

HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

Telephone;

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HON. SECRETARY:

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From:

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NEWSLETTER No. 6. AUGUST, 1970.

1. Wing Airport Resistance Association.

The Roskill Commission has finished the hearing of evidence and many thousands await the result with a mixture of hope and dread. W.A.R.A. has fought in a magnificent way to ward off this deadly threat to Bucks and the adjoining counties. The efforts made in fund raising have taxed the organisation to the utmost and all possible help is needed to pay the remaining debt of £12,000. Contributions from local Societies and individuals would be of enormous help. As the latest letter says: "Please don't let us down - it's your fight as well as ours".

The Address of W.A.R.A. is :

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

2. (a) Planning. High Wycombe and District Planning Review.

The Society has now completed and published its final report on the High Wycombe and District Planning Review. This report is only final in the sense that it is an amalgam of the Society's views and those of our Affiliated Societies.

A planning group has now been formed within the High Wycombe Society with broad terms of reference, but at the same time charged with studying aspects of the Plan in depth.

(b) . Downley Allotments - Public Inquiry.

Democracy in Action, or a farce?

The Ministry Inspector in his report on the Public Inquiry into the application to build on the allotment land at Downley, recommended that land be retained for allotment use, with the addition of public playing fields and provision for some old peoples' bungalows. But the Minister completely overruled his inspector, and gave permission for residential development over the whole area. The Minister has not seen the site, and cannot be aware of the local situation. What then was the use of the Public Inquiry?

To add further to Downley's problems, we learn that the recent refusals by High Wycombe Borough Council and Wycombe R.D.C. for building on areas H.4 and H.5 at Downley have now been appealed against by the prospective developers. In recent years, Downley has taken far more than its share of High Wycombe's growth. If these areas are swallowed up by housing, Downley will lose its identity completely, its last remaining farm will be destroyed, and there will be a serious infringement of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The further development of High Wycombe in a westerly direction poses a threat to all the Chiltern A.O.N.B, and the area of great landscape value. What indeed does the designation of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty mean if within 5 years of designation, large areas are proposed for housing development?

3. Group Reports.

(a.) Publicity. Wycombe Show.

At the time of preparing this Newsletter we are wrestling with the problem of an outdoor exhibit for the Wycombe Show on Saturday 5th September.

Messrs. Stephen and Carter have generously agreed to build a "structure" free of charge. If we do manage to create an exhibit our thanks will be due to a team of enthusiastic and hard working members. We hope that as many members and friends as possible will visit the show and our exhibit.

(b.) Outdoor Activities.

On Saturday, 13th June, we did manage to clear the Carver Hill footpath. John Willson led an enthusiastic band of all shapes and sizes, including friends from the Chiltern Society. Strenuous - but most enjoyable and useful. Mr. Andrews the Parks Manager, provided transport and staff to carry away the material cleared from the path.

C. Historic Works and Buildings

Old Chequers Inn.

The Minister of Housing and Local Government has listened to appeals made to protect this building and has intervened. A Public Inquiry is to be held in the Oak Room, Town Hall, High Wycombe on Tuesday, 20th October at 10.30 a.m. It is a matter for regret that on this occasion we are opposed to the local planning authority, but we are in good company. The Council for the Protection of Rural England (Penn Branch), the Chiltern Society, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and the Bucks Archaeological Society have also opposed the demolition of this building. This is a crucial battle and may have a great bearing on the future protection of our historic town centre. If we are to present a good case we shall need money to pay for essential professional advice and for other items. Please help your Committee to defend this building by sending any donations to the Hon. Treasurer, C.R. Stone, Esq., c/o Midland Bank, Cornmarket, High Wycombe, indicating that it is for the Old Chequers Fighting Fund.

Conservation Area - West Wycombe.

We submitted to the County Council proposals for a Conservation Area embracing West Wycombe and the attractive open land around. We have now received the County's proposals for comment. Apart from the inclusion of the village, these are very different from our own - and far more restricted. We hope to persuade the County authority to extend their proposals.

D. Trees.

Recently, as a start for a Trees Group, Mr. Andrews, the High Wycombe Borough Parks Manager outlined the work being carried out and planned by the Borough Council. Progress has been made with tree preservation orders; 150 have been made recently for the Amersham Hill area. Mr. Andrews and his staff are now carrying out a survey of the whole Borough in order to select those trees of high amenity value with a view to a massive programme of Tree Preservation Orders later. This survey should take at least twelve months. It is clear from his talk that the Borough Council is carrying out a great deal of work with regard to the planting of trees in various parts of the town, and especially on Council estates and open spaces. Mr. Andrews and his staff are philosophical about the occasional bouts of vandalism and damage and destruction from other causes. The extent of this is no worse in High Wycombe than most towns, and a good deal less than in some. We asked Mr. Andrews of the part to be played by this Society and affiliated organisations. He suggested the following

1. Encouragement of tree planting by residents on private estates. Residents' Associations might do a great deal with regard to this and might consider the donation of trees as a corporate effort
2. Bringing to light any trees which are in danger of damage or destruction and which merit preservation.
3. Carrying out surveys of woodlands and persuading local residents to join together in the clearance of rubbish and eyesores. The Borough Council, can often give help in clearing away the collection.

