

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 102

WINTER 1996/7

Helping to Save the Planet

Make a start with Local Agenda 21

Do you remember the Earth Summit held in Rio in June 1992? There, national governments, including our own, realised that to continue in our present course of unrestrained development would endanger life on Earth. They made a commitment for the 21st century – Agenda 21 – to take action to achieve 'sustainable development'. This means asking ourselves "Are our actions and use of resources going to make life more difficult for our children?", and making sure that they are not. To be effective, sustainable activities must be practised, not only by governments setting out appropriate policies and budgets, but by local communities and individuals as well. Our own Wycombe District Council is taking action: all its plans and policies are being reconsidered against sustainability criteria, and an Environmental Co-ordinator, Lesley Stoner, has been appointed to extend Local Agenda 21 ideas into the community as a whole.

The following initiatives are under way:

O **Energy** Energy efficiency must be improved and emissions of carbon dioxide reduced by private homes as well as industry. You can get advice for your home on (01494) 421741.

O **Waste** Recycling is good, but prevention of waste is better. A Corporate Environmental Advice Centre based at Buckinghamshire College will give advice to businesses on environmental management, and there is also a Wycombe Business Green Club with similar objectives.

(continued on page 4)

January Quarterly Meeting



You are warmly invited
to an illustrated talk
on

Georgian Architecture

by John Neale
of the Georgian Group

at The Reggie Goves Centre
on Tuesday 21 January 1997
at 7.45pm

Light refreshments will be available



...caring about our town and heritage

Registered Charity No. 257897

Honorary Secretary, John Gore, 30 Wordsworth Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP11 2UR. Tel: (01494) 526671

Heritage

Heritage Open Day: High Wycombe Heritage Tour

I had often day-dreamed about being a tour guide, so when I saw the item in the Summer edition of this Newsletter asking for guides for the Civic Trust's Heritage Open Day tour on 14 September, I took the plunge and volunteered, as did other Society members.

Eventually, there were about eight of us who attended a briefing at the Council Offices a couple of weeks before the event, when Heritage Projects Officer Valerie Coleby took us around the route.

So, on a warm and sunny (thank goodness!) Saturday, I arrived with my notes at the Tourist Information Centre to collect my badge and list

to give an informative talk, and some of the material was on display in the upstairs room, along with some ever popular old photos.

From here, we made our way along the High Street – not without its difficulties on a crowded Saturday – to the White House. I had looked forward to this enormously, and it was the highlight of the tour for me. The White House is truly a treasure house. It has an 18th century façade, and a much older interior filled with wonderful surprises, the best of course being the early 17th century wall paintings, on original plaster. However, I was surprised to see the painting is unprotected, and I wonder if there is a technical reason for this.

Our final destination was the Council Office building in Queen Victoria Road. After a look at the restored fireplace (formerly in the Library) just inside the entrance, we went upstairs to see the Council Chamber. The microphones were switched on, but only one gentleman was brave enough to try them! We then strolled back to the Tourist Information Centre, the tour having taken an hour and a half.

I thoroughly enjoyed my stint as a guide. The concept of opening buildings not accessible to the public is a brilliant one. All eight tours were fully – if not over – booked, and I think we may safely assume that all participants enjoyed their walk. Same time next year? Let's hope so!

Denise Lindsay



'The White House' in the 1930s

'...the highlight of the tour...'

of 'customers', which included my husband Edmund. We had initially been told that we would not be taking more than ten people, so I was a little surprised to discover that I actually had 13! Fortunately, one gentleman had brought along a baby, so I quickly made him Number 14!

