

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 109

AUTUMN 1998

Society's 30th Anniversary

IT WAS at a meeting in the Guildhall in November 1968 called by The Rye Protection Society and attended by over 70 people that The High Wycombe Society was born. The late 1960s were a disastrous time for High Wycombe's heritage. Hundreds of small houses, factories and workshops, chapels and pubs were demolished to make way for the elevated Abbey Way inner relief road, the Octagon Shopping Centre and the Bridge Street/Oxford Road car park (christened 'Western Desert' by Jack Scruton). Finally, the River Wye, the source of High Wycombe's prosperity over the centuries, suffered the indignity of being unceremoniously culverted out of sight.

The Rye Protection Society (Honorary Secretary: Jack Scruton), having successfully opposed the construction of the inner relief road across the north-west corner of The Rye some three years earlier, realised that someone ought to speak up for what was left of our local heritage and for the environment to save them from unthinking development. Its own constitution was restricted to defending The Rye, so it took the logical step of calling for the formation of a society with terms of reference capable of tackling the many wider issues demanding attention. We like to think that over the past 30 years of its existence, The High Wycombe Society, which now incorporates its begetter, has helped in the achievement of higher local environmental standards and better local facilities.

We must be grateful that there is now a greater awareness in national and local government of the need for sustainable development rather than growth at any cost, but a Society like ours is still needed as a watchdog to alert the public against potentially harmful schemes as well as keenly supporting potentially beneficial projects. In this, interestingly, we are only following the late Jack Scruton's philosophy, which he set out in Newsletter Number 1 in May 1969, as follows:

"This first Newsletter may give the impression that our thoughts are concerned mainly with opposing. It is important that we should be prepared to oppose or seek to modify projects which may be harmful, but we do realise that it is even more important that we should lend our support to the local authorities when they wish to carry out work which is clearly beneficial to the community. In addition we should have ideas of our own for the improvement of the town and the quality of life, and not be afraid to submit these for public discussion."

As long as it adheres to these principles, the Society deserves to continue to receive the support of High Wycombe people for many more years yet.

John Gore



...caring about our town: past, present
and future

Registered Charity No. 257897

Honorary Secretary, John Gore, 30 Wordsworth Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP11 2UR. Tel: (01494) 526671

30 Years Old – the Celebration

Late June in the open air ambience of Wycombe's lovely Chair Museum sounded like an ideal choice for the Society's 30th Anniversary celebration, an "Entertainment with Buffet Supper". However, that was to reckon without the little local global cooling that, from time to time, punctuates the long-term trend.

And so it was, that on the evening of 27 June 1998, some 70 people arrived, bearing brollies and clad in overcoats, heavy woollies and anything else that was a pragmatic response to the English weather, even if not entirely apt for the occasion. The ever-dapper Ron greeted us by neatly mutilating the corners of our £12 souvenir tickets - of which more anon - and folks mingled: Vice-President Olive was up from Hythe, and the Stones had rolled in from Ludlow with The Cake, and there were lots of other old friends (well, we're all a little bit older, aren't we?) who were a joy to see.

It was straight off to Marquee 1 for our quick free shot of warming noggin, and then at 7.45 - before the shivering began in earnest - the buffet was served in Marquee 2. There was scrumptious fare from Maggie Emm of Cottage Catering (we're all eco-rustic now!) including succulent mushroom quiche, followed by a choice of trifle, or meringue, or - sheer ecstasy - both! (And was that really Richard Gere helping himself to the potato salad, while the ladies drooled? Really?)

And the music played its lovely 60s stuff, and the lighting lit (by courtesy of our new members John and Tricia Ward). And we lolled around on the garden chairs, and on the lawn, and on the walls, chatting eagerly to our ilk, as our blood thickened...

...Until the action began, shortly before the appointed hour of 8.35pm. A skirl of pipes, and it was Mark Goodwin of the Caledonian Society, making a sombre circuit of the grounds playing not a lament (which might have been appropriate given the three-nil result in St Etienne during the week) but a Highland air whose name, alas, he was unable to recall for this historical record! And behind him, with a twirl here, and a chassé there, was our very own Myra, bearing The Cake - from darkest Shropshire, large, square, perfectly formed, its top a stunning work of art. Delicious too, as we were to find later: our hearty thanks, Diana!

