

HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY.

Hon. Secretary;

J, Scruton, 17, London
Road, High Wycombe, Bucks.
Tel: High Wycombe 25933.

Newsletter No. 2 - August, 1969.

Since our Newsletter of May, 1969, we have been active in many spheres and seem to have achieved some influence on local affairs. The following summary gives some idea of work undertaken.

1. Membership.

This is rising slowly, but we hope to attract many more at the Wycombe Show. We appeal to all our members to find recruits. Personal contact is always the most successful. Perhaps each member could make a resolution to find another. We are pleased however that the following organisations have affiliated to us and added considerable strength to our arm. We are sure their ideas and support will be of great help.

Brands Hill Residents' Association.
Deeds Grove Residents' Association.
High Wycombe and District Council of Churches.
High Wycombe Cycling Club.
High Wycombe Rye Protection Society.
High Wycombe and District Trades Council.
High Wycombe Liberal Association.
National Federation of Professional Women's Clubs.
Order of Crusaders.

2. Conservation Areas.

We have now heard from the Bucks County Planning Officer that the plans for Conservation Areas in High Wycombe are being printed and should be available soon. This will be a great step forward and will at last provide us with the means to protect and enhance the remaining fragments of old Wycombe.

3. Guildhall.

The Borough Council has decided that the Guildhall is to be renovated both internally and externally. The Borough Engineer recommended that as this is a Grade 1 Listed building, any work carried out needed careful handling. As a result the Ministry of Public Building and Works (Ancient Buildings Section) has been asked to nominate an Historic Buildings expert to prepare a suitable scheme in collaboration with the Borough Engineer. This seems a fine example of how controversy almost inevitably leads to improvement!

4. Three Tuns.

The plans for the redevelopment of this site have been discussed by the local authority and the County Planning authority, and we believe that the present scheme is being reconsidered by the Prudential Assurance Company. We also believe that the Three Tuns, at least, is still threatened by demolition. The presence of yet another supermarket would point the way to the final destruction of the character of the High Street, We feel sure all our members will support our opposition when the battle is joined.

5. Building at the corner of White Hart Street and Church Square,

This attractive building, the old Chequers Inn, is also threatened by demolition, and the owners have applied for this to be carried out and for the site to be redeveloped. This building is a most attractive foil to the Guildhall and its triple-gabled roof is a very pleasant sight when viewed from the High Street. The loss of this building would be a very serious one and the Society will do all that is possible to fight for its retention.

Railway Closure - High Wycombe to Bourne End.

A local Inquiry was held in High Wycombe, when the Society joined with the Wooburn Parish Council and others in protesting against the closure of this line. The Inquiry was restricted to an investigation into hardship to passengers if the service was withdrawn. Other important issues were ruled out of order and could not be discussed. We decided to register our disappointment with the Minister of Transport. This we have done, stressing the need to keep the line open for a number of reasons. The Minister has now replied saying that the closure proposal is by no means a foregone conclusion and that he will certainly take into account all the points we have made. It has been stressed that the Minister will be concerned to see that his decision is made in the best interests of the community as a whole.

7. Land south of Cressex Road, High Wycombe.

Since our May Newsletter we have heard that the proposal to develop the 36\ acres of land at Cressex has been deferred, pending consideration of the future of the whole of the land between Cressex Road and the Motorway. The County Planning Officer hopes to publish soon the County suggestions for the future of this area. Large developments of this kind must be seen in the whole context of development in and around High Wycombe if reasoned, balanced decisions are to be made.

8. Third London Airport.

We have again given support to the Bucks County Council and the remarkable Wing Aircraft Resistance Group in their great battle to prevent the establishment of a Third London Airport at Wing. We provided a statement of evidence, for submission to the Roskill Commission, in which we depicted the effects on High Wycombe and district if the airport was built at Wing. The effects of jet flights from London Airport in our area are already causing considerable distress

9. Sports Centre, High Wycombe.

Plans are afoot to build a Sports Centre at the top of Marlow Hill, as a joint effort by High Wycombe Borough Council, High Wycombe R.D.C. and Marlow R.D.C. This is of interest to a large number of people, many of whom had hoped that a Centre could be built in the middle of the town instead of the huge office block which is now contemplated. No formal plans have been prepared yet, but it is likely that the Centre will include such facilities as a Sports Hall for Gymnastics and other facilities, such as squash.

9. Group Activities,

a. Outdoor Activities Group.

