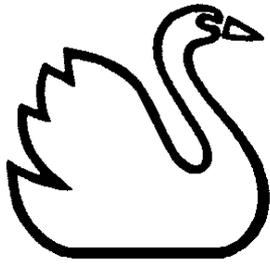


Don't forget – AGM and Friends of the Earth – 13 April at 7.30 – see p.6!



# THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

## *newsletter*

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### Of work, and trees

AT THE District Council's Planning, Environment and Transportation (PET) Committee's meeting on 31 January, there was a lively discussion of a Labour motion (with Lib Dem support) that had been remitted from full Council, about employment land.

In November, at the PET's first discussion of the Deposit Local Plan following public consultation, there was shared elation that it had been possible to withdraw almost all the unpopular sites earmarked for housing development (with the exception of Abbey Barn North). But how had the Council's officers pulled off such a miracle?

Well, first they took a hard look at other consents that had been granted in the meantime (such as the AXA site at Terriers) and at the expected "windfall" housing consents. Which was fair enough. Then they took an equally hard look at the supply of labour and the "supply of jobs". The population of Wycombe District is falling. Moreover, it is ageing too. Therefore fewer people will need employment in the future. And there is a trend towards office employment instead of manufacturing, and an office worker takes up less space than a manual worker.

All this sounds reasonable, but might the process have gone too far? Cllr Anthea Hardy thought so. She argued that the employment land allocation had fallen so far that it lacked balance and flexibility. Potential employers could be frightened off, and more Wycombe people would have to commute out of the area for their work. Your Executive Committee agrees. Not everyone is suited to an office job, and the area needs to attract a balanced spectrum of employment opportunities. We shall argue this at the Public Inquiry where, no doubt, the big builders will hire expensive Counsel to persuade the Planning Inspectors that even more land can be switched to housing.

\* \* \*

And trees? Your Executive Committee is shocked at the proposal to fell all the mature trees that now grace Frogmoor since their planting in the 1980s. Overall, the plan to enhance the town is good, but we think that to lose all the trees is totally unnecessary, wanton destruction. We have put our views forcefully to the consultants and to individual District Councillors and we know many of you have too. We can only hope that our elected representatives have second thoughts.

*Chris Woodman*



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

Registered Charity No. 257897

Honorary Secretary: Frances Presland, 61 Hicks Farm Rise, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 7SX. Tel: (01494) 523263

## **Transport**

THE TRANSPORT White Paper published in July 1998 has moved transport steadily up the agenda, nationally and locally, so the Transport Group has been busy trying to keep up with developments in this country and elsewhere, plus considering how these might be applied locally, and also responding to many consultations.

Recently these last have included commenting on the new proposals for Handy Cross (November) and responding to the Government's consultation draft for the revision of Planning Policy Guidance on Transport, PPG13 (December). Also in December we wrote to the DETR and to the Chairman of the House of Commons Transport Sub Committee, Gwyneth Dunwoody, in connection with reinstating the High Wycombe/Bourne End Rail Link (HBL).

We have studied this disused track bed for six years and believe the most sustainable form of integrated transport on the HBL would probably be Ultra Light Rail (ULR). This is a lightweight rail vehicle that uses a flywheel as its main energy storage. A member of the Group, Colin Harrison, made contact with a major independent rail consultancy where the Head of Light Rail is a leading expert on ULR and he has made a preliminary survey free of charge.

Mrs Dunwoody replied promptly to our letter and asked us to make a submission to her Committee's inquiry into Light Rapid Transport Systems (January). This gave us the opportunity to present the particular problems of the HBL and our case for supporting ULR. Also, the advice received from the DETR enabled us to write to Bucks County Council asking that the reinstatement of the HBL with public transport be included in the Local Transport Plan, and that an appropriate feasibility study be soon commissioned.

This study would be relatively cheap because of the considerable work carried out by the engineers of the Society's Transport Group. Chris Wallis has special bridge expertise, and Colin Harrison is a railway signalling consultant. We met Chris through a letter he wrote to the Bucks Free Press in late 1993, and Colin at the 1996 Wycombe Show, when the Group put on the Society's display about the HBL.

### **Handy Cross**

When prolonged gridlock occurs at Handy Cross it is usually because an accident or breakdown has occurred on, or close to, the roundabout. We therefore welcome the measures now proposed to reduce delays caused in these ways, e.g. cameras to discourage drivers crossing red lights.

The new plans also include four new slip roads which will enable some drivers to 'bypass' the roundabout. We appreciate the attractions of this scheme, but the harsh truth is, the slip roads will cost millions and do nothing to assist Road Traffic Reduction, and if there is no rigorous, positive road traffic reduction now, the slip roads would themselves be heavily loaded in a few years' time. Hence we believe the millions the slip roads would cost should be re-directed to support sweeping, innovative traffic reduction measures. These are also essential to reduce the congestion on the roads just north of the roundabout.

For similar reasons we oppose putting Park & Ride next to the M40 at Abbey Barn South. Instead, we have suggested a motorway bus stop only, with a frequent minibus shuttle service between Wycombe East and Flackwell Heath, to carry people to and from the M40 buses. This would require much less land than a P&R.