Vice-President Kathleen Peatey noted that President John Mayes, sadly, could not be with us, and thanked the Society for all its work, and hoped we would celebrate many more 30th birthdays. Chairman Roger followed with his habitual flawless performance, thanking Town Mayor Frances for her recent coffee-morning, and the two lady helpers who, he furtively advised us, shared their names - but hopefully not their fates - with at least two of the wives of Henry VIII, and then proceeded to the prize draw (the ticket corners!). First prize was to No.66, the Bucks Free editor Steve Cohen who, fearful of the ever-present risk of sleaze and its potential one day to sink our fine provincial newspaper, declined. Then No.37 was a no-show, so No.5 (Dorothy) walked off with the basket of fruit, and No.74 (David) with the chockies and No.2 (Mary) with the plonk.

Finally there was the Know-Your-Wycombe quiz. Disgracefully, not one person present knew Wycombe 100% and the tie breaker was not required, but David Gantzel - for 25 years the Hazlemere correspondent of the Bucks Free - knew it 80%. That made four happy bunnies!

So, as night fell, and hypothermia beckoned, and against the lovely flint facade of the Chair Museum, there followed a highly entertaining al fresco (freschissimo indeed) 45 minutes of "Showtime Favourites", delivered jointly by the Wycombe Savoy Opera Singers and the Bourne End Amateur Operatic Society.

Sadly, space limitations allow only the highlights to be recorded for posterity. There was "I'm just wild about Harry", with Harry sporting a boater and the ladies boldly wearing feathers. There was Mrs Mop who dreamt of what life might be like with the right man, while a loathsome soccer yob sat down to watch Brazil v. Chile. Alas, he was Mr Mop. There were the Kallé Five who braved the elements to bring us the story of Rose, and as the Chiltern Hills came alive to the Sound of Music, they were assisted by Victoria, who performed her pointe routine on the cobbles with aplomb. There was a lady (Victoria No.2) filling a bucket who turned out to be not part of the show, but was collecting water for the floating candlelights!

Then Valerie gave us a lovely rendition of Handel's "Where'er you walk", and the Kallé Five returned to deliver the Saga of Jenny with

great panache, and we were reminded of the time the nightingale sang in Berkeley Square just as our very own Wycombe song thrush celebrated the cool summer evening in a nearby beech tree.

Thus, with the frostbite nibbling at our toes, it all had to come to an end. Chairman Roger thanked the performers for rounding off the evening with such gusto and talent, even though, except for their spirited leader and accompanist Louise, they had already eluded the mob and made a modest beeline for the rear stage door and their warm vehicle.

And, courtesy of our museum officer Vicky Wood and James Rattue, we all trooped into the warmth and fascination of the Chair Museum, where there was a retrospective on G-Plan through the decades which reminded many of us awkwardly of our own living rooms, and one of our members regaled us with stories of Benjamin and Victoria (the Queen, that is).

All in all, a lovely evening. Thanks to the *very* many who made it all possible. We hope to be there in 2028, but we can't be sure. It should have warmed up by then, anyway...

Chris Woodman

On a lighter note...

You will be able to read, elsewhere in this Newsletter, Chris Woodman's account of our 30 years celebration.

There are related, but diverse, comments that I wish to make, following on from this informal and happy event, marking another milestone in the life of our society.

The celebration gave us all the pleasure of being together socially, to enjoy the food and wine, the entertainment and Museum displays. It is always good to see Olive Scruton up from her seaside eyrie in Hythe, to be with us and to join our other Vice-President Kathleen Peatey in the little ceremony that was an appropriate part of the evening.

Naturally, by the time this is published, we hope that Olive has felt considerably better and greatly strengthened, after her recent medical treatment.

We were saddened, however, that our President John Mayes was unable to be with us on the evening, due to ill health.

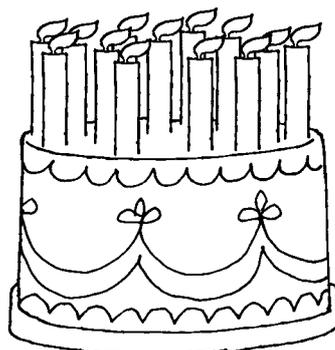
A further pleasure was to hear the bold, uninhibited vocal refrain from Frances Alexander, long-standing member and Town Mayor of High Wycombe, aided and abetted by Vice President Kathleen Peatey, in support of our operatic singers' rendition of "London theme" songs and ditties. Considering that both these ladies spend so much time and effort in contributing to our town and district public life as District Councillors, where do they get their energy from? Those long evenings of Committee work ain't beaten them yet!