We began the tour at the Guildhall, always a pleasure to visit, then crossed to the Little Market House, where one of the town's most exciting secrets was revealed. A strong-room at the rear of the building contains many local archives, including a fat old ledger book dating from 1470. Museum Philip Crouch was on hand

Commemorative Plaque for Lord Shelburne

A new plaque to commemorate William Petty, Lord Shelburne, 1st Marquis of Lansdowne, was unveiled on 6 September at the gates of Wycombe Abbey School by Councillor Derek Done, assisted by Kate Fielden, curator of Bowood House Museum, who represented the present Lord Shelburne. William Petty owned Wycombe Abbey, then known as Loakes Manor, from 1761 until 1798, when he sold the estate to the first Lord Carrington. He was Prime Minister of Great Britain in 1782–1783, during which time he negotiated the Treaty of Paris to end the War of American Independence and create the USA. He is buried in High Wycombe Parish Church in an unmarked grave, but there is now a memorial window in his honour in the north chapel. This was designed and executed by local stained glass artist David Wasley.

Please Help to Record our Heritage

There are few of us who are not interested in hearing and learning about bygone days, how and where people lived, worked and played. It is only through the skills and abilities of our ancestors that we have such a marvellous heritage today, and sadly much of it is disappearing fast. In spite of the listing process and the efforts of conservationists, some of our old buildings are being left to rot and decay. Many of our old traditions are vanishing, and there is a noticeable reduction in community spirit. Even the food we eat and the way we shop have changed with the growth of superstores and the closure of many small town and village shops, leading to the thought: *"You can't buy heritage in a super-market. It is up to us to cherish it or it will be lost for ever."*

The Heritage Group of the High Wycombe Society have plans to record as much of our local heritage as we can before it is too late,

and it is with this in mind that we would like to ask for your help. Are there any members (or non-members, perhaps) prepared to give a little of their time, and working at their own pace, to assist us? Just an hour per week would be fine. We need people such as: researchers, photographers, people with the ability to sketch, and those willing to do recording and filing. We would also like to receive old photographs of High Wycombe and local people.

If you are interested and able to help, please contact:

Pauline Cauvain
97 Guinions Road
High Wycombe, Bucks
HP13 7NU Tel: (01494) 529224
(evenings)

or any committee member.

Pauline Cauvain

Outings

Waddesdon Manor: "A Labour of Love"

"A labour of love" said Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in 1897, fearing that his property, Waddesdon Manor, might fall into decay as he had no descendants. The National Trust has ensured that this has not happened, and their recent restoration work shows the splendid interior in all its glory.

It was rather sad that not enough High Wycombe Society members wished to make up a coach trip, but those who were keen piled into cars, on a lovely September day, to visit the Aviary (never have I seen such birds, in such leafy quarters), the Old Kitchen Restaurant (a very important place) and above all, the Manor,

with its panelling, portraits, Sèvres porcelain, fabrics, carpets and a thousand other things. There was also a fascinating exhibition of paintings by Bakst, illustrating Sleeping Beauty, with members of the Rothschild family and friends as characters.

I for one will be visiting again, but it was nicer with friends. It does raise the question of whether or not the Programme Committee should continue to try to organise trips if there is not enough demand. They will be discussing this at their forthcoming meetings.

Ann Simone

Chiltern Walk

Just four of us met in Turville village on the morning of 20 October and set out in the direction of Dolesden. However, before reaching Dolesden Farm we took the left fork diagonally across the field to a road, which we crossed to a point where a gas terminal is 'hidden' in the wood. Then it was up the hill and down the other side to Skirmett.

At Skirmett we walked through the village, then turned left to climb the hill up to Mousells

Wood. There we made a sharp left left turn down to 'Fieldfare's Stile', where we read the inscriptions and enjoyed the magnificent view over Fingest.

After a suitable pause we continued down the hill to Fingest and on to Turville to complete the 'circuit' of some four to five miles. What a pity a few more members did not join us!

Ron Sims

Wycombe Show 1996

Personal Impressions of Wycombe Show

Isn't it annoying that however right you are (or think you are), you still need to convince others of your case? What is self evident to you may not be obvious or likely or even true to others.

When I was doing my shift on our Society stand on the Saturday morning of Wycombe Show, I overheard a lady complaining loudly to her husband about how very cruel it was that the two dogs on 'The Ark' stand just across the gangway from us should be restrained on leads. This point hadn't occurred to me, and even as I thought about it it didn't seem very convincing.

