

HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

Hon. Secretary:
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NEWSLETTER No. 5 - MAY, 1970.

1. The River Wye - Some thoughts by one of our Vice-Presidents.

A perfectly proportioned valley, with a small trout stream running through it, joining field and mead, has by man's ingenuity been changed into a choked industrial slum with an open canalized sewer sluggishly pushing its way through. Is this the description of some dreary industrial town in the Midlands in the 19th Century? A contrast dreamed up by Pugin in the 1840s? Unfortunately not; in large part it's right under our very noses in the High Wycombe valley, row.

It is worthwhile asking why what's left of the River Wye (the part that hasn't been culverted) has been allowed to go by default, and not the slightest attention paid to it.

The answer seems to be comparatively simple. Because of the great fluctuations in the water level (what river in Bucks, what winter bourn does not fluctuate), and because the space either side of the banks is heavily built upon, the channel of the river has been made FAR TOO DEEP: the banks in some cases are four to five feet high. Either having no path by the side of it (in which case anonymity gives one carte blanche to throw and deposit any kind of dirt), or having a path - but the path is too high above the river gives no one the slightest opportunity to love the river, touch it, listen to it be concerned for the purity of the water. It is an alien thing, with mud banks and bottom ten foot down, fit only for dumping trash.

To the people of Wycombe the Wye could become a truly refreshing addition to life, on these conditions:

- a. No dumping from the premises, either industrial or back gardens.
- b. Lower the flood banks to water level, where practical, bulldozing them 7 to 10 feet away from the river.
- c. Fill up the river with gravel at specific points to raise the level of the water.
- d. Put as many footpaths by the side of the river as possible so people can get to know and love it.
- e. Unblock the Artesian wells that abound in the valley and show them for what they are - a constantly flowing source of the purest water.
- f. Inspect factories all along the Wye and have powers not only to forbid effluent (this is not very effective), but statutory powers to see that the very pipes and conduits are effectively removed.
- g. Bulldoze larger areas, when the Wye could flow into small lakes and expand into lakes 20 - 50 feet long.

Given half a chance the self-curative processes of nature reassert themselves and in ten years time High Wycombe could be unique in having a river to be proud of, with trout and crayfish in it, as it was at the turn of the century.

In subsequent Newsletters I hope to examine in detail specific areas of the Wye and pinpoint exactly what should be done and could be done with the minimum of expense.

Patrick Reyntiens.

2. Membership - This is rising slowly, but we hope all our members will play their part in recruiting others of like mind. This Newsletter might be useful in interesting your friends and persuading them to join us.

Since the last Newsletter, the following Societies have become affiliated to us:

High Wycombe Film Society,
Wycombe Constituency Labour Party.
Society for the Parents of Mentally Handicapped Children.
Loudwater Residents' Association.
Deangarden Rise Residents' Association.
Cressex Residents' Association.

These affiliations of Societies are a great encouragement and of benefit to all of us. The exchange of ideas and the support we can give each other are proof of this. Above all the support of other Societies strengthens our aim when taking part in such things as Public Inquiries or in discussions with those in authority.

3. Third London Airport.

The final battle to decide on the place for the Third London Airport is now taking place, and the Wing Airport Resistance Association is in the thick of this. Their efforts to raise money have met with a great response, especially from the districts which would be affected badly. This is natural, of course, but it is clear that if the Roskill Commission decided upon an airport at Wing, it would be a calamity for Bucks as whole. W.A.R.A. needs money urgently, not only to fight before the Commission, but also to mount a national campaign in conjunction with those defending the other possible inland sites. One of our affiliated Society, the Downley Common Preservation Society has responded to our last appeal, and is to hold a Coffee morning with a Bring and Buy Stall at St. Davids, Downley Common (next to Old Smithy) on Tuesday, June 9th from 10.30 to 12 p.m. Admission 2/-, but children will be admitted free. We hope that some of our members will be able to attend.

If any other Societies could organise fund raising events to help W.A.R.A. they would be helping a great cause. The Secretary of W.A.R.A. would welcome individual or group donations. His address is:

Wing Airport Resistance Association,
Bridge House,
Leighton Buzzard, Beds.