If any members or Affiliated Societies have any queries, information, or suggestions about trees, please write or telephone to:

C. Peters, Esq., 49 Wordsworth Road, High Wycombe. Tel; H.W. 33762.

TREES - Highfield Wood, Micklefield.

Recently the Borough Council made an application to substitute one part of Highfield Wood which had been designated for housing, for another part of the wood included as protected woodland. At first sight this did not seem particularly harmful, but a survey of the area and conversations with the local residents revealed a very different picture. They are fond of the woodland now under threat and consider it a very precious amenity for their children. A petition has been raised by the residents and presented to the local authority. We have suggested that the wood should remain as it is and that none of it should be taken up for housing.

4. European Conservation Year.

River Wye, Since our last Newsletter we have received information from Mrs. P. Marsland of Sussex University that a survey is now being carried out. This is concerned mainly with pollution and the attempt to discover techniques for cleaning any river at a cost which would not be prohibitive. Mrs. Marsland is receiving help from various local authorities and organisations. It is hoped to arrange a meeting later in the year of all those interested in the river, including members of this Society. We have also heard that Dr. Grant and her students of Newland Park Training College at Chalfont St. Giles are also interested.

(b) Scheme for Funges Farm, Bassetsbury Lane.

As a positive contribution to European Conservation Year, your Committee has submitted to the Borough Council a scheme for an "open space with a difference". This scheme proposes that the area of the watercress beds at Bassetsbury, and the land of Funges Farm adjoining, much of which is derelict, should be used for various countryside activities for the benefit of schoolchildren and townsfolk generally. Funges Farm could be the focal point and it has been suggested that this might well be a countryside museum, using the outbuildings as well. The scheme has yet to be discussed by the Borough Council Committee, but we are hoping that it will lead to further discussion with the local authority and other interested bodies.

(c) Possible E.C.Y. Exhibition.

Throughout the country many local authorities, supported by local, county and national Societies, are staging E.C.Y. Exhibitions. These are arousing a great deal of interest and we are hoping that something similar can be arranged in High Wycombe, sponsored by the various local authorities. It has been suggested that the exhibition should be displayed some time after Conservation Year as a reminder that the fight to protect our environment must go on - and that every year is a Conservation year. We are writing to many local and other Societies seeking help and support. Any ideas from members would be very welcome.

(d) Course - Workers Educational Association.

As a contribution to E.C.Y., the High Wycombe branch of the W.E.A, has organised a short course of six meetings on the subject of "POLLUTION - A PROBLEM OF OUR TIMES". The meetings will be held on Thursdays from 7.30 to 9 p.m. at the Royal Grammar School, Amersham Road, High Wycombe, beginning on 8th October, 1970. The Class Fee is 15/-.

The tutor will be Dr. J.J.M. Flegg, B.Sc., Ph.D., A.R.C.S., Dr. Flegg is the Director of the British Trust for Ornithology. The subject is one of great importance to all of us. Members interested should write or telephone to; Mrs. E.M. Willson, Fieldfares, Ferry Lane, Medmenham. Tel : Hambleden 410.

5. Finance.

On 10th July, Mrs. Llewellyn of No.1. London Road held a Coffee Bring and Buy evening in aid of our funds. This was a great success, both financially and socially. Our thanks are due to Mrs. Llewellyn and all those who contributed.

On Friday, 25th September, Mrs. Clowes has very kindly offered to hold a Coffee Bring and Buy evening at Eyot House, Bassetsbury Mill, Bassetsbury Lane, from 7.30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Price of admission will be 2/-. We hope that as many members as possible will attend with contributions and help to make this a pleasant and successful evening.

It seems that in many Societies including our own, the ladies understand this dark mystery of raising money - something denied to the mere male apparently. In fact, in a number of Societies they have formed Fund Raising Groups which have proved highly successful. If any of our lady members would like to help in this way, or are willing to hold their own Bring and Buy or similar function, your Committee would be extremely grateful. If you are interested please get in touch with the Hon. Secretary. An active Fund Raising Group could well be the most important group of the Society!

6. Civic Trust.

Extracts from a recent survey of the whole Amenity movement carried out by the Civic Trust: "Growth of numbers of Local Amenity Societies"

1957 - 213. 1968 - 650. 1969 - more than 700.

Average number in each Society: 331. Aggregate membership_ 180,000. This has increased by over 50,000 during last two years. A number of communities far exceed the average number, with as many as 30 in each 1,000 of the population. (If we achieved this in High Wycombe, our membership would be nearly 2,000!)

The Civic Trust is a great inspiration to all amenity Societies, and the growing interest in this work is due in no small measure to the leadership of the Trust. We hope that all our members will help us to increase our membership to well above the average. As the Civic Trust has reminded us a society will grow if all members help to keep its achievements and ideals constantly in the public eye. Perhaps this Newsletter will help you to do this if you share it with your friends.

STOP PRESS

DEANGARDEN RISE. DEANGARDEN WOODS.

Result of Public Inquiry just received. Minister has rejected appeal by Ideal Homes to build in this lovely area. A great victory for the local planning authority, the High Wycombe Society, and the residents of Deangarden Rise and Bassetsbury area.