

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

Don't forget!
Special Transport Meeting
on 30th March
AGM on 7th April

newsletter

NUMBER 139

SPRING 2006

The Listening County

READERS OF this *Newsletter* will know that, for quite some years, we have not always felt that Bucks County Council has been sympathetic to the issues that trouble us down here in High Wycombe. Generally silent on the transport implications of planning applications, and seemingly unwilling to consider radical solutions to our continuing traffic problems, the County has often seemed remote in its Aylesbury tower.

Happily, that seems now to be changing. In our last issue we reported how the planners at BCC and WDC had done a tolerably good deal with other south-east local authorities over housing numbers (even though Mr Prescott will probably tear the numbers up). In this issue we report on BCC's insistence that before Aylesbury expands and Heathrow's third runway is imposed, the nettle must be grasped over "North-South" routes through our area. (That includes High Wycombe to Maidenhead, and Handy Cross to Aylesbury – in effect, London Road and West Wycombe Road.)

Furthermore, the County Transportation Department now has plans for "getting closer to communities". We hope this will mean that the insights of ordinary residents of our town, into why traffic jams occur where they do, for example, and how our transport needs can be better served, will have a real influence over how the County spends our council tax in our area.

One indication of this new awareness of things local is that the County's Director of Transportation, no less, has agreed to address a special meeting of the Society in March, which promises to be a lively and fascinating event.

All this progress may look like small beer, though, if the Government decides to impose a new unitary council structure in Bucks. The awful spectre of Wycombe's planning decisions being taken in Aylesbury rears its head. Fortunately, we understand that if we were to finish up with a county-wide unitary authority, that would not stop there being a Wycombe-based Local Development Control Committee to take local decisions.

It is evident that our elected representatives and their officers in Aylesbury well understand the need to get closer to local problems and local opinion. We welcome the new reality.

Chris Woodman

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

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Planning This Quarter

The Group and I continue to be amazed at the volume and pace that we continue to work at. Developers and WDC Officers Councillors, along with our Affiliated Groups, all continue to seek comments and guidance on a wide range of subjects including Skateboarders and BMX youths.

EDEN – Town Centre Development You will all have seen the pace at which this development is progressing. It is expected that the Bus Station/ Interchange should be open by the autumn this year. The up-to-the-minute activity can be seen on www.mywycombe.com by clicking on the “webcam” link. The project was also the subject of a Three Counties Radio interview with Councillor Peter Cartwright and Tony Fooks.

Our president, Stuart King, reports that the Arts Panel have been holding regular meetings to establish the procedure for judging the artists’ proposals and the artist who will be involved.

Sainsbury’s The Group have just received the final amended plans in preparation for their planning application to Wycombe District Council. I am pleased to report that most of the concerns that the Society have raised have been addressed in a suitable manner.

Wellesbourne/BCUC This development continues to give rise to concern over the traffic volume in the area and the access and exit from the site. This is further exacerbated by the proposals for the Terriers Farm site. We understand an up-to-date traffic movement survey in the area is now being carried out and will be studied by Buckinghamshire County Council. The Group will be keeping a close watch on this development. With regard to the proposals for the development of Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College in the town we are still awaiting plans to study.

Terriers Farm site In line with concerns expressed by some of our Affiliated Groups, the Society has sent a strongly worded objection regarding the planning application by Persimmon Homes and Redrow Homes. It is the

view of the Society that this application is premature at the level proposed. The Wycombe District Local Plan to 2011, supported by the Inspector at the Public Inquiry in 2002, clearly states that this site will not be required until 2011 and that, even then, housing should only be permitted if a housing survey in the District indicates a need for such a development.

Railway Station After many months of deliberation and with the Department for Transport being involved, Laing Rail have recently met members of the Planning and Transport Groups to discuss their latest proposals for the site as a whole.

These include a new footbridge and lift, new station buildings, a replacement platform, a new car park and bus and taxi drop-off points. Our initial reaction was to register our interest in the height of the car park, the position of the listed Brunel Train Shed (owned by Skillbond) acting as a traffic island, the entrance and exits on to Crendon Street and opposite Castle Street, and of course the elevation of the buildings facing Crendon Street, when they become available. The next step in this ongoing dialogue will be to view the design of the buildings and car park along with the traffic proposals.

Other potential development projects that the Society has been approached about include the plans of the organisation known as “Project Care” for the provision of care homes in the District, Thames Water’s thoughts about the future of the land around their pumping station next to Pann Mill and the ideas of a developer with links to the Teddington Society for a Leisure/Tennis club in the Wycombe area to be used by schools.

Tony Fooks

Hon. Sec’s Cuttings

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) Newsletter, “*Cornerstone*”, has a very interesting article on the pargetting exhibition which was part of their annual London Open House weekend. Pargetting is the art of moulding and cutting lime plaster to form decorative patterns on the exteriors of houses. It is particularly prevalent in period houses in Essex, Suffolk and North Hertfordshire. Looking at the examples shown, it is a pity that this fine craft is not more widespread.

A monumental effort The National Monuments

Record has now built up an archive of more than 10 million items. Originally called the National Building Record, it was started during World War II to record the buildings thought to be at risk from enemy action. The documents range from building surveys to sales records but the vast bulk of the collection consists of photographs and it contains the biggest public collection of aerial photographs in England. The National Monuments Record may be consulted by the public either in person by visiting its search rooms in Swindon, Wiltshire, or by telephone or letter. A digital access programme is now being developed which should make access easier.

