have operated to transfer the school from the centre of the High Street to a remote position near the church, accessible only by a long distance of lonely paths through the fields."

The present-day disruption, however, has been viewed in an entirely different light, for it has heralded the commencement of the long-awaited building programme to the Junior School, due for completion in August this year.

Over the last 150 years the school has gradually increased in size, with rooms being added to accommodate the rising number of pupils and the changing attitudes to children's education. Although large-scale work has been undertaken in the past, such as the major refurbishment of the Headmaster's cottage in the mid-1980s, no programme has been as lengthy or as complex as the one that began on 1 March 1993.

Some might argue that the planning for the present programme began before 1939, for, by the outbreak of the Second World War, a scheme had already been agreed by the Church authorities and the Board of Education for a new school to be built, with £6,000 being raised by the Diocese and the remainder by grants.

The 1944 Education Act revised all such schemes, and when the school managers of the time made the decision to apply

for Controlled status within the Local Education Authority, rather than becoming Voluntary Aided within the Diocese, the £4,000 that had been raised for the Building Fund went towards the cost of rebuilding St. Michael's School, Bartley Green; the St. Peter's Schools, which covered the ages 5 to 14 years, became a Primary Infants and a Primary Junior School, and both departments were to be rebuilt "as soon as was practical".

The site was not large enough for both departments and when a new Church Hall for St. Peter's was opened in 1964, the Education Authority purchased the old hall and surrounding ground with a view to building a new Infants School on the site.

Sadly, due to a national economic crisis in the late 1960s, the work was postponed and it was not until later that the work commenced, following major protests from the local community and parents at the delay, and a general outcry from the press at the Dickensian conditions in which the children were working. One comment from an article dated 1970 referred to the Junior School hall as having been known as "The Black Hole of Calcutta" for over 20 years, because of the conditions.

It was after a similar campaign by parents and friends of the Junior School, which also received wide media publicity, that the news was finally received in June 1992 that work was to begin on the long awaited refurbishment to the Junior School the following Spring. On 1 March, with the snow gently falling, the first bulldozers rolled on site, ready for action.

Demolition work began with the removal of the Hausa block along Old Church Avenue, much to the relief of the local community, as the building had been a target for vandalism for some years, with broken windows, peeling paintwork and widespread graffiti making it a general eyesore. Further demolition followed with the removal of Year 6 classrooms and temporary accommodation being erected on-site to replace them.

As the building work progressed, the staff and the children adapted to the noise and chaos around them and coped with the cramped conditions with amazingly good humour. Even the lack of heating in the winter months, and being deprived of

school meals through lack of adequate dining facilities, failed to quash their spirits entirely, and it was with sighs of relief all round that the children moved into the new classroom block at the beginning of February.

The problems of the previous year were quickly forgotten as the staff and children revelled in the delight of light and airy classrooms, new furniture, carpets throughout and . . . heating!!! The new building also met with approval from parents and visitors, who were pleased that some of the original features had been retained.

One such feature, the stained glass window in the original Infant Department, now forms part of the linking doorway between the library and Year 6 classroom; to celebrate the "new beginning" of St. Peter's, the school has commissioned a stained glass window to link the old school to the new, and this is due to be dedicated to the pupils of St. Peter's, past, present and future, by the Bishop of Birmingham in October at a service of Thanksgiving.

In the autumn, the final phase of the project will begin as the school embarks on an ambitious landscaping project for the school grounds.

Over the next school year, the children will be designing and creating their own school environment, constructing habitats to encourage wildlife, ponds and

quiet areas, and recreating the original garden design outside the Headmaster's cottage.

To fund the stained glass window and the landscaping project, the school has launched an Appeal to raise £30,000, and anyone interested in supporting the Appeal should send their donations to the school. All contributions, however small, will be gratefully received. Members of the public can also purchase a "brick" to go in the Wall of Memory, at a minimum cost of £5 each; it is interesting to note that a former pupil at the school remembered taking home a booklet of bricks to sell to raise funds for the building project in 1939. The wheel appears to have gone full circle, but this time the new school building has become a reality.