The major focus of the Society stand was a proposal for a tramway link between High Wycombe and Bourne End stations. To Elsa and her fellow members of the Transport Group the justification may be self evident on environmental grounds, such as air pollution, energy conservation and noise abatement. But for the majority (not least Bucks County Council) there is a major uphill struggle of persuasion, discussion, argument and research before such an

idea becomes even tenable. Taking on the motor car lobby and the car driver is not the easiest battle ground to choose. The self-centred arguments of convenience, exact route, multiple passengers for the same cost, privacy etc are not easy to counter when your main point is the common good.

As an exercise in conveying information to the small number of visitors who could be persuaded to step behind the table and look at the posters our stand was excellent. Unfortunately we had to compete in the Conservation Tent with 'The Ark' and their furry rabbits and prickly hedgehogs, with the Wycombe Museum and their washing dolly and marmalade maker, and with the Hawk and Owl Trust and their beautiful birds.

On the day, it wasn't enough to be right, we had to be persuasive, too just as persuasive as Annie Woodward was in getting me to write down my thoughts!

David Flynn

(continued from front page)

Local Agenda 21

O **School initiatives** We need to educate children in the care of the environment. Among other schemes, a Walk to School initiative is planned. If you are a head teacher or governor, you are invited to contact Lesley Stoner on (01494) 421744 to link your school into the programme.

O **Individuals** Maybe we should shop locally, walk or cycle and not use our cars so much, grow our own vegetables, start a compost heap to utilise kitchen waste for soil improvement and to reduce landfill etc, etc.

We hope to bring you more about Local Agenda 21 in our next issue.

WDC Environment Award 97

Entries are invited for the 1997 Environment Award offered by Wycombe District Council to encourage good environmental practice and pride in our local environment. If you as an individual or as a group, school or industry feel you have made a good local contribution, get in touch with Lesley Hammond on (01494) 421716 and ask for an application form. Entries have to be in by 7 March 1997. Trophies and monetary prizes are awarded.

Planning

Quad Bike Track

The Society has objected to a planning application by Wycombe Summit, owners of the ski slope off Abbey Barn Lane, to build a quad bike track in Deangarden Wood. English Nature were unhappy with the recent extension to the ski slope in an ancient woodland, but this new incursion would be even more harmful to wild life, and offset any promised woodland management benefits. Then there is the noise which would be produced by up to eight quad bikes tearing round the track. It would certainly be most intrusive and annoying to people living in the Deangarden, Keep Hill and Wycombe Marsh areas. Surely this application will be refused.

Western Sector

MAB Ltd have submitted an outline planning application for the Western Sector development. It appears to be almost identical to their model which was on show earlier this year. None of our suggestions for improvement seem to have been incorporated, such as more housing and a bus station in a more accessible position nearer the town centre. The Council must not get this development wrong.

A Little Piece Entitled "Why Do I Worry?"

Wycombe Show 1996: Pann Mill Open Day

Will the rain hold off?
Will there be sufficient water to turn the wheel?
Will anybody come to the exhibition?
Will the helpers turn up?
Will there be enough cakes for sale?

The answers are always: YES, YES, YES, YES and YES.

High Wycombe Society members always give of their time generously to help with mucky jobs and guided tours, sell publications or simply look decorative. They realise that the slow, but constant, restoration work on Pann Mill is important for the town and future generations. It is the last mill on the nine-mile stretch of the River Wye that can be made to work again, and it is hoped that the flour-milling process will begin in 1998.

"The Archaeology of Pann Mill" was the theme of our exhibition this year. Locations of previous mills were shown, along with exhibits unearthed during 1994 and 1995 when Stan and Pauline Cauvain, local archaeologists, gave their time to 'dig' for the Society. Splendid examples of local pottery and glass were displayed, along with clay pipes and fine wooden spoons. It remains a mystery why whole dinner services were thrown intact into the river bed.

