

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

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Local Democracy in Action

LAST MONTH I availed myself of my democratic right, as a citizen of this town, to attend a meeting of the Council's Planning, Environment and Transportation Committee. This was a fascinating experience and one which, in my capacity as Editor, I shall definitely repeat. The meeting began with a debate about taxis in Wycombe District: not the discussion that the committee and officials had hoped for because, inexplicably, the consultants whose report will form the basis for decisions had failed to consult the taxi drivers themselves! Sanity prevailed, and the main discussion was deferred until the consultants have completed their work. But the curtailed debate was important, and heard by almost all the town's cabbies. Just 42 taxi licences are currently issued (though there are many more licensed minicabs), and drivers pay a hefty premium for their plates. There is a proposal to remove the numerical limit and to require all new cabs to be "black cabs" which are wheelchair-accessible. I was impressed with the balance of the debate – the need for the whole district to be well served while at the same time respecting the rights of the current drivers – and with the openness and frankness of the discussion. When it became clear that no proper decision could yet be taken, the Committee nevertheless resolved to proceed with a study of taxi-sharing, and the improvement of waiting facilities.

After that, I found I was the only member of the public in the gallery. I heard a discussion on the South-East Draft Regional Planning Guidance (which "A Sustainable Development Strategy for the South-East", reviewed by the hon sec in last month's issue, has now become), supported by admirably thorough papers generated by the Council's paid officials. I enjoyed a ribald discussion of the ladies-only public toilet in Hambleden which is defended by a fierce dog, and I heard a discussion of the "performance indicators" which target the work of the Council. Eventually after 3½ hours I was ejected, in the nicest possible way, so that Councillors could consider confidential contract details.

All of this was edifying and encouraging. It did not surprise me, because I knew what efforts the Council have made to consult the town's citizens, for example, on the Local Plan. But I was left uneasy. How much *doesn't* get openly discussed like this? How come that the disturbing proposal to reserve part of Holywell Mead for a new "Colts XI" cricket pitch (see p.2) could be *approved* by the Community and Leisure Committee and go forward to the Council without our getting an inkling of it from the local press in advance? And how is it that decisions continue apace on the Western Sector (see p.8) while no serious attempt is made to ask the people about the details which could make so much difference to the acceptance of the scheme by the people of Wycombe?

Chris Woodman



...caring about our town: past, present
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New threat to Holywell Mead

THANKS ONLY to our independent local press (*The Leader*), a proposal which will almost certainly mean – if it is not stopped or fundamentally changed – the curtailment of public access to part of Holywell Mead has come to our attention. The hon sec has written to all local councillors as follows:

“**The Rye/Holywell Mead, High Wycombe: Proposal for Private Cricket Pitch**

We understand that the Council’s Community and Leisure (C&L) Committee has given its approval to a proposal to use part of Holywell Mead as a cricket pitch for High Wycombe Cricket Club (HWCC). This is both surprising and regrettable, and we sincerely hope that any such approval will not be endorsed by the full Council.

The draft Rye Management Plan, issued for public consultation in March 1998, mentioned the possibility of a permanent cricket square for HWCC, and this provoked considerable opposition from the public at the time. The general feeling was well summed up in the Officer Comment in the Summary of Consultation Responses (Item 33) published as an appendix to the agenda of the C & L Committee of 8 June 1998, as follows: “Casual use (of the Rye and Holywell Mead) is so popular that to restrict it by giving preference to formal sports would be detrimental.” This was a definite enough statement, even though the officer did go on to mention the “spectator attraction” of summer sports. We thought the general tenor of this comment meant that the threat of allowing the use of a large area of Open Space for the sole use of a private club had been lifted. Hence our surprise that the issue had resurfaced so soon.

High Wycombe people have traditionally understood that The Rye/Holywell Mead Public Open Space is for a multitude of recreational activities by all comers, including cricket, which records tell us has been played on The Rye for more than 200 years; and summer weekends are the most popular time for such activities. The HWCC proposal means that a large part of Holywell Mead would be reserved for the exclusive use of members of a private club on summer Saturdays and Sundays (and perhaps some evenings as well) just when large numbers of ordinary people (and Council Tax payers) would wish to avail themselves of it. We feel that this proposal strongly erodes the principle of free access, and its adoption would be a bad precedent for the appropriation of Public Open Space for private purposes.

