

# THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

MERRY  
CHRISTMAS



## *newsletter*

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CHRISTMAS



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### **A Time of Cheer**

WE HAVE been focusing in our recent front page editorials on the urgent need to revive our High Street and the rest of the old town centre. It is the matter which our members raise with us more than any other. How encouraging, therefore, to be able to report that this year's grand Christmas Light Big Switch-On on 19 November went with such gusto. The whole area from Frogmoor to High Street was heaving with Wycombe's citizens, in a way not seen in recent years. The lights and decorations themselves seem more attractive than before, too.

You only get a good turnout of local people for an event like this if you have effective information and advertising. This was all done under the watchful eye of the High Wycombe Town Centre Partnership, ably assisted by the District Council's Town Centre Manager, Melanie Williams. "Partnerships" are a new feature of the public scene. Some work better than others, and HWTCP seems to be one of the better ones. It brings together local government and other "stakeholders" – businesses ranging from the large to the small. Recent new members include the National Trust, Isaac Lord's, ASDA and Noodle Nation. Their current activities include marketing and promotion of the town centre, updating pedestrian signs, improving the look of the town with hanging baskets and "dressing" vacant shop units.

We congratulate the Partnership on a job well done on the 19th of November, and encourage them in their work. There is so much more to do.

*Chris Woodman*



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

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

## Planning This Quarter

THE GROUP'S work this quarter was the usual mixed bag: plenty of progress, some disappointments from the decisions of planning inspectors and/or the District Council, and some continuing light relief!

**De La Rue site** Following the Council's refusal of Careys' application for 133 flats and 27 houses on this site, solely on the grounds that they did not like the main block overlooking Hughenden Park, the developer has, as expected, lodged an appeal, to start on 2 February. We shall object, not only about the main building, but also about the inadequate environmental treatment of the Hughenden Stream corridor.

**Chiltern Centre Hotel** This application was approved. It is a good scheme, but there is no indication that notice was taken of our concern about the lack of fine detailing on the façade: we shall see.

**Octagon Hotel** This dreadful application was also approved, on 7 September, with much subsequent correspondence in the *Bucks Free Press*. Although several Councillors sided with our objections, the application was passed by a small majority. The Council Officer did an effective job in turning the tide. In particular, he pointed out that, when Abbey Way is gone, the building will be "read" (a town-planner's term!) in the context of Marks & Spencer's, across the newly-created open space. We were concerned, however, that in considering the height of the proposed hotel, he referred to the "emerging Local Development Framework". The most recent draft of the Delivery and Site Allocations Document proposed that a "landmark" building on the very corner of Abbey Way and Oxford Street should be allowed to rise to "5+ storeys", but said nothing about the continuing frontage along Abbey Way. We are not the only ones to complain that "emerging policies" are too often referred to as though they are agreed; this has been a recent theme at ANTAS meetings.

**Handy Cross Coachway/Sports Centre Site** This was the subject of a special meeting with the agents, Savills, on 5 November, see p.3.

**John North Halls** A planning appeal at an earlier stage resulted in the refusal of the appeal but only on grounds of inadequate affordable housing. Fairview New Homes predictably submitted a fresh application (their third) which dealt with that particular problem, and it was considered by the District Council's Planning Committee on 7 September. Despite the eloquent objections of the Fair Ridge, The Spinney and Foxleigh Residents' Association (FSFRA), the Committee felt they had no alternative but to approve this application, since all the possible grounds for objection had been

rejected by the Inspector at the previous appeal. This highlights a dilemma which sometimes occurs: there had been a second application which, from the Residents' point of view, was preferable either to the first or the third. We can see now that it would have been better if the Council had accepted it but, at that stage, nobody knew that the appeal against the first application would turn out as it did.

**Golf Balls** In our Summer issue we mentioned the problem of errant golf balls at Wycombe Heights Golf Club. A similar problem at Whiteleaf Golf Club (which had resulted in the death of a pet sheep!) was also proposed to be dealt with by safety fencing (10m high) and once again was thrown out by the Planning Committee, on 4 November, this time on the grounds of the visual impact on the Green Belt, the AONB and an adjoining listed building. Interestingly, the Planning Officer stated that safety considerations are not "material considerations" in planning decisions. (The implication is that if an activity is creating danger, solutions must be found that are not unacceptable in planning terms, but it wasn't clear whose job it is to bring about a solution.)

**Old Courthouse** Many members will be aware of the former police station/old courthouse on Hughenden Road at the bottom of Benjamin Road, currently used as offices. We objected to a proposal to cut parking spaces into the front garden of this building as has been done further up Hughenden Road, feeling it would spoil the setting of a pleasant and historic building. The application was approved by an officer under delegated powers a few days after we commented.