*Elsa Woodward*

### *Snippets and Scraps*

\* We have not seen the actual response of the District and County Councils to the Handy Cross Study, but we heard the PET's debate on 12 January. They strongly supported the new slip roads for the roundabout and even added a fourth – well, maybe just an extra lane – from the A404 out of Wycombe on to the M40 London-bound. The Marlow councillors in particular took a very dim view of the proposed new P&R site serving Wycombe at Little Marlow. And surprise, surprise, they regarded the Abbey Barn South P&R site (on the motorway) as a no-hoper. The Committee clearly felt the consultants had done a pretty haphazard job in

investigating the contributions made by the Cressex road network to Handy Cross's problems. Some Councillors even wondered if fixing those problems – including dropping off schoolchildren – would fix the motorway junction itself, but were warned off making too much of this in case it persuaded the DETR that works at Junction 4 were unneeded!

\* The District Council has issued an admirable leaflet (A4, 4pp) on Green Transport Plans. It defines a GTP as "a package of measures to improve choice of travel options available to staff both for business and 'home to work' trips."

## The Local Transport Plan

LOCAL AUTHORITIES are now required to prepare Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and consult widely on them. The Wycombe LTP is produced by the County Council. The current draft is based largely on the 1993 Wycombe Transport Strategy, plus measures aimed at reducing car travel to work and school, and some improved bus services including on rural routes. Since 1993 there have been big changes relating to transport, technology and the environment. Many of these developments were introduced by the former Conservative Government but now, in opposition, they are seeking to retreat from these and present themselves as the motorist's friend.

In 1994, when many politicians and other road builders had to recognise that congestion could not be cured by building more roads, the Government published PPG13, the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution reported on Transport and the Environment, and there was a report by the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Appraisal (SACTRA); all these confirmed the simple truth that car usage must be restrained. The first Road Traffic Reduction Act was passed four years after the 1993 Wycombe Transport Strategy, but before the 1997 General Election.

The Strategy was concerned with reducing congestion over only a fairly small area around Wycombe town centre, but now traffic reduction legislation requires considering larger areas.

Also, rail travel has increased substantially, Park and Ride can no longer be seen as a green sustainable procedure, new technologies such as GPS and mobile phones have become widely used, delivery services offer the possibility of reducing the astronomical shopping car mileage, and developments in Ultra Light Rail and transport funding open up new opportunities for reinstating the disused rail link between High Wycombe and Bourne End (with eleven intermediate stops) and a ULR extension to Maidenhead.

With these and other developments in mind, the Transport Group believes the LTP should incorporate many innovations. As a first step, the Group is hoping to analyse and compare the particular travel patterns (routes, distances, times, numbers) generated by different kinds of organisation, e.g. the hospital, theatre, work places, the railway station and town centre (shopping and other facilities) etc. This analysis, when integrated with detailed information about the journeys individuals wish to make, should help the development of convenient, economic and sustainable alternatives to the car. The Group would like to consult the Society's members, and invites comments and suggestions including ideas for new transport services and other facilities that would help them use their cars less. For further information, watch this space, or contact me on 443590.

*Elsa Woodward*

### *More Snippets*

- \* The highlight of Wycombe Transport Strategy Panel (WTSP) meeting on 8 February was a grand mutual back-slapping session on the Provisional LTP. By pressing all the buttons that would appeal to the DETR (parking strategy, promotion of bus use, safer travel to school, the role of passenger rail – and they haven't even tried proposing the HBL line yet!), the BCC had obtained a 44% rise in their budget (compared to 20% across the country).
- \* The most expensive item in the transport budget for 2000/01 is £821,000 on the new busway from Spring Gardens to the railway station. (Total project cost is £3m.) But progress is threatened by delays on the new station. We have spoken to both WDC and Laings about their continuing tough negotiations following the public 'development brief' of July 1998. WDC hope for a planning application later in the year, but that depends on Laings finding a way to fulfil the requirement of the Council and the Rail Regulator to replace 175 parking

spaces. The much-published artist's impression is very far from definitive.

- \* Did you ever hear about the Cressex Christmas Shuttle? A free bus service to and from Cressex, but hardly anyone heard about it. The WTSP held a bizarre discussion of why it had cost £3.85 per passenger to provide the service, before a clairvoyant councillor pointed out the lack of publicity. But worry not: they will try again, as indeed they should, perhaps not even waiting until next Christmas.
- \* By the time this Newsletter issues, the Hamilton Safe Routes to School project should have been launched, with the announcement of the name of the winning child in the competition for an illustration to go below the 20mph signs. A curious aspect of the Safer Routes to School project is the proposal for special parking permits for parents who, despite 'walking buses' and everything else, still need encouragement to drive their children to school. Odd!

## **Planning**

# **Go Ahead for the Rye Environment Centre**

The project to convert the former café building at Holywell Mead Swimming Pool into an environmental visitor centre, as described in our Summer 1998 Newsletter, has been given the go ahead after a successful bid to the Biffaward scheme. Biffaward, created by Biffa Waste Services and funded with contributions made under landfill tax regulations, is providing the bulk of the £576,551 funding for the project, with Wycombe District Council and the Environment Agency contributing the balance. These organisations will now be working with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT, formerly BBONT) as key partners in the scheme along with representatives from 16 local environmental groups, among them the Chiltern Society, Wycombe Wildlife Group and the High Wycombe Society.