Among the many forthcoming events organised by W.A.R.A. is one which may interest our members, as it is in our locality. On Sunday, 21st June, the Manor House, Bledlow, will be open for a Bring and Buy Produce Stall by kind permission of Lord and Lady Carrington.

4. High Wycombe and District Planning Review.

Many Societies and individuals have now sent in their comments to the County Planning Officer about the High Wycombe Development Plan. We have submitted a preliminary report, and we are now compiling a final one. The observations sent in by the various Societies will be very useful in this task. A meeting of representatives of all affiliated organisations will be held at No.3 London Road at 8 p.m. on 15th June, to discuss this report before submission to the County Planning Authority.

We have now heard that the County Planning Authority is arranging an Exhibition about the Planning Review, together with two public meetings. It is not yet certain where these will be held in High Wycombe, but no doubt full details will be given in the local press. We urge all our members and members of affiliated Societies to attend the Exhibition and one of the public meetings and make known their views.

5. Marylebone Station.

A Public Meeting was held in the College of Technology and Art on Friday 15th May when a large gathering heard the arguments for and against the possible switch to Paddington, and there was ample opportunity for comments from, the audience. It was obvious that there is widespread opposition to the proposed change, and no doubt many of our members have read accounts of this in the local press. We have made a formal objection, as have many other organisations, including the High Wycombe Council. The inquiry into

this important matter will be held on Thursday 25th June, at the Caxton Hall, London, beginning at 10.30 a.m. Some of our members who feel strongly about this may like to attend.

6. Group Reports in Brief.

a. Publicity. We propose to take part in the Wycombe Show and hope to have some form of outdoor stand. We need help and ideas. An attractive exhibit could swell our membership and extend our influence enormously if the 30,000 expected visitors materialise. If you would like to help in any way, please get in touch with Ted Kearney at 37, Dean Close, Deeds Grove.

Symbol Competition. Some time ago we held a Competition in order to find a suitable symbol for the Society. We received entries from the College of Art, various schools, and from individuals. These were judged by a panel and the results were:

- 1st - Janet Moles, College of Art.
- 2nd - K. Wilson, Hatters Lane Secondary School.
- 3rd - M. J. Richardson, Hatters Lane Secondary School.

Cash prizes have been sent to them and we hope that details will be published in the local press.

b. Outdoor Activities.

Footpath Clearance. As one contribution to European Conservation Year, John Willson, in co-operation with the Borough Council, has arranged to clear the Carver Hill Footpath on Saturday, 13th June. If any of our members would like to help they would be very welcome. The clearance party will meet at the Ambulance Station in West End Street, at 9.30 a.m. Tools such as sickles and shears are essential.

John has also had discussions with the Borough Engineer and the Deputy Parks Manager about the River Wye and possible improvements. As a first step he proposes that a survey should be carried out throughout the length of the river to determine the present state and to indicate where we might be able to help in the improvement of poor stretches. If you are interested in this, you will find him at 14, Gosling Grove, High Wycombe. Tel: High Wycombe 25966.

c. Historic Works and Buildings.

Old Chequers Inn. There has been a great deal of publicity about the fate of this building, and we have made strenuous efforts to protect this important piece of Wycombe's history. The battle has now reached the crucial stage, with the County Authority wishing to demolish the building, and the High Wycombe Society, the Chiltern Society, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Council for the Protection of Rural England (Penn Country Branch), and the Bucks Archaeological Society are striving to prevent this. We have asked the Minister of Housing and Local Government to intervene. We await his decision.

Listing and upgrading of buildings.

As a result of our continual correspondence about buildings of architectural or historic importance, the Chief Investigator of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government has decided to carry out a re-survey of High Wycombe within the next six months. He will consider the possibility of upgrading those buildings on the Supplementary List, so that they become Grade II and would therefore be protected; in addition, and perhaps of even more importance, he will consider all those buildings which are considered worthy of being Listed Grade II but which are not at present on the list. We have sent to the Minister details of our own surveys and recommendations, and in this connection we feel a tribute is due to Tony Clowes, Bill Charlton, and our professional adviser and Group Chairman, Ross Brittain, for padding round the town. Much shoe leather has been worn out, but we believe the final result will be well worth all their efforts. Our thanks are also due to Alan Huchinson for his splendid photographs which were used to support our suggestions.

d. Conservation Areas

We have submitted proposals for a Conservation Area at Terriers Green. This mini Conservation Area is a very charming place, with some fine buildings, including the imposing Terriers House, round a charming green. We believe that the various local authorities will support the application.