Plans for the official opening next summer are already under way and the school is looking for the oldest surviving former pupil to assist in the ceremony; if you were a pupil at the school, and have any artefacts, photographs, or memorabilia relating to the school that could be loaned for an exhibition for the opening, please contact the school, as they would welcome hearing from you.

Despite its new building, the character and ethos of St. Peter's, dear to so many, remains unchanged, and the school will continue, as in the past, to be an integral link between the Church and the community for many years to come.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Harborne Resident,

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue of The Harborne Society News. We try to include as many items of interest as possible, and to reach out to over 10,000 people who live, work or have an interest in Harborne.

Let me provide answers to some of the questions which might occur to you:

When was the Harborne Society formed and why?

The Society was started in 1960 by a group of people who met together to discuss the nature of a community and how to increase the level of awareness and concern for the environment within that community.

What does the Society aim to do?

We have six main objectives:

- ❖ to encourage the spirit of community
- ❖ to promote interest in the character and history of Harborne
- ❖ to represent the interests of Harborne and its immediate neighbourhood to Civic and other authorities
- ❖ to put forward proposals for the future of Harborne's environment
- ❖ to encourage suitable conservation
- ❖ to oppose unsuitable development

What do we believe?

We are becoming more and more convinced that the works of the Society, whether dealing with people, buildings or spaces, should become more predictive. In our opinion we should not have to wait for the wrong sort of building: to be built on an inappropriate site, or for 'x' people to be killed before a traffic island is installed.

We must have clear objectives

- We already have proven means of dealing with problems (I prefer to call them challenges)

So let us all be both vigilant and predictive to make Harborne a better community and place.

Why not join us now? See the foot of the back page of this Newsletter.

Yours sincerely,
MARY ABBOTT
Chairman

LOCAL NEWS

Police Reorganisation

Mary Abbott

The West Midlands Police is currently undergoing a period of change. At the beginning of this year the five-division structure in Birmingham was reduced to three. Sub-divisional boundaries will not be changed until after January 1995 and are still under discussion.

For the moment this means that the Division Headquarters, which includes Harborne in its jurisdiction, is no longer

based at Rose Road, but has moved to Steelhouse Lane Police Station. Rose Road, however, continues as Harborne's police station and the main station for the Sub-Division.

It is intended that, by cutting the number of Divisions, a leaner, more effective management structure will be produced and the finance thus released will lead to more effective community policing.



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TECHNICAL REPORT

Duncan Smith

The last twelve months have seen the successful end to one campaign, the promise of an early conclusion to another and two important public meetings.

At The Harborne Society's successful Open Meeting in September 1993, Harborne residents were given the opportunity to question representatives of the City Planning and Engineer's departments, the local Police and a property consultant representing some of the landowning interests in Harborne. We felt that the meeting offered an important channel of communication to those who can shape our community, and as such is worth repeating on a regular (biennial?) basis. Your thoughts would be welcome.

A special meeting of the Harborne Ward Sub-Committee was called by Councillor Alden in February to consider a planning application for a "lo-cost" supermarket on the Old Court House site bordering High Street/Ravenhurst Road/Serpentine Road. The Harborne Society supported the local residents and strongly objected to the proposal. The scheme paid no attention to the surrounding architectural environment, it failed to make adequate parking provision and threatened to put pressure on an already overloaded road system. There is a need for both new retail units in the High Street and cheaper food shopping at the western end of the village, but this scheme was totally inappropriate. After a spirited debate the Councillors voted to recommend that the scheme should be rejected by the Planning Committee. The application has not come before the Planning Committee and there is some doubt if it ever will. Nevertheless this is an important site and we will maintain our watching brief.

As many of you will remember, when the Harborne Walkway was opened in 1981 there was great concern that the railway bridge would be demolished. As we reported in our Summer 1992 Newsletter, it was thanks to a Department of the Environment grant, and funding from the developers of "The Woodlands", that the bridge was saved. In spite of the twelve weeks of traffic chaos, the refurbishment of the bridge and extension of the Walkway, which was completed in early 1994, has proved a successful end to our twelve-year campaign.