Roger Lawson

And thanks from Ann...

May I, through your columns, say a big thank-you to all those who helped to make the Party happen – you are too numerous to thank individually. In no particular order, the helpers on drinks and food, the ticket desk, the speech makers, the furniture removers, and the clearer-uppers; those who spent hours on the phone, and all those involved in the organisation. I do hope you all enjoyed yourselves, as well as working hard, and felt a sense of achievement at the end.

Ann Simone



Wycombe Show on the Rye 5/6th September 1998

This year, the High Wycombe Society concentrated on the Western Sector Development plans for its display on our stand in the Conservation tent. Various members had put together a splendid presentation about the different options and their significance for the people of Wycombe.

Questions were posed as to what the public wanted in the town, together with some suggestions for leisure activities. A special book had been provided for members of the public to make their own contributions to the debate.

After a slow start in the downpours of Saturday morning, the stand became quite busy. Visitors commented on the excellence of the stand, and some even braved the comments book. A lot of interest had been aroused, which can only be for the good of the whole debate on this important piece of ground. Once again the Society showed its commitment to important issues for the community.

Special thanks are due to John Gore and Frances Presland who were the main creators of the presentation; but many other members played their part in setting up or manning the

stand throughout the two days. Altogether a splendid showing for the Society.

Gita Szwerc

Willing Bodies: an Appreciation

Our stand had to be manned by 2 people throughout the day 10.30–6pm, and in addition, Pann Mill had to be manned by 3 bodies from 12–6pm on Sunday.

I had the task of tele-sales, recruiting willing bodies, to serve a period. This was a heart-warming experience. Some clearly couldn't help, or were away or heavily committed, quite understandable. It was the "yes" people who moved me, answering readily "yes, tell me when" or "no, sorry" giving good reasons, then phoning back later "you know, I think I can make it" or, "I've decided I must." Others made voluntary contact, "how can I help?"

To all of you, deeply appreciated, treasured people, a very big thankyou, we couldn't have managed without you.

Barbara Rippington

Former High Wycombe Arts Association Files

WE ARE grateful to Eric Alexander, the last Secretary of the former High Wycombe Arts Association, for passing on to us two files relating to the work done by the Association in the 1950s to conserve High Wycombe's heritage and to improve town planning standards. This was, of course, in the days before The High Wycombe Society was formed specifically to deal with topics of this nature. These files will form a valuable and interesting addition to our archives.

It appears that the ruins of St John's Hospital in Easton Street were in a deplorable state of repair in 1956. The Borough of High Wycombe took little interest, and the County Council was unwilling to find the money for the necessary repair work. There was even a proposal to pull the ruins down! Thanks to the late Lt-Col Lesslie K Watson, Chairman of the Arts Association, a meeting was called in May 1957 of people influential in archaeology and conservation who emphasised the importance of retaining such an important ancient monument, with the result that the County Council was finally persuaded to fund the repairs.

Lesslie Watson and the Arts Association were also concerned in 1957 about the state of town

planning in High Wycombe. The Borough Council was about to embark on an extensive demolition programme in the town centre with apparently no clear idea of what was to be done with the cleared areas. There were also fears that some buildings of architectural and historic interest might be demolished. The Association sought a public meeting, but the Mayor declined. The Association responded by drawing up a memorandum entitled 'High Wycombe - the next ten years' calling for scheduled buildings either to be preserved or, if demolished, to be carefully recorded. They also called for the appointment of a consulting architect to ensure high design standards; and for the adoption of higher planning standards in general; for example, limiting the town's spread within a Green Belt.

Interestingly, it wanted a feature to be made of the River Wye as it passed through the town.

The Association obtained the support of the Civic Trust and a number of other local and national architectural, archaeological and conservation organisations, and distributed the booklet widely. It received much praise. This was a successful lobbying operation in as much as the Borough Council gave their approval to the

proposals for scheduled buildings in March 1958 shortly after publication, but whether it had any practical effect is a moot point, for St Mary Street and Lily's Walk were demolished not long afterwards to make way for the inner relief road! However, it was a noble pioneering effort in setting planning policy. Planning policies are now set out in District Local Plans as a matter of course.