A Project Manager, Nick Forster, has been appointed to oversee the project for BBOWT. Renovations to the redundant café building are

expected to begin later this year, using recycled and local materials wherever possible, and employing the latest energy conservation and recycling methods in the construction. When completed, the centre will be equipped for visitors, young and old, to interactively learn about the environment and the sustainable management of resources in line with Local Agenda 21 principles. No doubt, in due course, volunteers will be sought to assist in the running of the centre.

The Society hopes that the centre will prove its worth by increasing the environmental awareness of all those who visit it, in practice as well as in theory. We have always stressed to our partners in the scheme the traditional importance of The Rye and Holywell Mead as green areas for informal recreation, and have emphasised that visitors should respect this, for example by not driving to the site.

*John Gore*

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## **Environmental Impact of Supermarket Competition**

It was probably the takeover of ASDA by the giant American superstore, Walmart, in the summer of 1999, and the fear that the Government might be considering relaxing the planning regime for new superstores in order to increase competition and cut prices, that led the House of Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee to conduct an inquiry into the environmental impact of supermarket competition.

The High Wycombe Society was among some 30 organisations nationally to respond to an invitation to submit evidence to the committee. We drew attention to the huge amount of traffic generated by shoppers visiting out-of-town superstores by car (millions of miles per year per superstore), which in turn adds to greenhouse and pollutant gases in the atmosphere at a time when Britain is committed to reducing these emissions. We concluded that it would be irresponsible to relax the current planning restrictions on out-of-town superstores, and advocated the encouragement of town centre stores backed by delivery services. We also floated the idea of appointing a Superstore Regulator, who would ensure that competing stores all adhered to the same environmental standards.

In its report, the Committee noted that out-of-town supermarkets have had serious and undesirable effects on town centres and village shops, and have led to increased traffic congestion. They had rarely seen such overwhelming support for a Government policy as that laid down in current planning policy guidance on 'Town Centres and Retail Developments' (PPG6). This advocates a 'sequential approach' in selecting superstore sites. In essence, it means that out-of-town sites should only be developed if there are no suitable sites in or on the edge of town centres. The Committee wants local authorities to use compulsory purchase powers, if necessary, to create sites in town centres rather than permit out-of-town development, and to insist on much better architectural design than has been evident hitherto. The Committee firmly believes that any relaxation of the planning regime in the interests of increasing competition would be disastrous, whilst doing little to encourage new entrants.

We hope the Government will follow this excellent advice and not be tempted to relax the present effective planning policy.

*John Gore*

## Planning this Quarter

**Planning Group** The Planning Group has met monthly to discuss significant planning applications and decisions by WDC Planning Applications Panel, and to monitor progress of the Deposit Draft Local Plan to 2011. We share the task of examining planning applications which appear to threaten the environment, such as infringing the Green Belt or leading to poor urban design, and submit objections when considered appropriate. If any member of the Society would like to join the group, please get in touch with the Hon. Sec. on 01494 523263 or the undersigned on 01494 526671.

**District Local Plan to 2011** Further radical changes to the Deposit District Local Plan to 2011 were accepted by the WDC Planning, Environment & Transport Committee at two meetings in January. They decided to schedule 100 new houses on Abbey Barn North after all, and not to relocate them on the Compair site, which we hope will continue to fulfil its employment role for many years to come. We have continued to press for assurances that an adequate supply of employment land will be retained to provide work for local people. See also p.1 of this Newsletter.

The current prognosis on the District Local Plan is that revised proposals will be issued on 3 March, to be followed by a six-week public consultation period confined to changes relative to the original Deposit Plan. (Please note and

send your statements of support or objection to the Council if any part of the Plan affected by the changes concerns you.) There will then be a pre-inquiry meeting on 24 May (to discuss the timetable etc) before the Public Inquiry into the Plan starts on 12 September 2000.

**Frogmoor and Oxford Street Enhancement** The Planning Group has also considered the County and District Councils' scheme for pedestrianising (apart from buses and taxis) and 'enhancing' Frogmoor and Oxford Street. We have written to Councillors and the local press about the indefensible proposal to cut down all the trees in Frogmoor – see p.1.

**Housing Projections for the South-East** A panel of planning advisers appointed to examine the South-East Regional Plan has caused much concern by predicting a need for almost 1,100,000 new homes in the South-East by 2016, including a further 92,000 in Bucks. If accepted, these proposals would have serious implications for the Chilterns AONB and the Green Belt around High Wycombe. The Society wrote to our MP, Sir Ray Whitney, expressing our 'shock' at the proposals, and suggesting that the result would be very bad for the UK as a whole by discouraging much-needed economic activity in other parts of the country. Sir Ray responded sympathetically.

**John Gore**

### More Scraps

\* The PET's consideration of the Local Plan included a long and tortuous discussion of the various areas of "safeguarded land" around the District. This is land which is not in the Green Belt and is not currently scheduled for housing or industrial development but might be in the future, e.g. in the next Local Plan in 5 years' time which will aim to satisfy development needs to 2016. In a long debate on the Gomm Valley, the council's officers argued that to designate it as a Local Landscape Area would involve them walking a tricky tightrope at the Public Inquiry. Eventually, Councillors had their way. But there was no modification of the status of the sensitive Grange Farm site in Hazlemere because it is already in the AONB (affording it higher status than a mere LLA) or of the other Safeguarded Land areas – Abbey Barn South, Lane End Road, Slate Meadow and Terriers Farm. The District Council will defend these areas against development at the Local Plan inquiry and, starting this year, will put the case for these areas in

the preliminary discussions with the County Council on the new County Structure Plan to 2016.