We trust that you will speak up for local people and use your influence and your vote to prevent this threatened restriction on public use of this area.”

As we go to press, we have heard that the Council considered the matter briefly at their meeting on the Council Tax on 25 March and decided, by a large majority, not to overthrow the decision taken by the C&L Committee. However, we are informed there are important safeguards, which may meet our concerns:

- the arrangements will be informal – no formal agreement like the Rugby Club’s at Kingsmead;
- anyone will be free to use the pitch. The Council will take bookings from *all* youth cricket teams (who are thought to be less dangerous to the public than adult teams!);
- the pitch will be used *only* by youth teams;
- it will not be a full-blown cricket square, but a close-mown wicket with minor work to make it even, and some white lines;
- public access will not be curtailed. Even the wicket itself will not be roped off (if only because the barriers get vandalised!).

Holywell Mead was given to the town in 1927 by the then Lord Carrington for the use of all of its citizens. We will keep you informed and will review the situation in the next Newsletter.

* * *

Wendover Way Interpretation Panel

On 17 February the Town Mayor, Cllr Frances Alexander, unveiled a new interpretation panel by Wendover Way on The Rye near the Dyke Boathouse. The panel tells the story of The Dyke, part of Capability Brown’s landscape scheme for the Shelburnes in the late 18th century; and of the Marquess of Lincolnshire’s gift of Wendover Way and the Dyke to the town in 1923 as a memorial to his son and heir, Viscount Wendover, who was killed in the First World War.

The panel also describes the War Office Gates, to be found on the boundary between Wendover Way and Wycombe Abbey School close to the panel. They were originally installed at the former War Office in Pall Mall, and were purchased by the Marquess in 1908. Dating from 1780, both Robert Adam and Sir John Soane were involved in their design. It is hoped they will be restored to their former glory before too long.

Next time you visit the Rye, and it is well worth a visit at any time of the year, take a look at the panel and refresh your knowledge.

John Gore

Deposit Draft Local Plan to 2011

THE CAMPAIGNING is over for the moment, and the numerous Action Groups set up to attempt to preserve their own neck of the woods from housing or business development, as well as many individuals, have sent in their representation forms to the Council. The Society submitted comments and/or objections on 20 policies in all out of a total of 200, so it can perhaps be concluded that we can agree with the bulk of the Plan which will control land use up to 2011. (Of course, it could also be said that time did not permit any closer examination of the Plan in the consultation time available, that is, eight weeks, including Christmas and the New Year holidays!)

On housing development, in which, it may be recalled, some 1,930 new dwellings are claimed to be required to be built on greenfield and brownfield sites from 2001 to 2011, our main theme was to call for stepping up urban regeneration to make better use of existing buildings and recycled sites in town centres for housing, bearing in mind that a major increase in single-person households is forecast, so there should be no need for any more large houses. We pointed out that in town centres, there was scope for car-free housing (with associated car pools) which would allow for increased density. We also called for more accurate counting of existing accommodation, including houses in multiple occupation, to prevent overprovision. We concluded that with efforts like this it should be possible to save at least one greenfield site from development. On particular sites allocated for housing, we expressed reservations about the use of Abbey Barn North and South, and Copperfields, mainly on the grounds of access and traffic. We also had our doubts about business development on Abbey Barn South, bearing in mind the traffic situation on Marlow Hill.

The Council are proposing that Wycombe Marsh Sewage Works, if and when it closes, should be allocated for housing and retail warehousing for bulky goods, with a road traversing the site. We felt we could not support retail warehousing here as it would inevitably attract more car-borne customers to arrive via the already overloaded London Road, and, with free parking, would take trade away the town centre and Western Sector.

We questioned the Council's policy to shift all 'badly-sited users' away from residential areas. Whilst some businesses are clearly unsuitable on the grounds of noise and/or pollution, others, including traditional High Wycombe furniture workshops, do no harm, and are positively useful (and sustainable), if people working there live nearby and do not have to travel to work by car.

