

# THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

## *newsletter*

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NUMBER 108

SUMMER 1998

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### **Pedestrianisation celebrated**

THERE WAS a festival atmosphere in the High Street on the first of June, one of the few fine days in early summer this year, when Councillor Ted Collins, Chairman of Wycombe District Council, cut the ribbon by the Guildhall to declare the town centre enhancement and pedestrianisation complete. Later, Councillor Frances Alexander, Mayor of High Wycombe, and Thomas Horn, Mayor of Kelkheim, our twin town in Taunus, Germany, unveiled a stone in the pavement in Church Street, close to the specially-commissioned new seats, to commemorate the 1985 twinning agreement.

Speaking personally, I think this is a first-class scheme. I feel a great sense of freedom walking along the High Street on market days, untroubled by fumes and traffic (although it is surprising how many "service" vehicles appear in the pedestrianised zone!) My impression is that there are now many more people about, and I hope this is reflected in increased sales in High Street and Church Street shops, and in the market.

Again speaking personally, I can accept the famous granite balls as an interesting and improving feature. Initially, I did not think them appropriate to complement our Georgian Guildhall. But, on the Society's 'Hidden Bucks' tour (see page 5), at Nether Winchendon House, which has Georgian connections, lo and behold, we saw dozens of stone balls lining the drive! Why people criticise the balls and ignore the real eyesores, I cannot imagine. These are the numerous black boxes which house the electricity supplies for the market stalls. Can't a more attractive alternative be found? Also, I can't help noticing the great forest of bollards, lamp posts

and traffic signs plus the boxes which clutter the view along the High Street. A few years ago, the Civic Trust campaigned for less clutter in our streets: now High Wycombe has more than ever! The rising bollards, which caused much amusement to people on first seeing them in action, are essential for keeping out unauthorised vehicles, but surely we do not need so many other posts.

So, nearly 30 years after the High Wycombe Society first called for High Street pedestrianisation, it has come to pass. Only 10 years ago, Bucks County Council held the view, opposed by the Society at a Local Plan Public Inquiry, that a northern relief road was essential before pedestrianisation was practical. Now it has happened, and there do not seem to be any dire effects. We congratulate the County and District Councils for going ahead with the project, and let us not forget the Society's Transport Group's valuable suggestions for improving the scheme. We hope the benefits will become increasingly apparent.

*John Gore*



Registered Charity No. 257897

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

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

# 1998 Annual General Meeting

THE 1998 Annual General Meeting was held on 14 April at the Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row with Roger Lawson in the chair. Some 50 members and visitors were present. The Honorary Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer both gave their reports for 1997/98 (copies available from the Hon Sec if SAE is supplied). John Gore said he had now been Honorary Secretary for 10 years and felt that someone younger ought to take over at the 1999 AGM if not before. After the reports, the elections took place and the following were appointed:

HONORARY LIFE PRESIDENT Mr L J Mayes

VICE-PRESIDENTS Mrs K M Peatey MBE JP, Mrs Olive Scruton

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman Roger Lawson 01494 528047

Honorary Secretary John Gore 01494 526671

Pauline Cauvain 01494 529224

Peter Hazzard 01494 447949

Evelyn Roe 01494 532575

Ron Sims 01494 440800 (Minutes Sec)

Annie Woodward 01494 527978 (Membership Sec)

Vice-chairman Myra King 01494 523968

Honorary Treasurer Nick Giles

Ian Guy 01494 716997

Frances Presland

Gita Szwed

David Turner 01494 521967

(3 vacancies)

After the business of the AGM, representatives of the specialist groups of the Society described their activities.

For the Membership & Publicity Group, Annie Woodward, Olivia Price and Ann Simone referred respectively to membership (only five new members last year), the programme of events (regretting the resignation of Barbara Rippington as Programme Secretary) and to the forthcoming 30th anniversary party.

Pauline Cauvain for the Heritage Group spoke about the Wycombe in Wartime project now underway. This should culminate in the publication of a book. She also invited us to have a look at the Group's display of Shops Gone By in the hall that evening.

Elsa Woodward for the Transport Group traced the change in attitude towards roads and traffic over the past 10 years, and discussed some of the Group's ideas which had come to fruition. Current projects for reducing local traffic include 'bespoke' public transport, superstore home deliveries and working for the reopening of the High Wycombe-Bourne End railway line as a light tramway.