Unfortunately, an oak post found upright and

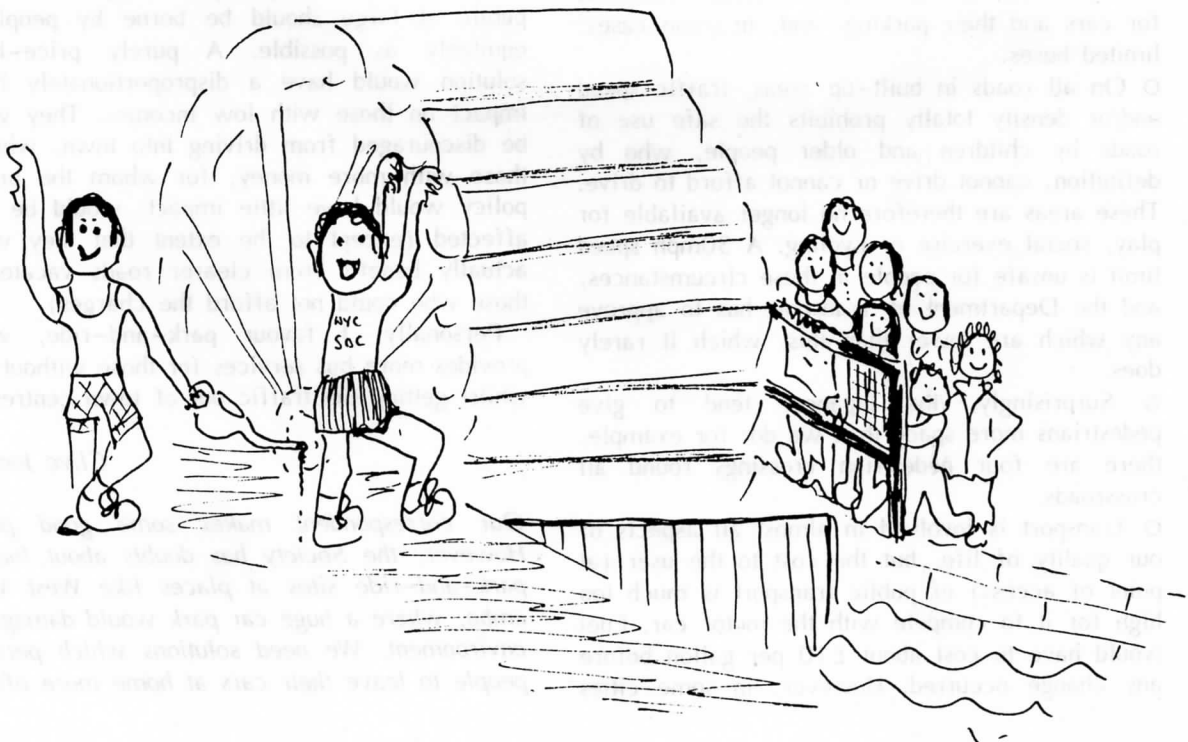
intact (evidence of a circa 1500 mill) was submerged beneath the surface of the mill leat on open day, and could not be seen.

Peter Hazzard is compiling a history of Pann Mill, and the archaeological evidence has helped to build a picture of past generations who have lived at the mill.

This may all sound rather serious and heavy going, but for most helpers it was a return to childhood and a fun day out. There are too few opportunities these days for grown men (*and women? Ed*) to dam up streams, wade about in wellies and jump on heavy machinery. For my part, I walk around giving orders, which allows me to think I am in charge, and together we make quite a team! 'Thank you' to everyone.

In spite of a successful day, no doubt I shall be there and worrying again next year!

Myra King



October Quarterly Meeting

'Transport Now' **Lecture by David Williams of the Civic Trust**

This was a very thought-provoking talk, presented at lightning speed via 70 slides delivered at the rate of one every 40 seconds! The topics were rapidly changed from one to the other and back again, thus leaving the audience somewhat dazed and muddled.