Important anniversaries The Amersham Society celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year. Congratulations to them, and I am sure that they will find plenty to occupy them over the next fifty years as well...

The SPAB Mills Section is also celebrating this year, it being their 75th anniversary.

The history of papermaking The Mills Group have a very interesting article in their Mill News Newsletter, taken from the theme of their autumn meeting. Papermaking originated in China and these early papers were made from the fibres of the paper mulberry, but later on the Chinese used flax and hemp fibres for papermaking. The papermaking art reached Europe in the 11th century and here rags of linen or hemp were used. The rags were made into a pulp by placing them in a stone trough with water, and three or four hammers powered by the watermill would then pound them up. The hammers were replaced in about 1650 by a device known as a Hollander Beater which could break up the rags more efficiently. This device was used right up to the 1930s when the Hydropulper was introduced. This device was rather like a food blender. Now pulp for paper is prepared by a Disc Refiner, which can do in seconds what took hours with the Hollander.

Papermaking was a skilled job, and by 1800 all papermakers were expected to join the Society of Papermakers. In return for their subscription, they enjoyed the benefits of sick pay, unemployment pay and help with funeral expenses.

Papermaking involved (and still does involve) a lot of water – up to 50 tons per ton of paper, and even with modern equipment, 10 tons of water is used per ton of paper.

The Mills Archive For details of mills past, why not visit the Mills Archive? They are now open to the public at their offices at Watlington House, 44 Watlington Street, Reading RG1 4RJ and you can visit by arrangement. For an appointment, phone them at 0118 947 8284 or e-mail info@millsarchive.com. Over 20,000 articles are also available via their website at www.millsarchive.com.

Spring Sprang earlier last year... English Nature has some interesting facts about the BBC wildlife programme *Springwatch Survey 2005*. Over 157,000 observations were received and the survey showed that bumble bees and butterflies are on the wing about three weeks earlier than they were 30 years ago. Swifts arrived about a week earlier in 2005 than in recent warm years, and hawthorn bloomed about two and a half weeks earlier than 30 years ago.

English Nature also has an interesting article on

how wildlife is starting to move into new locations. The London Underground has become a “green corridor” by linking London’s green spaces and so helping wildlife to move between them. Wildlife is living alongside tracks, in open cuttings and in trackside buildings. Metronet, the company responsible for renewing 75% of the network, is working hard to preserve the habitats their surveys have uncovered. They have already rescheduled work to avoid important life-cycle periods such as nesting and spawning times and they employed an arboriculturalist to pinpoint the roots of a group of mature oaks at Snaresbrook Embankment so that barriers could be set up to avoid damaging the tree roots.

Golf courses have also greened up in recent years, transforming themselves from wildlife sterile environments to a source of important habitats. On many courses, both walkers and golfers can enjoy a colourful variety of wild flowers, birds and insects. The potential for golf courses to help wildlife is enormous. 1,900 golf courses exist in England, covering over 110,000 hectares of land, and they can provide a vital source of habitat for species driven away from monocultured farm land.

Not Rambo but Ramble... An amusing article in *Chiltern News* by Brian Tordoff recounts how he was approached to make a public information film for a company called Life Channel. The company wanted to make a video which is to be shown in doctor’s waiting rooms, so that people would be encouraged to take up walking as exercise. Poor Mr Tordoff and his walking group had visions of at least a degree of stardom, but when he enquired as to why he had been chosen to arrange it, he was told they wanted an elderly group who didn’t look too fit, so as not to discourage newcomers...

Charles Chaplin 1907-1987 Artist, Engraver, Printmaker *Chiltern News* also highlights a very interesting book about the artist Charles Chaplin. The article shows a number of prints of his line drawings, which are executed in extraordinary detail. The book is divided into two parts. The first part is an account of Charles Chaplin’s life and his artistic works and methods, while the second part consists of a comprehensive collection of his prints. Many of the drawings illustrate scenes from areas close to where the artist lived, Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and the Chess Valley, together with other areas of the Chilterns.

“Charles Chaplin 1907-1987 Artist, Engraver, Printmaker” by Jon Chaplin ISBN 0953 6574 7 7 is available from Oblong Creative Ltd, 416B Thorp Arch Estate, Wetherby LS23 7BJ at a cost of £26.50 including packing and postage.

Frances Presland

Transport

Local Transport Plans

Back in the 20th century, transport planning was a haphazard process. The “predict and provide” principle ruled – *predict* how many vehicles will want to make how many journeys and then *provide* the roads to satisfy the predicted need. Central Government built and ran the motorways and the trunk roads (as they still do), while local highway authorities (County Councils) built and maintained other roads (called “local roads”). That was just roads: public transport and railway planning could have been on another planet! But in the late 1990s the Government told local highway authorities to come up with “transport policies and programmes” bringing together road and public transport proposals, which is what led to Wycombe’s parking meters and the bus lane in London Road. Those “TPPs” soon morphed into wide-ranging, five-year “Local Transport Plans”.

The first Local Transport Plan for Buckinghamshire ran from 2001 to 2006 and the second one (for 2006-2011) has recently been drawn up – the draft, called “provisional” runs to 596 pages(!) and the BCC has been holding consultation meetings about it around the county during the past 12 months. The Society submitted nine pages of detailed comments in November and December, covering issues ranging from the urgency of climate change and the need to use demand responsive transport to persuade people out of their cars to the “micro” factors that make local road transport inefficient, such as unsupervised road works, badly managed traffic lights and road humps from hell, and the need for clarity about new traffic links from Handy Cross.