The Transport Group in its submissions on transport policies in the Plan supported the references to sustainable transport, but pointed out some important omissions, including apparently lack of full awareness of climate

change problems, and the desirability of providing delivery services of goods from shops to reduce car usage. Other suggestions made for reducing private car usage included calling for:

- the provision of 'minibus taxis' for transporting passengers to and from railway stations to supplement scheduled public transport services, coupled with a survey to determine actual need;
- a reduction in parking space rather than prohibitive parking fees as fairer to the less well off, and a regional parking policy to avoid destructive competition between towns on parking;
- providing better facilities for cyclists;
- reiterating the environmental advantages of reopening the former High Wycombe-Bourne End railway as a light tramway;
- better and cheaper school transport, and car-free housing with car rental clubs;
- no increase in current road capacity, and no new roads on greenfields like Hughenden Valley;
- a Shoppers' Base in the town centre for shoppers to deposit their purchases for delivery to their homes, and so enable them to leave their cars at home.

The Council's proposal for four park-and-ride sites (vast car parks on the edge of the town) was deprecated as an inducement to use cars instead of public transport with no overall reduction in car mileage. It would also be an unsustainable use of land. A better alternative would be to adopt the suggestions made above.

The Council now have the massive task of sifting through the representations ready for the Public Inquiry, which will probably take place towards the end of the year. As the Bucks Free Press has been heading its reports on the Local Plan, 'Watch this Space'.

John Gore

AGM

DON'T FORGET the AGM on 13 April.
Details are on the coloured sheet issued with this newsletter.

Jack Scruton Memorial: *a question that never ends*

Riddle I am a question that never ends
 I'm green water, drowsy bends

I am gravity's perpetual motion
 And I am a map of the way to the ocean

I am the sap in the slap of the cricket bat
 I am the mason of boundary and flat

I'm cuckoo and cricket and ferret's cry
 Don't ask me *what* I am but *Wye*.

THIS IS the poem in the form of a riddle, which has been carved in an undulating curve of York stone set into the paved area on the south side of the River Wye by Queen Victoria Bridge. The newly landscaped area on both sides of the river is to be known as the River Park, a rather bland title as has already been commented on in the Newsletter. The whole site, including the river and both banks, has been transformed by the Council from a somewhat down-at-heel area into a much more welcoming riverside garden with boulders and aquatic planting in the stream, a new garden by the Abbey Way wall and a seating area, together with art work across the site, designed as a memorial to the late Jack Scruton MBE. This is an entirely appropriate place for such a memorial, because, but for Jack's remonstrations, the north bank could now be just another car park.

The poet, Fiona Sampson, worked with the sculptor, Alec Peever, to devise the work, which spreads over the whole area of the park on both sides of the river, as a tribute to Jack to reflect his life as an educator and environmentalist. The intention of the work is to intrigue and inspire present and future generations to think about and respect the natural environment, and, in particular, the river, which was one of Jack's special interests. As Fiona explained, she chose the form of a riddle for her poem as this is one of the oldest forms of English literature and is familiar to children. Being in the first person, the riddle puts the river at the centre of the work.

The title of the work, *a question that never ends*, is set by the wall on the south side of the stream and is visible from the north bank. Then, scattered around the site are circular stones carved with phrases each referring to a different time of day, and evoking different seasons of the year with references to human, animal and aquatic life.

dawn slinking like a cat *morning* the wash-white weir *noon* stickleback under stones
afternoon of photographs and thermos flasks *teatime* the rookery boils over
evening itches and scratches *night* an obsessive owl

Finally, on boulders in the stream are the words *refraction*, *momentum* and *conversion*, which are meant to inspire the reader to consider the physical and poetic attributes of the river, which is so bound up with High Wycombe's local history and its prosperity in former days.

It is planned to include the art work in an educational project involving primary school teachers and children, with the aim of continuing Jack's legacy as an environmental educator and to provide an aid to the interpretation of the work.

The official opening of the park is scheduled for 4 March. We are grateful to Wycombe District Council councillors and officials, Artpoint and the artists for creating this memorial garden which we hope will delight people of all ages for many years to come.

John Gore

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A Really Useful Day

This month you will receive with your newsletter a fly-sheet from the Bucks Federation of Women's Institutes about a 5-hour event at the Wycombe Swan on 19 April on a wide range of "green" issues. We are very happy to offer the facilities of our distribution network for this purpose and, furthermore, it has meant some additional revenue for the Society's coffers!

Pann Mill Tap Water

HOW LUCKY many of us are in High Wycombe to be drinking Chiltern Wye Valley water, straight from the tap. Not water just washed down from the streets, but rainwater that fell on the ground and moved down into the chalk aquifer below the town!