John Mumford spoke for the Pann Mill Restoration Group, whose members are working to a plan aiming to grind corn again. Millstones have been installed on a new 'stone' floor, and numerous items essential to milling have been renovated. Members of the group had visited a working mill at Charlecote to gain practical experience, and had attended milling and water

management conferences.

John Gore gave a brief description of the Planning Group's activities in monitoring planning applications, and in responding to Council planning proposals. In the past year the Society had arranged meetings of Residents' Associations etc to help formulate a response to proposed housing allocations for the draft District Local Plan 1991-2011. Western Sector proposals had also received much attention.

Clearly, the Society has had a busy and worthwhile year.

*John Gore*

## Celebrating High Wycombe

THE SOCIETY had a successful stall in the grounds of All Saints' Parish Church from 8.30am to 4.00pm on 6 June, the day of the Street Festival to celebrate the completion of town centre enhancement and pedestrianisation. Not only did we raise over £24 from sales and donations, but we also enrolled two new members.

The Society's presence at the event demonstrated one reason why it has always supported pedestrianisation - the High Street that day was a lively social centre.

*Gita Szwed*

## "Will you walk into my parlour?"

Nearly 70 people accepted Mayor Frances Alexander's invitation to visit her Parlour on the morning of 30 May, when the Society held its Coffee Morning and Bring & Buy Sale - and they were captivated!

This room, which is used by Frances to greet her official guests, is very pleasant and full of interest as it contains not only the insignia and regalia of her office but also countless items presented to mayors on past occasions, particularly from our twin town, Kelkheim.

Resplendent in her red robes, three-cornered hat, lace jabot and gold chain of office, Frances welcomed a succession of small groups into her Parlour and explained how the growing prosperity and civic pride of the citizens had been responsible for the long tradition of Mayor and Chartered Town Council in High Wycombe. The first royal charter was granted by Henry III in the 13th century. Subsequent royal charters, including one from Mary I and two from Elizabeth I, are treasured heritage. These have recently been put under glass in a purpose-built cabinet, and their preservation and availability for visitors are thus assured.

From the windows we looked down on the newly designed public garden, through which the Wye flows and which will feature art work dedicated to the memory of Jack Scruton.



Pride in Wycombe's past, translated into affection and pride in its present and future, is now Frances's theme for her year as Mayor: "Loving High Wycombe". She challenges every group in High Wycombe to undertake a project, large or small, "to make our town more beautiful or more happy". These endeavours will be recorded in her Ledger Book for the year, the front cover of which has been designed and donated by Ercol.

Our chairman, Roger Lawson, expressed our thanks to Frances for providing such a novel and interesting venue for our Coffee Morning and Bring & Buy Sale, to Gladys Pearson and her helpers for providing refreshments, and to the organisers of the sale. As we were all wearing name tapes, it was a golden opportunity to renew acquaintances and make new ones. Altogether a very successful morning event for the Society.

Jean Ley

*If any of our members has an idea for a project for the Society to undertake to meet Frances' challenge, please get in touch with the Chairman, the Honorary Secretary or any member of the Executive Committee.*

*If you were unable to visit the Mayor's Parlour on 30 May and would like to do so, you may wish to know that The Mayor, Councillor Frances Alexander, has arranged another similar coffee morning on Saturday 25 July at 10.30am at the Mayor's Parlour. Places are limited: entrance £2 incl coffee and biscuits. Please let Annie Woodward (527978) know if you would like to attend.*

### Obituary

#### Howard Vaughan

Those of us who knew Howard Vaughan were shocked and saddened by his recent sudden death at the age of 54.

Despite a busy life in the diamond trade, which involved a great deal of travel to all parts of the world, Howard found time to devote himself to the betterment of the local community. He served for many years as a member of Hughenden Parish Council, became Chairman and more recently Vice-Chairman of the Widmer End Residents' Association, and played a leading part in the recent successful campaign to prevent Grange Farm and Terriers Farm being allocated for building development.

Howard's many friends and associates came to appreciate the practical wisdom and sound judgement that characterised any advice he gave. He had a vast store of knowledge of local history and some good anecdotes about village life.

We extend our deepest sympathies to his widow and two daughters.

Ian Guy

**Wycombe Arts Festival****Hidden Bucks III**

Extra chairs were needed to accommodate a number of representatives of the Wycombe Arts Festival and of the general public who attended this meeting on 18 May. They were warmly welcomed by our Chairman, Roger Lawson.