On 3 February several members of the Transport and Planning Groups attended BCC’s annual all-day Wycombe Transport Symposium, now with the obligatory “workshop” sessions where participants talk around small tables before reporting back to the plenary meeting. There were thorough presentations by the “two Garys” (Gary Bartlett, BCC’s Service Manager for Strategic Transport Services, and Garrett Emmerson, BCC’s Head of Transportation) and by John Hodgkins, the Service Manager for Transport and Accessibility (who deals with buses and public transport policy in the County).

These were excellent presentations, well given, and thought-provoking in a number of areas. Gary Bartlett’s talk was a “delivery report” on the First Local Transport Plan and noted great progress in meeting targets: traffic delays at road works had been cut by 94%, we were told, and 97% of dangerous potholes had been repaired within 24 hours. In terms of its annual reports to central Government, BCC is a “top-performing transport authority”. There seems to be no doubt that the people at Aylesbury are highly rated by the Department of Transport. And yet, something seems adrift somewhere. What about the huge traffic delays that have plagued Hazlemere over the past 3 months, forcing knowing drivers to divert through Widmer End? And try driving round the Castlefield/Poets

Corner area where the overwhelming impression is of tatty road surfaces breaking up everywhere.

In the day’s second talk, Garrett Emmerson spoke about issues in the second LTP. Looking back at his slides, some were bureaucratic about consultation mechanisms, but the talk came alight when he got on to “real” issues. A top priority is for better “north-south” links so that people can get between the growth areas of Aylesbury, the Thames Valley and Heathrow – that means roads *and* public transport. Improving access to “major centres” is an absolutely key issue for High Wycombe – Eden will only succeed if people can reach it, whether by Park & Ride, DRT or in their own cars. A new “coachway” at Cressex will help people use long-distance coaches, whether to Oxford, London, the Midlands or wherever, for commuting or to visit relatives.

In the afternoon, John Hodgkins spoke about buses: a core network of bus services should aim for an hourly bus service to every village with over 2,000 inhabitants, and there would be “strategic” and “local” routes.

But, despite – perhaps because of – the thoroughness of these talks, like the 596-page draft Plan, they left an impression of a machine weighed down with bureaucracy and Government targets.

Also, much of the material was less interesting because it was county-wide and not focused on Wycombe. The County clearly recognises this is an issue. At an earlier event, they told us they saw a pressing need to “get closer to communities” and that local teams are to be set up for this purpose, each overseen by a senior BCC officer. Wycombe’s team will be supervised by none other than Garrett Emmerson, BCC Transportation Director, himself.

What an opportunity, we thought! We are absolutely delighted, therefore, that Garrett has agreed to make a presentation and participate in a question-and-answer session with our members and Wycombe residents with a specifically High Wycombe slant. (*See p.12 for time and venue.*) The sort of issues some of us

will want to raise are:

- *rail and public transport links* to Aylesbury and the Thames Valley;
- *road links*: the West Wycombe Road to Aylesbury is becoming as bad as the London Road. The links from Handy Cross in both directions are dire, but ill-positioned new roads could do great damage to the Green Belt.
- is there a coherent policy on *Park & Ride*, and how does the Handy Cross "coachway" and its location fit in?
- buses – is BCC squeezing as much benefit out of Demand Responsive Transport as it could?
- the town centre. Does the County see eye-to-eye with the District Council's vision – which owes a great deal to our Society's campaigning over the years – to divert the A40, knock down Abbey

Way and open up the River Wye and the Marlow Hill and Oxford Road roundabouts? And what about the Hughenden Corridor and Amersham Hill?

- management of roads. The increasing reliance on traffic lights to "solve" congestion issues, the delays caused by the Council's own road works and the chaos created by those of utility companies who seem to care nothing about the welfare of Wycombe's residents.
- the new local consultation arrangements and how they will work.
- where does climate change fit into all this?

We think this could be a very interesting agenda, and we urge as many of you as possible to come to the meeting in the Guildhall on 30 March.

Skateboarding – The Location

FOLLOWING UP Wycombe District Council's meeting in November, reported in our Winter issue, a further meeting took place at the Reggie Goves Centre on 30 January, specifically to consider *where* a skateboarding facility should be put. The meeting was chaired by Council officer, Paul Marston-Weston, supported by two of his staff. It was well attended by the public and the young skateboarding fraternity, who impressed us all by their insight into the issues. The discussion was lively and forceful, but orderly. Disappointingly, no councillors were present, except for one who looked in and stood at the back briefly before leaving.

Mr Marston-Weston explained that following the earlier meeting about designs, the Council is now thinking of a concrete structure about 30 metres by 15 metres and 1.8 metres high (plus a 1-metre high railing), and finance for it is in place. A questionnaire to potential users had shown that 45% favoured the Rye, and 20% Kingsmead. Desborough Rec was positively disliked. Of the sites considered, the Rye was closest to the town centre, but no suitable real town centre locations had been identified. Accordingly, Mr Marston-Weston said, "We take the view in favour of the Rye." The plans on display were limited to three locations on the Rye – two close to London Road and one near the boathouse. However, Mr Marston-Weston said that other sites could be looked at if they were suggested, and then threw the meeting open to discussion.

