

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 105

AUTUMN 1997

Jack Scruton Memorial Garden

As part of its policy to conserve and upgrade High Wycombe town centre, Wycombe District Council has announced plans to improve the riverside area by Queen Victoria Road bridge, and to include in it a memorial to the late Jack Scruton MBE. We review progress to date.

WYCOMBE District Council is planning to upgrade and landscape the area of land by Queen Victoria Road bridge, which lies between the Council Offices and Abbey Way on either side of the River Wye; and, what is more, it intends to include in the design a memorial to the late Jack Scruton MBE.

For the benefit of anyone who may not have heard of Jack, he was the main spokesman for the Rye Protection Society which in the 1960s successfully campaigned all the way to Parliament against a Borough Council proposal to run a road along the north-western side of The Rye. Jack went on to found the High Wycombe Society in 1968 and was Honorary Secretary until 1988. He died in 1991 at the age of 76 having just learned that he had been awarded the MBE.

Although the paved area to the south of the stream once received a design award, it has in recent years has become very dilapidated. The new design will make full use of the river and the mature trees, and aims to create a more tranquil environment to encourage people of all

age groups to visit the area. The paved area will be broken up with new seating and planting, and new boulders on the river bed will add interest and create sound. The memorial will be in the form of letters on the boulders, and words and verses carved on walls and on the paving, all combining to give a message linking the river and its flora and fauna, but the message will only become clear to those who take the trouble to seek the meaning. Alec Peever, a sculptor and lettering artist from Ducklington in Oxfordshire, has been commissioned to execute the work.

A few members of the Executive Committee have attended several design group meetings with the Council and the artist, and we hope that the work will convey Jack's love of the river and the environment, and the vital necessity of protecting it for future generations.

The Society is grateful to Wycombe District Council for remembering Jack in this imaginative way, and for involving us in the planning.

Please see back page for information about a seat on the Rye as a memorial to Jack Scruton.



..caring about our town: past, present
and future

Registered Charity No. 257897

Honorary Secretary, John Gore, 30 Wordsworth Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP11 2UR. Tel: (01494) 52667

Events

Afternoon Tea to meet New Members

THERE was a remarkably proper English air about this event in July as new members and Committee members sauntered about on a wonderful summer afternoon in an English garden or sat in the shade for tea and scones and a chat with each other about this and that.

The purpose of the event in this informal setting was to welcome members who have recently joined us, enabling them to know a bit more about the High Wycombe Society and its organisation, and to meet some of the Committee members. We were pleased that both of our

Vice-Presidents were able to join us. Chairman, Roger Lawson, spoke about current issues affecting the Society, and invited new members to become more active in Society groups and activities.

Membership & Publicity Group

We should like to thank Olivia Price for making her lovely garden and house available for this gathering, and also to thank her and other helpers for providing the delicious cream teas.

Coffee Morning

IT was with some trepidation that we set out tables and chairs in the garden of the Friends Meeting House on Saturday 9 August, for the previous day had been one of the hottest of the year. We were lucky, however, that the early mists which had settled over the Rye lingered until late morning, and kept temperatures comfortable.

A slow stream of arrivals enjoyed coffee and cakes, while trading at the Bring-and-Buy stall became increasingly busy. An added attraction at the Coffee Morning was the wonderful exhibition of drawings and cartoons by the late Jim Cottrell, who at one time was Chairman of the Rye Protection Society. The collection had very kindly been brought by Jim's daughter, Alison.

As a new member of the Society, I had a very pleasant morning meeting everyone, and learning

about past activities and future projects. It was also a good chance to stock up on pens and key rings, which have now been duly distributed to family and friends!

Whil we were perhaps slightly disappointed at the relatively low numbers attending the Coffee Morning, we must take into account the weather, and also the fact that August is a peak holiday time. Despite these factors just over £100 was raised.

Shirley Koster

Many thanks Shirley and all the other helpers at the Coffee Morning for organising a successful event, with special 'Thank you's to Gladys Pearson for arranging the refreshments and to Julia Wassell for all her help in setting up the event.