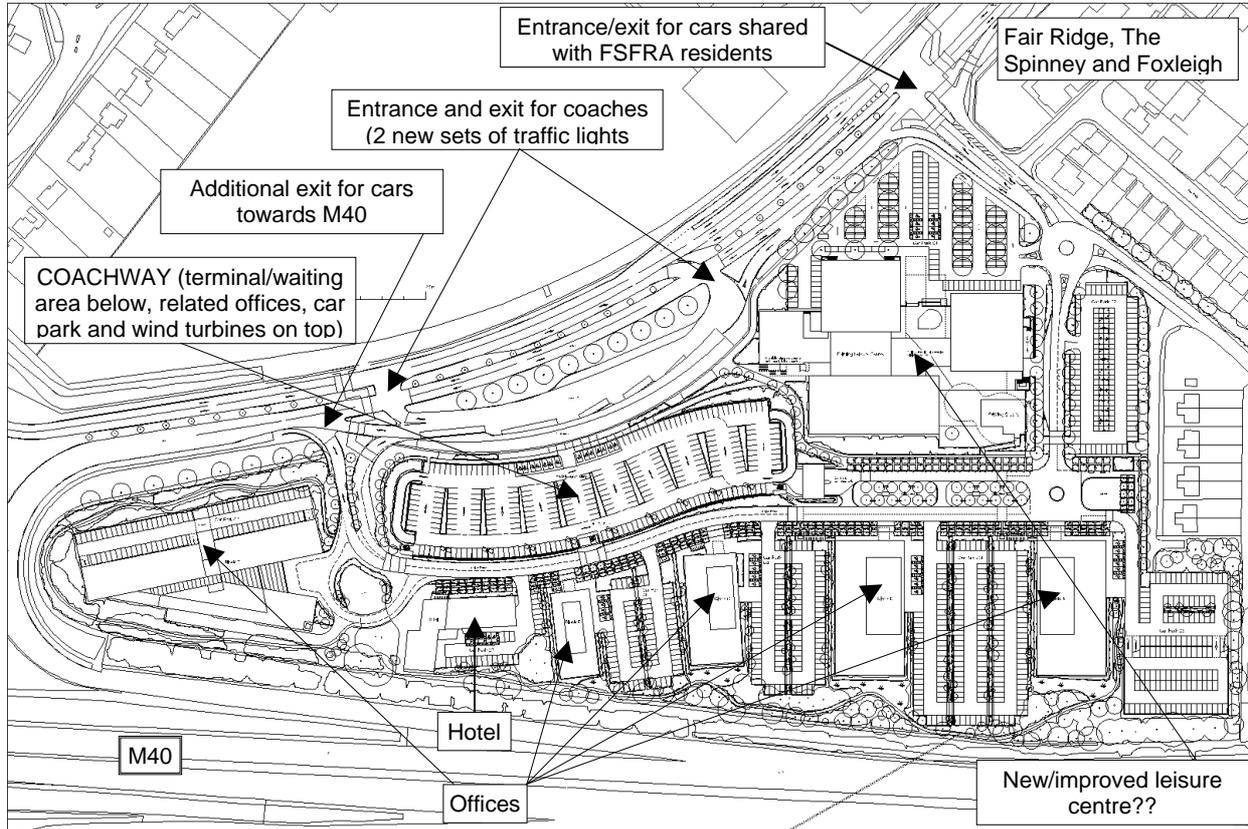
**Wind Turbines** An application to build a wind turbine at Highworth School was rejected by WDC Planning Committee on 4 November, on the grounds that the environmental and educational benefits were not significant enough to outweigh the visual harm. There had been an unusually large number of letters of objection from local residents about the visual impact, and several Councillors agreed with them.

**Wycombe and S Bucks Chamber of Commerce** Chris Woodman and Elsa Woodward now attend this body's Transport and Planning Meetings. We found it very useful to share with them our views on the Council's "Imagine the Future 5" consultation and more recently we have briefed them on the Coachway proposals.

**Chris Woodman**

## Handy Cross Coachway

IN JULY, Bucks County Council and Wycombe District Council mounted a public consultation on a proposal for a "Coachway" to go on the Handy Cross Sports Centre site. We were subsequently advised that BCC would want to see us in due course to go through the project in more detail, and a meeting duly took place on 5 November when members of the Planning and Transport Groups met with Savills, who are agents for both BCC and WDC (also represented at the meeting) and were preparing a planning proposal for submission during December.



The latest version of the site plan is shown above (their plan, our boxes). The background is that the Park & Ride currently on Cressex Island will (very sensibly) be co-located with the new coachway, allowing the buses to be used both for shoppers coming to the town and for townspeople going to catch coaches. There will be 558 car parking spaces for P&R and coachway users at the new site – if this proves insufficient another deck will have to be added. The coachway location very close to the motorway will be able to attract passing coaches and will also be the initial hub in a new "south-east coach network" serving Heathrow, Maidenhead, Slough, Reading and points further afield. The basic concept seems sensible, and although coaches do not attract people out of their cars as well as trains do, there should be a useful "carbon footprint" benefit, and coaches may cater for a different market. We were encouraged to be told that wind turbines on the coachway building will provide (on average) all the power needed for that building. Whether the sports hall will be re-located or rebuilt/improved in its present location is not yet decided. The

running track will of course need to be located elsewhere, and many members will already have read in the press of the opposition to its siting at Sir William Ramsay School.

At the meeting, we expressed a number of concerns:

- the capital cost, at £27m, although it will not fall on Wycombe council taxpayers, is huge and one could not help wondering if the sum could not be better spent, including our ultra-light railway proposal to Bourne End.
- we were not convinced of the need for all those offices, but our hosts insisted that there will be demand, which would otherwise need to be filled elsewhere, perhaps in the town centre.
- we were concerned about the impact of those new traffic lights and their effect on the A404 and the motorway junction (as are, we understand, the Highways Agency, who are responsible for efficient traffic flow on the motorway network).