Although there were quiet murmurings over whether roller-bladers could be catered for, and whether there would

be a "half-pipe" (whatever that is!), it quickly became clear that the users were well-reconciled to, and indeed grateful for, the scale and nature of the facility that was on offer. But they pointed to the absolute need to get the decision right. One town not so far from Wycombe, they said, had had to scrap its facility and start again. Security was a major concern, as was mud.

Even with strong floodlights and CCTV, they were clearly not convinced that even the Rye could be made a secure location, and they pointed to the measures that would be needed to keep smaller children away from a potentially dangerous facility. On the other hand, an older, more experienced member of the "wheeled leisure" business (the operator of the motorcycle track at Flackwell Heath) stressed that indoor facilities are extremely expensive, as is anything requiring continuous supervision.

The users were not unbriefed about the controversy over the Rye. We had to tell them that



Ron Sims, our former Minutes Secretary, and Chairman Roger Lawson aim to be the first wrinklies on the new skateboard park – if it's in the right place! Cartoon by Ian Barratt

the miniature railway (where the children's playground now is) many years ago was a very modest, inconspicuous affair, and that motorcycling on the Rye had historically been largely limited to Wycombe Show days. They made the familiar argument that the Rye is a huge space and that any skateboard park could take up only a small part of it. On the other hand, the members of the public who spoke, including Society members, stressed the incongruity and ugliness of a piece of concrete of the size proposed in *any* location on the Rye (though some participants noted that the French even manage to build elegant skate parks), and that what had to be preserved was the beauty and atmosphere of the place – including its relative quietness and its thriving wildlife.

In response to a question from our Tony Fooks, who said he understood there was no official Council position in favour of skateboarding on the Rye, Paul Marston-Weston explained that the "we" who favoured the Rye were the "leisure professionals" in WDC's Leisure Department.

Tony Fooks and Chris Woodman then drew Mr Marston-Weston's attention to land that would become available when the new Sainsbury's store is built. Quite apart from avoiding ugly development on the Rye, this could allow a real town-centre location, with better security than is possible anywhere else and, of course, no mud! The skateboarders were very interested but reasonably enquired about the timescale. Paul Marston-Weston suggested it could take several more years to come to fruition, but Tony Fooks pointed out that the new Sainsbury's store was planned to open at the same time as Eden, in 2008. Asked about the timescale for a skateboard park on the Rye, Mr Marston-Weston explained that he planned for an early planning application for consideration by the Develop-

ment Control Committee, leading to the skateboard park actually being in place in July 2006!!! Nevertheless, he emphasised that it was not too late to switch to an alternative site if a better one was available.

Winding up the meeting, Mr Marston-Weston said that to look at another site would certainly slow things down, but said he was getting a very strong message that it was important to "get it right" and he would be getting a range of options together.

Editor's comment: this meeting certainly showed that the stakes are high and the pressure is on, and it is now clear (as the Planning Group identified months ago) that much hangs on whether a viable alternative site exists. We believe it does and will be working to persuade the District Council of this.

In the background, however, there seems to be a real difference in visions for the Rye. We and, we think, all people with an awareness of the history of our town, insist it should be preserved as a impressive, peaceful, open meadow-like space. But there have seemed to be rumblings of an altogether different vision (which, to their credit, the skateboarders did *not* seem to share), that it is somehow a "wasted" space that should be developed with a range of "modern" amusements for all. One has also detected a view that provided the centre is kept clear, all manner of developments could be allowed to clutter the edges.

It is worth remembering that the proposals that led to the formation of the Rye Protection Society and, later, our High Wycombe Society, were not for a road across the middle of the Rye, but one that would have cut off one end. Our campaigning predecessors understood the importance of the "edge"!

Sustainable Building

In October, as part of their "Imagine the Future" programme, Wycombe District Council organised a half-day conference on "sustainable building". Tony Fooks, Leader of the Planning Group, reports that the event was "interesting and futuristic". Indeed, on the basis of Tony's notes, it seems to have been a pretty "dense" day. Five presentations were given, all by practitioners in the field. There was Bill Clark, Sustainable Development Manager for Southampton City Council; there was our own Alison Pipes, WDC's Head of Building Control and a Vice-President of the national advisory body known as "LABC"; and there were speakers and consultants including representatives of the Building Research Establishment and Thames Valley Energy.

The expression "Sustainable Building" no longer means what it might have been taken for fifty years ago. "Sustainable development" has been variously defined, but your editor still thinks that the definition by Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland, a former prime minister of Norway, is the best: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their own needs." So "sustainable building" means building that supports the objective of sustainable development. It does not mean "buildings that will not fall down" (although that is a desirable objective too)!

Naturally, therefore, the conference included much general policy background – climate

change and its consequences, the Kyoto Protocol, the EU's "Renewables Directive" (i.e. renewable energy), and the UK's Climate Change Levy and Renewables Obligation. Minimising waste, managing the use of resources while at the same time improving the quality of life – these topics were all covered by various speakers.

However, the conference was primarily about buildings. Alison Pipes reminded the conference that the full statutory requirements would not be laid out until January 2006, but it was already known that these would home in on the topics of ventilation and energy standards. If we are to minimise the emission of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, not only must we aim to depend more on "renewable" energy from the sun, wind and tides rather than fossil fuels, but buildings need to be much more efficiently designed than they have been hitherto. The conference heard that implementation and enforcement of the new standards posed a not insignificant training task for local authorities.