Pann Mill - the pumping station

The recent refurbishment by Nuttall of Thames Water's Pann Mill Pumping Station in Abbey Way provided the Society's Pann Mill Restoration Team with an opportunity to discover more about the water pumping operation.

Beneath Wycombe is a chalk aquifer which extends from Marlborough to beyond London and from Stevenage to Guildford. A large area of this aquifer is covered by impermeable material but around Wycombe rainfall can flow directly into the chalk, travelling down about 3 feet a year. Water is pumped from the chalk to Pann Mill from two wells which take groundwater from a maximum depth of 250 feet below ground level.

After being abstracted from the ground, the water is treated with chemicals to purify it. The water then flows through each of four large tanks to ensure the treatment has been effective. These green tanks are clearly visible from the Rye and Abbey Way. The purified water is then pumped direct into the water supply system through a low pressure pipe that takes water to Bowerdean Reservoir, as well as serving local properties on its way. Water is then piped from this reservoir to local customers and to Thames Water's Amersham Hill reservoir for distribution.

Pann Mill - the corn mill

Pann Mill, the corn mill site, can claim to play a part in the distribution of the town's tap water; the water pipe leading to Bowerdean Reservoir runs over it. Next time you visit the mill, maybe on National Mills Day, Sunday May 9th, you may wish to see, even touch, this notable water pipe which can carry up to 9½ million gallons a day. Walk up the steps beside the mill building, follow the water upstream for 70 paces and you will see two pipes bridging the river. The nearest one is the Bowerdean pipe which disappears under the north bank and continues beneath the roadways.

Pann Mill lent its name to the Pumping Station for a very good reason – the water works stands on the mill's orchard and kitchen garden. Wycombe Corporation bought Pann

Lucie Elmidoro 1914-1999

Lucie Elmidoro, who sadly died this February at the age of 84, was a good friend and loyal member of the Society from the time of her joining in 1981. She had been one of our "postmen", delivering newsletters in the Cressex area, and used her culinary skills generously to provide a wide range of delicious cakes for Society events, such as Pann Mill open days. Prior to her retirement, she had taught cookery at Vinio House School. She was a daughter of the Worley family and, as she told us in a Newsletter article in 1992, it was her grandfather who over 100 years ago founded the family transport business, which served the local furniture industry over many years. Originally, chairs were transported by horse and cart, and Lucie remembered horses being led through her grandparents' house in Frogmoor to their stable at the rear! We extend condolences to Lucie's family and friends.

John Gore

Mill in 1899, demolished a wing of the millhouse for road widening, and split the site roughly in half. The western half was retained – now occupied by the pumping station – and the reduced-sized mill property was sold the next year when corn milling continued. The mill's kitchen garden however was in the half that was sold; in its place today can be seen Thames Water's four green tanks. In 1910 a borehole was sunk – the very beginning of the Pann Mill Pumping Station.

Peter Hazzard

* * *

Hidden Bucks "2"

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water...

Ann Simone writes: the two car tours organised in 1998 were enjoyed both by organisers and by other participants and another has been arranged, for Sunday 24 April. We don't know where we're going yet, but we shall visit about 4 locations, using our own (shared) cars and visiting a pub for lunch. Anyone wishing to find out more, or to put your name down, contact Ann on 01494 448773.

Remember, don't worry if you don't have a car – plenty of other people have them!

(The 1998 trip was delightful: don't miss this one. – Ed.)

Local Book

Buckinghamshire Privies

by Martin Andrew

THE AUTHOR, Martin Andrew, who is Conservation Officer with Wycombe District Council, has an interesting sideline. Whenever he visits an old house in the District on business, he takes the opportunity to look out for any historic toilet arrangements. It is surprising how many ancient loos remain in Bucks, ranging from an architecturally-designed servants' lavatory block at Gayhurst, built for Lord Carrington around 1860, to the humble one, two or even three-holer at the end of the cottage garden.

Conditions were truly awful in the mid-nineteenth century slums; for example, at Newlands in High Wycombe. There, as a map and photograph in the book show, many of the privies emptied straight into the River Wye, with wells for drinking water close by. No wonder there were frequent outbreaks of typhoid and cholera. Around 1850, a public inquiry was forced on to the Borough Council because the death rate had risen to more than 20 per 1000, but, although the Inspector's report was condemnatory, he could only recommend improvements, and, as the Council was primarily interested in keeping down the rates, conditions improved only slowly.