*concluded on p.6*

## Any nice buildings to (locally) list?

As we remarked in our editorial in the Summer issue, there are 1,200 listed buildings in Wycombe District, of which as many as 97 are within 1km of the High Street/Crendon Street crossroads. The “list of buildings of architectural or historical interest” is maintained by English Heritage, who lay down procedures for adding to the list – something which railway historians used when they persuaded DCMS to list (as Grade II) the historic Brunel train shed which is now to be restored as part of High Wycombe Station re-development.

However, for buildings which are not quite special enough to make it on to the national list, “local listing” is available. Locally listed buildings do not have the full statutory protection against demolition and inappropriate modification enjoyed by nationally listed buildings, but the Wycombe District Local Plan provides that “the contribution made to the local scene or local historical associations will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications”.

The current “local list” of buildings in High Wycombe is shown below.

Nos 96-98 Abbey Barn Road	No 676 and 678 London Road
No 6 Easton Street	King George V Public House, London Road
No 28 Easton Street	Funges Farm barn and outbuilding, Marsh Green
St Johns House (former Wycombe College), Easton Street	Nos 24 and 26 New Road
No 83 Easton Street	Ruskin Works, Oakridge Road
Brook Lodge, Ford Street	No 6 Oxford Street
Nos 10, 12 Frogmoor	No 19 Queen Square
No 26 Kingsmead Road	Irish Club, Station Road
No 196, “Rosemary”, Kingsmead Road	The Beech Tree Inn, Terriers Green
No 2 Kings Square	Flint Cottage No 198 Amersham Road
Sands County School, Lane End Road	No 97 West Wycombe Road
The Rifle Butts Inn London Road	No 99, 101 West Wycombe Road
Nos 559 and 561 London Road	Nos 103, 105, 107 ,109 West Wycombe Road
Nos 563, 565, 567, 569 (Flint Cottages) London Road	No 18 White Hart Street
Wycombe Marsh Union Baptist Church, London Road	White Hart Inn, White Hart Street

It’s an interesting list. The former Wycombe College/Royal Grammar School on Easton Street, an attractive building with a history, is a particularly welcome inclusion, and there are others. However, it provides only a limited picture. Much of the town centre, for example, is made up of buildings on the national list, and there are also Scheduled Ancient Monuments (including St John’s Hospital and Desborough Castle). To get a complete picture, you need to find a computer and go to Bucks Maps ([www.bucksonline.gov.uk/Bucksmaps](http://www.bucksonline.gov.uk/Bucksmaps)), zoom in to the town centre and for your “visible map layers”, choose “Listed Buildings”. All listed buildings, including most locally listed ones, will then appear in yellow. You also need to look at Conservation Areas, because they too provide statutory protection against demolition, for example.

When we enquired of the WDC Conservation Officer whether the local list ought to be extended, we were advised that if the Society wishes to come up with proposed additions and justifications, officers would be only too glad to look at them. The Local Plan states that, “to be included on the Local List, a building should meet some or all of the following criteria”:

- (i) Be substantially unaltered and retain the majority of its original features;
- (ii) Be of good architectural quality or an example of a particular local building type;
- (iii) Play a significant role in the streetscape of a town or village;
- (iv) Be significant in the history of the area or be by an architect or designer of local note, such as Arthur Vernon of High Wycombe; or relate to the industrial heritage of the High Wycombe furniture industry.

This is a challenge to us. If we believe there are other interesting and historic buildings such as the “Old Courthouse” (referred to on p.2) which deserve recognition and a degree of protection, we need to set up a project for our members to seek out ideas for listing around the town and then assemble the case for each one. If you would be interested in joining such an exercise, then please contact the Editor. Failing that, somebody may be in touch to ask you!

## Peter Hazzard 1927-2009

Peter was born in the family's mill house in Oxfordshire. He was educated, as a boarder, at Blue Coat School, Reading, then gained academic and professional qualifications, specializing in Management Accountancy from the Universities of Reading, London and City (London) and CIMA.

I first met Peter when he and Diana moved into the London Road house in 1987. At that time there was very much a community feeling amongst the residents of the old Georgian houses that fronted the Rye.

After varied industrial experience, Peter chose to train to teach in Higher Education, retiring as a Principal Lecturer, First Examiner and Organizer for student revision courses at Reading and Oxford.

Too young for active World War II service, Peter joined the Navy in late 1945 – a national serviceman. Enjoying the sunshine of the then Ceylon, he was a member of the SEAC Radio Team in the naval section; off-duty time was spent playing tennis, badminton, table tennis and water sports. On return to England, an interest in hockey led him to County player standard and he played at a high level until well into his thirties whilst continuing to enjoy other sports.

Cycling to Nice from Reading on several occasions created many adventures and a love of France, in spite of the garlic!

Owning one of the first Austin Minis and later on one of the first Triumph TR7s was great fun for Peter. He did appreciate the advanced technology of the later models of both cars.



As an author he was most successful, writing with a fluidity and apparent ease, just like his art work. Living in Buckinghamshire gave great pleasure to this 'town and countryman', with an interest in the re-opening of Pann Mill, High Wycombe. This had been an aim of the Society for years and it was a pleasure to see Peter happily filling bags of freshly ground flour on mill days.

