



# Newsletter

## Autumn 2021



*Proposed Housing Development north of Lucas Hospital*

At last we are able to contemplate holding and attending live meetings, among the first of which will be our Annual General meeting on Wednesday 17 November.

Meanwhile we have been attending to business. The plans from the consortium for 16,500 homes in the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location, together with a nature park just north of the Waterloo railway line, were approved by the Borough Council's Planning Committee on 18 May. Also agreed was the Council's own proposed route and delivery plans for the South Wokingham Distributor road, but not without strong concerns about safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and the insistence on an additional controlled crossing on the Finchampstead Road.

Not included at that time was an application from Charles Church in respect of land to the north of Lucas Hospital, with plans for 171 dwellings. Our Committee has responded with suggestions for specific improvements, particularly in respect of infrastructure provision. A decisions are awaited from the Planning Committee.

In our last issue we reported on an application from Beaulieu Homes in 2018 to build 74 houses on land near Hilton St Anne's Manor,, which was rejected on grounds of overdevelopment and lack of access to amenities. Subsequently further applications have reduced the number of dwellings from 55and then to 54. On each occasion we have objected that there has been no local consultation by the developers, no immediate access to green open space and a lack of connection to the Strategic Development it is claimed to offer. Beaulieu Homes' appeal to the planning inspectorate against the refusal of its original application, and its newer application, have yet to be determined.

The Council itself has submitted plans for 130 residential units and a 70-bed dementia care home at Toutley East. We have objected against the perceived overdevelopment, the proximity to the noise from the A329M and the inappropriate location of the care home.

So, despite the limitations imposed by Covid, we believe we have tried to argue for limits on development and careful provision where new housing is appropriate or part of overall strategy In this way we seek to speak for our members and for what we hope are the concerns of the local community in terms of housing increases and the protection of our town's heritage.

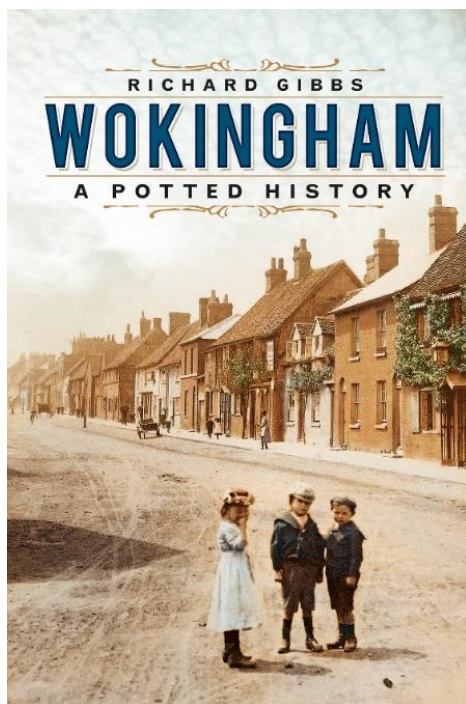
Peter Must, Chairman of the Wokingham Society

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## TOWN HALL

**WEDNESDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2021**

The Wokingham Society's Annual General Meeting will be held in the Town Hall at 7.45 pm for 8.00 pm on Wednesday 17 November 2021. There will be no limit on the number attending but we are asked to wear masks on entry to and when moving around the building. Members of the public are welcome to attend as well as members of the Society.



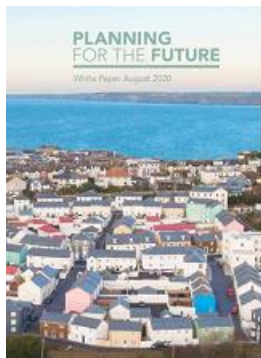
After the Annual General Meeting refreshments will be available before an illustrated talk by Richard Gibbs based on his recently published book, open to all free of charge.

The book provides a narrative of the town's history from its earliest days through to the present. Its rich history is interwoven with the history of England: a story of good times and bad, from the Beaker people to the Victorians to the present day.

Wokingham is the quintessential English county town. Richard will select from his narrative to paint a picture of Wokingham over time.

Richard will have copies of his book available for sale at £10 (discounted from £14.99).

# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE



We reported in the last two Newsletters about the Government's consultation on its White Paper entitled 'Planning for the Future'. The Society's Executive Committee had responded with concerns about the over-reliance on technology within the proposals to change the planning process, and the extent to which the local community would be excluded from being able to comment on a large range of planning applications. The recent replacement of Robert Jenryck by Michael Gove as housing minister has led to the White Paper being 'paused' so that Mr Gove can talk to MPs and other stakeholders. Particularly important will be the levelling up agenda, since this is now formally incorporated into the minister's title and that of his Department

Before the Government reshuffle it had been widely expected to be that the scheme for planning zones would be scrapped. These zones would have been determined nationally, thus leaving little opportunity for local decision-making on large-scale development. Also thought likely to be withdrawn was the proposal to make housebuilding targets mandatory. Indeed 2019-20 saw a record number of homes being built and developers appear to have kept up the pace in 2020-21, despite the pandemic. In addition there are more than 1.1 million dwellings with planning permission yet to be built.

The Government had already withdrawn its proposed formula-based approach to calculating the housing numbers to be required of local authorities in order to achieve the national target for new homes. Instead it intends to concentrate growth in the largest cities in the country.

However, the Government has managed to introduce revised legislation on 'permitted development rights' whereby owners will be able to change the use of their building from commercial to residential without planning permission. The Society's Executive Committee had not been alone in objecting that this would allow poor quality housing and also encourage landlords to optimise profit from flats rather than business use without regard to local need.. Time and experience will indicate whether these fears have been justified.

# LOCAL PLAN



Work is underway by the Borough Council on a further updated local plan to shape the future of Wokingham Borough.

The Council says that this plan "will guide where and how growth will take place in the borough in the years up to 2036. We know we have to plan for more housing, which is always a complex and controversial subject. We also need to plan for new employment, schools, roads, parks, shops and community

facilities necessary to create places where people want to live, work and do business.

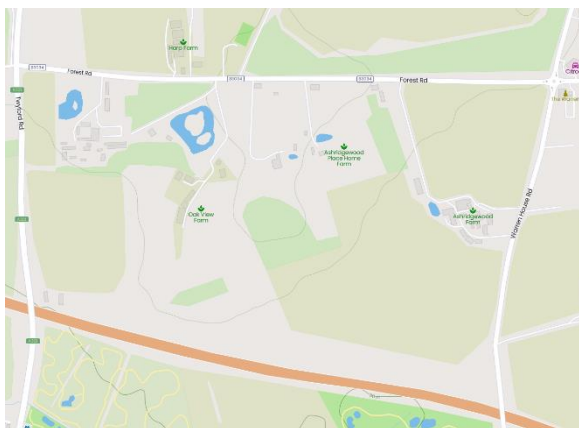
"The timetable for the Local Plan Update has been reviewed and agreed by the Council's Executive on 29 July 2021. It is expected that the LPU will be completed ('adopted') by the end of 2023".

The Council says it will be "undertaking a number of formal consultations throughout the Local Plan Update", but it is not clear whether this will involve full-scale public consultation, We will keep an eye open for progress in this respect.

One major change from the earlier draft Plan, arising from the withdrawal of plans for Grazeley, is a Masterplanning document, which proposes major developments at the University of Reading's Hall farm near Arborfield and at Ashridge, north of the A329M and west of Warren House Road. The Society's Committee focus will be on the latter proposal, about which the document concludes:

"the collection of sites promoted through the Call for Sites at Ashridge has been considered on the basis that it provides an opportunity for a more comprehensive strategic development of up to 3,000 dwellings located north of Wokingham between the A329(M) and the M4 and to the west of Warren House Road. Alongside new residential neighbourhoods, there is potential to integrate business growth at existing farm complexes through designating mixed-use areas. Detailed mitigation would need to address air quality and noise associated with the M4 and A329(M), surface water management and sustainable drainage systems and established woodlands

and habitats, notably Ashridge Wood. The setting of listed buildings, especially at the Bill Hill estate, also requires a sensitive response.



“The extent to which new development presents the opportunity to deliver improvements to the road network has been considered and incorporated in the concept layout for the site. As such, significant investment in public

transport facilities is considered necessary to ensure that this could deliver a sustainable site. Due to the assumed costs to the developer of upfront or early stage infrastructure, the high-level viability assessment shows that development would not generate a land value sufficiently above existing use value to encourage a landowner to sell for development. This could be further tested in scenarios with lower than policy level affordable housing or where more of the infrastructure burden is paid for from CIL receipts”.

