



High Wycombe Society

HON.

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NEWSLETTER No. 26.

AUTUMN 1975



Trinity Church

PLANNING GROUP

EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE YEAR

Michael Hammett of the District Council's Architects Section has taken a leading part in the work of the Joint Committee and his enthusiasm has helped a great deal in bringing about improvements in the High Street and Easton Street. We asked him for his views about the work of the Committee and he has sent us the following:

THE EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE YEAR COMMITTEE

1975 - European Architectural Heritage Year - the climax of a campaign sponsored by the Council of Europe to stimulate the people of the seventeen member states to recognise, evaluate and consider the care, condition and quality of the built environment.

The concern is with the architecture and environment that affects us every day. The architectural treasures, our great cathedrals, abbeys, great houses and showplaces cities are recognised and revered by all, but in this year we are encouraged to look at the towns and villages with which we are familiar and to see them for what they have been, what they have become and what they might be.

The President of the UK Council for EAHY, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, encouraged us by pointing out that "There is no town, or village, or housing estate which cannot do something to help; no project is too big and no action too small to make this campaign a success."

As reported in the Autumn 1974 "News-letter" the Wycombe Society and the Wycombe District Council formed a Joint Committee to implement the EAHY campaign in High Wycombe. The Committee consists of Councillor Derek Slowe (Chairman) and Councillor Clifford Prout who represent the District Council, Councillor Robert Darby representing the High Wycombe Charter Trustees, Jack Scruton, Walter Davies (Laterly Jim Cottrell in his stead) and Ross Britain representing the Wycombe Society, Martin Pearson the deputy District Secretary and John Bennewith and Michael Hammett of the Technical Services Dept, and the Department of Planning and Architecture of the District Council respectively.

For the Committee's first meeting Walter Davies produced a detailed report of a survey of the central area of High Wycombe carried out by the Action Group of the Wycombe Society. This excellent document was greatly appreciated as a review of desirable improvements and formed the basis for a further "action check list".

Resources dictated that the scope of the work of the Committee be limited if effects were not to be weakened by over ambition. It was agreed therefore to prepare a detailed "action check list" of the improvements that could be made to properties and spaces in and around the Market Square, the High Street and Easton Street. The Committee has no direct



financial assistance to offer property owners and so all approaches have had to be in the spirit of goodwill, and encouragement.

To all owners and/or tenants of properties in the study area a letter was written explaining the aims of EAHY and the local Committee and asking for their co-operation in the campaign. Subsequently owners were advised of the Committee's observations regarding their property and asked if they would undertake the improvement work suggested. Naturally the approaches had to suggest modest work which could reasonably be expected as a voluntary gesture. Such work as redecoration, repairs, maintenance and removal of debris and redundant fittings were considered appropriate. These works were necessary anyway in good premises management and with co-ordinated efforts a valuable improvement to the overall street scene could be effected.

Response has been encouraging. Several owners have redecorated their premises. Whether they would have done so anyway is a matter of conjecture but in several cases the advice of the Committee was requested in the selection of colour schemes and, in others, maintenance work has obviously been stimulated by the Committee's observations. Some owners have removed redundant cables, signs and TV aerials and undertaken maintenance work to building and grounds all to general good effect. The GPO has embarked on a programme of clearing redundant cabling and improving untidy installations.

Early responses have stimulated others to join in the spirit of improvement and we have recently updated our "check list" and written to owners again to either thank them for their co-operation or to ask if they can now undertake the improvements suggested. There are still notable deficiencies in some parts of the two streets and we hope to see some action of improvement before the impetus is lost.

Many of you will have seen the EAHY Exhibition at the Guildhall during the Wycombe Arts Festival in the Spring in which we set out to highlight our towns, attractive buildings and townscape - to point out our heritage in fact - as well as to identify some of the neglected opportunities for improvements. Comments from visitors were appreciative and constructive and we felt that it was a successful venture.

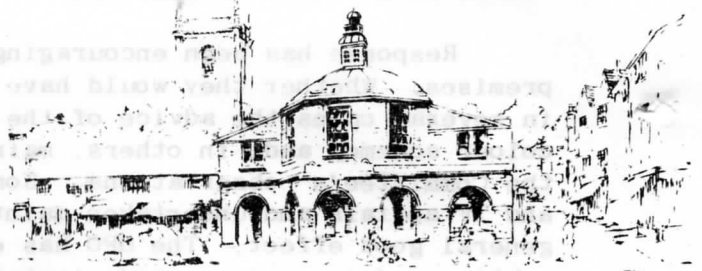
Our Video tape "film" and colour slides exhibits at the Wycombe Show are again aimed at those aspects of our town we feel to be valuable and worth our communal concern. We also reported on our "Action Check List" work and were pleased to show Doug Hodson's photographs of Churton House in Easton Street - the restoration of which gained him an EAHY Award of Merit.