\* The Government is so convinced that Park & Ride is a Good Thing that it has proposed (in the draft new PPG13) that it should be possible to remove P&R sites from the Green Belt as part of the Local Plan process. But the Government Office for the South-East (GOSE) had to remind the District Council that the *current* situation is that P&R sites must be the subject of individual planning applications (which GOSE could, if so minded, "call in" for decision by the Secretary of State). Nothing could have delighted our Conservative District Council more: they made a virtue of compulsion and "spun" the change in the Plan as a strategic retreat from P&R. Cllr Chris Oliver (Chairman of PET) has been heard to remark that P&R involves spending an awful lot of money on a mere 2,500 prospective users. Right!

## Events

### Turning Out Time

Spring cleaning they say is old fashioned and unnecessary but there comes a time when cupboards, shelves and sheds have to be turned out if only to find room for more things. So when you are doing this please remember we are looking for your unwanted saleable goods (not clothes or furniture please) in good condition which we can sell from our charity stall on Saturday April 29th or at our coffee morning on Saturday July 1st. These events help to raise funds to pay for our speakers and for the hire of the hall for our meetings and to continue the work of the High Wycombe Society. Articles gratefully received at 18A Lucas Road High Wycombe, but could you phone first please 01494 527042 to make sure we can give you and your works a big welcome.

**Volunteers are needed to sell on the day – it doesn't matter if you've never done it before.**

*Olivia Price and members of the Membership and Publicity Group*

### Two Special Dates

**Sunday 11 June** – an outing to Selborne and Chawton, Hants, to visit Gilbert White's country house and garden, including the Oates Museum. Jane Austen's house, where she lived from 1809 to 1817, is at Chawton. On this occasion we are joining a coach outing organised by the National Trust Wycombe Centre. Tickets £14 including entrance fees.

Contact Ann Simone (01494) 448773 for further information, or directly to the outing organiser Juliet Davis on (01494) 488305.

**Saturday 8 July** – Another chance to get together and visit some of the spots highlighted in Jean Archer's book. Details later, from Ann Simone.

### Buttercups or Bricks and Mortar?

Koy Thompson, International Rainforest Campaigner for Friends of the Earth, addressed the High Wycombe Society in July 1988 on the subject of Tropical Rainforests.

In April, Friends of the Earth returns with a topic nearer to home. Tony Bosworth, its Housing Campaigner, will speak on Housing and Green Belt Development.

Plans for further housing pose some of the biggest problems the town has ever faced. It would be a great encouragement to the Society

to have a good attendance at this important meeting. The talk follows the AGM on 13 April at 7.30pm in the Reggie Goves Centre (please note the earlier starting time). PLEASE BRING YOUR FRIENDS – ALL ARE WELCOME.

*Membership and Publicity Group*

### Local Books

**Treasures of the Chilterns** (pub. The Chiltern Society 96pp A5, £7.50) aims to help visitors and local people find (using the map references supplied) and explore new places of interest in the 650 square miles of the Chilterns, ranging from the Thames in the south to Hitchin in the north. Features in both the natural and built environments are covered, including woods and waterways, great houses, villages, towns (not comprehensive enough, in my opinion), churches and mills, plus a few unusual features, such as the Pedestal at West Wycombe. Our own River Wye and Pann Mill receive a mention, but there is a curious lack of reference to High Wycombe in the index and in the chapters on towns and churches, as if High Wycombe did not have buildings such as the Guildhall and the Parish Church to match others in the Chilterns in historical and architectural interest!

**Hughenden Valley** from the Middle Ages to the end of the second Millennium, by John Veysey (96pp A4, £12.00). Many local people helped John Veysey compile the story of Hughenden Valley and how it has grown as a community over the last 50 to 60 years. The concept, building and use of the village hall as a major centre of community life feature strongly in the story. In spite of the emphasis on recent social history, the general history of the area in earlier centuries (don't forget Disraeli lived here!) and its wildlife are well covered. The book is attractively illustrated throughout with photographs, sketches and paintings, many by local artists.

**Chilterns Illustrated Walks** by Trevor Yorke (pub. Countryside Books, 96pp A5, £6.95). Twenty circular walks are described, ranging from three to seven miles in length, and all within about a fifteen mile radius of High Wycombe. Indeed, one 3-mile walk is in High Wycombe itself, taking in The Rye and the town centre, virtually combining our town and water trails. Each walk is well-researched, with details on how to reach the starting point, where to park and where to eat; plus detailed route maps drawn by the author. Interest is added by including brief descriptions and line drawings of interesting features en route. This should prove to be an excellent guide to the enjoyment of our Chiltern countryside.

*John Gore*

## “We’re Keeping the Mill in Millennium”



On May 14th 2000 we will have achieved one of our goals – we will grind flour and thus re-establish a link with a thousand years of millers who worked on the site before us.

