

## Recent Chair's Reports for the AGM

### January 2023

Prof Sir Roderick Floud, Chairman of HVS writes:

The Society's activities have gradually returned to normal after the pandemic. We have experimented with different technologies for hybrid meetings, including live-streaming on the Haddenham.net Facebook page and Zoom, but have been able to welcome large live audiences to the library for successful meetings addressed by Bruce Alexander on local history, PGA Associates on the Streetscape Project, Matt Taylor on his work as a BBC weatherman and Rob and Fiona Daniel on their work with Hearing Dogs for deaf people.

The year concluded, as usual, with the Christmas concert given by the Witchert Chorale. We are, as always, extremely grateful for their financial support in a very generous return for our minor contribution to the event.

We have continued to support various village activities, including the Haddenham.net website, the Syrian refugee appeal and the current Warm Spaces initiative. Membership has increased during the year and our finances are in good shape, helped by an overwhelming rush for Pimms and beer at the sun-drenched village fete.

Covid interrupted our efforts to recruit members in the new housing developments, but we intend in 2023 to resume those efforts and to supplement them with another Community Fair in April. We hope this will enable the huge range of community activities in the village to be displayed to residents old and new.

HADSWAC, now under the chairmanship of Alan Thawley, has continued to campaign for safe walking and cycling in the village. It produces an online newsletter for supporters and has particularly encouraged participation in the Streetscape project under the aegis of the Parish Council. It is pleased that further work is now underway on the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit throughout the village, one of the most popular proposals arising from the public consultation sessions.

HADSWAC has continued to campaign for the walking and cycle route to Thame, now the subject of yet another feasibility study — I have lost count of how many such studies have been carried out since the route was first proposed over 25 years ago, but let us hope that this one finally bears fruit.

I shall be standing down as Chair of the Society at the AGM and take this opportunity to thank all members for their support over recent years. I am particularly grateful to all the officers and committee members who have demonstrated flexibility and ingenuity during some difficult times. Graham and Alma Tyack and Henriette Webb have provided tea and coffee at our meetings in the library and many thanks are due to them; Graham has also listed the Society's archives which have now been deposited in the Library.

I would, however, like to pay a particular tribute to John Brandis, my predecessor as Chair but also a committee member since the 1990s, with an interlude while he was a parish councillor. Working with Judy, he has given unstinting service to the village and exemplifies the friendliness and community spirit which we all so much value among those who live in our lovely village.

## January 2022

Prof Sir Roderick Floud, Chairman of HVS writes:

The end of 2021 brought the sad news of the death of Tom Bucknell, a former committee member and President of the Village Society and a very long-standing member. Tom was an important figure to all of us and I particularly remember his welcome to Cynthia and myself when we moved to Haddenham. A private family funeral took place in December and a public memorial event will be organised as soon as possible.

Like so much of all our lives, the activities of the Village Society have been inhibited by the Covid pandemic. Almost all our meetings, including successful election hustings, have been held via Zoom. They have been well-attended, but all of us miss the interactions which are only possible in a physical meeting and the opportunity to meet friends and neighbours.

The only physical meeting, addressed by Bruce Alexander, was particularly enjoyable for that and other reasons. So too was the visit of the Any Questions team to the village during the summer, at the invitation of Brian Bowman; I'm very grateful for the assistance of Pete Summerskill and members of the committee in setting up the Hall, acting as stewards and ensuring that the whole event went very smoothly

We have taken the opportunity to experiment with different modes of meeting and to investigate possible alternative venues, as the library is too small for adequate social distancing. However, Keith Milmer arranged and carried out a very successful live-stream on Facebook of Bruce's talk; it was widely viewed at the time and afterwards and seems to provide a possible way forward for our meetings, probably combined with the continued use of Zoom for at least as long as the pandemic continues.

Remote events do have the benefit of being accessible to those of our members and others who, for whatever reason, cannot attend a physical meeting. In the light of the Omicron variant, we will be holding virtual meetings for the time being.