Another ongoing campaign for The

Harborne Society has been the "Traffic" problem. After years of pressing for the City to tackle the increasing congestion, it seems that the City Council are finally about to do something - although they have not had the best of starts. Despite being committed to public consultation and wanting to avoid tackling individual roads in isolation, the City Engineers tried to close Park Hill Road to traffic without any consultation with residents. As the result of a vociferous campaign by local residents, this has been shelved. At another special Ward Sub-Committee meeting called by Councillor Zissman, the Engineers have now committed themselves to a lengthy consultation process, starting with the publication of detailed proposals and a full public meeting in September 1994.

Harborne is the focus for traffic travelling to the city from all points south and west. The resulting congestion forces traffic onto the surrounding residential roads, compounding the problems of parking and road safety. There are obvious physical constraints that limit the possible solutions. In 1991, The Harborne Society published its own Traffic Management report, which recommended the use of relatively cheap traffic-calming measures and changes to the traffic flow around the Village. Some of our suggestions have been taken up in the City's proposals; others have not.

We feel that the priorities should be to eliminate as much of the through traffic as possible, to improve road safety, reduce the speed of traffic on the residential roads and where possible to provide parking for residents. However not all of this is possible and some proposals would be counter-productive in other areas. We must maintain the High Street as a viable shopping area which in itself will put pressure on local roads and parking provision.

So, what is important for Harborne? There are no easy answers. But it is vital that YOU look at the plans, make your comments and that the City then takes notice. What happens to Harborne over the next twenty years is now up to you.

If you have a planning problem, or would like details of The Harborne Society's traffic study, please write to or telephone Mary Abbott, Duncan Smith or Raymond Hackett (addresses on page 6).

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ST. PETER'S CHURCH, HARBORNE

Edward Chitham

There have been several attempts to suggest that there was a church on the present site in Anglo-Saxon times. In conversation Bill Hardwick, former head of St. Peter's School, would point to the fields at Bishop's Croft as the site of the original village, surrounding an early church building. The Rev. Angus MacIntyre sometimes suggested that the stone built into the windowsill of the south transept was a relic of this earlier building, and the Rev. Michael Counsell wondered whether the base of a pillar now in the cloister was related to a cross where it might be supposed St. Chad preached.

Of these suggestions, one can say with some likelihood that the earliest village probably did include buildings at what is now called Bishop's Croft. St. Chad's boundary is certainly marked by the Chad Brook and the Bourn ("Boundary") Brook, the former dividing us from Warwickshire and the latter from Worcestershire. It must be possible that Chad came to Harborne, and the building of a church overlooking these boundaries seems quite probable. A link with what became Weoley Castle (the first element suggesting a pagan shrine) also seems likely. The pillar base in the cloister, however, does not seem to have much claim to be of Saxon origin. Much more attention needs to be paid to it by experts before a clear idea could be formed of what it actually is. The stone in the south transept must have been placed there in Yeoville Thomason's rebuilding of the late 1860s. It cannot be in its original position if we are to judge by the size and location of the Medieval church.

Though there are one or two schematic representations of Harborne church on early maps of Staffordshire and neighbouring counties, the first larger-scale drawing appears to be that of David Parkes, the Halesowen artist, dated 1806. This shows south aisle windows which appear to be of about the fourteenth century, consistent with the architecture of the tower windows. The east wall of the

church has been rebuilt in 18th century style. This rebuilding could date from 1777, the date of the weathercock.

A major rebuilding of the church took place in 1827, the aim being to extend its capacity by enlarging on the south. This caused some graves to be disturbed, and it may have been one of these which yielded the skeleton discovered in the Rev. Michael Counsell's time, on the same occasion as the foot of the sandstone pillar was discovered. There are two good pictures of this enlarged church, one drawing from 1832 and a sketch by the architect A. E. Everitt from 1842, now in the William Salt Library at Stafford. Details of this were used in restoring the tower windows during the 1987 restoration under the architectural authority of Douglas Hickman. Unfortunately, by far the most common picture of this 1827 church is the well-known engraving, based on a pencil drawing by Henry Lester Harris. This is a grotesquely malproportioned drawing, even the tower being very much out of scale. The date of this appears to be 17 June 1840.