The following is an attempt to produce a clear account from a record of the slides shown:

O Although this country is supposed to need a "car economy", the Japanese are the biggest car makers in the UK, but they mainly produce for the European market. However, although we have fewer cars than the rest of the EU, we use them more.

O Early modern road planning was based on the ultimate efficiency of motorways for moving people and freight, but they only joined places without relevance to the facilities being connected. This had (and has) the effect of leaving town centres blocked by vehicles which prevented the free and safe movement of pedestrians, bicycles and buses.

O In contrast, late Victorian roads, together with an almost universal rail network, had the benefit of connecting local residential areas with shops and markets. Now, in an attempt to unite shoppers with their shops, superstores are built outside towns, so that they are totally accessible for cars and their parking, and, in some cases, limited buses.

O On all roads in built-up areas, traffic speed and/or density totally prohibits the safe use of roads by children and older people, who by definition, cannot drive or cannot afford to drive. These areas are therefore no longer available for play, social exercise or cycling. A 30mph speed limit is unsafe for people in these circumstances, and the Department of Transport has to approve any which are lower than this, which it rarely does.

O Surprisingly, the Japanese tend to give pedestrians more space than we do; for example, there are four pedestrian crossings round all crossroads.

O Transport is involved in almost all aspects of our quality of life, but the cost to the user (at point of access) of public transport is much too high for it to compete with the motor car. Fuel would have to cost about £10 per gallon before any change occurred. However, in some cities

(for example, Manchester) local trams have been resuscitated, and are far better than buses for medium distances out of and around the city.

O In this country, bicycles are still treated as a dangerous nuisance or a joke, depending on circumstances. Even the "Civil Engineering Charity" Sustrans considers them to be a leisure facility.

The lecture was followed by a dozen or so pertinent questions from the audience about bikes, buses, local finance etc. Dr Elsa Woodward, Chairman of the Transport Group, concluded the meeting with thanks to the speaker.

Christopher Wallis

Letter to the Editor

Preferred Parking Policy

In response to the letter in Newsletter No 101 entitled 'Car Bashers Required', I certainly agree with the opinion that there are too many cars parking in the town centre. I plead to differ, though, with the suggestion that raising car parking charges is the best way of lessening the problem.

My view is that a policy to bring benefit to the public at large should be borne by people as equitably as possible. A purely price-based solution would have a disproportionately heavy impact on those with low incomes. They would be discouraged from driving into town, whereas those with more money, for whom the pricing policy would have little impact, would be little affected (except to the extent that they would actually benefit from clearer roads vacated by those who could not afford the charges).

Personally, I favour park-and-ride, which provides more bus services for those without cars whilst getting the traffic out of town centres.

Clive Jones

Our correspondent makes some good points. However, the Society has doubts about locating park-and-ride sites at places like West Wycombe, where a huge car park would damage the environment. We need solutions which persuade people to leave their cars at home more often!

High Wycombe Transportation Projects

Following the presentation from the speaker, David Williams, at the October Quarterly meeting, I had the feeling that some High Wycombe Society members were not aware of all the measures that are planned over the next few months and years in our town. These measures are all aspects of the Positive Public Transportation Strategy adopted by Bucks County Council and Wycombe District Council, and they include the following:

High Wycombe Town Centre Pedestrianisation Detailed design is now taking place, and the scheme will be implemented during 1997.

"Special Parking Area" for High Wycombe This will include residents' parking bays, and will mean less commuter parking in residential areas. There will be an early review of the effectiveness of the scheme.

Bus Lanes in London Road and Easton Street Work on the London Road bus lane will start shortly, with the area between Hatters Lane and Micklefield Road probably modified until off-street parking can be provided. Further work is taking place on the design of the Contraflow bus and cycle lane in Easton Street.

Quality Bus Partnership Initiative Wycombe Bus Company have introduced new buses and upgraded services in the 303/313 route serving the Totteridge, town centre and Desborough Castle areas. If successful, this will be a blueprint for other areas.