We also know that the Council has received around one hundred nominations for designated Local Green Spaces, where any development would be limited to a purpose relating to the reason for designation. The Wokingham Society Committee has already had the following locations approved:

- a) Elms Field, Wellington Road
- b) Howard Palmer Gardens, Cockpit Path
- c) Barkham Recreation Ground, Latimer Road
- d) Langborough Recreation Ground, Gipsy Lane

The Committee has nominated a further three sites:

- (e) Leslie Sears Playing Field, Reeves Way
- (f) Viking Field, Tanners Row
- (g) Redlands Farm Park, Evendons Lane.

We wait to see if these are included in the revised Local Plan.

## DAVID TINKER (1939-2021)



We are sad to report the death, on Friday 6 August 2021, of David Tinker, past Chairman and President of the Wokingham Society.

David was born in Bury, Lancashire, and raised in Altrincham,

Cheshire. He was educated in Manchester and at Trinity College, Dublin. He had an early career in office equipment and computers, including a period working in Singapore where he and his wife had their first child, and then in Greenford, West London.

The family, including a second daughter, moved to Wokingham in 1979 and in 1983 David took a job with the Institute of Chartered Accountants, first in Milton Keynes and then in London, retiring in 2000. Meanwhile, in 1990 the sale of Evendons Farm for development prompted him to join the Wokingham Society in order to pursue his belief that ‘attributes wherever you live must be retained or enhanced properly – not bulldozed for profit’

David joined the Society’s Executive Committee in 1999, becoming Membership Secretary and Newsletter Editor in quick succession before being elected Chairman in 2003. In that role he campaigned tirelessly through the press and in engagement with the local authority to prevent the careless loss of Wokingham’s built heritage and landscape and to encourage thoughtful development where appropriate. With these concerns in mind he was proud to have assisted in the establishment of The Friends of the Emm Brook and The Wokingham and District Veteran Tree Association.

When he stood down from the chairmanship in 2007 David became President of the Society and in that year was the recipient of the Town Council’s Civic Award for services to Wokingham, including his work as Secretary to the Wokingham Job Support Centre. He was also strongly involved in the local U3A, serving as Convenor of the Industrial Heritage



Group and giving many talks on subjects ranging from seaside piers to the development of the London sewers following the ‘Great Stink’ of 1858.



David handed over his presidency of the Society to Lady Elizabeth Godsall in 2012 but remained a very active member, most recently persuading the Committee to help fund a number of resting benches in parks in the Evendons area of the town. The accompanying picture shows him sitting on one

of them.

Current Wokingham Society Chairman Peter Must says “David was the reason I joined the Society, the person who persuaded me to stand for election as Chairman and who showed me by advice and example what it means to be an advocate for the town’s heritage and well-planned development. In many ways he was Mr Wokingham and we will sorely miss his wisdom and passion.”

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## **WE NEED A NEW COMMITTEE SECRETARY**

John Griffin, our Hon. Secretary, has given notice of his wish to stand down at the Annual General Meeting in November or as soon as possible thereafter. The Secretary not only issues Agendas and takes minutes but deals with room bookings and takes part in all discussions and decision making. There are usually eight Committee meetings a year, two Open Meetings with talks and an AGM



We really do need someone to take over from John so if you would like to discuss the work involved do please get in touch with him at [jcgriffin01@aol.com](mailto:jcgriffin01@aol.com)



## REPLACEMENT MEMORIAL BENCH FOR DONALD MACDONALD

During, but not necessarily as a result of the use of Carnival Corner at the top of Finchampstead Road for work on the adjacent building site and then for storage of materials when Elms Field and Carnival Roundabout were being modified, the original bench to commemorate Wokingham Society Chairman and President Donald Macdonald was damaged beyond repair. Helped by a generous contribution of £300 from contractors McLaughlin & Harvey, and with installation being carried out by Wokingham Borough Council, a replacement bench has now been provided.



Donald's daughter Mairi speaking on behalf of the family said: "A huge thank you to you and the other Wokingham Society members - this means a lot".

*The Macdonald family sitting on the original bench*



*The new bench*



*The memorial plaque*

# EDIBLE WOKINGHAM HERITAGE DAY



On Saturday 11 September the Town Council organised its Annual Heritage Day, this year on the theme of Edible

England. stall holders aplenty offered their produce for sale in the Market Place and an array of stands and displays were laid on in Howard Palmer Gardens.



Falconers brought along their (non-edible) birds of prey but also introduced the crowds of children to ferret racing.

Elusive Brewery, based in the town, had its ales available for tasting and purchase, and Freely Fruity had strawberry plants and herbs for people to sample.