Ross Brittain and John Bargman are now working on the more complicated one for West Wycombe. We are sure that everybody will agree that this is an area which must be given the maximum protection, in view of the beautiful village, West Wycombe Park, and House, West Wycombe Hill, with its Church and Mausoleum, and the delightful countryside around. The whole area is steeped in historical associations and we are very fortunate that it forms part of the Borough of High Wycombe.

e. Housing.

In support of the local Planning Authority, we have made formal objections to an appeal by Ideal Homesteads to erect 107 houses in the vicinity of Deangarden Wood. This proposal has aroused a good deal of feeling in that part of the town. One of the results of this has been the formation of the Deangarden Rise Residents' Association. We feel that to allow this development would be a great blow, not only to those in the locality, but to the town as a whole. Deangarden Wood and the land below form one of the few remaining wooded slopes we have left and it is loved and admired by many of the townsfolk. A Public Inquiry is to be held at the Municipal Offices, High Wycombe, at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday 16th June, and we hope that some of our members will be able to attend to give their support.

f. Traffic. The Borough Engineer Mr. Richards, has made proposals for the High Street to be freed from traffic, from the Guildhall to Corporation Street. This has met with opposition from the local Chamber of Commerce and other business and industrial organisations. They fear that this could lead to loss of trade and difficulties in parking elsewhere. A number of towns have already carried out similar schemes without running into these difficulties, notably in Norwich. The arguments for and against might well culminate in a Public Inquiry. What do our members think? We should like to know.

7. Social Activities.

In our last Newsletter we drew attention to a canal and coach trip to be organised by Derek Woods. The response was so great, despite the fact that we printed the wrong date, that Derek arranged another one. The two trips by coach and long boat will take place on 6th June, and 20th June and they are fully booked. Our thanks are due to Mr. Woods for the enthusiasm and hard work he puts into the complicated arrangements for these trips. They give a great deal of pleasure to our members.

8. Quarterly Meeting.

We are holding our Quarterly Meeting for members and affiliated Societies at the Methodist Church Hall on Friday 26th June, beginning at 7.45 p.m. The High Wycombe Film Society has very kindly agreed to present some films of Wycombe, and we can follow this with a discussion about the work of the Society. All details are given in the attached letter to members and Societies.

9. Finance.

As all our members are aware, a Society such as ours depends almost entirely on subscriptions from our members, augmented sometimes by fund raising activities. Expenses are rising all the time - postage, telephone bills, printing, stationery, and so on. The work of the Society is expanding steadily, but is likely to be seriously hampered by lack of funds. We think this would be a great pity if it happened. Some of our members have not renewed their subscriptions for this year and we do urge them to help us by sending these as soon as possible. Reminders are enclosed for those members. Your Committee will do all they can to raise funds in other ways. Any suggestions or help from members will be most welcome.

10. Group Work,

We are very conscious of the need to form groups to tackle the wide variety of work of an amenity Society. This is bound to be a gradual process. Some Groups have been formed, some are in an embryonic stage, and some have not yet seen the light of day. We hope to involve an increasing number of members in activities which interest them, and we have indicated in this Newsletter a number of ways in which they might help. The Civic Trust advice is that it is better to spread out gradually like a fan, rather than try to proceed on a broad front immediately,

11. Affiliated Societies.

We would like to hear from affiliated Societies of any worthwhile activities which have been carried out and which might be of interest to others. We could publish the information in our future newsletters.

12. An Apology.

In our last Newsletter we used the phrase "Much has been written and talked about public participation in planning of late, but nobody seems actually to have done anything about it". We have been reminded by Mrs. E. Willson, one of our members, and Chairman of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Workers' Educational Association, that the High Wycombe Branch carried out some fine pioneering work in this field when they arranged a splendid series of lectures and discussions in 1968 called a "New Concept of Planning", and which enabled the High Wycombe Society to start off on a firm footing. The course certainly brought together the planners and interested members of the public. Although our remarks were aimed at participation in a wider field, we do apologise for not introducing them with a tribute to the Workers' Educational Association for their initiative in arranging such a stimulating and useful course.