The last two years were physically difficult, but working on the history of flint tools and the four papers he prepared gave a new outlook. One of my recent memories of Peter was of his excitement regarding his finds in the local area. He was convinced of the presence of pre-historic flint tool making in the area. When visiting one day he had a labelled display of various flints for an expert to view. My greeting to him was along the lines of "Morning Peter, where's your antler-pick?"

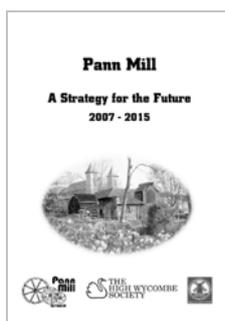
Peter had a recent hip operation which was successful, but he died shortly afterwards from a heart attack. No hospital crews could have looked after him better than the staff at Wycombe General.

*Chris Gregory*

## Pann Mill – Getting Security of Tenure

PANN MILL is the lifeblood of our Society. Our three Open Days a year get us valuable income, a huge amount of goodwill from local people, and not a few new members. Everyone appreciates what has been achieved by the hard work and commitment of the Pann Mill Group in creating an environmental asset and a haven of peace alongside the Rye, and Margaret Simmons' beautiful garden is a constant delight, to visitors and passers-by. Pann Mill is where High Wycombe's residents can buy real stone-ground flour, and it also engages members in a way that nothing else does. A Society such as ours needs something brawny like Pann Mill to leaven the mixture of the other more cerebral things we do like planning applications and sustainable transport and listening to visiting speakers.

And yet for the past ten years, our occupancy of the Pann Mill site has been, on the face of it, insecure and precarious. We have had nothing like a formal lease, and letters from Wycombe District Council acknowledging our presence there have merely constituted, we are advised, an informal "licence". For two or three years now, the Pann Mill Group have been working to get things on a firmer footing.



In many ways, the Mill is an underused resource: it provides entertainment for the public on Open Days, but should it not also be seen as an educational facility? School parties visit with increasing frequency. The Group are keen to replace the rickety "workshop", which provides storage (not very dry) for Pann Mill machinery, garden furniture and kitchen sundries for Open Days, with something more substantial

and leak-proof that can not only look after our assets but can also incorporate some modest space for exhibitions for visitors, including the school parties. These aspirations are set out in a well-argued "Strategy for the Future", prepared two years ago. However, whereas the team have worked wonders for years with minimal resources, the next stage may involve investigating the scope for grant aid, and you can't do that unless you can point to legal

security of tenure.

And so it is that there have been negotiations on a lease, which has been scrutinised at great length by the Pann Millers themselves, and by the Executive Committee with legal advice. We expect that all will be signed and sealed in the next few weeks.

Those of you with access to a computer can read the Strategy at [www.pannmill.org.uk](http://www.pannmill.org.uk).



The time to "make your own WDC budget" is over! It closed at the end of November. We are told that 700 people submitted responses – "twice as high as we normally get from similar paper-based survey exercises". WDC's communications department is now analysing the results for the Cabinet.

But was it really successful? What participants had to do (preferably online although paper versions of the questionnaire were available) was to go through five main categories of expenditure (community, leisure, environmental services, planning and housing), and within each category go through from three to five subcategories: for "leisure" these were Managing Parks and Open Spaces, Wycombe Museum, Information Centres (tourism) and Sports Centre. In each subcategory we were invited to say how high we wanted to set the budget (up to 25% change up or down), and for each of those percentages there were examples of what services would be added or cut in consequence. You could also write (type) comments.

We found this rather frustrating. This is what your editor said (in a personal capacity, of course) for a "comment" (slightly moderated in the square brackets for respectable circulation!):

*This is [unsatisfactory]. There ought to be a separate comments area for each category. I need to comment in each category because although I want to change the budget, I do not agree with the typical consequences that are suggested. If I type in some comments and then go back to the category to think what else I want to say, my previous comments have vanished. So I have had to draft my comments on a separate document and then paste it in at the end. SORRY, IT'S AN [UNREFINED] TOOL. Here are my substantive comments on each category.*

*ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES: I would cut the Environmental Health budget accepting the various negative impacts but I would want an EHO on duty longer hours in order to provide cover for EH incidents such as noisy events etc. Reduce expenditure on recycling, which I think is an overrated activity. Maintain street scene by maintaining bin-servicing, and removing graffiti on*

*private buildings.*

*Park & Ride good: reduce charges and introduce P&R north of High Wycombe.*

*PLANNING etc: revitalise High Wycombe town centre, maintain public consultation on the future of High Wycombe, its town centre and its place in the South-East, reduce spending on building control.*

*LEISURE: MAINTAINING THE APPEARANCE OF THE RYE IS VERY IMPORTANT BUT IT DOESN'T NEED MORE MONEY SPENDING ON IT. There is already a café, we don't need another one. But restoring the toilet near the London Road entrance would be a good idea. Improve the Tourist Information Centre in the Library which is a shadow of its former self in Pauls Row. DON'T CLOSE THE MUSEUM OR MOVE IT, it's a beautiful place with a beautiful garden. Be open to proposals to re-open the Holywell Mead Swimming Pool if ways can be found to make it pay, or to operate with a subsidy appropriate to the number of users.*

We wish WDC well in interpreting the results, but we suspect there will be a temptation to come up with over-simple conclusions. We hope they can do even better next year, and encourage people to comment on specific impacts and not just on spending levels in broad subcategories.