The book contains a wealth of interesting

stories and reminiscences about the privy, a list of ancient Bucks privies open to visitors, plus a comprehensive vocabulary of pseudonyms for the loo.

Buckinghamshire Privies
by Martin Andrew 96pp
Countryside Books, Newbury £6-95

The Wycombe Museum

LAST MONTH John Gore reported on the final stages of the refurbishment of the Wycombe Museum in Priory Avenue.

James Rattue now advises us that the work will be complete and the new displays open to the public on Saturday 20 March. This represents the culmination of a 10-year process to broaden out the museum from its early – and very important – focus on chair and furniture making to all aspects of life in Wycombe down the years.

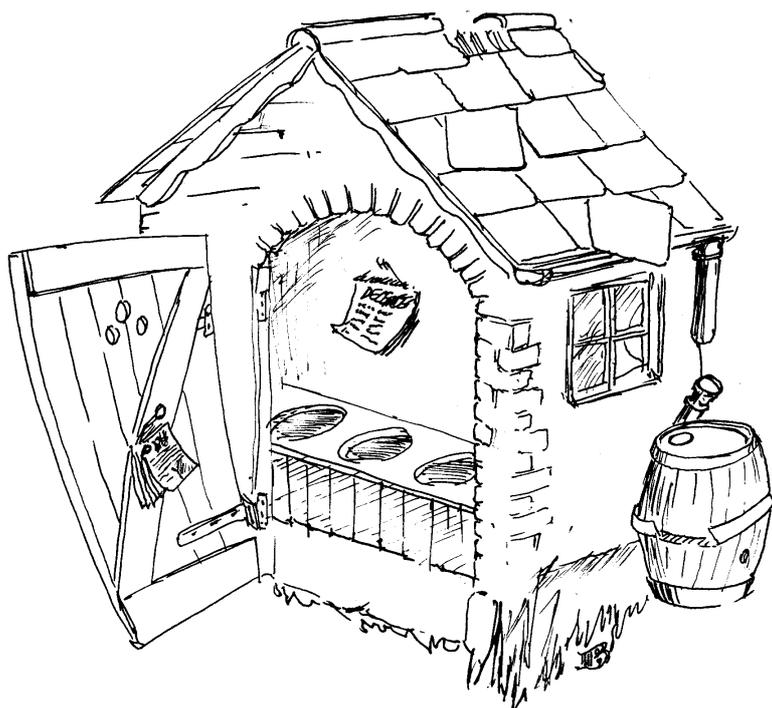
At the same time it is being modernised with, for example, a “Discovery Room” where the emphasis will be on hands-on experience. When I asked James if that is aimed at children he said he hoped older “children” would appreciate it too!

Albert Ivermee, who has long taken an interest in the museum, reminds us that the building itself is over 200 years old, and has been a museum for 37 years. High Wycombe was a town where pillow lace was made, and in Victorian times young girls could be sent to lace schools to learn this exacting craft. The furniture industry is catered for in two ways: the items of our local craftsmen and the regional furniture made from all over England. The “vernacular” furniture, made by the local craftsmen, required few tools and a lot of effort.

There is great diversity in the museum's exhibits. The coming of the railway in the 1880s changed the town: the railway navvies cut the huge cutting through Amersham Hill, leaving us a giant wall with all those blue bricks. And did you know, bus bodies were once made in Hughenden Avenue?

So, some time in the coming months, pay our local museum a visit and see the difference!

[There is always space in the Newsletter for historical reminiscences such as these. – Ed.]



A RARE THREE HOLER PICTURED
AT IVINGHOE 1938

Quarterly meeting, 20 January

Barbara Hurman: An Archaeological Perspective

BARBARA HURMAN was a professional archaeologist until her retirement and since then has continued to work on a contract basis on a number of projects. Her archaeological involvement in Buckinghamshire began in Milton Keynes before she joined the Buckinghamshire County Museum in Aylesbury. She was required to be present at all major excavations carried out on behalf of the museum and to take charge of the handling of small finds. Her specialism was pottery. Later she left the County Museum to return to Milton Keynes and to work for the Milton Keynes Development Unit on the last few of their excavations and behind the scenes, again on small finds.