Although the Committee's task has been in connection with the "Action Check List" and the Exhibitions, we have also supported and promoted two other important schemes. The first is the restoration of The Toll House, the future of which seems rather uncertain at the time of writing, and the other is the restoration of Pann Mill Water Wheel and gear. The Council has approved in principle the turning of the wheel and it is hoped that the project will be realised with voluntary work by an interested group.



The Committee is hopeful that EAHY 1975 will be an inaugural year for a new attitude to our heritage and that an active communal concern will continue into the future.

Rather than see a lessening of interest after December 31st, it is hoped that voluntary groups based in other towns and villages throughout the district will take some encouragement from the successes achieved in High Wycombe so that the interest now stimulated should not be allowed to fade away.



TERRIERS FARM

In view of a Planning application which has been submitted for housing development at Terriers Farm, we asked John Willson, Planning Officer of the Chiltern Society to comment in view of this new threat to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These are his comments:

"Surely the final proof that nothing ever changes is the planning application recently submitted for residential development at, believe it or not, - Terriers Farm. Those with any memory at all will remember the "H.7" Inquiry, dismissed by the Department of the Environment after a battle royal, and £2000 of Amenity Society money spent (which was as nothing to the Public money spent!). This present application (two in fact) is for some 57 acres of land designated as part of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in a highly strategic position, separating urban Wycombe from built-up Hazlemere.

It is essential that this sector of the A.O.N.B. front line be defended at all costs. Once breached the precedent will condemn the green perimeter of Wycombe to the fate that has already overtake the hill ridges of Downley, Bowerdean, Loudwater, Cressex etc. etc. We repeat again, in our opinion the search for housing sites should be directed towards the central areas of the town, where, only too apparent are the disgraceful open derelict sites used solely for dumping old cars, and the growth of willow herb. Are we insane to tolerate such waste and yet at the same time apathetically accept that more of our invaluable agricultural land, beautiful land at that, is to founder beneath yet another anonymous speculative development company?

A constructive action on behalf of the Wycombe District Council would be to indicate that no further applications over a certain area (say $\frac{1}{2}$ acre) will be permitted until final agreement is reached over the County Structure and Local plans. It is absurd that further public money may have to be spent in seeing through all the hours of another Inquiry, after an identical Inquiry a short time ago".

OPEN CAR PARKS OR HOUSING

High Wycombe seems to have more than its fair share of Open Car Parks, some of them notorious eyesores, and all of them extremely wasteful of land in central areas of the town. It is believed that because of them our expensive multi-storey car parks are being much under-used. Is it not time that we should rid ourselves of some of these open parks? With the need for housing in the central parts of our town rather than eating up the surrounding countryside, could not they be used for that purpose? We have made representations about the old Railway Place and Saffron Road area and we feel very strongly that this area and others should be given the highest priority by the District Council.

We have now had an encouraging reply from Mr. Pendrill, Chief Executive of the District Council in which it was agreed that the area is eminently suitable for housing, although it could be used for other purposes. It has been under a blight because of rather vague road proposals which have not been buried, but it is still threatened with further road proposals in the Wycombe Area Transportation Study. However, the Chief Executive's letter is very realistic about this, stating that the Council would be opposed to the sterilisation of the land because of a long term proposal which might never reach fruition.

We hope that when a decision has been reached about the Study early next year, that the land will be given up for housing.

GAILEY CARAVANS

The prominent site occupied by Gailey Caravans near Wycombe Marsh has long been one of the many unattractive features along the A.40. We now hear that the District Council Planning Committee has refused an extension of the lease for the siting of caravans. Instead they wish to use the land for housing. We strongly support this decision and hope that the same attitude will prevail with regard to Open Car Parks mentioned above.

WYCOMBE AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

A public meeting was held in the Town Hall, High Wycombe, on Tuesday 21st October, to discuss this vital subject and to hear the views of members of the public. There seemed to be general approval for the report, but strong fears were expressed about the plight of public transport and the steeply rising fares.