John Silvester (a consultant to WDC and formerly a local government officer himself) ran through the impact of government guidance (the

Planning Policy Statements Nos. 1 and 22) on buildings of various sizes and types (small and large developments, individual houses, commercial buildings, mixed use developments etc). He reminded his listeners of the new funding opportunities such as the Energy Saving Trust, the Solar Grants Programme (i.e. photo-voltaic solar cells) and the Carbon Trust, not to mention the obscurely-titled VKA1 "Virtual Key Action 1" of the "Intelligent Energy – Europe" programme. Mr Silvester backed all this up with a case study using Bracknell Town Centre.

Tony Fooks evidently found this a very concentrated half-day. He comments that delegates generally felt that the short time available meant that the speakers skimmed their material and that there was no time for in-depth discussion of each area covered.

However, perhaps it is inevitable these days, when public bodies are forever searching for "efficiencies", that events have to be crammed into the short time that specialist officers can make available from their diaries. We wish Wycombe District Council well in meeting the challenges of these new policies.

Quarterly Meeting

Seekers and Finders

The Story of Quakers in High Wycombe

A VERY suitable subject for us all: High Wycombe has strong links with Quakers in High Wycombe, as the Vice Chairman, Mr Tony Fooks, said in his introduction. Judging by the large audience, the subject attracted a lot of our members and some visitors, and the Programme and Membership Group is to be congratulated for including such an attractive subject and in finding a fine speaker, himself a local Quaker and one well-versed in his subject, Keith Chatfield.

The first part of Keith's talk was about the Quaker faith and its beliefs – why, where and how it started and its development over about 350 years into a large community. This was a moving and stimulating account. "Quakers are good at silence," he said – a statement that will attract a good many of us.

He talked about the Quaker Burial Ground. Jack Scruton was instrumental in preserving this pleasant area. It is now a small attractive formal garden at the top of the Car Park attached to Trinity United Reformed Church, in London Road opposite Pann Mill.

Slides showed us how the movement grew in High Wycombe. We know the names of local people who were vital in its progress and expansion and how

they searched for a suitable Meeting House. As many of you know, this is now in the London Road on the corner of Stuart Road. It used to be called Fairwood Cottage and was once owned by Mr Fred Skull of the well-known Wycombe furniture-making family. It is there that the Friends meet on Sunday mornings for quiet thought. We saw pictures of the interior of the building, and the simple furniture and chairs used at meetings.



Friends House, 25 London Road

There was much to listen to and be impressed by, and a lot to think about, and the warm applause indicated our great appreciation. A good leaflet called "Your Guide to Quakers" gives a good picture of the thinking which developed into the community we know today.

Olivia Price

Chepping Wycombe Parish Workhouse

The Parish Workhouse was situated in the angle between Bassetsbury Lane and Bowden Lane. Today the buildings comprise 'Rosedale' and 'Box Tree House' to which 'Marsh Green House' was subsequently added. The original building was erected as the parish workhouse, probably in the 1760s on land given, it is believed, by William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne, a great benefactor of the Borough. Although some have thought that the workhouse was built in the 1740s, the building does not appear on a land ownership map drawn in 1763 for the Dean and Chapter of Chichester Cathedral, who owned lands around the Borough, but a Marsh Farm and house are clearly shown on the same site. The land may have been manorial waste land on the edge of Lord Shelburne's estates but could also have belonged to the parish.

I have not been able to establish the precise date of the building, on whose land it was built and who paid for it. It is quite possible that Lord Shelburne did, being a generous benefactor. A parliamentary report of 1777 recorded 80 to 90 inmates in the Chepping Wycombe parish workhouse. An extract from the vestry minutes of a meeting in 1809 states, "And it is further ordered at this vestry that part of the Marsh Green adjacent to the Poor House of the said parish be enclosed at the expense of the parish for the purpose of enabling the Governor to keep two cows for the use of the paupers in the said Poor House." This enclosure is shown on a Carrington estate map of about 1812-13.

Before 1834, oversight of the workhouse was the responsibility of two Overseers and two churchwardens. With the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834, the Poor Law Commissioners were empowered to consolidate and sell redundant properties. Groups of parishes were enabled to form Poor Law Unions and concentrate inmates in larger, often purpose-built workhouses. The Overseers became Guardians of the Union. The Wycombe Poor Law Union was formed in 1835 and set about re-organising the workhouses in its 33 constituent parishes. As a result the Chepping Wycombe Poor House was put up for sale.

It was advertised for auction at the Falcon Inn at 3pm on 3 February 1837 in two lots - the building and garden, and the land. The particulars of sale described it as a freehold

property comprising a large brick and tiled building measuring 100ft with a corresponding depth, out-offices and extensive garden. 'The building is divided into a multiplicity of apartments and possesses the capability of being easily converted into habitations for a numerous tenantry, or materials for the construction of a genteel residence.' The plot consisted of 1 acre, 1 rood and 33 perches. The land adjoining, sown to grass, was 2 acres and 2 roods. A manuscript note on the conveyance papers held in the Carrington Archives in Aylesbury reads: "the Workhouse, gardens and premises, having been in the possession of the parish for upwards of 100 years, originally built upon the waste (land) but now of freehold tenure."

Lord Carrington, who had purchased the Loakes Estate (renamed Wycombe Abbey Estate) in 1798-1800, bought both lots for £567. The churchwardens were Thomas Shackel and William Williams, and the Overseers (by then also Guardians of the Wycombe Union) were James Furness and Thomas Edmonds. Aged 80, Edmonds provided a written statement for the property search on 14 December 1837 to the effect that during the previous 70 years, the building had belonged to the parish and had been occupied and used as the workhouse.