I and the committee particularly regret the fact that we have been unable to arrange another Community Fair and to continue our practice of touring new housing developments to welcome newcomers to the village. Despite or because of the pandemic, the village is growing rapidly and we are anxious to do all we can to integrate newcomers into our community.

We are particularly concerned at the number of housing developments which are physically separated from the main centres of village life. We are also conscious of hostility which has occasionally been expressed towards newcomers and will work with others, such as the schools and churches, to understand and mitigate that hostility.

Many aspects of the work of the society have continued despite the pandemic. We are particularly grateful to Richard Hirst, Roz Owens and John Brandis, our planning sub-committee, for continuing to lead our comments on planning applications. We have had some successes, working with the Parish Council, in achieving improvements to applications; there have also been some failures, most notably that over the change of use of the Green Dragon from pub to private house.

It is often difficult for our members to realise how little power local residents, the Parish Council and even Buckinghamshire councillors have to affect planning and other decisions, despite government boasts about full consultation. Village opinion was divided on another decision, the cycle route along Thame Road introduced with minimal consultation, but our sub-committee on Safe Walking and Cycling has continued to campaign for improved consideration for the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

Cynthia Floud has now been succeeded as Chair of the Group by Alan Thawley and we are grateful to her for all her efforts over the past 13 years. HADSWAC hopes to play an important role in the Streetscape Project initiated by the Parish Council following a recommendation in the neighbourhood plan.

Many thanks are due also to the Vice-Chair of the Society, Jim Robins, to the Treasurer, Bill Burns, to the Secretary, David Hammond, to the Membership Secretary, Juanita Hughes and to the other committee members, who have supported me throughout the year.

We are very sorry that David Hammond is unable to continue as Secretary and thank him for all his work; we propose that Mike Cottrell should succeed him. In a re-arrangement of the work of the committee, we suggest that the Chair should be assisted by three Vice-Chairs and the committee proposes that Jim Robins, Gerald Knight and Keith Milmer should take those roles.

I am willing to continue as Chair on that basis for the time being, although I would willingly cede the position to anyone prepared to take it on. Please contact me if you would like to volunteer for that position or as a committee member (or to suggest someone else); we very much need more members and would particularly like to secure some from the newer housing areas and from a wider age-range.

## **January 2021**

Prof Sir Roderick Floud, Chairman of HVS writes:

In this most unusual and sometimes tragic year, the Village Society has tried to continue its work — preserving and enhancing our village. We have therefore joined with many other organisations to support residents, including our own members, and to foster a communal spirit. Specifically, we joined with the Fish scheme, at the request of the Parish Council, to provide a telephone helpline — 24 hours a day — which could be accessed by anyone in the village seeking assistance. It is perhaps a sign of the help that many were receiving from friends and neighbours that it was little used, but it was there for those who did need it. We have also joined the Parish Council, haddenham.net and the Bucks Herald in publicising services available to our residents.

We have continued to provide our programme of meetings, albeit via Zoom rather than by gathering in the Library. It has worked well, once some glitches were ironed out, and audiences have matched or exceeded those we would have expected from physical meetings. I am very grateful to the speakers, who provided excellent presentations and coped with the challenges of answering questions and contributing to discussion. We will continue with Zoom meetings while the pandemic and its restrictions lasts and so many of our members are confined to their homes.

The other work of the Society has continued "behind the scenes". I am particularly grateful to Richard Hirst, who has led the planning group and continued, with John Brandis and Roz Owens, throughout the pandemic, to plough through development and planning applications and to "attend" meetings of the Planning sub-committee of the Parish Council. We have worked with the Parish Council to comment on a number of applications, large and small, in particular concerning developments on the Aston Road/Stambridge Road site and the proposed housing north of Rosemary Lane. We have also continued to oppose successive applications and appeals for change of use of the Green Dragon by the current owner; it is gratifying that, so far, all applications have been turned down by planners and on appeal.