The High Wycombe Society's Planning Group submitted preliminary views to the panel and we thought it might interest our members and Affiliated Societies if we printed below the more important proposals and suggestions:

1. A more appealing public transport system is needed to help relieve congestion.
2. There should be no significant increase in "on or off" street parking in the town centre. Off street parking should be of short duration.
3. We are strongly against any major highway improvements or new roads as these would encourage more traffic to enter the Town centre.
4. We are against bus-only streets if this means allowing buses through pedestrian precincts.
5. Traffic lights at Totteridge Road/Amersham Hill should be installed immediately for safety reasons.



"I was reading here how the bus service could be improved and didn't notice one draw up for me."

6. Newlands should be the bus terminus where one is required in the town centre. Other non-terminating routes should go via the Railway Station.
7. Public Open Car Parks in or near the Town centre should be used for new housing.
8. We are very strongly against the widening of the A.404 (Amersham Hill).
9. We wish to see immediately the adoption of pedestrian precincts in parts of High Street, Church Street and White Hart Street.
10. We made a number of suggestions for improving the inner circulation of traffic.
11. A pedestrian cross-over should be provided under the A.404 to allow safer access for children to and from the railway station.

Mr. Parker-Jervis, the Chairman at the public meeting, in complaining about the comparatively sparse attendance, invited everyone interested in local transport problems to send their comments on the Study to the County Engineer and Surveyor at County Offices, Aylesbury before 1st December, 1975. We hope that many of our members and Affiliated Societies will respond to this appeal.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS GROUP

Old Chequers

We were intrigued to read in the "Bucks Free Press" about the Secret Session held by the Planning (Control & Development) Committee of the District Council to discuss the "tactics" for the Council's representations at the forthcoming Public Enquiry. It will be remembered that the Council refused to accept a purchase notice served on them by the Developers; on the grounds that the building was capable of beneficial use; and yet, we are inclined to believe the "Bucks Free Press" when they say "it is no secret that the council would like the building pulled down".

As an Amenity Society engaged in the battle for the preservation of this building we are in no way furious with the Council for not allowing us to listen to their deliberations; we are quite content to wait for the Council's "tactics" to manifest themselves at the Enquiry, and confident that as a result of these tactics, or in spite of them - whichever may prove to be the case - it will be established for a third time that the building is capable and worthy of restoration. Of course, we shall, in conjunction with the Chiltern Society and with the support of Societies throughout the country, make our usual contribution to the debate. As citizens and Rate payers we are rather sad that the Council should have found it necessary to devise their "tactics" in secret.

Walter Kraft.

TOLL HOUSE

On 24th September the Wycombe District Council discussed the Toll House and whether approval should be given for its demolition as requested by the Sports Club. The question was debated for a long time in a very thoughtful way and there was much support for the restoration if possible. At the suggestion of the Council we are seeking financial help from the various National and other Societies who supported us. It seems unlikely, despite their sympathy, that they will be able to provide funds. Their incomes are strictly limited, with barely sufficient to cover day to day running expenses. The Chiltern Society has made a generous offer of £100, but of course we need a good deal more to bridge the gap, unless we can find other means of restoring the building.

It would be possible to leave the building properly landscaped, as a picturesque ruin, to await a more favourable time for restoration, but we would like to see it properly restored. The situation is not hopeless. The building is not in the way of any other development and it is not a nuisance to anyone apart from its derelict appearance, and that could be rectified with a little effort. We do know that two local firms might be willing to help with roof and timbers at a low cost, or even for nothing. It has also been suggested within the District Council and by Arthur Percival, Secretary of the EAHY Committee, that students in the Building Section of the College of Technology might be interested in the building as a project. Another source of help could be a grant from the District Council from the fund set aside for Historic Buildings under the 1962 Historic Buildings Act. The County Council are willing to help so perhaps our own Council will do likewise.

The fate of the Toll House is to be debated again by the District Council on 12th November and we will make a plea on the lines of this article.

If the building could be restored it would not be a replica as over 2/3rds of the Toll House are still there. It would be ironic if this project to celebrate EAHY should culminate in a demolition job instead. As many as 40 local firms and many individuals contributed to our Appeal Fund in addition to our own members and Affiliated Societies. If any member or Affiliated Society would like to offer further financial help, Jim Cottrell at 13 London Road would be glad to receive donations made payable to "The Toll House Appeal Fund."

Jim Cottrell



TREES GROUP

On Saturday October 10th, a massive onslaught on our Nursery bed at Magpie Wood was undertaken by two members of the Group with the very kind and able assistance of the 7th High Wycombe Baptist Rangers. Weeds had grown alarmingly through the Summer and without the help given the task would have been formidable.

Despite rumours to the contrary, the Desborough Street Playground scheme is not yet dead. The District Council is determined that money allocated for the scheme should be spent on it although results of enquiries cast doubts on whether the money is still available. We hope to report more positively in the next Newsletter.