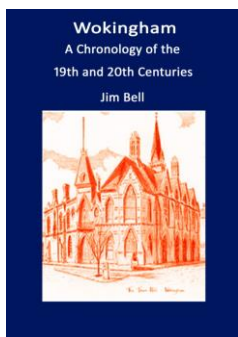
Local charity Wokingham in Need (WIN) held a raffle with prizes of a hamper of local produce and a bouquet of seasonal flowers. The money raised by the raffle went towards buying plants/seeds for WIN's Sensory Garden's living wall of plants at Acorn Community Centre in Woosehill .



Old Albert the Gardener mingled with visitors, showing them a wheelbarrow full of giant horticultural props!

Books on Wokingham's heritage were available from a stand mounted by our local historians, which also provided the opportunity to tell people about the work of the Wokingham Society and provide membership information.

# WOKINGHAM: A CHRONOLOGY OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES



We are pleased to announce the publication in July 2021 of the book *Wokingham A Chronology of the 19th and 20th Centuries* written by Jim Bell, a local historian, Wokingham Society member and author of many booklets on Wokingham's history. It complements the earlier *Wokingham A Chronology*, which has long been out of print and, by concentrating on a shorter period, it paints a varied picture of Wokingham from the beginning of the 19th century up until the end of the 20th century.

This has meant that local events can, where appropriate, be put into a wider national or international context. In addition, greater length has also allowed particular brief reports in the earlier *Chronology* to be fleshed out in greater detail.

The coincidence of the starting point in the early 1800s with the development of photography has allowed the use of pictures to illustrate the items included so that we can not only read about individual lives and activities but see them as they were at the time.

Examples of the day-to-day happenings will bring back memories for people who have lived in Wokingham for many years. For relative newcomers to the town it will give a taste of what Wokingham was like before they came.

Jim Bell says 'I was convinced that there was a lot of 19th century Wokingham history still to be discovered and I have been delighted at how much new information has come to light'.

Copies of the book (ISBN 978-1-871514-04-9) are on sale for £5 at the following locations:

- The Town Hall Information Centre, Market Place, Wokingham, Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings 10am to 2pm
- Wokingham Library, Denmark Street, Wokingham
- Waterstones, Peach Street, Wokingham
- Henry Street Garden Centre, Swallowfield Road, Arborfield

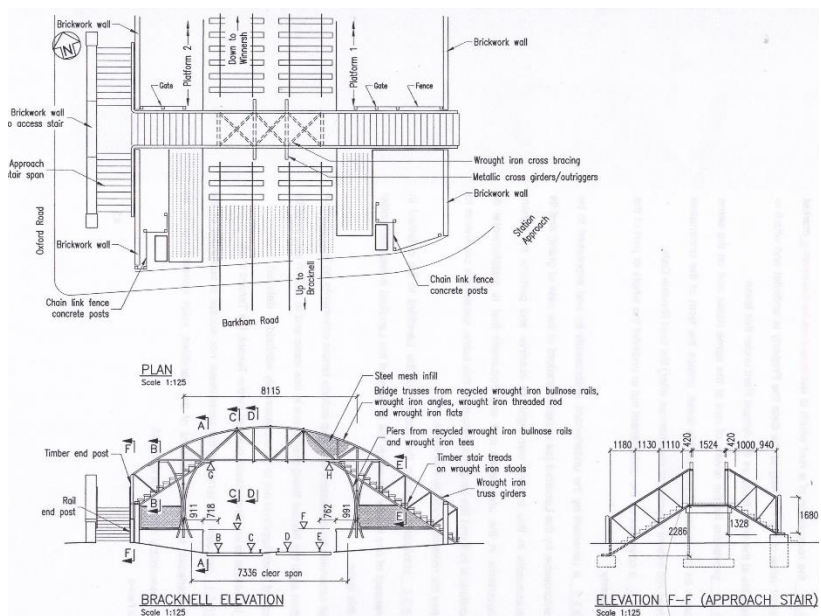
It may also be ordered emailing [jim4history@gmail.com](mailto:jim4history@gmail.com).

# RENOVATION OF WOKINGHAM STATION'S RAILWAY FOOTBRIDGE



After initial collaboration with the Wokingham Society Committee, the involvement of local expertise and detailed negotiations with the Borough Council's Development Control Officers, Network Rail completed its renovation of the Grade II Listed footbridge at the station in July this year.