Barbara is a long-standing member of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society. As the premier Society in the county it is responsible for publishing the Records of Bucks which contain many of the reports of archaeological work along with articles about local history. It was also responsible for publishing all of the excavation work carried by the Milton Keynes Unit which are obtainable as a series of monographs. Along with the Bucks Archaeological Society the county has a number of active groups, all based on volunteers, and the work of the County Museum was supported by another volunteer group who made a major input to many of the archaeological projects of the 70s and 80s.

Probably the oldest 'dig' in the County was in 1883 when a mound at Taplow was opened to reveal a rich Anglo-Saxon burial complete with intact glass drinking vessels. The finds are on display in the British Museum and until the excavations at Sutton Hoo the Taplow mound was the richest Anglo-Saxon burial in the country.

Although there is much archaeology in the county, most of it remains buried and unseen: there is little above-ground archaeology in Bucks. This is especially true of High Wycombe with its villa on the Rye and romano-british finds at Micklefield. The full extent of the Rye villa has only been recently established despite several previous excavations. The south of the county has a number of other villas at Hambleden, Latimer and Saunderton.

Excavation is total destruction so the recording of information is vital to good archaeological practice and the interpretation of features. Barbara showed examples from the Romano-British site at Shardeloes, now under the Amersham by-pass. The drawing of excavated features and photography both play important roles, as does the careful recording and examination of finds which often provide the vital dating evidence for excavated features.

Human remains often feature in archaeological work. They have to be examined and usually

removed or they would simply become scattered during building work. Barbara showed examples from George Street, Aylesbury, where the burials were associated with the Anglo-Saxon churchyard at St. Mary's, and Desborough Road where there was the now lost medieval church of St. Margaret, possibly associated with the housing of lepers but not proven. Isolated burial groups also occur, such as those revealed by the digging of a pond at Bledlow. [Reporter's note: human remains are always treated with respect by archaeologists and after suitable study are commonly re-interred in a suitable location.]

Some archaeological puzzles remain for the High Wycombe area; what was Desborough Castle really for, is the mound in the museum grounds really a motte for a castle, and where were the pottery kilns at Cadmore End?

In concluding, Barbara reflected on the state of the archaeological service in Buckinghamshire. In the 1950s archaeology was largely carried out by amateurs under the umbrella of the Bucks Archaeological Society who were responsible for the excavations at Invinghoe Beacon. As the 1960s unfolded, the considerable pace of development in the county provided the impetus for rescue archaeology which in turn led to the creation of a professional service. Throughout the 70s and 80s the professional service remained strong but gradually there was a move to contract archaeology with the work going to the best bidder whether they were based in the county or not. With the movement of other archaeological groups into the county and the winding-up of the Milton Keynes Unit the pattern on archaeology began to change. Buckinghamshire has now lost most of its archaeological professionals and all of its fieldwork, this at a time when archaeology remains very popular with TV programmes such as 'Time Team' and 'Meet the Ancestors'. In Buckinghamshire the archaeological future looks bleak although a number of individual professional and amateur groups remain active.

Pauline Cauvain

Planning

Planning Workshop

Last month's essay entitled "Decisions, Decisions", evidently struck a chord. Ann Simone says:

"I have felt for some time that Planning should be more 'debated' rather than 'reported', but how to get more people involved? The various articles in Newsletter 110 – all seemed to gel with the idea that perhaps we should have *more* meetings of interested members, since those we already organised [*referring to the short report-back sessions held at recent quarterly meetings*] certainly do not allow time for extra discussion."

So there has been arranged something new: **Planning Matters – a Workshop for Society Members.** Not just listening to a speaker, but a discussion group, listening to each other (the "experts" and the "doubters"?). The Membership Group, which has taken the lead in organising the session, and the Planning Group hope for the active participation of all the groups and members who feel that the articles raised in Newsletter 110 merit discussion.

This event takes place at the Friends' Meeting House on 23 June, at 7.45pm prompt.

AXA (Equity & Law) Site

The Inspector in the public inquiry into the application for outline planning consent to develop the former Equity & Law site at Hazlemere for housing (see p.6 of the Winter Newsletter) has approved the application. The Council will be seeking to increase the number of homes on the site from the original 100 suggested by the developer, thus making a proper contribution to meeting the area's predicted housing needs.