The Safe Cycling and Walking Group, chaired by Cynthia Floud, has continued its work and Cynthia is providing a separate report to the AGM.

All of us have missed the convivial events, the St George's day dinner and the Pimm's tent at the village fete, which we would normally have organised. Committee meetings, always pleasant occasions, have been conducted via Zoom and I would like to thank all the officers and committee members for their forbearance and their assistance with the helpline and in other ways. We are particularly glad that our help with fund-raising for the Syrian refugee appeal bore fruit with the arrival of a family in the village; volunteers led by Alison Watt have been supporting them in settling here, a task made much more difficult by current circumstances.

Equally difficult has been any attempt at attracting new members to the Society. Before the pandemic, committee members had visited several of the new housing areas, to welcome new residents and tell them about the Society's work. Such visits are impossible at the moment, but people are continuing to move to the village and it will be a high priority for the committee in the coming year — as soon as we are able to do so — to visit them. We will also hope, in 2021, to repeat the very successful Community Fair to show the enormous range of community activities which Haddenham is fortunate to possess.

## **January 2020**

Prof Sir Roderick Floud, Chairman of HVS writes:

The Society has had another successful year, with a mixture of interesting and informative talks on topics of relevance to Haddenham, another most enjoyable concert in association with the Witchert Chorale and a contribution to the village fete. We have also organised two Hustings events, first for the District Council elections and then, recently, for the General Election.

Both were very well attended and appreciated by the audience and candidates; although there is no particular reason why we, rather than another organisation, should be responsible for such events, we are happy to make this contribution to the democratic process. I am particularly grateful to our President, Brian Bowman, for his effective and gracious chairing of the two events.

Behind the scenes, our planning sub-committee has worked very successfully to advise the Committee on the responses which we have made to a number of planning applications. It is not often appreciated that this involves reading a very large number of complex documents, interpreting them to discover the real motives and intentions of developers and keeping track of the numerous modifications and resubmissions which are usually made.

We also try to keep in close touch with the Parish Council and, in most cases, we reinforce the views that they express. They tend to be blamed for the outcome, but they actually have little or no control over it. This is particularly the case at the moment, since the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) has still not been finally approved and, as a result, developers have much more freedom than should be the case.

We have particularly supported the efforts of the Parish Council in relation to the proposed development to the north of Rosemary Lane and have pressed, with them, the necessity of a footpath/cycle path from there, through the airfield developments, to the station.

We have worked closely with another sub-committee, the Safe Walking and Cycling Group. The furore over the refurbishment of the Green Lane has died down, as the vegetation grows, the birds return and flourish and the path is used by numerous walkers, cyclists, children and adults on mobility scooters, toddlers learning to ride scooters and bicycles; in short, it is, as we always hoped, a true community path.

The Group is now working closely with Bucks County Council in their efforts to extend the path, off-road, through Dinton and Stone to Aylesbury. An even more important objective, the similar

path to Thame, has moved a few steps further towards achievement, particularly with the availability of substantial funds from Oxfordshire and joint working by the two County Councils and Sustrans, the cycling charity. Public consultation on the need for a path — as if this has not been demonstrated at regular intervals for over 20 years — has recently taken place.

The Group has also mounted a successful "Report a Pothole" week and continues to press for safer routes for cycling and walking within the village.

Haddenham is not directly affected by the proposed Oxford-Cambridge expressway, although it certainly is by the extra million homes proposed along the route. However, we certainly do have an interest in the preservation of ancient woodland and landscapes, such as those in Otmoor, and we devoted one of our regular meetings to a presentation on the expressway and its consequences. This is particularly important as the Government, with Highways England, has refused to undertake any meaningful public consultation on the route or even to conduct an environmental assessment of this massive project; this is outrageous when a village as small as Haddenham had to make such an assessment of its Neighbourhood Plan.

We strongly support the efforts of the Parish Council, in pursuance of the Plan, to make Haddenham a more sustainable community, the topic of Margot and Martin Hodson's presentation to the AGM. Our President is pursuing his proposal to turn the area between the railway and Pegasus Way into a community wood, to encourage tree-planting.