Once the metalwork had been fully treated, it was painted in Maunsell Dark Olive, the traditional colour of Southern Railway's Eastleigh works. The treads and deck were made of reinforced hard wood and repairs were carried out to the brick and stone work.



*Detailed drawings for the renovation of the footbridge*

# **WOKINGHAM'S EARLY FIRE SERVICE**

## **by Kevin Lenton**

Wokingham's first firefighting service was formed at a public meeting held in Wokingham Town Hall on November 19th 1830. The following extracts are taken from the secretary's minute and account book of the Forest Association, Wokingham:-

“ At a meeting of the Magistrates and other Gentlemen, Yeomen and Inhabitants of the Forest Division of this County and its vicinity held in the Town Hall, Wokingham, on November 19th, 1830, presided over by the High Sheriff, John Walter, it was “Unanimously resolved on the motion by the Marquis of Downshire, and seconded by Robert Palmer, Esq. M.P. that the alarm created by the acts of base and lawless incendiaries in the neighbourhood districts render it highly desirable that an association be immediately formed with a view to the prevention of the acts by vigilance and firmness, having at the same time the fullest confidence in the good order which has at all times characterised the labouring classes of this neighbourhood.

“On the motion of Sir John Walsh [1st Baron Ormathwaite, owner of Warfield Park], it was further resolved that the Magistrates, Gentlemen and landholders should open lists in their respective Parishes of all Householders willing to be sworn and serve as Special Constables in aid of the Civil Power within the Forest Division”.

The specials had to watch and guard farming premises day and night with the utmost vigilance and Wokingham was the centre of communications for all purposes of the Association. Meetings were held in the Rose Inn.

Each parish had to form its own constabulary force and arrange to act in conjunction with each other. Two or more persons, chosen by the men themselves, were appointed superintendents in each parish. Buckets were to be provided, and ready at all times, together with any other means of extinguishing fires.

In June 1860 the Wokingham police force, together with one of their two manual fire engines, moved into their new headquarters in the new Town Hall. The policing activities of the association appear to have been so efficient during the following twelve months that, according to records, there was very little trouble from then onwards.

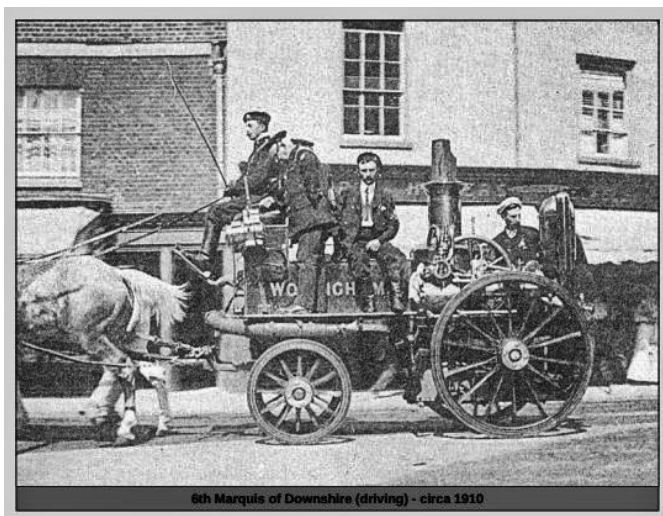


The Wokingham Volunteer Fire Brigade was formed at a public meeting held in Wokingham on Friday September 29th 1876, and took over the responsibility for firefighting from the police force. It was based in the town hall.

Edwin Ifould, Wokingham Mayor in 1895, was a member of the Wokingham Volunteer Fire Brigade for many years. In 1897 he, with other members of the Fire Brigade, roasted an ox that had been donated for the celebrations of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

In later years, the residences of firemen living near the Town Hall were connected to the town hall by means of an electric wire and bell. When there was a fire, someone in the Town Hall would press a button. A bracket that may well have supported the wire can be seen at 20 Sturges Road.

Chief Officer Arthur Wills John Wellington Blundell Trumbull Hill (1871-1918), 6th Marquis of Downshire, nicknamed Lordie, served for 25 years as Chief Officer of the Wokingham Volunteer Fire Brigade, to which he contributed generously. The efficiency of the Brigade increased when he obtained, at his own expense, two highly trained Tilling Grey horses supplied by the Thomas Tilling Company, which also supplied the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.. Their names were Dolly and Dustpan.