But Pann Mill is a living site and we feel a duty to pass it on to the next generation, not as a



*The Stone Floor – showing the stone crane and 2 French Burr and 2 composite mill stones.*

completed “mill in a bottle” but as a dynamic project the final shape of which will be limited only by the imagination of the group. There is mill machinery slumbering on the site today waiting for restoration and integration into the overall plan. An archaeological team unearthed pottery and other artefacts which we have reburied in situ as there is not the labour at this time to investigate it further, but we will not lose it from the history of Pann Mill.

This project is not about Councils or Academics or Learned Societies but has been carried forward by an ever evolving team of enthusiasts who see Pann Mill as an important community asset. You can be part of our history by visiting us on National Mills Day, Sunday 14th May, when we will be grinding corn in the traditional manner from 11.00am to 5.00pm. The day will bring to fruition fifteen years of sustained team effort. Those who have helped and moved on are too numerous to mention, but their efforts are recognised by those who remain on the project. In particular we remember Jack Scruton MBE, first secretary of the High Wycombe Society, who had the foresight to know that this site of industrial heritage could be saved. We are indebted to him.

We are also lucky to have the help of several ‘young millers’ who we hope will form a lifelong interest in mills and milling history. Their energy and enthusiasm will be invaluable on

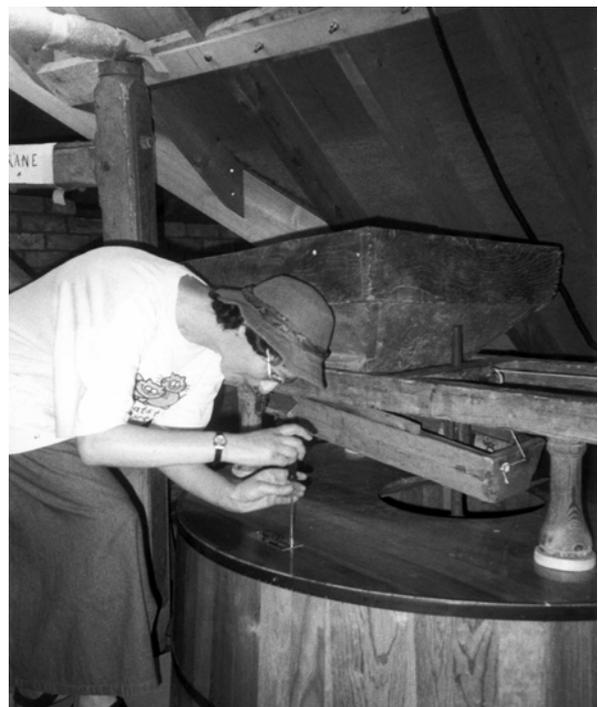
our milling day.

During the past six months, with this date in mind, we have worked to a strict schedule in a very productive atmosphere. None of us has any previous milling experience, which leads to great fun when we get together each Sunday fortnight. We take technical advice from local millwright Chris Wallis.

It has been a costly period in the restoration programme, with the knowledge that the high financial outlay will continue for some time to come. A huge effort to fund-raise will be needed on May 14th. As before there will be delicious home made teas, plants and pottery to buy and delightful grounds in which to relax. Considerations of health, site safety and hygiene have been another major factor in our preparations, resulting in negotiations with Wycombe District Council and a visit by the Fire Brigade.

Engineering students from West Herts College have fabricated a flywheel mechanism free of charge and it is hoped that they will sustain an interest in our mill for some time to come. We hope to arrange some publicity by way of thanks to the College.

**Myra King**



*Cathy Kraft – screwing a brass plate on to the pine tun which she gave in memory of her father, a long-standing member of the Society.*

## Quarterly meeting

# Mills and Milling Through the Ages

ON JANUARY 19th Society member Stanley Cauvain gave an illustrated talk on Mills and Milling Through the Ages. A scientist, who would perhaps be more used to conducting full-day seminars on the subject of wheat and flour, Stanley had just one hour to cover his subject. By interweaving the subject of milling with local archaeology, and avoiding technical jargon, he was able to bring the subject alive for the large winter audience.

Starting with the make-up of the wheat ear which originated in Turkey, the speaker compared present-day with prehistoric examples. Natural cross pollination in early days led to better quality wheat, worth grinding for food. Pre-GM days! Baking may have begun by accident when it was found that wetting and heating flour made it a more easily digested and more palatable food.

The historical sequence of wheat grinding between stones was highlighted, e.g. hand querns, watermills and windmills, before roller mills appeared in the late 1800s. Archaeology has suggested that wheat was grown and ground locally at Micklefield some 2,000 years ago. How careful we are now, to avoid the over-used M word!

Pann Mill's archaeological finds were used to illustrate the fluctuating fortunes of milling over the centuries. A strong example of this was the heyday of milling, late 18th century, when it appears the war with France was good for millers. Milling rose in status and many new buildings were constructed, including Pann Mill (demolished ca. 1971).

Unfortunately, in the mid to late 1800s the development of metal rollers for milling and the import of cheap but good quality wheat from North America sounded the death knell of many small traditional mills. Roller mills, using vertical steel cylinders, produced in one hour what millstones produced in one week.

Ending on an optimistic note – for the flour milling industry – Stanley surprised many in the audience by saying that 95% of all wheat used in this country today grows here. Another interesting fact is that this country is the 5th biggest exporter of wheat in the world.