We continue to hope that it will be possible to conduct a full professional review of traffic in Haddenham, to inform future decisions, but HADSWAC believes that the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit throughout the village — following on from the proposed limit in Dollicott — would be a substantial contribution to reducing pollution and encouraging safety. The Committee believes that the piecemeal introduction of parking restrictions, in response to pressures arising from Haddenham and Thame Parkway station, would not be a sensible or efficient course of action and that any restrictions should anticipate and take account of the likely consequences for the rest of the village.

The Society depends heavily on the work of its Committee members. We suffered a grievous loss, early in 2019, from the death of Jim Robinson, who made such a large contribution over many years both to the Society and to the village community. We have benefitted from the help of four new Committee members, Suzy Barron, Mike Cottrell, Gerald Knight and Jim Robins, and regret the resignation, recently of Suzy Barron for personal reasons. We also greatly regret the resignation, with effect from the AGM, of Brian Cole, Membership Secretary and previously Secretary, who with Hazel Cole has made an enormous contribution to the Society over many years. Finally, John Brandis is stepping down from his longstanding role as Vice-Chairman, having previously been Chairman for some years. He has also been an active member of our planning sub-committee and the Society is deeply grateful for his contribution in so many ways.

Like other voluntary organisations in the village, we are finding it increasingly difficult to fill places among our officers and committee members. The demand for voluntary work continues in general to increase, as local and central government seeks to shed responsibilities, while at the same time work and family pressures combine to reduce the availability of people of all ages, but particularly in the younger age-groups. The increased population of the village may offer some relief, but we do encourage all members to consider if they could spare a small amount of time to join the Committee.

## January 2019

Prof Sir Roderick Floud, Chairman of HVS writes:

1. The Society has continued to be active in pursuit of its objectives to preserve and enhance our village. I am very grateful for the support of its committee and, in particular, for the work of our Secretary, Graham Tyack, who is standing down at the AGM; he has been exemplary in this role and will be much missed. Mike Mingos, whose idea for a community fair was such a great success and who has also organised our programme of meetings, is also retiring and will be an equal loss; Roz Owens is also leaving the committee, with our thanks for her contribution, but will continue as a member of our planning sub-committee, where her expertise is particularly valuable. I am also grateful to Richard Hirst, who has chaired that sub-committee and to Cynthia Floud, chair of the Haddenham Safe Cycling and Walking Group. I shall be proposing at the AGM that Jim Robins, Suzie Barron and Mike Cottrell become members of the Committee and we would still welcome more volunteers. We have recently been very sorry to hear of the serious illness of Jim Robinson, long-standing and active resident of the village and a member of the Committee, and send him our very best wishes.

2. On behalf of the Society, I made several attempts to persuade the National Infrastructure Commission to engage in a proper public consultation before deciding on the "corridor" for an expressway between Oxford and Cambridge. The Commission would not even reply to letters from myself and other interested organisations, despite the best efforts of our MP, John Bercow, and neither Bucks County Council nor AVDC would conduct a public consultation before giving their advice to the Commission. In the event, the Commission's choice of the central route via Winslow will have less effect on Haddenham than would have BCC's preferred solution of upgrading the A418, but it is likely that we will still be affected by the additional million homes that the government intends to build along the route. However, the failure to consult or to conduct a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the different options for the corridor is likely to produce a legal challenge, not least from the organisations which are determined to protect Otmoor, so the outcome is uncertain and we shall have to remain watchful.

3. The long saga of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) continues. The Inspector appointed by the Government to examine the draft plan has, however, agreed that the Plan does not need to take account of the extra homes which will be needed in the Vale to help to meet the government's housing targets for the Oxford-Cambridge corridor; it therefore seems likely that the plan will come into force in 2019. In the meantime, the Society has made substantial comments on the revised plans for the Glebelands development and on the proposed development north of Rosemary Lane, as well as on a number of smaller proposals. Although the Society, with many residents, regrets the cessation of gliding on the airfield — together with the likely further development of the site for housing — we did not receive any encouragement from the Upward Bound Trust to make representations on their behalf.