*The Marquis of Dpwnshire driving the fire engine pulled by Dolly and Dustpan*



*This picture comes from a framed photograph of the Marquis of Downshire, which hangs in the Town Hall and which has a brass inscription as follows “IN RESPECTFUL MEMORY OF OUR LATE CHIEF OFFICER THE MARQUIS OF DOWNSHIRE WHO PASSED AWAY MAY 29TH 1918 AFTER 25 YEARS ACTIVE SERVICE IN THE WOKINGHAM FIRE BRIGADE”.*

The Wokingham Volunteer Fire Brigade provided a continuous service until August 1941 when it was taken over by the National Fire Service.

### **Sources of information:**

*Britain In Old Pictures - Wokingham - Bob Wyatt*

*The Goatley family.*

*A Short History of Wokingham Volunteer Fire Brigade - Jim Bell*

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## **PAUL GALLAGHER (1950-2021)**



We are very sorry to report the death of Paul Gallagher, Chairman of the Emmbrook Residents' Association from 2007. Paul moved to Wokingham with his wife Liz, both proud Liverpoolians, with their children in 1976 and they both immersed themselves in the life of the town and Emmbrook in particular. Paul served as a Foundation Governor for St Paul's CofE Primary School.

Over the past ten years Paul provided impassioned leadership for the Association, especially in response to plans for building upwards of 1,500 houses across the north of Wokingham and through the heart of Emmbrook, and for the provision of a distributor road along the whole of the area. He cared strongly about the impact the proposed changes would have on the lives of the community he represented, and he worked tirelessly to look after the interests of his local residents by challenging planning decisions he felt would have a deleterious effect on the area where he had lived for more than twenty years.



## Wokingham Town – Some dates for your diary

### Check website or organisation to ensure the event is going ahead

**Sunday 10 October** –Vegan Market in Market Place, 11 am to 3 pm.

**Saturday 16 October and Sunday 17 October** – Wokingham Children’s Book Festival, to be held in the Town Hall from 10.00 am. Admission £3. Digital sessions will also be available. Information from <https://wokingham-tc.gov.uk/bookfest/>

**Sunday 24 October** – Wokingham Walks: three walks around the town of 5, 10 or 15 miles starting in Elms Field, with a rolling start time from 9am until 10.30am. to facilitate social distancing.

[www.wokinghamwalk.co.uk/](http://www.wokinghamwalk.co.uk/)

**Remembrance Sunday 7 November**, Civic Parade and Service at All Saints Church, 2.30 pm from Market Place

**Thursday 11 November** – Armistice Day, 2 minutes silence for Armistice Day To take place in the Market Place at 11.00 am

**Wednesday 17 November** – Wokingham Society Annual General Meeting and Talk by Richard Gibbs about hi Potted History of Wokingham. <https://www.wokinghamsociety.org.uk/>

**Sunday 28 November** – Winter Carnival, from 10.00 am in town centre (Carnival Procession starts at 4.00 pm). [www.wintercarnival.co.uk/](http://www.wintercarnival.co.uk/)

**Wednesday 1 to Friday 24 December** – Living Advent Calendar, Each weekday at 6:00pm and weekends at 4.00 pm digitally on Facebook and website at <http://wokinghamadvent.org.uk/>

**Saturday 11 December** – Christmas sing-along, 12.00 noon, Town Hall

## The Wokingham Society

### Executive Committee

<b>Chairman: Peter Must</b>	8 Albert Road, RG40 2AL	0118 9781671
<b>Vice-Chair/Secretary John Griffin</b>	27 Eastheath Avenue, RG41 2PP	0118 9790341
<b>Treasurer: Keith Reed:</b>	White House, Murrell Hill Lane, Binfield, RG42 4BY	01344 227199
<b>Membership Secretary: Keith Malvern</b>	98 Woosehill Lane, RG41 2TS	0118 9781751
<b>Planning Officer: Hazel Guile</b>	50 Rose Street, RG40 1XU	0118 9788285
<b>Grants Officer: Trevor Sleet</b>	55 Arthur Road, RG41 2SS	0118 9781437
<b>Data Protection Officer: Kevin Lenton</b>	4 Bedfordshire Way RG41 3BA	07948 753133
<b>Committee Member: Guy Grannum</b>		
<b>Editors of Newsletter: Peter Must and John Griffin</b>		
<b>Honorary Solicitor: Anne Deller, Clifton Ingram, Wokingham</b>		
<b>Examiner:</b>	Rice Associates, Wokingham	

**Website:** [www.wokinghamsociety.org.uk](http://www.wokinghamsociety.org.uk)