

HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

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Hon. Secretary:

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NEWSLETTER No. 11 - DECEMBER, 1971

1. Membership.

We welcome the affiliation of:

Bellfield Residents' Association
Hughenden Residents' Association
Workers' Educational Association
Hughenden Park Estate Residents'
Association

Although more local associations have affiliated, we are still in need of a larger individual and family membership. From the work of local organisations it is clear that there is great talent within their membership which is rightly being used to benefit their own local community. We hope that the Secretaries of these organisations, particularly Residents' Associations, will encourage members to join the High Wycombe Society as well and perhaps make use of their talents in the interests of the town as a whole. We hope that all our members will do their utmost to strengthen the Society by recruiting at least one member during the coming year. Personal contact is the surest way.

2. Group Activities.

(a) Planning. Members of the Group have worked closely with the "A.404 Action Group". Members of the Action Group represent Residents' Associations in the Hughenden and Hazlemere districts who have been particularly concerned with and dismayed by the County's proposals in the Wycombe Planning Review for new roads in their areas. As a result of their very fine efforts a report has been produced and sent to the Ministry of the Environment and the County, drawing attention to the threat of an urban motorway, linking the M.3., M.4., M.40 and M.1. via the centre of High Wycombe. The report is an outstanding document and the High Wycombe Society congratulates those concerned in its production. We hope that the report will receive the attention it justly deserves.

Application has been made for a large housing development in the Cressex area (Area H.2. in the Planning Review). The Cressex and District Residents' Association have been concerned for some time with traffic problems in their area, and in particular with heavy vehicle access to the Industrial Estate. These housing proposals would add enormously to the existing traffic burden.

The High Wycombe Society has made it a matter of principle, quite apart from other reasons, to oppose planning applications concerned with the H. areas, taking the view that such applications are premature until such time as a statutory plan has been hammered out. If they are to be treated apart from the Review they should stand the test of a Public Inquiry. The Society is therefore objecting to the Cressex application. If the development should be approved, then it is absolutely vital that housing and roads should be carefully integrated and every effort made to relieve the difficult traffic problems within the area.

Loudwater.

During recent years the "village" of Loudwater has suffered a great deal of mutilation, and many familiar and attractive features have been swept away. Most of the open areas have been built on and there are serious problems of traffic. As a result of representations made by the Society, after consulting the vigorous Loudwater Residents' Association, the County took the unusual but welcome step of sending two members of the County staff to meet representatives of the Society and the Residents' Association. Informal and frank discussions took place about the need for an open space in the middle of the village, about the possibilities for river improvement, about new housing developments, and the urgent need to consider traffic problems. We feel that the meeting was very useful and hope that it will pave the way for much needed improvements in Loudwater.

Saffron Platt.

The Borough Council is seeking a Compulsory Purchase Order for the demolition of houses in Saffron Road and Station Road, with the underlying motive of creating a road from the A.40 to Queens Road. This would bring about a one-way system between Gordon Road and Pann Mill - and also allow heavy traffic to infiltrate into a heavily populated area. The Society has opposed the Order, not only from a traffic point of view, but also because of the continuing demolition of housing in the central parts of the town, creating deserts and a great loss of character. In the process much of the community spirit once associated with High Wycombe is being lost.

Owing to other commitments the Chairman of the Group (Mr. E. Kearney) and the Secretary (Mrs. W. Marshall) have had to resign after two years of hard work, especially that due to the publication of the Wycombe Planning Review. The Society is grateful to these two members for all the work they have carried out in their limited spare time. Mr. Clive Bray has taken over as Chairman. A Secretary has not yet been elected.

(b) Historic Works and Buildings. Most of the work of the Group falls within the established Conservation Area, running from the edge of Frogmoor to the Funges Farm in Bassetsbury. Much is occurring in this area, with cranes dominating the skyline and many gaps being filled. Although some development may have a daunting effect, it seems likely that there will be a general improvement in the appearance of the area within the next twelve months. The Old Chequers at the corner of White Hart Street and Church Street is to be restored sympathetically - a fitting conclusion to our successful effort in saving the building. The Guildhall restoration will be completed and the Woolworth development will try very hard to look like the old Red Lion. Some of the gaps in Easton Street will be filled and the new Law Courts should do much to restore the character of this once attractive street. Along the London Road Park House, for which we fought, will look better than ever after restoration, and the new housing developments there and on the other side of the road at Park Street, should fit in with the fine open space of the Rye. Although we regret the disappearance of the last working mill, we must applaud the efforts of the Borough Council, Parks Manager and Staff in making the Pann Mill site look attractive, with careful landscaping, the removal of the hideous hoardings, and other improvements. The water wheel and machinery have been retained and we hope they will be incorporated as working feature in a future museum.

It is sometimes the little things which matter, and the Group is interested in the control of unsightly window stickers, fly posting, eyesores, ugly illuminated signs, street furniture, and so on. There is certainly scope for all kinds of improvements, and with this end in view the Group would like to carry out a comprehensive survey in 1972 and submit this to the County and Borough for consideration. To do this we need extra members for the Group. If you are interested please contact the Honorary Secretary.

(c) Traffic. The Group is holding regular meetings, at which the numerous problems of Wycombe's traffic planning are discussed. Strong support has been given to the Cressex and District Residents' Association and the 404 Action Group. The next task for the group will be to formulate the questions which should be asked, and answered, in Part 2 of the Council's Transportation Study. At the same time efforts will be made to press for a rational solution to specific problems.