John Gore

Transport Group

The Government White Paper on Transport, 1998

THE Transport Group of the High Wycombe Society have been beavering away on local transport and road issues since 1989, when it was formed with Elsa Woodward as Group Leader. Additionally, where the local issues and our proposals to challenge or resolve them have had national implications, we have readily spoken or acted accordingly, with any government body, local or national, environmental transport groups, or individuals.

Since it may not be generally understood amongst all High Wycombe Society members that there is a very "green transport" philosophy being pursued by the Group, it would seem to be appropriate to discuss the issues in forthcoming editions of the Newsletter.

"Green transport" has been brought into focus by the Government's recent publication of a White Paper on the subject. The car lobby have been quick to deride it as a collection of largely impractical measures to restrict car use. These critics are oblivious of the threat to health that unrestricted car use in urban areas will bring.

They are assisted in their resistance by the deeply emotional bond that exists between the average motorist and his, or her, set of four wheels. This emotional tie means the green transport lobby must summon clear counter-arguments to support the White Paper's basic tenets and proposals, where we believe these are valid.

"Green Transport" will also require Government, local and national, to introduce and carry through certain measures that are not, by any means, vote-winners. It will also require considerable financial investment in sustainable transport modes, to reduce car usage.

Now that could well be the central issue to be grasped and implemented.

Roger Lawson
A member of the Transport Group

"Water Features"

Those of you who are sceptical about the value of "water features" – and true, they are a pale shadow of full deculverting – should none the less pay a visit to Safeway. Stroll over to the left of that huge car park (the "Northern Desert"?) and take a look over the railings by the small trees. Quite some way below is the

Hughenden Stream, babbling its way over rocks and specially planted flora. A delightful urban interlude. What a pity that most people, scurrying from their cars to the supermarket, are not even aware it's there!

Chris Woodman

A Sustainable Development Strategy for the South East

IN MAY of this year, The London and South East Regional Planning Conference (SERPLAN, for short) issued a document for public consultation entitled 'A Sustainable Development for the South East'. The document posed a number of questions to which the Society responded along with over 900 councils, voluntary organisations and members of the public. SERPLAN's recommendations are very relevant to all of us, as they form the basis for both County Structure and District Local Plans, in this case up to 2016.

It is good to know that the new strategy aims to produce a more sustainable pattern of development, focused on making better use of the urban areas in the region (an urban renaissance), and on promoting a switch from unnecessary use of the private car to greater use of public transport. This approach is reinforced by strong policies to protect the countryside.

In our comments we welcomed the basic aims of the proposed new strategy, and supported the idea of specifying 'areas of economic regeneration' and 'areas for economic consolidation', suggesting that South Buckinghamshire should be in the latter category. On housing targets, we and many others questioned the high forecasts for housing needed up to 2016, including the figure of 75% of total household growth being in single-person households. We proposed that greenfield sites should not be allocated until the figures had been confirmed. It is rumoured that the 'predict and provide' system for building perhaps more houses than necessary is to be ended: ANTAS (the Association of North Thames Amenity Societies to which we belong) suggests 'monitor and manage' as a better method for deciding on numbers. Accepting that there is a trend towards smaller households, we argued that we already had sufficient of the larger type of house in our district, so developers should be deterred

from building more of these on greenfield sites, either by fiscal means (a greenfield tax) or by increasing local authorities' powers. The strategy suggests setting a target of at least 60% of new housing to be built on brownfield or recycled land: we thought a higher target should be aimed at in areas like ours surrounded by Green Belt and AONB. The higher cost of developing brownfield, perhaps polluted, sites could be subsidised by a greenfield tax, which, we said, should be set nationally to ensure even treatment across the country. Along with many other respondents, we questioned if water supplies would be adequate for large building programmes in some areas.

Our Transport Group's contribution pointed out that a reduction in parking spaces was a sure way of reducing car usage (as well as putting valuable land to more productive use), but imaginative alternatives to the car must be introduced first. Some of the alternatives to the private car were discussed, as was the possibility of some form of road charging and taxing of parking spaces to pay for sustainable transport systems. Park-and-ride was criticised as being essentially unsustainable. A comprehensive region-wide parking policy was essential to prevent unfair competition between towns.

John Gore

If any member would like a copy of the Society's submissions, please send a request with 50p worth of stamps to the Hon Sec.

When is a draughty corner ... worth over £100?