During an interesting question time, one topic discussed was the different kinds of wheat flour. The speaker was in no doubt that because individuals, internally, are all slightly different, flour that suits one person does not suit another. One member of the audience proved the point by telling me he eats 100% wholemeal bread to the exclusion of any other bread. Appropriately enough given the topic, the leader of Pann Mill Restoration Group, Myra King, gave a vote of thanks on behalf of the appreciative audience.

**Peter Hazzard**

\* \* \*

### Politics!

It seems that some people thought our last issue was political! It's not the Society's aim to support one party rather than another: we try not to see Wycombe issues in party terms and in the past we have numbered district councillors of different persuasions in our membership.

So, to be clear: the Wycombe Transport Strategy Panel, whose commitment to District/County co-operation we praised in the Winter issue, is the successor to joint bodies that were set up under previous administrations. It is just that things have now advanced to the point where the atmosphere is more constructive than it has been before. Well, maybe the fact that the County and District are both under the same party *does* make a difference, but it is not the Society's job to take a view on that.

### "Cannot see to read this hymn?"

If *you* have trouble reading this newsletter, write to the editor (or phone 528106). We should be able to do a large print edition for you.

### !!! Quiz Time !!!



Calling all children 1 - 15 years old...

Each Newsletter will carry a quiz question. Solve it and *you* could win a £5 Smiths token!

1st Question:

**"Where in the town can you find a village pump?"**

Send your answers to the editor (address on back page) by 30 April. The first correct answer out of the bag will win.

Questions set by Pauline Cauvain of our Heritage Group.



## ANTAS

WE INCLUDED a brief reference to ANTAS – the Association of North Thames Amenity Societies – in our Winter 1998/99 issue. We make no apology for returning to it – it is an organisation with a growing influence. ANTAS currently has a membership of sixteen local amenity societies within Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. It has two meetings a year which provide the opportunity for discussion on matters of mutual interest, and experience shows these have been lively, informative and of great interest to the participants. The wide range of guest speakers on planning and related subjects has also been popular with members.

In addition to these meetings, officers of ANTAS examine and, where appropriate, comment upon Government consultation papers including revisions of the DETR's Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs). ANTAS maintains close links with the Civic Trust and is represented on the Trust's Planning and Heritage Group. It supports member societies in their dealings with local planning authorities and provides help and advice where possible.

The Civic Trust is currently implementing a new regional structure (to conform with Government organisational boundaries) and ANTAS expects to have an increasingly important role to play in this, particularly as the channel through which the views of member societies can be co-ordinated and pursued. We are delighted that the Civic Trust, through ANTAS, have decided to invite Elsa Woodward, leader of our Transport Group, to act as a transport consultant to the Trust's new watchdog committee for the South-East (to be known as Civic Trust South East). As we all know, Elsa has a penetrating insight into transport issues and we believe that, backed by the Society's members, she will be a considerable asset to the committee. Congratulations to Elsa and the whole Transport Group!

ANTAS's next meeting is in High Wycombe on the morning of Saturday 15th April and the guest speaker will be Michael Gwilliam, the Civic Trust's Director. These occasions can be very good value but numbers have to be limited. Anyone wishing to attend should contact the High Wycombe Society's Hon. Secretary.

\* \* \*

Last Spring ANTAS was treated to a superb talk by Dame Jennifer Jenkins on the role that existing, historic buildings can play in revitalising rundown towns and cities – provided this potential is recognised. In a message to the Urban Task Force, then about to start work, Dame Jennifer drew some fascinating comparisons with continental Europe as these two brief extracts from her talk show:

*"There can be no doubt that historic towns in France and Italy have survived far better than have ours. There has been little large scale*

*demolition for redevelopment. Most have kept their traditional layout and artisan quarters as well as their churches and public buildings, yet they have not lost their vitality. They are still places where people want to live, work and do their daily shopping and they have now also become magnets for tourists and universities. Ironically, the absence of inner relief roads and new highways slicing through historic quarters has not made traffic more difficult to solve. On the contrary, it has been easier to exclude cars from tightly woven centres and return the narrow streets to pedestrians as pleasant places to walk. Only this autumn I was struck by the measure taken to ban through traffic from main thoroughfares as well as from the medieval district of Naples, not a city one would expect to be giving a lead to London."*

Dame Jennifer noted that public attitudes to living were important: on the continent there is a "continuing appreciation of urban living and its cultural resources", and "little nostalgia for the equivalent of a rose-covered cottage in the Cotswolds which has helped to fuel the flight from towns in this country." She went on to describe the dramatic progress that two northern towns, Chester and Halifax, had made with the regeneration of their urban hearts by repairing and rescuing the historic buildings that were already there. Of Chester, she said:

*"Chester is a city now experiencing almost excessive pressure for development but which 30 years ago was suffering from widespread dereliction: people had moved out of the historic core which was described as 'depressed..., visually blighted by misused, empty and near derelict buildings. The situation was breeding insecurity and pessimism among the remaining inhabitants'. Following a detailed survey of the historic centre by Donald Insall, the local authority in partnership with the Historic Buildings Council launched a strategy for restoring decaying properties, re-occupying empty churches and other interesting buildings for a mixture of housing, commercial and community purposes and filling gap sites. The city levied a conservation rate to help finance the programme and within twenty years these objectives had been accomplished: the historic centre was thriving and its success had attracted new businesses to the outskirts of the city."*

## Communication... Communication... Communication

AS A civic society and environmental pressure group, we thrive on communicating with the local authorities, at District and County levels, also with similar adjoining amenity societies holding broadly similar aims to ours, with national 'specialised' bodies such as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and Transport 2000, and with the local public at large. We have considerable challenges to meet in the future. Your Executive Committee have identified one of our important aims as the recruitment of new members – people who will hopefully bring new insights and energy to our Society by their active participation. So, how are members to communicate these ideas and influence the Society's policies?