The Inspector noted that his decision could increase pressure to develop the Grange Farm and Terriers sites for business use. The Council has reaffirmed its strong opposition to this over the period of the Local Plan.

Western Sector

Since the Winter Newsletter, things have moved forward decisively. The *Bucks Free Press* Property Section reported on 12 February that, although decisions on the all-important Compulsory Purchase Orders relating to Tesco's and the Gas Works site are not likely to

be determined until April/May, the House of Fraser and British Home Stores had signed agreements to take the biggest two shops in the scheme. The developers had also signed up Warner's for a 9-screen cinema complex. And the Policy and Resources Committee on 7 February voted overwhelmingly in principle to go ahead with the project.

There is talk of the project being completed by 2002. So now that the position is clearer on the largest participants in the development, will the Council arrange an exhibition to show the public how the details are turning out?

* * *

Downley Village Design Statement

The Countryside Commission is sponsoring a scheme for villages to formalise the views of their inhabitants into a Design Statement applicable to an individual village, which would hopefully, and subsequently, be adopted by the local planning authorities as Supplementary Planning Guidance for that village area.

The enterprising Downley Parish Council have not let the encroaching tide of housing originating on the Hughenden Road side of the hill, and now merged with the former by separate village settlement, deny the proposition that Downley is still a distinctive village by location and ethos, with standards of design and layout to be safeguarded.

Therefore residents of the greater Downley area are joining together to establish a record of the history and character of Downley, the current buildings' usage and physical features.

This will be the basis for a formal statement to establish design parameters for conversions and new buildings construction, and to support any resistance to encroachment into the countryside which developers are keen to do when £ signs appear before their eyes.

The High Wycombe Society interest in this project must surely centre upon the welcome prospect that a design statement for Downley, formulated by its citizens, and adopted by the Parish Council and Wycombe District Council, could directly influence the deliberations and decisions on future planning applications applicable to the "area of benefit".

Downley Parish Councillors, and other residents, who are also members of our High Wycombe Society, are participating in this new initiative to preserve the identifiable character of a formerly remote village settlement outside a then distant High Wycombe town.

Roger Lawson

"In My Opinion..."

Deculverting – a “realistic” view?

For the almost 30 years or so that I have lived in High Wycombe I have heard frequent laments at the culverting of the Wye, and wouldn't it be nice if it could be uncovered for all to enjoy again, flowing through the town. Theoretically, yes, but what would it look like? Flowing through Desborough Recreation Ground and from there on into the town, where it can be seen, it is heavily littered with rubbish of every description, quite a lot in the area of the Rye and Kingsmead too.

Some years ago I overheard two elderly ladies who had lived in Newlands reminiscing about that area, and agreeing that the culverting of the river was a blessing because it had been used as a litter bin [*and, if you go back a little earlier, rather worse, see p.6. – Ed.*], and was never cleared.

To see a clear flowing river, in the mind's eye is delightful, but who will keep it clean?

Barbara Rippington

Some years ago, Barbara organised clear-ups of the Wye bed by HWS members, from West Wycombe into the town and beyond. – Ed.

Name that street

The 1997/98 Winter Newsletter contained a paragraph about the naming of roads in High Wycombe and the District. The need for new names will become greater as the number of new roads increases, so it might be a good idea if all of you who read this paragraph would also read the article at the top of the current issue of Community News. It will tell you all you need to know on the subject and it will surely inspire some of you to put forward ideas for new names in which local people, who have freely given time and talents to the welfare of the area, are remembered.

Olivia Price

Editor's Note: This letter had to be held over from the last issue of the newsletter so it is no longer the "current issue of Community News" that Olivia refers to. Here it is again (with acknowledgements to Wycombe District Council):

“The names of new streets are decided following agreement between the relevant Parish Councils and the developer (in High Wycombe the charter trustees are consulted).

The District Council's Building Control Services co-ordinates the process and liaises with other interested

parties such as the Post Office and the emergency services.

If a Parish Council and developer are unable to agree a name, the matter is referred to the Council's Planning, Environment and Transportation Panel for decision, however the Parish Council and developer are normally able to agree on a name. Parish Councils are pleased to use names that have connections with the locality. The Parish Council and the Building Control Service welcome suggestions from members of the public to assist in the process.”