The "pedestrianisation" of the High Street seems as far off as ever despite the efforts of the Group to stimulate action. The correspondence on the subject is baffling to ordinary mortals and the attitudes taken up by the various authorities seem to be strangely contradictory. If this problem could be solved, and the High Street given this freedom, it would be a great boon for the people of High Wycombe and district.

(d) Water Group. The Group has continued its survey of the Wye, and we have now examined the river down to Snakely Mill in Loudwater, and the Hughenden stream as far as the boundary of Church Farm. Our findings have still to be written up and illustrated, but it is hoped that this can be completed during the Christmas season. Briefly, the Wye in the main appeared clean, but much could be done at very little expense to improve its surroundings in several places. We have taken one or two samples for pilot tests on dissolved oxygen in the river, and hope to make a general survey along these lines in due course. Such a survey should give a more sensitive picture of pollution in the river than the tests sponsored by A.C.E. mentioned in the last Newsletter.

Although strictly outside our immediate responsibility, we feel a concern for the river as a whole, and have been perturbed by events at Loudwater. In the past three months the tributary stream running beside Watery Lane has been doomed to culverting,

and there are proposals to culvert the river as an integral part of the redevelopment of Snakeley Mill.

The Group have written, objecting strongly about the Snakeley Mill proposals to the R.D.C. and the Thames Conservancy Board, but the replies we have received have not been encouraging.

The state of the Dyke has been giving cause for concern for some time now; there is a considerable leakage on to the Rye and the waterfall has deteriorated to a somewhat dangerous condition. The Group hopes to make suggestions soon for the improvement of the waterfall, striving to recapture some of the attraction it once had years ago.

One of our long term aims is to open up riverside walks wherever possible, with the ultimate utopian dream of a walk stretching from West Wycombe to Bourne End. This is obviously a long - very long! - term project, but we have approached the National Trust about the possibility of a path along the north bank of the Wye, from Park Farm Road to Chapel Lane. Such a path goes under some magnificent chestnut trees and is picturesque at all times of the year. We have not yet had a response.

The Group can always do with more active members. Anyone interested in our activities is invited to contact the Secretary, Mrs. Diana Smith (H.W. 29301).

(e) Exhibition Group. We are hoping to take part in the Wycombe Festival in March, 1972. The Group would like to get away from a static Exhibition for a change. Instead we hope to show films dealing with the environment, linking them with the work of the Society. It is all a bit nebulous at the moment, but we have been offered the College of Technology on 7th, 9th and 14th March, at 8 p.m. The Wycombe Film Society have very kindly offered to help us.

3. Trees and Woodlands.

We are very conscious of the need in a place like High Wycombe and district for a vigorous group of people interested in Trees and Woodlands. On two occasions we have tried to form such a group, but the attempts failed. We seemed to lack a "blueprint" on the way to set about the task. Now the Arboricultural Association have produced a fine booklet for use by amenity Societies, setting out in detail the way to create a group and all the interesting and useful tasks which can be tackled. We know that many of our members have expressed an interest in this kind of work and we propose to call a meeting early next year. Meanwhile we do need someone round whom we could build a group. Enthusiasm rather than expertise is the principal requirement. The Honorary Secretary would be very pleased to hear from anyone interested in this topic.

4. R.I.B.A. Exhibition and Symposium.

We are sure our members and affiliated Societies will be interested in an Exhibition "New Life for Old Villages" being shown in the College of Technology from 3rd to 15th January. The main aim of the Exhibition is to show that growth means a process of natural evolution, and not brutal amputation. Examples of both will be vividly displayed. As a corollary to the Exhibition, the R.I.B.A. (Bucks Branch) and the Chiltern Society, have arranged a Symposium entitled "Planning for People", to be followed by discussion with the audience. A very distinguished panel has been drawn together. This will take place at 8 p.m. on Monday, January 10th, 1972, at the Wycombe College of Technology and Art. We hope that as many members as possible will attend.

5. Quarterly Meeting.

This will be held in the Wesley Hall, on Wednesday, 19th January, 1972, at 7.45 p.m. and we hope that as many members as possible will be able to attend. We have been fortunate in persuading Mr. J. Parsons to talk on "Population Control and Individual Liberty". Mr. Parsons is an authority on this subject and his talk should be absorbing. Details are given in the letter to be circulated with this Newsletter.

6. The Dove.

Despite the decision by the Bucks County Council not to give financial aid to the Dove, the hard-working Campaign Secretary, Hugh Bennett, and his enthusiastic supporters, have undoubtedly caught the imagination of many young people in High Wycombe and District. To achieve their object they will need unflagging effort and courage, and a great deal of skill, and we hope that all our members and affiliated Societies will do all in their power to help them in the coming months. This help can be given in many ways. An offer of help or support made to 11 Pauls Row, High Wycombe (Tel. 30598) will receive a ready response.

7. Tramp Supper.

The Water Group is to hold a Tramp Supper on Friday, 25th February, at 8 p.m. Jill and Peter Morgan cordially invite members to this supper at their home, Chequers, Bassetsbury Mill, Bassetsbury Land, High Wycombe. A charge of 35p per head will be made Any profits made will be used to further the work of the Group. A prize will be offered for the most disreputable 'tramp', but those attending (especially ladies) need not dress as tramps.

8. A Peep into the Future.

We need to form additional groups covering:

Housing

Youth activities - this is particularly important.

We need to interest young people in our work and gain their help in worthwhile activities.

Local Amenities.

Please help your Committee. We need your help in recruitment of new members, in helping where you can with Group work, and in taking part in meetings and discussions, and in communicating to others the need to take an interest in our town and district.

We are too late to wish our members and affiliated Societies a Happy Christmas, but we do wish everybody connected with the Society a very happy and prosperous New Year.