Well, our newsletter Editor has reiterated that this is indeed a forum for printing members' views, and the only possible restriction would be the amount of space available for members' letters to the Editor. So far, we have not been inundated – but that could change as we on the EC continue to improve our efforts to inform you, our members, of the policies we are pursuing on your behalf on planning and transport topics of really great importance.

Of course, there is no set of policies that your EC can adopt for the Society that will be identical to the personal views of all of our members for all of the time. Sometimes members will differ from the 'official' position, as they are fully entitled to. Indeed, out of disagreement and challenge, we hope, can come the soundest set of policies. But there is one plea that I would make to each member, and that is that if you have a view on, say, further pedestrianisation of the town centre (which is to be extended to Frogmoor, under the published scheme) that is diametrically opposed to the Society view, and you are moved to write to the local press, please do not claim your membership of the Society as a justification for it. This has been done, twice, before. It was a misleading thing for the members to have done, because it sought to give their views, which were backed by neither the membership at large nor the EC in the name of the Society, a false authority.

Finally, a word or two on how we should respond to *requests* for the Society's views. Our Founder Hon. Secretary, Jack Scruton, and his successor, John Gore, by the time he came to the end of his 11 year stretch, were very well known to our members who did not hesitate to refer questioners to them.

I have discerned a possible confusion, recently, about the appropriate person to be contacted.

Some outside bodies have been given my name, as Chairman, as the primary contact for the Society. "He's big and ugly enough to cope," you may say! But in fact it is our elected Hon. Secretary who is the proper channel of communication for our Society, and it is *her* role to respond authoritatively on any subject, after consultation with the officers and EC where necessary. Frances Presland has been Hon. Secretary for almost a year now, and she has a telephone number specific to Society business, and an answering machine to receive any input during business hours when, unlike many of us, she is at work!

So the guidance is: articles and letters for publication go to the Editor; official business and information go to our Hon. Sec. Only when a very rapid response is needed during working hours should enquirers be referred to the writer. Do be assured, the three above-named are reasonably efficient at communicating with each other!

**Roger Lawson**  
Chairman

\* \* \*

### Data Protection Acts

The Society is registered under the Data Protection Acts, which have recently been revised and extended. One of the provisions of the Acts is that people whose names are held on databases are entitled to see their own records. If *you* want to see *your* record, contact Annie Woodward on 01494 527978.

\* \* \*

### Robert Jarvis

Robert Jarvis died on 24th January after a debilitating illness. He was a Wycombe man and true patriot. Born to Robert Jarvis Senior, the miller of Pann Mill, on 22nd October 1922, he began his married life to Rita in the attic rooms of the Mill, before moving to Radnage in 1950. His family business, Jarvis Engineering, has been long established in Oakridge Road and he was a man of wide interests. His engineering and model-making talents were renowned. He even had his own observatory, for which he constructed a 12in astronomical telescope. He has been a great asset to the team during the Pann Mill restoration programme, making parts and giving advice on a subject very dear to his heart. We are sorry to know that he will not see Pann Mill grinding corn again this year.

**Myra King**

*"In My Opinion..."***The Mayor's Millennium Appeal**

Dear Chris,

I must strongly disagree with a sub-item in your report on the back page of the Winter Newsletter. It is true "there was limited support for commemorative benches" – certainly there were fewer than 10,000 attendees and of those present not every hand went up. However in the modern idiom this is known as spin-doctoring.

For one thing, the issue of lack of seating has been on the Rye Group's agenda for some years: at a meeting a week or two before, our Hon. Sec. responded enigmatically that we should await an announcement at the quarterly meeting. Also, at the event, I distinctly recall the dismayed look on our Chairman's face (£512 if I recall). Nonetheless it was my impression that the motion was carried.

My own ambitions were rather different anyway: as Mr James Porter (WDC's Parks and Environment Manager – *Ed.*) has limitless thousands, one might persuade our Council to allocate some hundreds towards benefiting the infirm.

Frank Brunner

*And Frances Presland responds:*

I am very concerned that Frank feels that the consultation at this winter's quarterly meeting was subject to spin-doctoring. I presented the various projects being undertaken for the Mayor's Millennium programme and asked the members present to indicate by a show of hands which they would like to support.

I judged that most support was for the Society to make a contribution to the Frogmoor water feature. It is true that I did not count the actual number of people supporting each option, as I did not want to take up too much time at the end of a fairly long meeting and the result appeared clear-cut, with the majority of those voting supporting the water feature item. What a pity that Frank did not indicate his disquiet at the time, then I could have asked people to vote again and counted the resulting responses.

Unfortunately, we are not a Society with 10,000 members, with funds to match, and the Executive Committee is legally bound to be responsible with the Society's money and to ensure that we spend it in accordance with our members' wishes.