Jean Archer delighted us once more with her knowledge of parts of Buckinghamshire that some of us know little about, like Gibraltar, and Addington, the birthplace of Sir Lawrence Olivier. This famous actor had sung in the Church choir there, his father being the vicar, and Sir Malcolm Sargent had played the organ.

For the last part of her talk Miss Archer showed us slides and told us much about the history of Old Amersham. The late George Ward was the

photographer, and it was delightful to see the scenes of Weller's Brewery, the Parish Church, the Market Place and the Crown Inn. Those of us who live in the area can even now recognise some of the existing buildings such as the old almshouses and the Market House.

Jean Archer was warmly thanked by Barbara Rippington, and then members and visitors were able to greet each other, chat informally and look at the displays while refreshments were served.

The next High Wycombe Society Quarterly Meeting will be on Tuesday 20 October, when Richard Pushman will talk on 'Countryside Matters'.

Olivia Price

**Speeding in the Chilterns****The Chiltern Society wants your views**

The Chiltern Society is concerned about speeding on rural roads throughout the Chilterns.

In a recent poll of Chiltern Society members, 87% were in favour of speed limits. The Society now seeks the views of a wider public on the following proposals:

- 30 mph speed limits in all villages, or
- 40 mph speed limits on all minor roads, or
- a combination of both.

If you are in favour of any of these proposals, please write to: The Chiltern Society, 113 Vale Road, Chesham, Bucks HP5 3HP.

*The Chiltern Society was founded in 1965 with the sole aim of conserving the character of the Chiltern Hills in four counties comprising 600 square miles. It is run by volunteers for the benefit of all who live, work or visit the Chilterns for recreation.*

*For further information or membership details, please contact the Administrator at the address above, or telephone 01494 771250.*

**River Wye: Alleviation of Low Flows Study**

LAST WINTER saw the unprecedented drying up of the upper reaches of the River Wye, down to Desborough Avenue at least, and the Hughenden Stream remained dry almost over its entire length. It is of some comfort to know that the Environment Agency (EA) and their consultants, Gibb Ltd, have completed a study into the causes of low flow and into possible remedies.

The causes are accepted as being a combination of groundwater abstraction and low rainfall over a long period. The options for solving the problem include: rearranging the pumping rates at Mill End and Pann Mill pumping stations; importing water from a source at West Marlow to enable these pumping rates to be reduced; and pumping water from downstream (for example, from Funges Farm groundwater) in a pipeline through High Wycombe and feeding it to the upper reaches.

In our comments we noted that no mention had been made of reducing the Hughenden Valley pumping rate: this could be significant in restoring the flow in the Hughenden Stream. We also commented on EA's cost-benefit study. Not having a flowing river is a great loss to our town, and it is likely that water charges will have to rise to pay for remedies to overcome the low-flow problem.



# No hiding place

## The High Wycombe Society's car tour of 'Hidden Bucks'

A sparkling sunlit Saturday saw the start of the Society's car tour. Eighteen intrepid explorers, armed only with a fistful of itineraries, several maps and the library's last copy of Jean Archer's book on 'Hidden Bucks', set off to see some of the most beautiful and tranquil parts of the county that I, at least, didn't even know existed.

Stop one was at the quaint double bridge at Ickford where, regardless of oncoming traffic, we dutifully read the bridge's inscriptions that "The County of Oxon ends here" and "The County of Bucks begins". We learnt that there had been a bridge over the river since 1237 and, two hundred years before then, Edward the Elder had made a treaty with the Danes on that very spot. (I hope he had good Wellington boots as the river and pond looked decidedly damp!)

Our next stop was the lovely old church at Chilton, with its mysterious knight that, it is believed, has stood guard over the church since 1280, inside until the 16th century but, strangely, outside near the roof since then.

Next we proceeded to lunch in the Bottle and Glass pub at Gibraltar (I can personally recommend the