Park and Ride A comprehensive feasibility study is being carried out by Halcrow Fox. This is looking at the four main corridors into High Wycombe.

Abbey Way Gyration The plan is to improve the capacity and efficiency of the Marlow Hill/A40 'magic roundabout' junction.

Integrated Transportation Consultants have been appointed to look at bus services in the town centre, with a view to integrating services to the railway station, the bus station and the hospital, in preparation for changes brought about by Western Sector development.

Wycombe 1997 Transportation Bid Continuing the strategy, the County Council is seeking a further £750,000 to be spent on a wide range of schemes. The District Council is planning to support this programme with capital finance.

1996 Wycombe Transportation Symposium This was judged to be a great success. In response to a questionnaire, 99% of the people attending found the programme good or excellent. A synopsis has been sent to all those invited. The improvements to the forecourt of High Wycombe Railway Station were a direct result of bringing people together on that day.

Bourne End - High Wycombe Railway Line It has already been agreed by Bucks County Council that the line south of the London Road should be protected for cycle and pedestrian use. A second survey has been carried out for Wycombe District Council, and a recommendation that the part between London Road and the Railway Station should be studied for use by buses was agreed by the Planning, Environment and Transportation Committee at their November meeting. (see footnote)

Traffic Lights on A404 at Dawes Hill and Handy Cross Sports Centre Completed at last, and many appreciative comments have been received.

I find it frustrating that everything happens so slowly. However, much is being done to make transportation more sustainable in High Wycombe today.

Councillor Frances Alexander

Editor's note. At their November meeting, the Council's Planning, Environment & Transportation Committee also decided not to rule out the possibility of protecting the whole corridor from High Wycombe to Bourne End for the future provision of a fixed-track rail or people mover system. The Society continues to advocate the introduction of a quiet, low power consumption, environmentally-friendly light tramway (people mover) system over the whole route as a major contribution to solving local transportation problems.

Did your know?

The Government aims to increase the proportion of bike journeys from 2% to 8% by 2012.

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr C S Burden, Harcourt Gardens, Marlow
Miss D B Hicks, Cryers Hill Road
Ms S J Koster, Mayfield Rd, Wooburn Green
Ms J S Payne, Hamilton Road
Ms C Trench, Priory Avenue
Mrs L F Webb, Coningsby Road

We look forward to meeting new members at our next event. Please introduce yourself!

Obituary

It is with much regret that we record the deaths of the following members of the Society, and we would like to express our condolences to their family and friends:

Mrs Olive Mines
Mr Bill Willson

Letter to the Editor

Contentious Planning Decision

The Autumn Newsletter reports recent planning cases where the Society opposed applications and the Council refused them (hurrah) or allowed them (boo).

I hope you will give equal prominence to the recent application for blatant back-land development at 35 Rectory Avenue, in a conservation area.

The Society saw no reason to oppose this. The Council gave permission. This blows a hole right through the Society's policies (as well as the Council's). It also antagonises members of one of the Society's long-standing affiliated Residents' Associations.

'Further degradation of what was an attractive residential area'?

Bernard Peatey

We must agree that the Council should always abide by its own Local Plan. Whenever an affiliated society or an individual member is concerned about the effect of a planning application, please get in touch with the Hon Sec and the Society will endeavour to provide support. Ed.

BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR

from the Chairman and the Executive Committee

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 21 January 1997 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row
(Please note change of date)

Quarterly Meeting: *Georgian Architecture* John Neale
of the Georgian Group

Monday 14 April 1997 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

AGM followed by a talk by Colin Dawes, County
Museum Officer

Wednesday 21 May 1997 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

Wycombe Arts Festival: *Hidden Bucks (Part 2)*
by Jean Archer

Saturday 7 June 1997 8am-noon
Little Market House

Charity Market Stall

Saturday 21 June 1997

Canal Trip starting from Marsworth. More details in
our next issue.

Saturday 9 August
Friends Meeting House

Coffee Morning