

# The Harborne Society

Number  
NINE  
Summer  
1984

# NEWS



## LIFT UP THINE EYES!

When we look at a shopping street like Harborne High Street, much more so than with a residential street, our eyes focus on the ground floors and what they contain, and often we're scarcely conscious of the upper storeys. Obviously the shops themselves encourage this for their own reasons, with large, bright signs and prominent display windows designed to draw our gaze downwards. So when we do raise our eyes to look at the architectural features above the shop fronts — especially late at night, or on Sundays — they can come as a pleasant surprise.

Even in such a seemingly modest street as the High Street this is true; here too, many of the shop buildings repay a second *upward* glance. Look up and you see attractive mid-Victorian windows on buildings which were originally private houses; handsome balustrades surmounting some of the earliest shop-fronts which were built on to these houses when they were converted around 1900; interesting and quirky turn-of-the-century gables, classical pediments and even little

Gothic turrets on buildings some of which must have started life as private dwellings, or as chapels, meeting-halls or workshops. Even some of the plainest of the street's shop-buildings, like some of the small shops between Albany and Station Roads, often turn out on

closer scrutiny of the upper floors to be in fact very old, primitive labourers' cottages from the early 19th century, among the High Street's first buildings. Not only appealing visual details, but also tokens of the village's history, are to be found in these upper storeys.

Of course, not all these features are shown at their best. Often attractive upper-floor windows are



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partly obscured by sign-boards; windows themselves are bricked or boarded up, or covered by advertisements, or, most frequently, left unpainted when the ground-floor facade is redecorated; original frames are replaced by new ones in discordant styles; shops using a single building adopt contrasting signs and colour schemes, diminishing the building's harmonious appearance. This is a pity, for even if we don't often consciously examine the condition of these shops' upper

in curtains and blinds, tending the brickwork (painting or repointing) and the roofs and chimneys, making attractive use of lamps and plants, harmonising and scaling down their signboards, and altogether enhancing original features of their buildings. We think of the 'Rumours' hair salon, Michelle's Restaurant, the 'Harborne' pub and Miss Maxine's, Lloyd's Bank, 'Rock Candy Mountain', 'Tobias Shoes', to name a few. Such efforts benefit



storeys, it is still an important part of our unconscious awareness of the street scene. They *do* contribute much to the impression of well-tendedness and prosperity, or lack of it, which we have as we walk down the street.

But things are improving. Several businesses in the street *have* now included their upper storeys in their scheme of decoration, painting the windows, if possible renovating them in the original style, putting

the appearance of the premises concerned and the street as a whole out of all proportion to cost. They are positive and welcome developments which we hope will continue. For they not only make life visually more agreeable for those who live here, but, by making the High Street more appealing to outsiders as a place to shop, must also improve the area's prosperity and general well-being.

*M.F.P. and J.G.L.*





## TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT

by JEREMY LOWE, *Chairman Technical Committee.*

McDonald's Hamburgers Limited have, as anticipated, not given up in their attempt to persuade the City planners to allow them to take two units in the Bryants' development on the York Street/High Street corner despite their initial refusal. They have reapplied for units nearer York Street and not adjacent to the National & Provincial Building Society which the planners, it is reported, decided would break the rule of the new District Plan which forbids 'non-retail' development next to existing 'non-retail' use. Regrettably McDonalds are

taking two units effectively reducing the number of units on the site to four; previously there were nine shops.

As we go to press we hear that planning permission has now been granted, though the design of the shop front and signage will be the subject of a further application. Of all the fast food names McDonalds have to their credit a reputation for cleanliness and a conscience about the litter problem — which is more than can be said for some of the franchise operations.

The Committee and many mem-

bers of the Society are becoming increasingly concerned about the state of 118 Greenfield Road — the listed building known as the artist David Cox's house — which appears to be much in need of attention. The agent in charge is Mr. E. F. Hanson (ex Lord Mayor, 1978/9), who tells us that discussions concerning the financing of the work are taking place.

Other notable planning applications include the development of the site at 196 Harborne Park Road which necessitates the demolition of this unusual old landmark. The Secretary of State for the Environment has decided that Bromford Housing Association's development in the grounds of Metchley Abbey — Harborne's premier listed building — can proceed. The Committee remains concerned that the setting of this outstanding building will be destroyed. Bannister and Thatcher's old shop in the High Street is wanted for an 'amusement centre' and snack bar and the shops opposite the Green Man face demolition in a plan to develop the High Street/Nursery Road corner site.