### ***Coachway (concluded from p.3)***

- we are very concerned about the congestion implications for our members in the FSRA residents' association.

The next stage will be the submission of a formal "hybrid" planning application embodying these proposals. The plans for the coachway structure itself will be definitive, but those for the offices and other buildings will be "outline", in order to establish the principle but allow developers to submit detailed proposals later.

## The Civic Trust: The background to the demise of a respected environment sector organisation

The Civic Trust went into administration in April 2009 after running into financial difficulties. As an overseeing body of the civic societies/amenity societies sphere of activities, it had frequently led the campaign for good design, nay, better design, of public buildings and private developments. Our Society's founding Secretary, Jack Scruton, openly and regularly acknowledged his appreciation of its work.

However, its financial basis was not of the best, since it relied for income on Government grants, subscriptions from civic societies, and service agreements to provide project management and research for third parties, including local and national government.

The credit crunch terminated most of the service level agreements: the funding was no longer available. Also many civic societies, including ours, were asking questions about the value they obtained from their Civic Trust subscription – apart from the regular Newsletter.

Nevertheless, the shock announcement of the descent into administration prompted an immediate reaction of concern amongst Civic Societies across the nation, English Heritage, The National Trust, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), and the Civic Trust of Scotland, Wales and the North of England.

It was widely felt that a replacement "umbrella" organisation was vitally important to continue the work, in some form or other, that had been undertaken by the Civic Trust before its closure.

These concerns resulted in the transfer and funding by the National Trust of their Director of Strategy and External Affairs, Tony Burton, to lead a widespread consultation on how best to establish a well-constituted replacement body for the Civic Trust. The CPRE and RIBA offered office space. The North of England Civic Trust has provided a temporary base for the consultative process in the North of England. English Heritage has stepped in to adopt, for the interim, the continuation of Heritage Open Days.

The High Wycombe Society has expressed keen interest in the consultative process, which has adopted the title "The Civic Society Initiative", especially as our vice-chairman, Tony Fooks, had barely settled into his new role as Chairman of the Civic Trust South-East (CTSE). This functioned within the umbrella of the Civic Trust but was independent of it for most purposes.

Our membership of ANTAS – the Association of North Thames Amenity Societies, covering Berkshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire – brought us to participate in a

consultative seminar at Bucks New University, High Wycombe, at the end of July.

Tony Burton encouraged and elicited some forthright views from delegates of ANTAS societies on the future role of a worthy successor to the Civic Trust. It was evident that there was a widespread desire, nationally, to establish a successor organisation to the Civic Trust.

Our members (you, the reader!) will understand these principles; they are the continuing aims of your own civic society – the High Wycombe Society!

**Roger Lawson**

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Editor's postscript: This work is continuing apace. At [www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk](http://www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk) you can read a report, "Own the Future", documenting what Societies say they would like from a new body to replace the Civic Trust.

Tony Burton has summed this up in a report which can be seen at [www.antas.org.uk](http://www.antas.org.uk). To quote: "The loss of the Civic Trust has left civic societies without a champion in the corridors of power and without the individual guidance and advice that can help each society flourish. The effects of insensitive development, weak land-use and transport planning and a lack of regard for heritage and the identity and character of the villages, towns, cities and neighbourhoods of England is diminishing them and all our lives. As a result there is an overwhelming demand for a small new national body to lobby and campaign where it matters."

*But now the crunch...!*

"The Civic Trust closed because it became remote and dependent on Government funding. The same cannot happen again. Each Society will be asked to raise something like £2 or £3 per member and will have to decide where to raise these funds."

*There is a sweetener: every member of each contributing Society will receive a free day pass for any National Trust property. However, whether to sign up for this is a question which your Executive Committee will grapple with in the months to come.*

## The individual's choice to counter climate change

THE SOCIETY has for some time been represented on the Environment Sub-Group of the Wycombe Strategic Partnership (WSP), a body comprising Wycombe District Council, some key stakeholders including local commerce and industry companies, and public agencies such as the local Primary Care Trust, Thames Valley Police and the Fire and Rescue Service.

After many deliberations, the WSP has adopted three of the Environment Sub-Group's realistic proposals to counter the negative aspects of climate change, as follows:

- (1) *Reducing plastic packaging in the retailing of food and non-food items, throughout the Wycombe District.*

All members of our Society can contribute to this, by declining unnecessary plastic overwrapping or a "one trip" carrier bag when offered by the retailer. Supermarkets are encouraging this switch to multi-trip carrier bags by offering incentives for the customer, including free replacement of worn or damaged "bags for life".

- (2) *Adoption of Green Travel Plans by stakeholder participants to the WSP.*

Not easy for us, individually, to do, but those of our members in gainful local employment may be fortunate to be offered car sharing as an option for reducing car mileage. Free bus passes and healthy walks over manageable distances offer our retired members the incentive to leave the car at home. Longer-distance travelling by train fits the bill. For our Society-arranged excursions our car sharing schemes or our coach travel arrangements contribute to fewer private car mileage on these occasions.