Lord Carrington, by then a widower, married Charlotte Hudson in 1836 but died 19 months later in September 1838. Soon after, his son, the second baron, built Marsh Green House for



Marsh Green House (on the left) and Chepping Wycombe Workhouse (on the right) today. Photo: David Snoxell.

his stepmother. This grandiose residence was built in a similar gothic style to Wycombe Abbey at right angles on the end of the workhouse. It is likely that the Governor's quarters were at that end and were remodelled and enlarged. Thus it became known as the Dower House. At the same time the workhouse was probably divided into two separate cottages. It is also possible that originally there was a second floor in the roof space which was then reduced to provide for a higher ceiling on the floor below.

The occupants of 'the old workhouse' in the 1841 census are given as George (a labourer at a brewery), Anne and John Pusey. The Dowager lived in Marsh Green House until her death in April 1849. The three houses were thereafter let to tenants, often staff at Wycombe Abbey. The 1849 tithe assignment shows Lord Carrington as the owner and George Wright and others as the occupiers of the three houses. Isaac Line is recorded as in occupation in 1875. He was Head Coachman to the 3rd Lord Carrington (created Marquess of Lincolnshire in 1912) who was to move to Dawes Hill some years after the sale of Wycombe Abbey in 1896. The coach house and stable for the horse was, as it still is, behind Box Tree Cottage: the small wing, now called the Coach House, to the side of Marsh Green House, was in fact its kitchen and scullery. Thomas Henry Line lived in Box Tree after his father Isaac, and established a Windsor chair-making business there. Rosedale was at one time used as the laundry for Dawes Hill, and the laundry maids lived there.

In 1930 the 5th Baron Carrington sold the three properties. Box Tree was bought by Thomas Line for £500. The deed of conveyance also granted an entitlement to the use of Chestnut Avenue (formerly the eastern drive to Wycombe Abbey - there was a lodge on the western corner with the London Road) 'with or without horses, cattle, carts, carriages, motor cars and other vehicles'.

In the twenties and thirties, the younger Mitford sisters, who lived across the lane at Old Mill Cottage, were regular visitors to Box Tree Cottage as they had made friends with Margo Durman, Mr Line's granddaughter. As there was not enough space at Old Mill Cottage, Mr and Mrs Stobie, who cooked for Lord and Lady Redesdale (parents of the Mitford sisters), had a room in Box Tree Cottage.

My thanks are due to Malcolm Walker who provided a critical eye and valuable information for this article.

David Snoxell

And your Editor takes this opportunity to own

up to the fact that he inadvertently and regrettably reversed the photograph of Marsh Green Mill in David Snoxell's article on p.9 of the Summer 2005 Newsletter. When re-reading that article, please have a mirror to hand!-Ed.

Fawley Museum Railway Steam Day

This members' shared-car trip on 13 August costs £4 per person for entry to the premises (includes tea/coffee) and a ride on the steam train. Members should bring their own picnic lunch. There is space for 40 people, but we already have 20 people who are interested in the above outing, so to avoid disappointment, please contact Angela Rees on 01628 850491, and she will add your name to the list. There will also be a list available for you to sign up at the AGM.

The Fawley Hill Railway near Henley-on-Thames started in 1964. It is now maintained and run by volunteers of the Fawley Museum Society. The Steam Days occur on four days throughout the year. The steam train, hauled by the Fawley Mountaineer, an 0-6-0 saddle tank, runs for a mile up a 1 in 13 gradient through lovely valley scenery in the parkland, by kind permission of the Hon Sir William McAlpine Bt FRSE. The park is full of deer, emus and cranes. The railway has many preserved station facades and arches, signal boxes (one from High Wycombe station) and railway huts, saved from demolition. At the present time there are three locomotives and 20 pieces of rolling stock. There is also a museum full of railway memorabilia.

The Fawley Mountaineer, No 31, was delivered new to Robert McAlpine and Sons on 14 April 1913. It is the only surviving locomotive to have been owned by McAlpine for the whole of its working life. It worked on a number of building contracts, including Wembley Stadium (1923-1924) and RAF Boscombe Down (1944). Its weight in working order is 26 tons.

South-East Regional Assembly

"What's that?" you may say! Yes, the South-East *does* have a Regional Assembly, most of its members being appointed by local authorities including WDC and BCC, and it works from Guildford, in Surrey. Although your editor has argued trenchantly in the past that SEERA should be abolished, we are told that the Assembly has considerable influence where it matters, so should not be ignored. We hope to arrange a meeting to be addressed by somebody very competent to tell us what goes on at SEERA and it is tentatively set for May 19th. If it goes ahead, there will be more publicity nearer the time. See p.12.

Imperial Villas

TALK ABOUT “villas” nowadays and thoughts are prone to turn to sun-seeking in the Mediterranean. Perhaps the more historically inclined still think first of relics from the Roman Empire, while dedicated sports followers might bring to mind some well-known football teams. But only a century ago, the term was in much more regular use to denote a modest suburban house, often, though not always, semi-detached. In a class-conscious society, a villa resident might well regard themselves as a cut above their neighbouring cottage dweller or terrace inhabitant. Many buildings in and around High Wycombe date from this time, and in parts of the town you will find houses proudly displaying their villa names and the dates when they were built. The more I look, the more I find.