...When it is the High Wycombe Society's Charity Stall in the market in July!

Yes, thanks to those who turned out their drawers and dusted their shelves, and thanks to those who decided how much those items might fetch, and thanks to those who stood in that draughty corner of High Wycombe's Little

Market House – we made over £100 towards the Society's funds on 18th July.

Large pictures, small plants, home-made marmalade, even the lacy underwear and the bedsocks found buyers.

We have a stall every year – so *never* throw anything away – someone out there will buy it, and contribute to our funds.

Ann Simone

Penn Wood

MANY of our members will be aware of the threat to our local Penn Wood, the subject of a Public Inquiry after a planning application for a golf course.

One of Britain's largest ancient woods, 176 hectares, it is mostly beech, and has been managed as wood pasture since Saxon times.

The Woodland Trust launched an appeal to buy it for £1.1m and save it from development. It was described by their chief executive, Mike Townsend, as "a unique habitat of great beauty and complexity that can never be recreated. As a link back to Britain's original virgin forest it contains plants and wildlife that depend on the continuity of tree and shrub cover. Despite this,

there is no legislation in force that can truly protect this wood." The Trust promised to "restore it to its former glory" and open it for full public access.

The High Wycombe Society generously pledged £100 to the appeal, and the happy news this month is that the Woodland Trust has reached its appeal target. We still await the result of the Public Inquiry.

The Society are planning a walk through the wood next year. Look out for details in a future Newsletter.

Barbara Rippington

It's a monk, Jack!

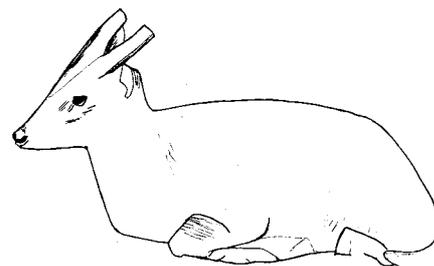
A FEW weeks ago I was roused at about 11.30pm by a furious rattling of our house, which continued for about a quarter of a minute and was followed by a plaintive barking cry. First suspicions were of a fox but on going outside I found an unfortunate muntjac caught in our neighbour's side gate.

These are tiny deer, the size of a medium dog, and this particular individual had tried to squeeze through a gap in the wrought iron that was less than 3 inches wide, before becoming stuck by its haunches. So we called the fire brigade and set to trying to calm the creature by covering it up with a blanket, and the fire brigade called the RSPCA. Sadly, before the inspector arrived, the poor creature died. Our neighbours were left with a sawn-apart gate and the fire brigade passed the dead animal to the RSPCA.

So we wondered, what should we have done? Well - having spoken with the RSPCA - not much more than we did, it seems. Cover it with a sack, keep it quiet and keep people away until expert help arrives. Muntjac, like any wild animals, become extremely stressed in these circumstances and may die even if they're released quickly. If a vet had come sooner, the treatment would have been pain killers and sedatives while the fire brigade went about their work: an anaesthetic can just hasten death.

One useful point however: on this occasion the RSPCA warned us they would take an hour and a half to arrive. There are normally about 2 inspectors on duty in each county and they're "always on the go"; they have to decide priorities and this was not an exceptional response time. We could have called a local vet: the RSPCA have an arrangement that they will recompense the vet in these circumstances. That might just have made the difference in this case, but probably not.

Chris Woodman



Urgent - Stop Press - Help Required

The Town Mayor, Frances Alexander, has challenged the Society, as part of her "I love High Wycombe" year, to create an illustrated map of the town. If anybody has relevant skills - illustrating, drawing, cartographical or just organisational - and thinks they may be willing to contribute to the project, could they please contact the Hon Sec John Gore on H.W. 526671 as soon as possible.

Progress at t'Mill

WHEN Thames Water began their major refurbishment of the Pann Mill pumping station in Easton St. we volunteers at Pann water mill were concerned at the effect it would have on our site. We were prepared for the worst when we heard how long their work would take and what they hoped to achieve. Margaret, our gardener, looked on with horror as heavy plant crossed the area and began to demolish the west bank.

A little over a year later there is no evidence of their presence. The grass has recovered and Margaret has been compensated financially for the loss of her plants.

During their time as our neighbours, they have been as helpful as it is possible to be. They have lifted machinery, provided us with plastic sheeting, constructed a new concrete slipway and on completion of their work organised an evening walkabout and a conducted tour for the Society.