The Rye and the Dyke
Drawing by the late Jim Cottrell
from Newsletter No 26 Autumn 1975

Wycombe Show 97

'Secret Wycombe' at Wycombe Show

Vicky Lindsay gives her impression of the Heritage Group's exhibition on the Society stand in the Conservation Marquee at Wycombe Show on the Rye on Saturday/Sunday 6/7 September.

ON SUNDAY 7 SEPTEMBER Mum and Dad asked me if I would risk my street cred and help out on the High Wycombe Society stand at Wycombe Show.

We had all been to Annie Woodward's house with the Heritage Group to put the display together, and Dad had taken some photos of the parts of Wycombe that are usually hidden from view, the sort of things Mum always tries to point out to me when we go shopping. Aren't parents embarrassing?

I quite enjoyed working on our stand though. The display did get lots of attention, and I sold one of our books.

We also went to see the Pann Mill wheel turning, which I think was the best thing in the Show. It looked great, and seemed to be very popular with visitors.

Vicky Lindsay (age 14½)

May I say 'Thank you' to Annie Woodward, Pauline Cauvain, Frances Presland, Gita Szwerc,

my husband Edmund and the Museum staff for their invaluable help in putting the display together. Didn't we do well?

Denise Lindsay (age ??½)

The rest of the Society would also like to express our thanks to the Heritage Group for preparing the stand in the Conservation Marquee at such short notice. We only had about three weeks notice that there was even going to be a Conservation Marquee at this year's Show. Thanks also to everyone who helped to 'man' the stand on the two days of the Show.

For those who did not have the opportunity to see the Heritage Group display 'Secret Wycombe' at Wycombe Show, we hope to put exhibit it again at the October Quarterly Meeting on Wednesday 8 October at the Reggie Goves Centre.

Pann Mill Open Day – 7 September 1997

It has become a tradition to open Pann Mill on Wycombe Show Sunday. This year it was evident that much progress has been made over the past 12 months. Pann Mill Restoration Project Leader Myra King reviews the day's events. Congratulations to the team for putting on such an excellent show.

AT WYCOMBE SHOW each year, we do our best to remind Wycombe people (and visitors) what the High Wycombe Society stands for. I believe we succeeded this year, judging by the numbers that came to Pann Mill and stayed to take in the 'story' of the mill from its 11th century origins to its refurbishment today. Copies of *Pann Mill Times* No 1 were available to give visitors an up-to-date progress report.

Our conservation efforts can be seen in the lifted and dressed mill stones, the assembly of the feed and chute, and the cogs, wheels and belts which will play a part in the milling process.

The Show day was successful due mainly to Thames Water and their engineers, who generously gave their time to set up a supply of pumped water to our wheel, which kept it turning all day. Low flows on the Wye stream made it impossible for the wheel to turn without

some assistance. This fact does jeopardise our aim to grind corn with natural energy in the immediate future, nevertheless we are working on this project for the benefit of future generations who may experience a wetter climate.

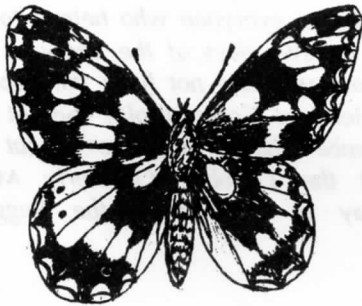
Homemade teas and cakes were available on the Open Day, and I would like to mention Helen, Sarah and Lesley who work cheerfully in 'basic' conditions each year. The weather was fine and settled, the occasional sunny spell contributing to the enjoyment of the day. Margaret Simmons' pretty garden and the pleasant company encouraged visitors to linger and buy from our publications stall. Olive Scruton made a guest appearance from Kent.

New members are cordially invited to look over the project during any one of our Sunday morning work sessions. Ring me on 523968 for an appointment. Thanks to all who participated.