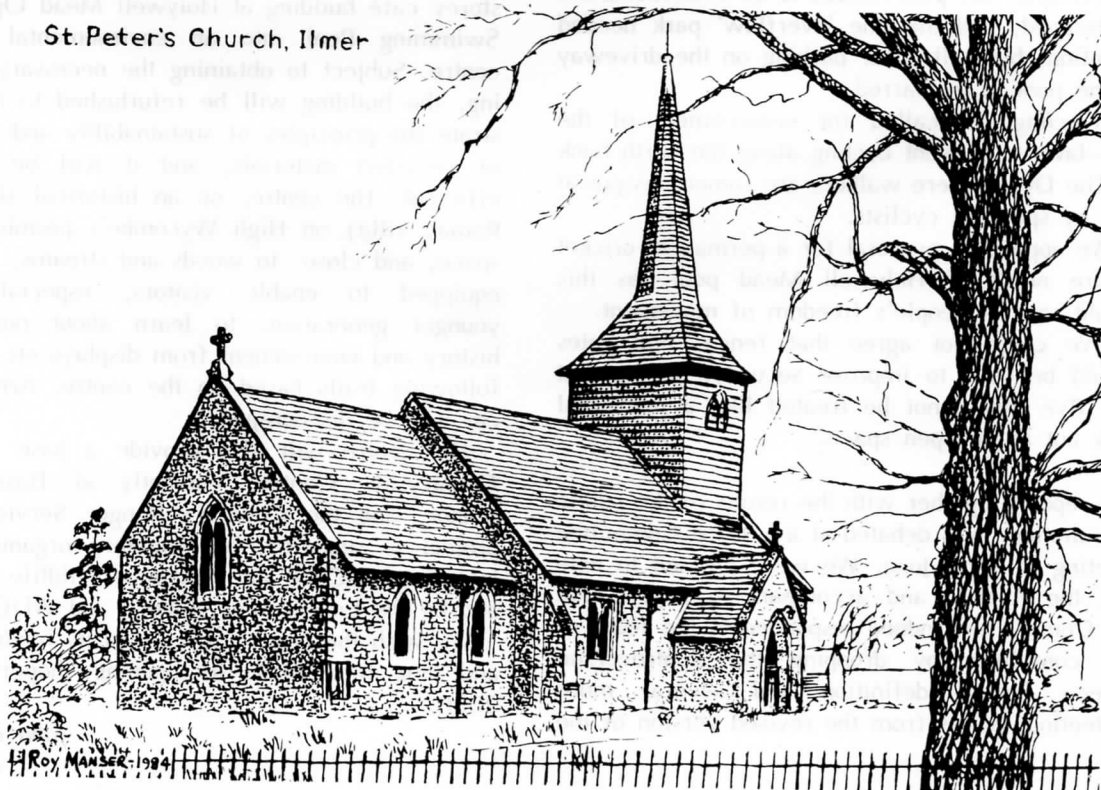
Australian dry white wine and the olive pasta), followed by a short walk around the thatched cottages that had seen such tragedy in the Great Plague of 1665 and again, some 200 years later in 1848, when 48 people from this tiny village died of cholera.

A quick dash took us to the church at Nether Winchendon, with its interior which, unusually, has undergone virtually no restoration since 1715. The high-box pews were a delight, and the stained glass figure of St Peter dated from the 13th century.

Last, we visited the beautiful parish church at Ilmer, which was redolent with flowers and their fragrance. We were lucky to arrive just a few hours before a wedding and the church was undoubtedly at its best. As we slowly made our way back to Wycombe our thoughts stayed with the church and the wedding on such a beautiful, tranquil and evocative day.

Gerry Palmer

St. Peter's Church, Ilmer



## The Rye and Holywell Mead Management Plan A Draft for Consultation

PUBLICATION BY Wycombe District Council of a draft 15-year management plan for The Rye and Holywell Mead for consultation raised alarm among the many friends and users of The Rye that something sinister was afoot. Mention of defining the area as 'Green Space' with a supporting clause referring to the possibility of new development in 'exceptional circumstances' was enough to frighten us all. Wasn't the existing definition as a Public Open Space, a Local Landscape Area and part of a Conservation Area enough to protect The Rye, cherished by High Wycombe people for generations, sufficient? The Society called a meeting of interested members and members of the public which considered the proposed action points in turn. As a result we submitted reasoned comments to the Council, and sent copies to all High Wycombe Ward Councillors. Most people want to see a high standard of upkeep of The Rye, Holywell Mead, Keep Hill Wood and the remainder of this wonderful open space, but do not want a change of character or unnecessary restrictions. Apart from the Green Space issue, other concerns aroused by the draft document which we covered in our comments included:

*O Tree planting along the London Road boundary*

We opposed this idea, saying that in time the trees would block the incomparable view across the river and green space to the woods beyond.

*O Restricting the area open to dog walkers*

We said that people should be free to wander anywhere on The Rye, although we do recognise that fouling of play areas by dogs needs to be dealt with.

*O Toilets* We agreed that the existing toilets needed upgrading.