John Vahey, site foreman, even brought his family down from London for the day during National Mills weekend last May.

Bilquis Mahmood, Thames Water public relations officer, gave a donation of £250 and the same department prepared a small exhibition for our use at the time.

By the time Wycombe Show approached, the pumping station had returned to normal with the minimum of visits per day to an unattended building.

Our Pann Mill was far from normal this year. The period of heavy rains since Christmas '97 has changed the appearance of the mill

grounds. Gradually over the years the flow of the River Wye stream had been reduced to a shallow trickle. Last autumn's newsletter tells how Thames Water helped to turn the wheel by pumping water into the leat!!!

It was becoming harder to accumulate a head of water to get our wheel turning and harder still to maintain the momentum. This show day, with heavy rains the previous evening, we were able to start up the wheel in about an hour and keep it turning all day.

Children visiting the site were delighted to stop and start the wheel themselves by lowering the sluice boards with the long handle.

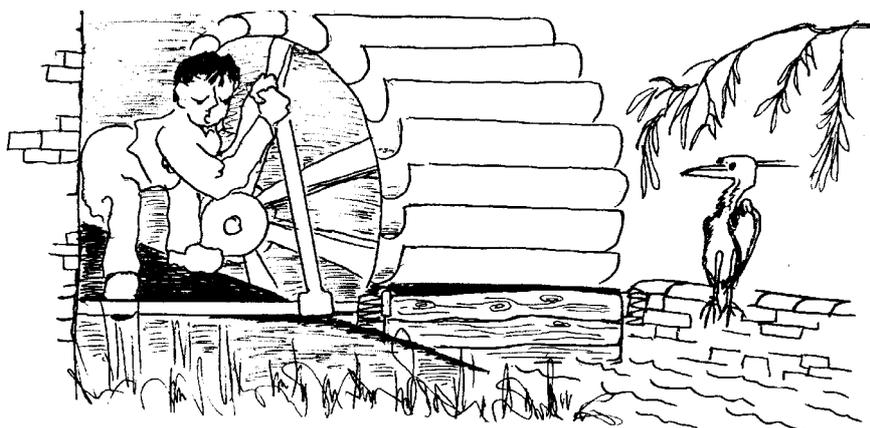
A team of knowledgeable helpers arrived on the day, to give guidance to the public. Delicious home made cakes and drinks were available in our workshop at the quieter end of the garden, which raised £72 for our refurbishment project.

It is very important to bring our project of grinding corn again on this site to the attention of the public and we are always pleased with the donations, praise and good wishes we receive on open days.

Pann Mill is the only location where it is possible to grind corn on the nine-mile stretch of river which runs to the Thames at Hedsor.

Our four man/woman team of regular helpers will be working over the winter towards the year 2000 when we hope the restoration will be complete. We work fortnightly Sunday mornings and welcome any new members for a cup of tea and a guided tour.

Myra King



...and swiftly flows the Wye...

Time for a Western Sector Review?

READERS of the *Bucks Free Press* Letters to the Editor column and *Property Press* in recent weeks will have seen that the Western Sector development has again been under the spotlight. In 1996, after the public had been invited to comment on the development plans of three different firms, Wycombe District Council selected MAB Ltd as its partner to redevelop this important eight-hectare site. The main objectives set by the Council were:

- to enhance High Wycombe and improve its attractiveness as a shopping centre;
- to create a mix of entertainment, employment and community uses; and
- to encourage public transport usage.

The overall aim is to try to meet all High Wycombe people's shopping and leisure needs so that they do not need to travel elsewhere, whilst encouraging outside shoppers to come into the town. The site plan has changed quite a lot since the public consultation – the area allocated to commercial leisure has gone up by 15%, whilst community services floor space has declined. This is a summary of the plan's current state:

- over 30 new shops, including two large stores ("anchor" stores) and a basket food store;
- a new bus interchange on Bridge Street;
- a nine-screen multiplex cinema;
- a night club, a themed bar and 4 or 5 cafés, restaurants etc;
- 134 bedsits and a further 29 bedsit hostel on Desborough Road;
- a new public library and (maybe) accommodation for community services such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau;
- at least 1250 parking spaces; and
- a 'civic square' and water feature plus some uncovering of the River Wye on the Oxford Road roundabout.