- (3) *Reducing the carbon footprint of WSP participants.*

Implementing this aspiration at a personal level challenges the members of our Society who aspire to green credentials. Yes, it may be possible to turn down the central heating, convert to a modern, more efficient condensing gas boiler if the finance is available, and use a lower washing temperature in the clothes washing machine, but many take the view that fewer car journeys will make the greatest contribution.

So there we have three suggestions for combating climate change that we can consider implementing.

Will you be willing to try to make your contribution to protecting our planet's eco-systems? It's your choice!

**Roger Lawson**

### Postmen's Party 2009

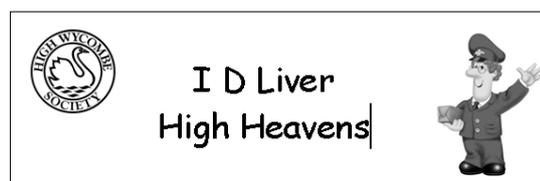
On Friday 13th November, we attended the Postmen's Party, a buffet supper at the Guildhall (my favourite Wycombe building). This occasion was to thank those of us who deliver the Society's newsletters in our local areas.

We enjoyed an excellent meal, with lots of delicious choices plus desserts, and table decorations, all prepared by Joan Hagley, Barbara Pathé, Angela Rees, Ann Simone, Eileen Walters, Mary Woodman and Annie Woodward.

Edmund and I deliver our batch of newsletters around Sands, on foot, after Roger Lawson has delivered them to us. We cover an area from upper Sands to Dashwood Avenue.

We are usually accompanied by our "granddog", Emily, our daughter's Cavalier spaniel. If you are at home when your newsletter arrives, you may have heard Emily yapping with excitement at your front door!

Come to think of it, maybe Emily should have been invited to the party - a dish of Iams would have been well-received!



*Everyone had an informative name badge!*

Seriously, it was a great evening, so thank you for thanking us!

**Denise Lindsay**

*And that's not all of it! The Chairman made a memorable speech, observing that our 24 postmen and 3 "über-postmen" hand-deliver 240 newsletters every quarter, and every postperson received a beautifully-wrapped tea-towel decorated with lovely town scenes. The postmen themselves had a huge range of experience: Ron Sims has been doing it (two walks!) for longer than anyone can remember, and Wendy Willson is looking forward to her first round. Roger paid tribute to Peter Hazzard, Head Postman for many years, who first put the membership database on to the computer.-Ed.*

## Quarterly Meeting

# Chiltern Trees with a Story

IT IS difficult to imagine that anyone can fail to appreciate the beauty of the woodland that covers so much of the Chilterns. At the Society's Quarterly Meeting on October 21st, Rachel Sanderson, manager of the Chiltern Conservation Board's Special Trees and Woods Project, took us beyond the beauty to learn the stories behind some of the more outstanding of these trees and woods.

Over the nearly four years of the project, volunteers have recorded some 750 special trees and 160 woods. Trees can be defined as 'special' for both social and cultural reasons. We are lucky to have woodlands that are defined as 'ancient', that is, over 400 years old. Signs that a wood is ancient include the presence of flora such as bluebells and wood anemones, and sometimes slow-moving fauna such as varieties of snail, observable management practices or evidence of earlier land use. Age is just one feature that may make a tree special. Other notable trees may have been planted as a celebration, be of a distinctive shape, of historical interest, a local landmark or of remarkable size.

An example of a tree that qualifies as 'special' on basis of being both old and large is the Domesday Oak in Kings Walden Park. Believed to be over 1,000 years old, the oak has a girth of 11m. At the other end of the scale, history in the making is represented by the olive planted in 2006 by Desmond Tutu to celebrate the opening of the Tutu Peace Garden at Henley Management College. This has a girth of only 10cm.

Workers on the Special Trees and Woods Project have made a particular point of collecting oral history, a skill that we seem to be losing these days. It took the memory of someone now living in Australia to recall that the 'blasted oak', a roadside landmark near Chivery, was not split by lightning as was popularly believed. The oak had in fact split when it was being used as a winch post as the RAF struggled to retrieve the wreckage of a plane that crashed in the adjacent field on a foggy morning in October 1942.

In some cases, research carried out as part of the project has led to the preservation and indeed regeneration of landmark trees. After much searching, volunteers investigating the origins of a row of eight lime trees on the Back Common in Tylers Green found an article in the Bucks Free Press of November 1937 describing in detail how thirty trees had been planted by ex-servicemen as a memorial to comrades who fell in the First World War and a commemoration of the coronation of King George VI. The local community raised funds

to restore this living memorial. Twenty-three of the original trees were found and seven new saplings planted, each of the thirty trees being marked with a plaque bearing the name of a fallen serviceman. A moving re-dedication was held on June 28th 2009, the 90th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles which formally ended the First World War.

Following on from the stories of individual trees, Rachel outlined how history can be traced in our woodlands if we know how to read the signs. Most of us realise the importance of wood to our past local economy, both as fuel and the raw material of the furniture industry. We are probably aware of the work of turners or 'bodgers' and of the existence of sawpits in the woods, but how many of us would recognise traces of a charcoal hearth or of iron smelting being carried out? Larger pits, we learned, may have been quarries, identifiable by the sloping end that allowed horses and carts to remove the quarried material. Just what that was can be hard to judge if the quarry was completely worked out but chalk, flint and building stone are all possibilities. Banks and ditches may mark ownership boundaries or may have been dug to prevent the movement of animals – to keep game animals in the woodland or domestic animals out. In some cases, landmark trees may be found at the junctions of boundary banks or the remains of hedges can be seen at points along them.