The villa names reflect the fashions of their age, too. Many take their inspiration from natural history: “Primrose”, “Laurel”, “Fern” and “Myrtle”, to name but a few to be found within our town. One can imagine the Edwardian lady writing her diary in one of these. Some give a more direct indication of the time when they were built, which was the zenith of the British Empire: High Wycombe has a pair named “Victoria Villas” and a singularly named “Edward Villa”. I’ve also spotted pairs of “Coburg Villas”, “Wellington Villas” and “Nelson Villas”. Probably the “Lyndhurst Villas” and “Rosebery Villas” refer to the politicians of those names. A portrait of Lord Lyndhurst, a patron of Disraeli, hangs at Hughenden Manor, and Lord Rosebery succeeded Gladstone as leader of the Liberal Party and prime minister towards the end of the 19th century.

Sometimes, as in “Kingsmead Villas”, the name may give a good indication of its location, but this cannot be relied upon. In one of our neighbouring towns it amuses me that there are three adjacent pairs of villas named “Beaconsfield Villas”, “Chesham Villas” and “Amersham Villas”. At the time they were built they would have been far outside any town boundary.

Still, you don’t have to travel even that far to reach the more exotically named “Bloemfontein Villas” and “Springfontein Villas” with the echoes of events of the Boer war in their South African names; if you live in High Wycombe the

chances are that you’ve driven by them many times. On the same road you’ll find many named villas including “Priest Croft Villas” and “Heath Side Villas”. In another part of town, you’ll find a pair of “Ramillies Villas”, presumably named after the Duke of Marlborough’s campaign in Belgium as part of the War of the Spanish Succession. Not far away, I find myself wondering whether the “Alma Villas” are named after the battle of that name in the Crimean war, or in honour of a lady of that name.

On our ever more congested roads in and out of High Wycombe, motorists, or at least their passengers, may like to indulge in a little villa spotting of their own. The plaques are usually to be found in the middle of the front of the houses – at first storey level. I have been surprised and amused to find two quite separate pairs of “Aston Villas” within the town boundary; there may be more.

The externally named villas are only a fraction of the number of properties that would have been classified as villas. Many more substantial detached properties were known as villas at one time. It is interesting to note that one such Victorian gentleman’s property in Shropshire has recently been taken over by the National Trust who have recognised its importance in representing an often-overlooked slice of history. While the majority in the Wycombe area are not so grandiose, they still hold their place in its history.

Jackie Kay



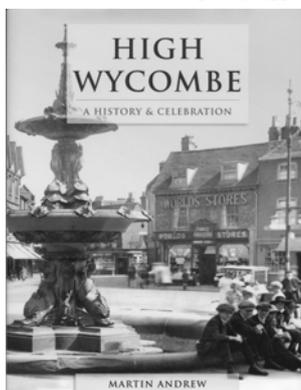
The norm was semi-detached pairs, such as Edward Villa and its anonymous twin in Amersham Road, but in Wycombe Marsh you can see a terrace of six, known as Bloemfontein Villas.

Local Books

High Wycombe, A History & Celebration

By Martin Andrew

Expositions of High Wycombe's history are becoming more frequent. Martin Andrew's new book joins other works covering much the same ground, but in general emphasising different aspects, by L J Ashford (1960), John Mayes (1960), Ivan Sparkes (1979) and James Rattue (2002). Martin Andrew, Wycombe District Council's Conservation Officer, is well qualified to write about our town's history, and he has produced a very readable account of the changing local scene from the Iron Age until the present day. The illustrations are also worthy of comment. The many old photos are supplemented by some fine present-day shots taken by the author.



Chapter 1 follows the growth of the town through to 1558, the time of the accession of Queen Elizabeth I, the ancient borough with its mayor having been established in the late 1200s. According to the Domesday Book of 1086, High Wycombe was already a relatively prosperous place with six water mills, and it continued to prosper. (Perhaps I could interject here to say that I cannot really support the author's assertion that Wycombe derived its name from the River Wye. I prefer Ashford's theory that 'Wicumen' or 'Wicumbe' meant 'a valley with a stream', with 'High Wycombe' being the largest settlement in the valley. It seems likely that the stream did not acquire its 'River Wye' title until the coming of the Ordnance Survey in the 19th century.)

Chapter 2 takes us on to 1800, during which time the town developed considerably in size and activity. In this section our author's professional expertise becomes apparent in his description of the surviving timber-framed and other fine buildings that were erected in the 16th-18th centuries. This was the heyday of the landed gentry when the Shelburnes occupied Loakes Manor, later to become Wycombe Abbey when they sold it to the Carringtons in 1798.

Chapter 3 on the 19th century covers the growth of the furniture industry, the coming of the railway from Maidenhead and the expansion of education, while Chapter 4 on the 20th century is sub-titled 'Total Transformation'. The furniture industry reached its zenith in the 1930s and then declined, with industry as a whole diversifying and expanding. With the growing population, large

numbers of new houses of all descriptions spread up and over the surrounding hills, the Borough Council being a major sponsor. Our author is clearly not happy with the result, especially in the case of Bellfield. He goes on to regret the wholesale clearance programme of the 1960s when Newland and most of Brook Street and St Mary Street were demolished, including many old timber-framed houses. He rues the day when the River Wye was culverted and the town centre cut in two by the elevated portion of Abbey Way. The High Wycombe Society receives a mention or two as an advocate of reinstatement of the river and for the Pann Mill project.