The Executive Committee is working to continually improve our consultations with our members and this exercise was part of that commitment. In order to prevent any doubts

being cast on future issues, each vote will be counted in order to ensure that the membership's views are satisfactorily registered.

Finally, on my "enigmatic" reply at the Friends of the Rye meeting: I did mention that seating was one of the options for the Mayor's Millennium projects and said that I hoped it would be supported (meaning by other contributing bodies), and in an aside, I said that the Mayor's fund would be discussed at our quarterly meeting.

**Frances Presland**

**A Note From the Past**

In Wycombe Marsh we have a useful alarm clock at present – the daily start of demolition of the old paper mill. The noise may be a nuisance but the work is welcome since the very large site had become derelict and vulnerable to all kinds of squatting. In that state it was useful to 'travellers' (a difficult residence last year after eviction elsewhere) and to the occasional film crew wanting visuals of despairing 'change and decay'. We now, at last, have the beginning of change.

Some fascinating vistas are opening as the buildings go down. They range back through many years and gain interest as they are blitzed by the bulldozing and become progressively skeletal, yielding new prospects. There are many trees too and it is pleasing to see that these are being kept – at least as I write. The Wye stream flows through, partly under, the complex and was of course a necessary feature. In my childhood Kingsmead was bounded by two, very different, rivers (so we called them). The back stream, choked by weed in the summer, could be relied on to overflow into a new 'water feature'! High level pollution in the Wye stream, on the other side, kept the weeds at bay but that 'river' changed colour exotically according to production at the Mill. The stream could now be an attractive feature of the new development which I think, for once, can only be an improvement. At least a part of the A40 prospect at the beginning of the town can be remodelled and landscaped into a new, more open, scene. Much will depend on sensitive appreciation of what remains and a very adroit handling of access.

**Ronald Swains**

*Ron is a man of many talents! At 8.00pm on 11-12 May he appears at the Wycombe Swan in Two's a Crowd – a "confection of relationships good and bad" culled from Sheridan, Wilde, Dylan Thomas, Pinter et al. Tickets from the Box Office £6, even less for kids and wrinklies! – Ed.*

## Notices

### New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mrs B I Peacock of The Rise, Loudwater

Mr A J Tanner of Terryfield Road

Mr I Watson of Totteridge Road

### Obituary

We regret to announce the death of Mr R F W Jarvis of Bledlow, and extend our condolences to his family and friends (see page 10).

### The New Rye Booklet

The long-awaited new edition of the Society's booklet "The Rye – a Treasured Possession" is now available, price £2.50, thanks to a great deal of hard work by the leader of our Heritage Group, Pauline Cauvain. It contains much new material. Pick up a copy at the AGM or at any of

the events in the diary where we have a sales stall.

### Wycombe Arts Festival

As part of the programme for this year's Event, we have organised a talk on 18 May (*not* 17 May!). James Rattue from Wycombe Museum will be giving a talk on "*The Social History of the Furniture Industry*". This is well-timed, being the day after the grand unveiling of the "Millennium Arch of Chairs" in the High Street. Bring your friends and join us at the Reggie Goves Centre at 7.45pm prompt.

Many thanks for all your splendid contributions this quarter. Material for the Summer issue should reach the Editor at 29 Maybrook Gardens High Wycombe HP13 6PJ (01494 528106) by **20 May**, please.

*Chris Woodman (Hon Editor)*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### 2000

Thursday 13 April 7.30pm  
(*and not as in previous newsletters*)  
Reggie Goves Centre

Annual General Meeting and Quarterly Meeting.  
Housing and Green Belt Development. Tony Bosworth,  
housing campaigner for Friends of the Earth.

Saturday 29 April 8.00am-12.00noon  
(*and not as in previous newsletters*)  
Little Market House

Charity Market Stall  
Please remember us when doing your spring-cleaning (see  
p.6)!

Sunday 14 May...

11.00am-5.00pm, Pann Mill

National Mills Day, milling flour in the traditional manner  
(see p.8). Home-made cakes and teas, wood-turning, sale of  
cottage garden plants and ceramics, and a raffle.

2.00pm, S Porch of Parish Church  
(finishing at Pann Mill)

Town Trail: Explore your local history with a guided walk  
around the town centre.

2.00pm, start and finish at Pann  
Mill

Water Trail: A guided walk around the Rye, Holywell Mead  
and beyond.

Thursday 18 May 7.45pm  
(*and not as in previous newsletters*)  
Reggie Goves Centre

Wycombe Arts Festival talk.  
A Social History of the Furniture Industry. James Rattue,  
Wycombe Museum. See above.

Sunday 11 June

Coach trip to Selborne and Chawton, Hants – see p.6.

Saturday 1 July 10.30am-12.00noon  
Wycombe Museum

Coffee Morning with Bring & Buy stall – see p.6.  
Take the opportunity, at the same time, to view the display  
of our member Lorna Cassidy's etchings which is showing in  
the Museum from 10 June to 3 Sept.

Saturday 8 July

"Hidden Bucks" tour No.3 by shared cars, visiting another  
batch of places described in Jean Archer's book (see p.6).  
Contact Ann Simone on (01494) 448773.

Wednesday 18 October 7.45pm  
Reggie Goves Centre

Quarterly Meeting: The Work of the Historic Buildings Trust.  
Martin Andrew, Wycombe Dist. Council Conservation Officer.