4. The Society's programme of meetings — designed to address matters of current concern or interest to residents or to mark the achievements of villagers — has continued. We were very grateful to David Truesdale, chair of the Parish Council, for addressing the AGM about current planning and other issues. Other topics were: 100 years of the RAF, the suffragists, the funding of country estates and gardens, the Syrian refugee project, the memoirs of Phyllis Floud and driverless cars. We also held our annual dinner to honour St George and repeated our involvement in the Village Fete and our support for the annual Christmas concert of the Witchert Chorale.

Mike Mingos led a particularly successful trip, for two groups of members, to notable scientific sites in Oxford. He also chaired the group which organised a second very successful Community Fair; over 50 village organisations participated and their stalls were visited by about 400 people, including many new residents. We are grateful for the support of the Parish Council and the Haddenham Beer Festivals' Trust for the Fair; the Committee will shortly decide whether to repeat it as an annual activity or to wait for 18 months, the gap between the first two Fairs. The

Committee would be very glad to receive suggestions for topics of meetings for 2019-2020, the programme for which is about to be arranged.

5. The activities of the Safe Cycling and Walking Group are the subject of a separate report. The Society has supported the group, which during the year has been formally established as a sub-committee of the Society, in its efforts to improve the Green Lane from the north of the village to the A418, as a means of improving pedestrian and cycle access to Dinton, Stone and Aylesbury, a project included in the neighbourhood plan. Despite some opposition from a vociferous minority, the improvement has proved a success as it is now being well used by walkers, many of whom are accompanied by dogs, runners, cyclists, children learning to cycle, wheelchair users, horse-riders and the local hunt; the vegetation on either side of the tarmac path is growing back. Following the recent good news of the funding for an improved pedestrian and cycle route to Thame, after 25 years or more of lobbying, we hope that money will also be available for the safe connection of the Green Lane path to that in Stone and thus provide a safe walking and cycling route from Haddenham to Aylesbury.

6. The AGM will also receive a report from the group of residents which has promoted the project to house a Syrian refugee family in Haddenham. This proposal, originally made by a committee member, Alison Watt, has received very considerable support from residents and in particular from the churches in Haddenham and a project group has been established to raise the £30,000 which is likely to be needed. The committee has agreed that the Society should, as a charity, act as the sponsor of the project, as is required by the terms of the government's scheme, on the basis that no financial liability should be incurred either by the Society or, individually, by its officers, who act as trustees.

7. The Society's website has recently been renewed by Keith Milmer, to whom we are most grateful. It can still be found, in its splendid new form, at [www.villagesociety.org](http://www.villagesociety.org) and we will ensure that it is kept up-to-date as a guide to and record of the work of the Society.

8. On behalf of the Society, I have expressed our support to the group of residents who are seeking to purchase the Green Dragon and run it on behalf of the community.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish all members a very happy 2019.

## **January 2018**

Prof Sir Roderick Floud, Chairman of HVS writes:

This has been a successful year for the Society, with well-attended meetings, a slight increase in membership and a satisfactory financial result. I am most grateful to the officers and committee members, who have worked very well together to achieve these outcomes.

The major innovation of 2017 was the Community Fair, held in January at the Village Hall; over 50 of Haddenham's clubs and societies were represented and over 400 residents attended, packing the village hall for the whole afternoon. This Fair, the suggestion of committee member Mike Mingos, represented a real service by the Village Society to the village community. We are most grateful to the Beer Festival Committee, who provided generous funds for the event, to the committee members who worked hard to make it such a great success and to all the participants. We intend to repeat the event, in association with the Parish Council, in the autumn of 2018.