Wycombe Woodlands Strategy

The First Five Years

THE storms of 1987 and 1990, which brought down hundreds of old and weak trees, revealed the poor condition of many of our local woodlands, which should be one of the District's finest environmental assets. The major redeeming feature of the storms was the decision in 1990 by Wycombe District Council to launch the Wycombe Woodland Strategy, a 30-year initiative to improve the conservation, amenity and landscape value of the Council's own woodlands, followed by those of other owners in a series of five-year plans.



Marbled White Butterfly

A report on the first five years was published earlier this year to show that tremendous progress has been made on many fronts. There are now 26 sites totalling nearly 600 acres under positive management, including 14 Council-owned sites covering 200 acres. Many community groups have become involved, including schools, youth groups and residents' associations, 112 in all, and some twenty local firms and branches of national firms have generously provided sponsorship. In all 50,000 new broad-leaved trees and shrubs have been planted, and 1000 tonnes of usable timber has been removed.

Active woodland management has included the improvement of habitats, and surveys have shown an increase in the diversity of plant, insect and animal life in the woodlands. The project has also developed a program to establish Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), including Chairborough LNR, set up in 1992 in partnership with the Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group, and Sands Bank LNR in 1993 in partnership with West Wycombe Estates. Gomm's Wood, Micklefield has been established as the Strategy's flagship site and has

won a Forestry Authority award. In 1992 it was launched as a Demonstration Woodland in partnership with British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BCTV), Southern Electric and local people. Also in 1992, Ercol Furniture adopted Keep Hill Wood under a 5-year partnership.

Access to the woods has been improved to allow more people to enjoy the woodlands. Waymarked walks and nature trails have been installed with on-site interpretation panels. Self-guided leaflets are available for Chairborough LNR, Gomm's Wood, Keep Hill Wood and King's Wood.

The Council sees the Woodland Strategy, involving local people in the care and management of their environment as a very real contribution to sustainable development and Local Agenda 21.

For further information about the project (and copies of the report) please contact the Ranger Service, Wycombe District Council, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe HP11 1BB (01494) 421824/5. Trail leaflets are available from WDC Reception.



Hawthorn

Although the High Wycombe Society is not listed in the report as being among the groups involved, we did in fact plant young trees in Castlefield Wood as part of a High Wycombe Rotary Club scheme, and in Gomm's Wood with BCTV as a memorial to the late Ted Kearney, our former Chairman and President.

John Gore

'No' to Park-and-Ride

In its submission to Wycombe District Council on the pre-deposit issues raised by the Council in the run-up to the revision of the District Local Plan, the Society opposed the four proposed park-and-ride sites on the grounds that park-and-ride represents an unsustainable use of land, some of it very attractive, and makes very little difference to traffic levels. However, we did submit some positive suggestions for reducing traffic. Here Elsa Woodward, leader of the Transport Group, sets out some of the Group's practical ideas for making us less car-dependent in the future.

INCREASING car use has led to an enormous land-take for parking at all destinations. Pressure on green-field sites for roads, housing and out-of-town developments has aroused increasing concern for landscape, habitats, mineral reserves and simple green spaces. All-party support for the Road Traffic Reduction Act passed in March this year drove home the message that there must be an overall reduction in traffic in town and country alike.

In High Wycombe, the Council has made proposals for four park-and-ride schemes, which the Society has opposed on the grounds that they are not sustainable. Park-and-ride requires huge land-take, but does nothing to reduce traffic mileage other than in the town centre. Desirable though this is, it is no longer enough. We need to tackle car journeys nearer their origins, not ignore them until they are a mile or two from the town centre.

For most people living other than in the major conurbations a new kind of 'bespoke' public transport, similar to dial-a-ride but much more comprehensive, is needed to reduce car dependency. The services should be closely tailored to individual needs using postcodes and computers.

Postcodes lend themselves to computer processing and thus offer a quick way to convert home and other trip origin and destination data into suitable routes and times for dedicated and on-demand bespoke services. Such services could support the Confederation of British Industry's initiative against car commuting by advancing company travel plans beyond simple car-sharing schemes. These already use postcodes, but tend to stop when two people are matched.