Western Sector – a “native” speaks

Most of the members will not remember High Wycombe after the Second World War, 1939-45: full of interesting bits, factories, shops, housing and people, untouched by bombs and war, apart from all the troops stationed here. I know this is a long time ago, but some people still remember! Then the town streets were reduced to rubble, the river was sent underground, the flyover built and the part of town *not* rebuilt was along Oxford Road. Most of the streets and roads in this area will vanish under the Western Sector scheme. What do we think will happen to all these shops if the proposed development takes place? Will they occupy some of those empty town shops while the upheaval is happening, or will they go elsewhere? Also do we need another multi-screen cinema? Where will the people park who wish to use this cinema? I feel the need is not more shops, but fill the existing ones first. We could put the buses back into Frogmoor, this is nearer the town centre than Bridge Street. By the year 3000 we could end up with a new concrete jungle, with those granite balls filling all the open spaces.

Albert A Ivermee

On my reading of the plans, the areas beyond Bridge Street and across Oxford Road are not affected, and most of the shops in Desborough Road lie outside the area for development. But we shall have a lot of screens in Wycombe, shan't we? Will there be even more empty shops? - Ed.

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STOP PRESS: The opening of the River Park – “Jack's Garden” as we in the society shall always know it – took place as planned on 4 March. Unfortunately our vice-president Olive Scruton could not be there, having taken a bad tumble near her home in Hythe a few days earlier, assisted by two heavy shopping bags. We send her our very best wishes for a speedy recovery and look forward to her next visit to Wycombe.

Notices

Obituary

It is with much regret that we record the death of the following members of the Society, and we would like to express our condolences to their families and friends:

Mrs L E Elmidoro (see also p.5)
Mr J Wright

New members

We welcome the following new members:

Mr I D Barratt of Pinions
Ms A J Green of Totteridge
Mrs M J Custance of Parsonage Close
Mr D F Murray of Plomer Green Ave

The first of these names will be recognised instantly by those of you who take an interest in the artistic talent in the Newsletter, "conveniently" displayed this quarter on p.6!

Charity Stall; and Coffee Morning

One of the ways the Society supplements its funds is through the sale of bric-a-brac, plants, cakes etc at the Charity Stall at the Little Market House. This year WDC has allocated us the 10th of July. We need items to sell – if you have unwanted gifts, ornaments, household goods, etc we would appreciate them, preferably the day before, so that they can be sorted and priced. Please contact Olivia Price on 527042, who has kindly agreed to store items. And by the way, would you like to help?

The Coffee Morning, on 12th June at the Friends' Meeting House, is always an occasion to meet other members in a pleasant atmosphere. Another opportunity to donate, and buy, cakes and other "bring and buy" items. See you there!

Ann Simone

Many thanks for *all* your contributions. Material for the Summer issue should reach the Editor at 29 Maybrook Gardens High Wycombe HP13 6PJ (01494 528106) by **19 May**, please.

Chris Woodman (Hon Editor)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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Tuesday 13 April 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Annual General Meeting.
Chilterns Woodlands Project, John Morris, Project Leader

Saturday 24 April

2nd tour of Hidden Bucks locations, with pub lunch (see p.5).

Sunday 9 May 11am-5pm
Pann Mill

National Mills Day: exhibition, garden composting workshop, sale of cottage garden plants and teas.
2.00pm: Water Trail led by Prue Meek (start from the Mill.)

Wednesday 19 May 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Arts Festival talk: Public House Signs and the Stories Behind Them, David Cohen. Entrance by ticket only, from Annie Woodward (527978) or at the door, £3 including coffee.

Saturday 12 June 10.30am-noon
Friends' Meeting House, 25 London Rd

Coffee Morning with Bring and Buy stall.

Wednesday 23 June 7.45pm
Friends' Meeting House, 25 London Rd

Planning Matters – a Workshop for Society Members (see p.8).

Saturday 10 July 8am-12noon
Little Market House

Charity Market Stall.
It's not too soon to start saving your contributions!

Thursday 14 October 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Community Policing in the Thames Valley. Robert Beckley, Superintendent & Area Commander, Thames Valley Police.

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Wednesday 19 January 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Mills and Milling through the Ages. Stanley Cauvain, Archaeologist and HW Society member.