Otherwise, we have held a number of interesting and entertaining talks, attracting audiences of between 50 and 100; there have been a few hiccups with the audio and visual facilities in the Community Library and we are working with the Trustees of the Library in the hope that these problems can soon be resolved. We have repeated our enjoyable St. George's Day dinner in the

Green Dragon and have helped in general enjoyment of the Village Fête by providing Pimms and other drinks. Finally, we have again assisted the Witchert Chorale at their annual Christmas concert in St. Mary's Church and are again grateful for the donation to our funds that has resulted. The only unsuccessful activity, despite the best efforts of Brian Bowman and Jim Robinson, has been the annual summer walk; following low attendances for several years, we have agreed not to repeat the walk this year.

Behind the scenes, Richard Hirst and colleagues have worked as a Planning Group, scrutinising applications for housing developments and formulating our comments on the proposals. We have worked closely with the Parish Council on these matters and have achieved several substantial changes to the detail of proposals in the design, layout and materials of houses, even if we have not been able to moderate the flow of such applications, which now threaten to provide in the next year or two all the housing envisaged, in the Neighbourhood Plan and the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, to be built over the next decade. We have also made representations to the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) about their proposals for a new settlement near Haddenham in conjunction with the development of the Oxford-Cambridge corridor. We are grateful to David Truesdale, Chair of the Parish Council, for agreeing to speak to the AGM on these matters. There will also be a report from the Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling Group about their activities; the Group is an informal gathering of interested people which reports both to the Parish Council and to the Village Society.

Haddenham faces several challenges. The housing developments now taking place or being planned will increase the size of the village by about 50% and therefore bring between 2,000 and 3,000 new residents. If the proposals by the NIC result in the upgrading of the A418 to an expressway as part of an Oxford-Cambridge road and then attract a new settlement of 4,500 to 6,000 houses, our village would change out of all recognition. It is already experiencing, with many other communities in the south-east, the effect of high living costs in London, with more commuters, often with young families, coming to live among us. These developments are not necessarily negative, but they will demand a response.

The committee of the Village Society considers that it is therefore sensible for us to consider what our rôle should be. The Society is over 50 years old. It has never been mainly a preservation society, although it has always campaigned to preserve the historic character of the village. It has tried to maintain the friendliness of a village, in which neighbour helps neighbour, but also to enhance it through a wide range of activities and actions, as well as working with the Parish Council in such matters as the Neighbourhood Plan. It does not have the statutory responsibilities of the Parish Council and is therefore free to pursue what it thinks to be the best interests of the village at any one time.

But what in particular should we do? We want the thoughts and suggestions of members, but here are some questions which we can consider at the AGM and thereafter. Comments to [roderick.floud@btinternet.com](mailto:roderick.floud@btinternet.com) would also be very welcome:

How should we interact with other clubs, societies and organisations in the village?

1. In recent years, our programme has concentrated on matters of interest to the village or talks by villagers and we have not sought to duplicate other activities such as U3A. Is this the right approach?
2. Should we seek a more active role through such events as the Community Fair and try to act as the voice of the 'voluntary sector' in Haddenham, publicising and supporting its work?
3. Should we increase or decrease, or maintain, our focus on planning and development issues?



4. Should we campaign, though not on a party-political basis, on issues affecting the village, such as the funding and organisation of the NHS, the proposed closure of children's centres or the funding of the library?

5. How much focus should we put on transport matters, including walking and cycling?

6. There are a number of activities in Haddenham which support older residents or those who might be lonely or isolated. Are there other such activities which the Society might initiate or organise?

7. What should we do to welcome new residents to the village (and perhaps encourage them to join the Society) through events, visits or other activities? Should we consider sponsoring and supporting particular incomers — as Haddenham did with Belgian refugees one hundred years ago?

We will have an opportunity, at the AGM, to discuss these and other questions and the committee will then make proposals, which may involve some changes to our constitution and charitable objectives. If so, those will be carried through by the appropriate formal procedures.

Finally, the Society is entirely dependent on the members of its committee to carry out its work. We very much need, and will greatly welcome, new members and I hope that people will be prepared to put themselves forward, or to suggest others.