



Tonbridge Civic Society February & March 2024

FEBRUARY & MARCH 2024 NEWSLETTER



Tonbridge's High Street is an ever-changing place, despite all its critics. In recent weeks there have been many plans and additions so here's a quick review of what we know.

**TCS Chair
Tom Freke**

Starting at the south end, at 13 Quarry Hill Road, you'll all likely know we've finally got a Post Office. This ends the temporary pop-up

facilities at the Castle where space was provided by the council. The new Post Office is part of an Eco Hub Refill store and has three serving positions.



Over the railway bridge the former Poundstretcher has gone but there are proposals, which appear to have been approved by the council, for the offices above the shop to be converted to flats as well as a small extension to add a

retail unit on Vale Road. I'm assuming the existing retail space remains.

Walking up the High Street, it's hard to miss developments at the former Poundland unit on the west side of the road. This is being replaced by a mixed commercial/residential development. Again, the retail unit seems likely to stay (further details [here](#))



Then crossing the Big Bridge, on the right we have Cakes and Bakes, a new cake shop. They even deliver!

Moving on to the former NatWest building on the west side of the High Street. This is being converted into a restaurant of some kind, to be called The Market House. Follow developments on their Facebook page [here](#). Hopefully they'll be open sometime in the summer.

And then lastly the Rose & Crown. The town's venerable hotel was acquired last year and we're awaiting plans for its refurbishment. Given the hotel's key part of the town's history, position within the conservation area, and its heritage, we will be monitoring any proposals closely.



NEWS

Also, and stop press, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) has just published the Phase 2 report from consultants Mace. This report, available [here](#), focuses on the area to the east of the High Street and presents a number of options for the area currently occupied by the Angel Centre and surrounding car parks. The Sainsbury's/Beales building is not part of the scope of the plan. There'll be a council meeting to discuss the report on March 12.



Across the border in Tunbridge Wells, a consultation on the council's local plan has been extended to April 12. This follows TWBC's response to the Planning Inspector's initial findings letter. The Save Capel campaign has reviewed the various documents and recommendations are [here](#).

A [petition](#) is being prepared to lobby for a Tonbridge Town Council following a public meeting in February.

Residents of West Peckham have plans to buy The Swan pub as a 'Community Benefit Society' and expect to launch a share offer sometime this year. Further details can be found [here](#).

TMBC councillors were due to meet on March 4 to hear the outcome of the recent consultation on changes to parking charges across the borough.

The Southborough Society is appealing for action to preserve two historic buildings on London Road, the former Bat & Ball pub and the old Lloyds Bank building. Further information [here](#).

EVENTS

May 18

Free prostate cancer screening organized by Tonbridge Lions Club. Testing will be by appointment only and bookings can be made via www.pcaso.mypsatests.org.uk. Further details [here](#).

June 9

Tonbridge Lions Community Fete, including parade of superheroes (12pm-4pm). Further details [here](#).

A great snapshot of some of the daily and weekly events in Tonbridge can be found [here](#)

Civic Society Events

- March 5 Talk at the Angel Centre: Sir Paul Britton
- April 21 Walk: Civic Society Design Award winners
- May 7 AGM & Speaker Sally Pearce, Tonbridge Needs Access to Cash
- June 4 Talk at the Angel Centre: Speaker TBD
- June 26 Visit to Long Barn Gardens
- July 21 Summer party and Design Award

PLANNING

A planning application has been made to replace the Stag's Head pub in the Slade with six three-bed houses. Details can be found [here](#).

Nearby, a planning application has been made to convert much of the retail space occupied by the Cyclops bike shop in Castle Street with residential properties. Details can be found [here](#).



Tonbridge Civic Society 2023
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INTRODUCING: BABONS CANCER SUPPORT



You may have noticed a new arrival at the top end of the High Street, Babons Cancer Support. We caught up with the team to better understand what they are offering to the people of Tonbridge.

What is the main purpose of Babons Cancer Support?

Babons Cancer Support is a charity that exists to come alongside the cancer community of Tonbridge, whether you are the patient, carer, family member, colleague or friend. Our purpose is to help and support people by offering counselling, support groups, drop-in emotional support and signposting to support services.

What prompted it to be set up?

Babons Cancer Support was created in memory of Jean Spickernell (called "Babon" by her grandchildren) who lost her life to cancer in February 2022. Jean was a "pocket rocket" who loved her community and always looked for ways to help others even when she needed help herself.

After Jean's devastating diagnosis of ovarian cancer in 2020, the journey we experienced as a family highlighted just how much help we needed and how fast things changed with Jean's care. We found much of our time was spent researching what we could access to make Jean as well cared for as possible and to maintain her independence and dignity. We felt very alone as a family and there was no one to guide us through.

Inspired by the grandchildren, "Babon" was not only her name but BABONS - "Bringing A Bit Of Needed Support" - reflects exactly what Jean wanted to do for the cancer community. Sadly she didn't live long enough to see it happen but her family has taken up the baton and BABONS is born!

Where can people find you?

We are located at 147 High Street, Tonbridge, TN9 1DH. Virtually, we can be found at www.babons.org.uk where you can read all about us and our services. We also have Facebook and Instagram pages that give up to date news about our support groups, cancer cafes and additional services that we have coming into the centre to support people over the coming months.

What do you think is the best thing about it?

At Babons we offer our services free of charge so they can be accessible by everyone in Tonbridge.

We do not want money to become the deciding factor when people need help. Our drop-in emotional support is exactly that, there is no need to book an appointment just pop in for a coffee and a chat and one of our lovely team will be here to listen and support you in any way you need.

Whilst we are not medical advisers we aim to bridge the gap between hospital care and hospice and to hold your hand when you need it.

What are you focusing on right now, and what are your plans for the next few months?

Having just opened, we are focusing on welcoming people through our doors. Our centre is a lovely environment, warm and friendly where we want to provide practical compassion for people.

We are starting Friday Cancer Cafes that run from 10am-12 noon for specific people. The first one, on Friday March 1 was for patients, March 8 for carers, friends and family, March 15 is for anyone who has lost someone to cancer and the March 22 is for anyone who has been impacted by cancer.

On Friday April 19 we are starting our first support group which is aimed at women who have or have had any kind of cancer. More support groups are planned for the future so keep an eye on social media and our website.

How should people get in touch if they want to learn more?

Please call us on 01732 71164 or email office@babons.org.uk for further information or counselling appointments.

If you are interested in training as one of our "pocket rocket" listeners or supporting us to fundraise or donate to help support our services, please do call us for a chat.



Babons Cancer Support at 147 High Street, Tonbridge