*O Car parking* We were pleased that the draft plan specifically stated that it was not intended to introduce any activity that would increase traffic to the site. We agreed that the existing car park by the open-air pool needed to be resurfaced and landscaped, and that the 'overflow' park needed attention, but called for parking on the driveway to the pool to be barred.

*O Cycling* We called for enforcement of the bye-laws to prevent cycling along the north bank of The Dyke where walkers are sometimes put at risk by speeding cyclists.

*O* We opposed a proposal for a permanent cricket square north of Holywell Mead pool, as this would restrict people's freedom of movement.

*O* We could not agree that fences and gates should be used to improve security, saying that The Rye should not be treated like a municipal park but as an open space.

The report, together with the results of the public consultation, was debated at a Leisure Committee meeting in early June. We were pleased to note that the Agenda and accompanying papers that the Council had indeed responded to the fears of the consultees by dropping the controversial 'Green Space' definition and several more contentious points from the revised version of the

Management Plan. Then, in the debate, it was gratifying to hear many Councillors voicing the feelings of local people about The Rye, summed up in the phrase "jewel in the crown of High Wycombe", and calling for retention of the area as a place for informal recreation. We hope funds will permit the maintenance of a high standard of upkeep.

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## The Rye Environment Centre Project

An exciting new project is in the planning stage whose objective is to convert the former two-storey café building at Holywell Mead Open-air Swimming Pool into an environmental visitor centre. Subject to obtaining the necessary funding, the building will be refurbished to demonstrate the principles of sustainability and the use of recycled materials, and it will be energy efficient. The centre, on an historical site (the Roman villa) on High Wycombe's premier open space, and close to woods and streams, will be equipped to enable visitors, especially the younger generation, to learn about our local history and environment from displays etc and by following trails based on the centre. Arrival by car will be discouraged.

The centre will also provide a base for the Countryside Centre, currently at Bassetsbury Manor, and the Council's Ranger Service. The project is supported by voluntary organisations, including BBONT and Wycombe Wildlife Group, and by the Environment Agency and WDC.

We wish the project success in its funding bid, and look forward to its opening, hopefully by 2000.

*John Gore*

## Planning

# New District Local Plan Progress

SUCH WAS the public interest in the preparation of a new draft District Local Plan 1991-2011, that Wycombe District Council Planning, Environment & Transport Committee held an open meeting in early April for members of the public to ask questions about the proposals for the allocation of land for housing, employment etc.: and 46 did! The following week the Committee again met in public, but without public participation, to make their decisions. To a considerable extent, the Council took note of public opposition to building on green-field sites, and excluded Grange Farm, AONB land at Sands and the bulk of Gomm Valley, for which we are grateful. However, two sites on the borders of Gomm Valley, given the names of Ashwells and Pimms Close, have been scheduled to take 90 and 40 dwellings respectively, and this has not pleased local residents. Abbey Barn North and South have each been allotted 200 dwellings, together with employment land on Abbey Barn South. It is admitted that such development will pose traffic problems in both the London Road and Marlow Hill areas: we await the proposed solutions with interest. A newly-identified site at Copperfields off West Wycombe Road is also likely to prove controversial.

More recently, the Council have published their latest ideas for park-and-ride sites. Although the Society opposes park-and-ride in principle as being ineffective in reducing overall car mileage, we will be examining the pros and cons of the new proposals. However, it is certainly pleasing to learn that West Wycombe and Terriers Farm have been exonerated.

The complete draft District Local Plan is due to be published later this year, and no doubt there will be a Public Inquiry to deal with objections some time in 1999.

*John Gore*

## Transport

### Road Traffic Reduction Act

FOLLOWING a Government invitation to comment on their draft guidance to local authorities on implementing the Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997, the Transport Group has submitted comments based on local experience.

Parking availability nationwide, including park-and-ride, should be reduced, but only when attractive alternatives to the car are put in place; such as, bespoke public transport, light rail systems, cheap school travel & car-free shopping.

## **Letter to the Editor**

I would like to endorse everything written in the letters from Douglas Fraser, Doug Hodson and Ann Simone (Newsletter No. 107) and to congratulate the Editor for printing them.

The aims of the Society, as stated by the Chairman, are surely those of everybody associated with High Wycombe. Is there anybody out there prepared to state, in public, that their aims are *not* for the best interests of High Wycombe?