Is this a balanced development that will make High Wycombe a better place to live, shop and enjoy yourself in? The Society considers that there is an over-emphasis on passive leisure activities and that the convenience of the public has not been given enough priority. We would like the following to be considered for inclusion in the final plans:

- move the bus interchange nearer to the town centre to make it more accessible to people shopping in the High Street and market etc. People with shopping don't like shuttle buses;
- put the basket food store next to the bus interchange to make it easier for people without cars to get their shopping home;
- provide some active leisure pursuits such as ten-pin bowling and roller blading for the younger generation and families;
- put more housing on site; and also public assembly rooms.

Suggestions such as these were voiced at a recent Local Forum for Western Wycombe, but the response seemed to be that they would not be 'commercially viable'. Commercial viability is obviously very important, but we want the whole town centre to be viable. The Western Sector must draw in new customers, not poach them and big-name retailers from the High Street and Octagon and Chilterns Shopping Centres. Nor at the Local Forum did there seem to be any intention of seeking further views from the public before construction started. Hence, we thought we would attempt to open up the debate by writing to the Editor of the BFP and by inviting visitors to our stand in the Conservation Marquee at Wycombe Show on September 5/6 to give their comments. And people certainly did! Many thought that a nine-screen cinema was overdoing it; there was agreement with our views on the locations of the bus interchange and basket food store, and on the need for more active leisure pursuits; and, as might be expected, a keen desire to see the River Wye deculverted. We hope to put these points to the Council, and ask if a new model based on the latest plans can be made to accompany another round of public consultation. This is an expensive development and one that will have a major impact on the town and its people for many years to come, so it is important that everyone's views are heard.

John Gore

Notices

New Members

After the frantic activity earlier in the year, just one new member to report this time: Mr R J Turner of Bowerdean Road. Welcome, Mr Turner!

Priestfield Arboretum

Priestfield Arboretum, the only private arboretum in the Chilterns, is a collection of rare and specimen trees of all ages, in a delightful woodland setting. Situated in Stony Lane, Little Kingshill, it is voluntarily managed by the Friends of Priestfield and open to the public only two days each year. It is approached via a rough path and grassy field, and visitors are recommended to wear sturdy footwear.

The next Open Day is on *Sunday 11 October 10.30am-4pm*. Guided tours by Friends of Priestfield take place on the hour, and a guide book is available to purchase. Admission 50p towards maintenance and further planting.

Editor of the Newsletter

As many of you will know, for the past 10 years or so, John Gore has not only been our hyperactive honorary secretary, but he has also been the unpaid editor of this Newsletter. I know everybody believes he has done both those jobs extraordinarily well.

Now these posts are, quite rightly, to be

separated. I shall be your new editor, and I shall do my best to maintain the high standards that John has set. John, as our hon sec, will continue to be a major contributor. This issue, my aim has been to change as little as possible – just to be sure I can do it! In future, I hope we can excite even more real debate than in the past between our members. Not only am I keen to receive and publish letters, but I would be only too happy to run a column entitled “*In My Opinion*”, where people can air their personal views, not just about High Wycombe and the many issues which affect its development, but also about the stand that we, as a Society, should take. We have had some welcome and controversial correspondence over the past year: let’s have more of it. It is only by challenging and testing our ideas that we can ensure that they are sound and robust, and hope to convince the powers that be that things need to be changed. And while you’re at it, are there changes you would like to see to this Newsletter?

So, who will offer the first piece for “*In My Opinion*”?

Please send all contributions to:

Chris Woodman
29 Maybrook Gardens
High Wycombe HP13 6PJ

Telephone: H.W. 528106

Deadline for Winter issue **20 November**, please.

Chris Woodman (Hon Editor)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

1998

Saturday 10 October 10am-3.30/4pm Tour of ‘Hidden Bucks’ villages by car. If interested, please contact Ann Simone (448773) or Annie Woodward (527978)

Tuesday 20 October 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Quarterly Meeting: *Countryside Matters*
Speaker: Richard Pushman CPRE member

1999

Wednesday 20 January 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Quarterly Meeting: *An Archaeological Perspective*
Barbara Hurman, Bucks Archaeological Society

Tuesday 13 April 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Annual General Meeting, followed by talk on
‘*The Chilterns Woodlands Project*’ John Morris

Saturday 10 July 8am-12noon
Little Market House

Charity Market Stall