While the beauty of the Chiltern trees and woodlands is a wonderful thing in itself, Rachel certainly opened our eyes to how much more we can learn if we look more deeply into our local landscape.

The four-year Special Trees and Woods Project will reach completion in 2010. A project on the orchards of the region is planned to replace it.

**Roberta Wilson**

Roberta adds: If you want to know more about reading historic signs when you are out walking, John Morris will be leading a Woodland Archaeology Workshop at Hastoe near Tring on Saturday, January 30th 2010. Ring 01844 355504 or email [dhunter@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:dhunter@chilternsaonb.org) for details.

## Heritage

# Oak Room Windows – Can You Fill A Gap?

Regular readers of the *Bucks Free Press* may have noticed a couple of recent articles describing the Oak Room Windows Centenary Project. The Project Team – who are hard at work investigating the lives of the individuals honoured in the windows – have appointed Mike Dewey as their press spokesman, and have been appealing for descendants of those named in the windows, or other people with specialist information, to come forward. This appeal is also echoed on the High Wycombe Society website, which has recently been updated by the new webmaster, Malcolm Connell, to include pages for Heritage Projects.

Over the coming months, we hope to engage members of the Society in answering some of the trickier questions arising from our studies. Some of the individuals who are named below left prolific paper trails of their activities, but others are proving harder to investigate. Particular questions that are niggling researchers at present include:

- Is there a likeness anywhere of Hannah Ball, or of Benjamin Drewett?
- What significance, if any, does the date 1805 have for the pioneer chair manufacturers, Samuel Treacher and Thomas Widginton?
- Why was the Hon. Charles Grey “parachuted in” to stand in the 1832 election?
- What exactly was William Judson’s contribution to the First Newspaper?

If you think you may have information, documents or photographs that would help the team, or if you’d like to pose a question for them to consider in their work, please get in touch.

Name	What the central “Progress” window says about them
Hannah Ball	Founder of Sunday Schools 1769
John Bates	Gold-medallist Paper Manufacturer 1787
Samuel Treacher	Pioneer Chair Manufacturers 1805
Thomas Widginton	
Robert Wheeler	Founder of the First Bank 1812
Hon Robert John Smith	Hon Members of Parliament after Reform Bill 1832
Hon Charles Grey	
James George Tatem	First Mayors after Municipal Corporations Act 1836
George Harman	
Daniel Hearn	Developer of the Lace Industry 1837
Benjamin Drewett	Master of the First Public Elementary School 1837
Henry Kingston	Author of the first History of Wycombe 1848
William Butler	Founder and Editor of the First Newspaper 1856
William Judson	
John Turner	Originators of the Cottage Hospital 1871
Thomas Lucas	
John Parker	Author of The History and Antiquities of Wycombe 1878
James Oliff Griffiths QC	Donor of Frogmore Gardens 1877, Founder of the free Library 1882

The project will come to fruition in May 2011 when there will be a public exhibition in Wycombe library. We are also planning to produce a publication.

**Jackie Kay**

High Wycombe Society members who wish to contribute to The Oak Room Windows Centenary Project in any way can contact Jackie Kay on 01494 534876 or at jackiehkay@aol.com.

## The Early History Of Crown House

*The recent news that Crown House School has purchased Bassetsbury Manor from Wycombe District Council makes this article by Mike Dewey particularly topical.—Ed.*

THE ORIGINS of Crown House School can be traced to the 1920s, and to the Revd. Woollcombe of St Peter's Church, Loudwater. He did not wish to send his daughter Joan to the local Board school, preferring instead to have a private tutor to teach her. The teacher he appointed was Mrs Jesse Cabbage, wife of Sidney Cabbage of the well-known High Wycombe family. Mrs Cabbage cycled across from her home in Wycombe to conduct lessons on the top floor of the Loudwater vicarage. Word soon spread about the benefits of this arrangement, and the Revd. Woollcombe agreed that his daughter could be joined by children from other local families.

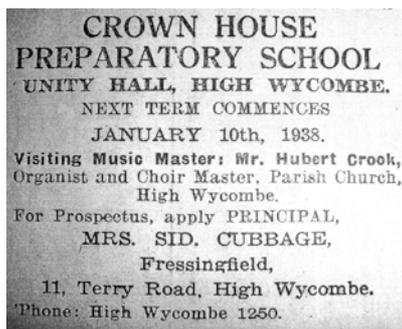
According to tradition, Mrs Cabbage was cycling to Loudwater one day when she fell off her bicycle into a ditch. It was then that she decided that she would no longer go to the children, but that they must come to her in Wycombe. Whether prompted by this episode or not, Mrs Cabbage acquired premises near the Crown Forge in Crown Lane, where her husband Sidney ran his engineering business, and her class moved there in 1930. An advertisement in the Bucks Free Press on April 18 1930 states: "Pupils prepared for Entrance Examinations. Special attention given to delicate children. A sound education on modern lines."