Postcode scheduling could enable many employers within close proximity of each other to collaborate in cutting car commuting efficiently, perhaps also involving a nearby school. Once such a scheme had been developed in an area, similar principles could be applied to other types of 'radial' car trips to and from a small central area. Together these could help to rejuvenate public transport and reduce car usage, including that for many 'dispersed' journeys.

Because computers work fast, groups of postcodes could be processed quickly, in order to arrange minibuss transport at short notice at rail stations, leisure venues and for delivery services, hospital out-patients etc. Requests for onward transport, from a railway station or a bus interchange, for example, could be transmitted electronically and sorted into minibuss routes whilst the passengers are still in transit.

Park-and-ride, once established around a town, is likely to stifle imagination and reduce investment aimed at more effective methods of reducing road traffic in both rural and urban areas, while, at the same time, taking large areas of green land and making very little reduction in traffic mileage. In some places it has even encouraged more traffic! From now on no further park-and-ride should be developed, apart from, perhaps, in a few small historic towns attracting thousands of visitors, and for the occasional use of brown-field sites in special situations such as pop festivals and football matches.

Downley Parish Map

The people of Downley, under the auspices of their Parish Council, have produced a Parish Map, which attractively presents all the features of interest in the village. Copies are available from Downley Post Office, High Street, Downley, High Wycombe, Bucks HP13 5XJ price £3 each, including packaging in the form of a cardboard tube. A novel Christmas present for Downley people perhaps!

A Celebration of the Diversity of Wycombe's Communities

The Chairman of Wycombe District Council, Cllr Frances Alexander, invites us all to participate in the celebration at The Wycombe Swan 2.15pm Sunday 28 September. Tickets £1 from the Swan Box Office. The celebration is part of European Year Against Racism, Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia.

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new member:

Mrs C M Bone, Amersham 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 member of the Society, and we would like to express our condolences to their family and friends:

Mrs E I Hands

Executive Committee

We are pleased to announce that Myra King has been elected Vice-Chairman in place of Evelyn Roe who has felt it necessary to resign because of the illness of her husband, Roy. Also, we welcome Frances Presland, who has agreed to be co-opted to the Executive Committee.

Jack Scruton Seat

A park seat has been installed on The Rye in memory of the late Jack Scruton MBE. It has been installed by the Council near the Pann Mill bridge facing south, looking over the broad expanse of The Rye and The Dyke to the backdrop of Wycombe Abbey woods. If Jack and The Rye Protection Society had not succeeded in their 1960's campaign to keep the proposed relief road off The Rye, then the site would actually have been on the road!

The seat is already being well used, but we are hoping to have an informal 'unveiling' ceremony on the morning of Sunday 26 October.

Questions and Answers

It's fairly safe to assume that, between us, the members of the Society know quite a lot about High Wycombe. However, individually we cannot know everything. So it has been suggested that we should have a 'Questions and Answers' spot in the Newsletter. Now and again, we all come across something that puzzles us. Here goes!

There is a pair of houses in Chapel Lane, Sands built in 1902 and named 'Godstow View'. Does anyone know what or where was the Godstow that could be seen from this spot? Probably not Godstowe School. And while we are in Sands, can anyone give any information about a 'Shrublands Hotel' which we have been told once existed? Please tell us if you know.

We would like you to respond not only with answers but also with questions you would like solved.

October Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday 8 October

at 7.45pm

at the

Reggie Goves Centre

Improving Your Environment

*An illustrated talk
on the work of the Environment Agency*

Come and find out about the vital work of the Environment Agency in maintaining the quality of our air, land and water.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

1997

Wednesday 8 October 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

October Quarterly Meeting: *Improving Your Environment*
Illustrated talk on the work of the Environment Agency

1998

Wednesday 14 January 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

January Quarterly Meeting: *Georgian Houses*
Speaker: John Neale, Georgian Group

Tuesday 14 April 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

AGM followed by talks by Society Groups on their activities