Don't keep your views to yourself; why not tell us?

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS 1984-85

President: Miss Madeline Aston

Chairman: Mr. Philip Simpson

Vice Chairman: Mr. Malcolm Lever

and Mr. Eric Abbott, Miss Ethel Ellis,

Miss Thelma Hadley, Dr. Mary Lambourne,

Hon. Secretary: Mrs. Mary Abbott

Acting Hon. Treasurer: Mrs. Mary Martin

Chairman, Technical Committee: Mr. Jeremy Lowe

Chairman, Social Committee: Mrs. Jean Curr

Mr. Tom Magrath, Mr. Roger Miles, Mrs. Gill Wise.

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

With a society as large and as varied as The Harborne Society, it is always difficult to pick out just one or two topics to comment about. I should like to make two comments on past events which I believe show the tremendous back stage work which goes on and demonstrate how easy it is for us all to underestimate it.

The first concerns the small memorial stone recently fitted by the City's Recreation and Community Services Department in Grove Park, commemorating Thomas Attwood M.P. The end result is perhaps small but it belies the months spent on designing the layout, selecting the correct

stone, agreeing the position and details and finally getting all the work done.

The second event was the Summer Outing to the Jinny Ring and Avoncroft Museum of Buildings. Evenings spent telephoning, writing off for brochures, checking the premises and booking coaches, teas etc., were very nearly all abortive. Only 11 people had booked by the deadline date but after more 'phone calls and worried evenings sufficient members booked to make the whole trip a thoroughly enjoyable day. But it would have been so much nicer for Jean Curr if members had booked before the deadline date!

Next May we will be celebrating our 25th Jubilee and both members and non-members alike will be hearing much more about our cele-

brations. A personal hope of mine is that the Jubilee could be marked in a permanent and interesting way. Just as 25 years ago the enthusiasm and drive of a few people saw the founding of The Harborne Society, so I should like to harness a similar enthusiasm to found a Heritage Centre in Harborne. Housed in one of the many fine buildings we have in Harborne it would bring to life for schoolchildren, teenagers and all other ages, a shared heritage in this remarkable Town within a City — Harborne.

A Heritage Centre is not a pipe dream. It has succeeded elsewhere and with your help, I know it will succeed in Harborne. Think about it!

PHIL SIMPSON,  
*Chairman.*

# PROGRAMME FOR 1984-85

## 1984

- September 12th, Wednesday, St. Peter's**  
The Birmingham Botanical Gardens — Mr. L. Salt.
- October 9th, Tuesday, Onneley House**  
Samuel Johnson, a Rare, a Valuable and an Impressive Human Being — Mr. Robert Laslett.
- November 7th, Wednesday, St. Peter's**  
A Return Passage to India — Mr. W. Canham.
- December 4th, Tuesday, Onneley House**  
The Ruins of Forgotten Times — English Mediaeval Monastries — Mr Peter Hodson.

## 1985

- January 12th, Saturday, St. Peter's Church Hall**  
New Year Party, 7.00 p.m. — 11.00 p.m.
- February 5th, Tuesday, Onneley House**  
Promoting Social Innovation and Social Change — The Birmingham Settlement — Mr. Peter Houghton.
- February 19th, Tuesday, College of Food and Domestic Arts**  
Annual Dinner.
- March 13th, Wednesday, St. Peter's**  
To be arranged.
- April 16th, Tuesday, Onneley House**  
Stuart Crystal Glass.
- May 4th, Saturday, The Clock Tower**  
Silver Jubilee Celebration
- May 15th, Wednesday, St. Peter's**  
Annual General Meeting. Speaker : Miss Madeline Aston

*Note : All meetings commence at 7.30 p.m. unless otherwise stated.*

Cut along here

### APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE HARBORNE SOCIETY

(Membership is open to anyone interested in Harborne)

NAME: Mr/Mrs/Miss .....

ADDRESS: .....

TELEPHONE No: ..... Postal Code .....

#### SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Family Membership (children under 18) — £5.00

Single Membership (over 18) — £3.00

Half rates for Senior Citizens and Students.

TOTAL ENCLOSED £ .....

Cheques payable to 'The Harborne Society' to be sent to: The Hon. Treasurer, Mrs. Mary Martin, 11 Ethel Road, Harborne, B17 0EL.

Signature: ..... Date .....

Projects you would like to see the Society undertake:

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