Chapter 5 reviews the High Wycombe of today and looks to the future. Our author is pleased with efforts to enliven the town centre and safeguard heritage buildings. In spite of the decline in the furniture and other industries, he is generally

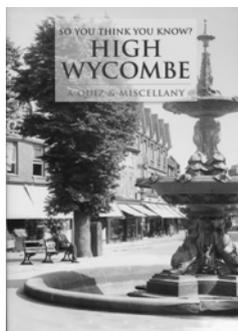
optimistic that current and planned developments will maintain vibrancy into the future with traffic being less dominant and with the River Wye again flowing openly through the town centre.

'High Wycombe: A History & Celebration'
Martin Andrew; ISBN 1-84589-207-0; 117 pp;
£15-99.

* * * * *

So You Think You Know? High Wycombe, A Quiz & Miscellany

This is a companion volume to Martin Andrew's book on High Wycombe reviewed above, and would be useful to someone wishing to organise a local quiz. It commences with a section of 50 paragraphs of historical facts in date order, based on Martin Andrew's book, with four or five paragraphs per page. This is followed by a section with 50 questions about the town, followed in turn by 50 answers. Most of the questions can be answered by reference to the first section, but at least one needs reference back to Martin Andrew's larger book for checking. Answer 18 contains an error: Wulfstan was not Bishop of Winchester, but of Worcester. This part of the book is illustrated with photographs of local scenes.



Two more sections complete the book: 50 questions mainly on British history, followed by the 50 answers, this time illustrated with nationwide photos.

'So You Think You Know? High Wycombe, A Quiz and Miscellany': ISBN 1-84589-237-2; 89pp; £8-99.

John Gore

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr D J Smith of Malvern Close, HW.
Mr R J Timms of Kingsmead Road, HW.
Mr & Mrs A Walker of Walton Drive, HW.

Grand Book Swap

Our Grand Book Swap is now an annual event, taking place at the AGM. Please bring along books you are happy to wave good-bye to, and buy a replacement for a modest price. All proceeds go to the Society's funds.

Visit to Claydon House

Claydon House, north of Aylesbury, is the ancestral home of the Verney Family, one of the families featuring in our July 26th talk, "Famous Buckinghamshire families and their Treasure

Houses".

Edmund Verney, who was Knight Marshal and Standard Bearer to King Charles I, took over the house in 1620 but the Tudor manor house was remodelled in 1754. Subsequent additions and the sumptuous views make this a remarkable house and well worth a visit. Sign up for the members' shared car trip on 25 June at a meeting or telephone Mary Woodman on 01494 528106.

Contributors' Corner

Once again, thank you to all those who have provided us with fine articles for this *Newsletter*. Material for the next issue should reach me at 29 Maybrook Gardens High Wycombe HP13 6PJ (01494 528106) by **20 May**, please.

Chris Woodman (Hon Editor)

Put these dates in
your diary **now!!!**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2006

Thursday 30th March
7.30pm, Guildhall

Special meeting on Transportation in High Wycombe. Opening speaker: Mr Garrett Emmerson, Bucks County Council Director of Transportation (*see p.5*).

Friday 7th April
7.30pm, Guildhall

Annual General Meeting followed by Reports from the Society's Groups. Annual Grand Book Swap (*see above*).

Sunday 14th May
11.00am-5.00pm
NOTE CHANGED DATE

Pann Mill Open Day. Pann Mill turns again (water permitting) and mills flour. Refreshments, plants, bric-a-brac, sale of flour. Also Water Trail at 2.30pm, start and finish at Pann Mill. Town Trail, meet 2.30pm at the Parish Church, finish at Pann Mill.

19th May, provisional

Possible meeting on the South-East Regional Assembly (*see p.9*). Watch local press for date, or phone the Editor on 01494 528106.

Friday 26th May
7.30pm, Guildhall

Wycombe Arts Festival Meeting: "*The Art of Traditional Furniture-Making*". Speaker: Stuart Linford, local furniture-maker.

Sunday 25th June

Members' shared-car outing to Claydon House (*see above*). Contact Mary Woodman on 01494 528106.

Sunday 9th July
11.00am-5.00pm

Pann Mill Open Day. Pann Mill turns again (water permitting) and mills flour. Refreshments, plants, children's activities. Also Water Trail at 2.30pm, start and finish at Pann Mill.

Wednesday 26th July
7.30pm, Guildhall

Quarterly Meeting: "*Famous Buckinghamshire Families and Their Treasure Houses*". Speaker: Mr Brian Edwards, Blue Badge Guide.

Saturday 29th July, 8.00am-noon
Little Market House

Charity Market Stall.

Sunday 13th August

Members' shared car outing: Fawley Railway Museum's Steam Day. Bring own picnic. Contact Angela Rees on 01628 850491.

Sunday 3rd September
11.00am-5.00pm

Pann Mill Open Day. Pann Mill turns again (water permitting) and mills flour. Crafts by Society Members. Bric-a-Brac, Teas and Cakes. Also Water Trail at 2.30pm, start and finish at Pann Mill. Town Trail, meet 2.30pm at the Parish Church, finish at Pann Mill.

Wednesday 25th October
7.30pm, Guildhall

Quarterly Meeting: "*Brunel, the Man Behind the Icon*." Speaker: Miss Julia Elton, President of the Newcomen Society.