Convenor: J. Willson., 14 Gosling Grove, High Wycombe.
Telephones High Wycombe 25966,

A party of our members with the help of local Guides has cleared the footpath known as the Hollow, Way. It is now much more attractive. The Borough Council provided the sacks and cleared away a great heap of litter of all kinds. John Willson hopes to tackle other jobs when the holiday season is over, and he would be glad to hear from any volunteers.

Mr. Ronald Sims is carrying out a survey of footpaths within the Borough. When this is complete it will be sent to the Borough Engineer with the Society's suggestions for joint action to clear and improve many of these paths.

West Wycombe Hill Survey. Volunteers from the Society have been active on several occasions, interviewing visitors and providing information for a Bucks County Council survey covering beauty spots.

b. Historic Works and Buildings Group,

Since our first newsletter. Mr. Jarrett has had to give up his job as Convenor of this Group, as he is moving out of the district.

The Convenor is now J. Scruton, 17 London Road, High Wycombe.

Telephone: High Wycombe 25933.

This Group is busy tackling a number of problems connected with interesting buildings in High Wycombe. We are hoping to bring about the restoration of the Toll House and Bassetsbury Barn. We have taken part in discussions with the Chiltern Society and the Rye Protection Society about the future of Pann Mill. We have defended the Priory buildings in Castle Street, and are prepared to do battle for a number of buildings now threatened including the Three Tuns, the Grapes, and the old Chequers Inn. Our first list of Eyesores and Treasures has been submitted to the Borough Engineer and has brought a favourable response. We hope to increase the size of the Group and undertake surveys of listed buildings and those buildings suitable for listing.

c. Publicity Group.

Convenor: Mr. E. Kearney, 37, Dean Close Deeds Grove High Wycombe.

This is another Group in need of assistance in order to organise displays, posters, etc. This Group has arranged a display at the Wycombe Show and hope that as many members as possible will pay a visit to the display caravan.

d. Trees Group.

Convenor: Mr. C-. Peters, 49 Wordsworth Road, High Wycombe.
Telephone; High Wycombe 33762.

Mr. Peters is seeking help in order to survey the Borough's tree stock, so that it can be conserved and enhanced. In the words of the song - only God can make a tree, but many men are prepared to destroy trees overnight.

c. Social Activities.

Convenor; Mr. D. Woods, 19 Adelaide Road, High-Wycombe.
Telephone; High Wycombe 20284.

Mr. Woods has met with great success with his trips to places of beauty and

historic interest in Bucks. On 28th June a combined tour by coach and canal delighted all those who took part. The journey by narrow boat from Cosgrove to Fenny Stratford was quite fascinating. On 19th July a coach trip was made to North West Bucks and on August 9th a similar trip covered North West Bucks. On August 30th another trip has been arranged for North East Bucks. We are indebted to Mr. Woods for the great thought and effort which lie behind these trips. He would welcome any ideas members may have for social activities during the Autumn and Winter months.

10. Forum.

We are trying to arrange a Forum in the Autumn and invite organisations throughout the town, including of course our own members. We are hoping to have as speakers our local M.P., the Area Planning Officer, the Town Clerk, and the Borough Engineer. The theme might be "What do you think about High'Wycombe?'"¹. Such a Forum would be in line with all the emphasis in the Skeffington Report on the need for public participation.

11. Conclusion.

While the scope of most of the work to be tackled is obvious, there are many things which might escape the Executive Committee, but which should not be ignored. We hope that Affiliated Societies and individual members will not hesitate to bring to the notice of the Secretary any problems or suggestions which they think are part of the work of the Society.

The publication of the Skeffington Report has emphasised the importance of Local councils telling the public more and there is no doubt that local Societies can play a big part in stimulating the flow of information and discussion. Our attitude to our environment is something of great significance, since we are dependent even more today on the balance of nature. Modern technology is upsetting that balance, as we cover the surface of the land with concrete, pollute the air with our aircraft and vehicles, poison the land with insecticides, and pollute our rivers and oceans with more and more waste.

This neglect of the basic requirements of our environment, is reflected in much of the current bad planning in our towns and cities. Nothing short of a revolution in our attitudes will suffice. Only by close co-operation with the local authorities and planning officials can we hope to achieve the healthy environment we need. We hope that the Skeffington Report will lead the way to much greater publicity for local plans and to frank discussions with all concerned before these plans become hardened.