By 1938 the school had moved to Unity Hall (*see advertisement above*), and was named Crown House Preparatory School. Mr Hubert Crook, Organist and Choir Master at All Saints parish church, had been appointed as the Visiting Music Master.

### *The move to Newlands Methodist Church*

For reasons which I have been unable to establish, early in 1941 Mrs Cabbage was obliged at very short notice to transfer the school to new premises. She wrote to the Trustees of the Newlands Methodist Church, and the minutes of a meeting called to discuss her application record that:

"Two applications were made for part of our School Property, from the International Bible Reading Association and Mrs S. Cabbage for her School. The Trustees very carefully considered both applications. While appreciating the great work of the



I.B.R.A., the Trustees, knowing the difficult situation of Mrs Cabbage at that time, decided to let Mrs Cabbage have the use of the large Schoolroom and one small room."

The agreement was for:

"the 3 terms the School meets - an average of about 40 weeks in the year.

From Monday till Friday. From 9am to 4pm. With one half day holiday (Tuesday) the School finishing at 12.15.

Mrs. Cabbage to have use of Tables and Chairs.

For the duration of the War.

Weekly payment of £2.0s.0d. plus rates & tax involved through letting.

To provide own fuel for stove and fire.

The Trustees to do the cleaning. It was agreed that the Caretaker had an allowance of 12/6 per week when the School was in Session."

Crown House remained at the Newlands Methodist Church (*illustrated*) from early in 1941 to 1953/54. The weekly rent seems to have increased to around £2.6s.0d. over the 12 or so years of occupation.

In 1953/54 the school moved to its present location in London Road, High Wycombe.

I was a pupil at Crown House, when at Newlands, from 1943 to 1949; at that time there were about 30 children at the school.

**Mike Dewey**



*Newlands Methodist Church in 1936, with the entrance to the School Hall on the right.*

SWOP RHW 01086

## Notices

### New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr E Bevan of Brambleside, HW.  
Miss K Dawson of Princes Gate, HW.  
Mr R English of Earl Close, HW.  
Mr J Foy of the National Trust.  
Mr & Mrs C Watson of Green Lane, Radnage.  
Mr R Wilkinson of West Drive, Totteridge.

### Obituary

We regret to announce the death of:

Mr Peter Hazzard

We extend our condolences to Diana, their family and friends. (See p.5.)

### Showing off the Town

On 8 October, a group of 50(!) pensioners from the Bromley University of the Third Age (U3A), who were visiting Hughenden Manor, were shown around the newly-revised High Wycombe Town Trail by no fewer than three guides, led by our doyen, John Gore, who covered the ground more speedily, efficiently and effortlessly than the other two, relatively novice guides. WDC kindly opened up the Guildhall and provided copies of the Trail for each visitor. The Society got the benefit in the form of a generous donation to Society funds. If *you* want to be shown around the Town Trail, see below (9 May).

Thanks are also due to Tony Fooks for making a presentation, "New Plans for High Wycombe", about the Society's work to the "Wesley Ladies" on 18 November. More dosh for the Society's funds, thank you very much ladies!

### Holywell Mead

Members will know of the campaign to have the Holywell Mead open-air pool re-opened. At a

very lively meeting at the Environment Centre in October, Councillors stated firmly that this would not happen. The Society's position is that in principle we would like to see a swimming pool on the site, but recognise that, if it happens, it must be on a sound financial basis. Wycombe District Council is now conducting a survey, by questionnaire, of what activities people would like to see take place on the "swimming pool complex". We are in touch with Elaine Jewell, the Head of Community Services, who has offered to address a meeting of our members. The Executive Committee believes this would be a very good idea, but that the meeting should also attempt to identify some boundaries/guidelines on what should happen on this very sensitive site. If a meeting can be arranged, we will advertise it and email those of our members who have a computer.

### FAGAM

As we go to press, preparations are in hand for the next Forum for Affiliated Groups and All Members (FAGAM) at the Friends' Meeting House on 4 December, where the live topics will include the Council's Budget Consultation and the future of the Holywell Mead Pool Complex, Planning Enforcement and Locally Listed Buildings. Your next chance to come to a Forum meeting will be on 26 March.

### And from the Editor...

This newsletter is only as good as its contributions. Many thanks to all those who have contributed copy for this issue. Material for the Spring 2010 issue should reach me at 29 Maybrook Gardens High Wycombe HP13 6PJ (01494 528106) by **20 February**, please.

**Chris Woodman (Hon Editor)**

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

### 2010

Friday, 8th January  
7.30pm, Guildhall

Quarterly Meeting: The History of High Wycombe – a film show presented by John Smithson, High Wycombe Film Society.

Friday, 26th March  
7.30pm, Friends' Meeting House,  
25 London Road

Forum for Affiliated Groups and All Members (see above).

Friday, 9th April  
7.30pm, Guildhall

Quarterly Meeting: Annual General Meeting followed by Reports from the Society's Groups.

Sunday, 9th May  
11.00am–5.00pm

National Mills Day. Pann Mill open 11am–5pm. Bric-a-brac stall, Teas & Cakes, sale of flour (water level permitting), children's activities provided by Wycombe Museum. Also Annual Town Trail, 2.30pm, meet at Parish Church, finish at Pann Mill; Water Trail, 2.30pm, start and finish at Pann Mill.