During the 1827 enlargement, only the south part of the church was radically altered, a large oil painting of about 1840 or a little later showing some of the eighteenth century detail surviving at the west end, where at this time there was no main entrance; the same picture shows the present west door obstructed by steps apparently leading to the belfry. But a greater reconstruction was planned in the 1860s, the well-known figure Elihu Burritt being part of the rebuilding committee. Yeoville Thomason was engaged to plan the new building, and plans show that he intended originally to retain the north wall. This part of the church seems to have been the best preserved of the medieval building except for the tower. Details at the Diocesan Record Office at Lichfield show that there were some old box pews adjacent to the north wall, and it is

possible that some of the others would wish to retain their seats unchanged.

However, it seems that during rebuilding following 1867, Thomason must have discovered that the wall was in poor condition. We may hazard that some of this wall nevertheless survived, with windows at new intervals. At the east end, the church was extended beyond the limits of 1827, perhaps with new liturgical ideas of the altar and its function in mind. The tower was reinforced while retaining its exact outer dimensions, and the present appearance of both tower and nave largely dates from this time. Traces of the galleries which once ran the length of the nave are still visible.

A curiosity of the tower is the way in which it is sometimes rebuilt with three battlements on the south side and sometimes four, if our data is to be trusted. The medieval church, as rebuilt in 1777, apparently had three only; after 1827 there were four, but in the 1867 rebuilding three were substituted again. The large window in the west wall of the tower through which the ringing gallery can be seen appears to date from the fifteenth century, i.e., rather later than the other tower windows, but whether any details of this remote rebuilding will ever surface is an open question.

This is, of course, only a very sketchy outline of some of the changes to the fabric of the parish church during the centuries. There is a great deal more to be discovered and made public.

Sources

Pictures and observations at St. Peter's church
Victoria County History of Warwickshire, Vol. VII
Documents at Lichfield Record Office

BIRTHDAYS

Mary Abbott writes: Our congratulations go to Miss **Thelma Hadley**, who reached her 90th birthday on 11 July 1994. Thelma was a founder-member of the Society and for many years its Membership Secretary. She was often to be seen pedalling her bicycle around Harborne delivering Newsletters and collecting subscriptions. Few defaulters escaped her attention! Happy birthday, Thelma.

Our congratulations also go to the Editor's next-door neighbour **Mrs Ethel Irene Tustin** of Oakham Road, who celebrated her hundredth birthday on 21 July 1994.



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THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Jenny Buchan

The 34th Annual General Meeting of The Harborne Society was held on Wednesday 25 May 1994 at 7.30 p.m. in St. Peter's Church Hall, Harborne.

Detailed reports of the activities of the Society were given in turn by the Chairman, Mrs Mary Abbott, the Technical Officer, Mr Raymond Hackett and the Treasurer, Mr William Curr. These were all very informative and showed just how much work had been put in by many people who were concerned about the Society and our Environment.

Mrs Norma Bark had resigned from the Committee but there had been two nominations - Mrs Judy Powell and Mr Michael Darby. These two, along with the twelve members who were standing again, were duly elected as the Committee for 1994-95 (see on page 6).

The Secretary gave dates for the evening meetings in 1994-95, and said it was hoped to have an outing in September to the Needle Museum in Redditch.

Various issues were then raised and discussed, including the widening (or otherwise) of the High Street between Ravenhurst Road and Serpentine Road, the possible closure of Park Hill Road at the Railway Bridge and the general situation concerning shopping and parking/traffic in Harborne.


LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor has received several letters arising from her article on The Harborne Express in the Easter 1994 Newsletter.

Mr Roger F. Newman of Southwick, Trowbridge, Wiltshire (how our Newsletter gets around!), a Railway Historian, points out that the caption under the photograph was incorrect. The Special Train shown, which ran on 3 June 1950, was *not* the last one ever to run on the line; that ran on 2 November 1963, two days before the line was closed to freight traffic. He says that the locomotives on that occasion were 46429 and 46522, one at each end of the six coaches, and that he was on the train. The Editor regrets her error.