The differences occur in what are considered to be the best interests and the means by which they can be achieved. The best interests of those who live and work in the Wycombe district will differ from those who live in the district but work elsewhere and from those who work in the district but live elsewhere, and will differ again from the best interests of those of other so-called 'associated' people who neither live nor work in the district.

The recent views of the Society seem to be more opposed to those of the first three categories mentioned above and more supportive of the latter who, I would suggest, are they who speak with forked tongues. If the views are those of the Society, then a resignation is the simple personal solution. If however the views are not those of the Society, as might seem to be the case, the solution is not so simple. If those with views alien to the rest of the Society are the only people prepared to be 'active' members of the Society, they are not going to be replaced and neither are they likely to promote actions or views of others which are alien to their perceptions. Resignations of the rest would leave but a handful of people giving the illusion that they spoke not only for a significant Society but also for the people of High Wycombe. That would, I think, be disappointing to say the least. In that instance it would be far more honourable for the Society to be disbanded.

*Peter Somerville*

## Notices

### **New Members**

We are delighted to welcome so many new members this time. Thanks to the various opportunities we have had to sell our publications and the Society's name, many new recruits have come forward. We hope they find the Society a worthwhile cause, and we look forward to getting to know them:

Mr & Mrs A Alexander, Havenfield Court  
Mrs M C Barville, Watchet Lane, Holmer Green

Miss M R Buchanan, Parsonage Close  
Mrs R F Carlisle, Grimms Meadow, Walters Ash

Mr & Mrs P J Ebberson, Warrenwood Drive  
Mrs H Y Evans, The Pastures, Downley

Mrs I Foster-Brown, Station Road  
Mr & Mrs B Gelsthorpe, Benjamin Road

Mrs J C Lees, Desborough Avenue  
Mrs D Martin, The Haystacks

Mr R E Morcom, Littleworth Road, Downley  
Mr G C Palmer, New Road, Booker

Mrs C Pryde, Partridge Way  
Mr J Rattue, Bevelwood Gardens

Mr & Mrs J S Rayner, Shrubbery Road  
Mr & Mrs A Roberts, Micklefield Road

Mr & Mrs G Stewart, Bassetsbury Lane  
Miss E O Thorn, Oakridge Road

Mrs E Walters, Totteridge Avenue  
Mr & Mrs J Ward, New Road, Sands

## **Georgian Houses**

If you missed the interesting and authoritative illustrated talk on 'Georgian Houses' by John Neale of the Georgian Group last January, you may like to know that it is being repeated at the Whitehill Centre, White Hill, Chesham on Friday 16 October at 8pm. Admission fee £2 including coffee.

This meeting is being organised by the Chess Valley Archaeological & Historical Society. Another of their meetings which may be of interest is on 'Hughenden Manor & Disraeli' by Dr M Crawford on Friday 18 September at 8pm also at the Whitehill Centre.

## **No Hiding Place II**

There will be another opportunity to join a car tour of Hidden Bucks villages (see article on p. 5). This will be held on Saturday 10 October from 10am to 3.30/4pm. Please contact Annie Woodward (527978) or Ann Simone (448773)

## **Society's 30th Anniversary**

The High Wycombe Society was founded in November 1968, so this is our 30th anniversary year. A successful celebration party was held in the grounds of the Wycombe Local History & Chair Museum on Saturday 27 June. We will include a report in our next issue, which will also include special anniversary features.

Copy for Autumn issue by 22 August, please

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

1998

Saturday 18 July 8am-12noon  
Little Market House

Charity Market Stall. Please contact Olivia Price (527042) re items beforehand, or take them to stall

Saturday/Sunday 5/6 September  
The Rye (see local press for times)

Wycombe Show 50th Anniversary Year  
We hope to see you in the Conservation Marquee

Sunday 6 September 11am-5pm  
Pann Mill

Pann Mill Open Day: exhibition and refreshments

Saturday/Sunday 11/12 September  
Saturday 11 September

Heritage Open Days 98  
Local buildings of historic and/or architectural interest will be open - see local press for details  
Town Heritage Trail - a guided circular tour around the Town Centre Conservation Area

Sunday 12 September 2.15pm  
Parish Church South Porch

Tuesday 20 October 7.45pm  
Reggie Goves Centre

Quarterly Meeting: *Countryside Matters*  
Speaker: Richard Pushman CPRE member

1999

Wednesday 20 January 7.45pm  
Reggie Goves Centre

Quarterly Meeting: *An Archaeological Perspective*  
Speaker: Barbara Hurman, Bucks Archaeological Soc