Mrs Catherine E. Ismay of Gordon Road remembers standing on tiptoe or on a brick on the footbridge over Harborne Station to watch the engine being turned round on the turntable, and says that the highlight of her holidays was a journey from Harborne to New Street and back. She also remembers going on a St. John's Church summer outing to "Follows' Field", for a picnic and games, in a well-brushed and clean coal-cart with a white sheet covering it, drawn by one or two horses.

Christine Shaw of Almondsbury, Bristol, formerly of Harborne, says that she went to King Edward's Grammar School, Handsworth. She used to travel on the 8.20 a.m. train from Harborne to Monument Lane, and change there for a train to Soho Road station, which was two minutes' walk from her school.



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THE HARBORNE SOCIETY ART AND CRAFT EXHIBITION 1994

At The Clock Tower, High Street, Harborne
Friday and Saturday, 28 and 29 October 1994

Duncan Smith Vice-Chairman, The Harborne Society

As you may remember, as part of the One Hundred Years of Harborne Village in Birmingham celebrations in 1991, The Harborne Society mounted a very successful exhibition of original artwork by local residents.

This year we are planning a similar event, and would welcome entries of paintings, drawings, collage, sculpture, ceramics, embroidery, bookbinding and other similar exhibits from local people. We are planning to have several "hands-on" demonstrations during the course of the exhibition, with special events on the Friday for the under 16s.

If you wish to exhibit, or if you know of other local residents who might be interested in taking part, please complete the tear-off slip below and return it as soon as possible to Mrs Jane Hitchcock, the exhibition organiser.

Exhibition space will be limited, so although we hope to display the majority of items offered, we reserve the right of selection where necessary.

We very much hope that as many of you as possible will be able to come along during the day on Friday 28 and Saturday 29 October (half-term week) and enjoy the wealth of artistic talent that exists in the Harborne area.

To Mrs Jane Hitchcock, 12 Albany Road,
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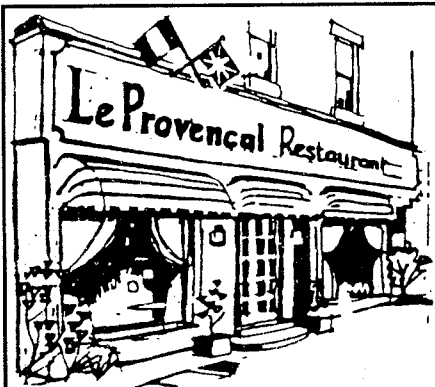
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PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS, 1994-95

Jean Curr

1994

Wednesday 14 September

"Waste Management" Mr J. Shields

St. Peter's Church Hall

Saturday 17 September

Visit to the Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch (members will receive a booking form)

Tuesday 11 October

"Archaeology in Birmingham" Dr M. Hodder

Onneley House, Court Oak Road

Wednesday 9 November

"BCOP - 50 Years of Voluntary Service" Miss B. Glasgow

St. Peter's Church Hall

Tuesday 6 December

"Working with Crime: Reflections on a Career in the Probation Service"

Mr R. Tebboth

Onneley House

1995

Tuesday 7 February

"Issues of Traffic Management" Mr A. Ross

Onneley House

February (date to be announced)

Annual Dinner

Birmingham College of Food

Wednesday 15 March

"The Birmingham Rep" Ms V. Butt

St. Peter's Church Hall

Thursday 4 April

"The Rivers of France: In the Steps of R.L.S." M. and P. Knox

Onneley House

Wednesday 17 May

Annual General Meeting

St. Peter's Church Hall

All meetings (except the Redditch visit and the Annual Dinner) begin at 7.30 p.m.

We hope that next season's programme contains subjects of interest to members. We are fortunate to have been able to book Dr Mike Hodder, the newly-appointed Planning Archaeologist for Birmingham, and are pleased to welcome Miss Barbara Glasgow, whose headquarters we are privileged to use on Tuesdays, as our October speaker. We look forward to sharing another fascinating excursion with fellow-members Mary and Peter Knox.

LIFTS TO MEETINGS

Committee Member Mrs Judy Powell, 426 3142, has undertaken to co-ordinate requests for, and offers of, lifts to meetings. If you require a lift to a particular meeting, or are able to offer one, please phone Mrs Powell in plenty-of time.

PATRON, OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE, 1994-95

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