Our woods are abundant with a glorious variety of fungi at this time of the year and an interesting foray through Kingswood was undertaken on Saturday October 25th with do-it-yourself identification of specimens at Micklefield Environmental Studies Centre afterwards. With enthusiasm still high, some of us joined the British Microbiology Society for a foray through Savernake Forest the following day. Here, over one hundred different species were found including a previously unknown one and four specimens were sent to Kew for identification. The truly expert leadership of Prof. Richard Jennings was most stimulating. Anyone interested in joining a foray to be led by him next Spring should write to me at 52a Booker Lane, High Wycombe (Tel. High Wycombe 26616)



"You naughty man, you've been nibbling strange fungus again."

Watchdogs have alerted us that trees are being felled in Branch Wood. The Forestry Commission assured us that this is part of the West Wycombe Estate's covenant with them, and replanting will take place hopefully next Spring. Hearnton Wood, Little Cockshoot Wood, Tilbury Wood, Hellbottom Wood and Lees Wood will be similarly affected in the future. Removal of trees in small areas and replanting is their policy to ensure the future of the wood, to keep the stock healthy, and provide trees of varying age. Perimeter trees threatening to endanger houses are also to be removed. We feel, approval is given to build houses and estates far too close to the edge of woods, causing their perimeter trees to be removed after the houses are established and thus diminishing the size of the wood. When will this stop. Perhaps a minimum distance should be decided, beyond which the boundary fence of gardens should not transgress. This is something we shall have to take up with the Planning authority.

Mr. Hall from TRADA's London H.Q. has agreed to talk to members of the Trees group in the near future. Members of the Group will be notified as soon as a date has been decided. The meeting will probably be held in the Friends' Meeting House at 5a London Road and refreshments will be provided.

Barbara Rippington.

WATER GROUP

Pann Mill Water Wheel

As a result of representations to the District Council made by the Joint EAHY Committee, permission has been given for the turning of the Water Wheel at Pann Mill. The Water Group of the Society is willing to help with this work in co-operation with the District Council Engineer and other interested bodies. The work seems to be in two phases. First we must see that the wheel is "turnable" and if so we must go on to the clearing of the channel to enable the water to flow freely. If the task is accomplished it is intended to have the wheel turning occasionally, for special occasions and with adequate supervision. Anyone interested in the project is asked to contact the Hon. Secretary. It should certainly help to rejuvenate our Water Group.

Peter Morgan

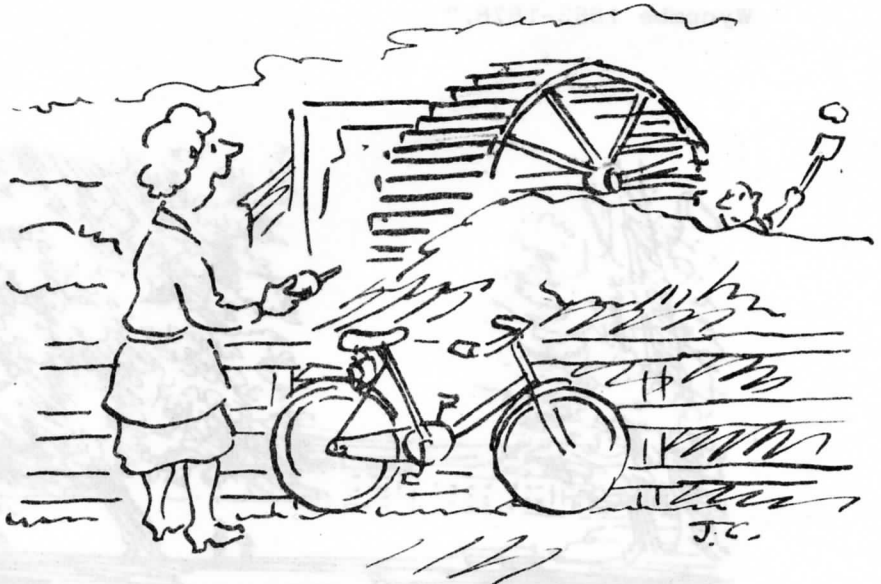


"YOU'RE RATHER PREMATURE,
WE HAVEN'T EVEN FREED THE
WHEEL YET."

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Taken from a pamphlet of the
Council for the Protection
of Rural England:

"Every year-according
to the official Government
statistics - more than 100
square miles of countryside
in England and Wales
disappears"



"Would you care To borrow my oil can? "

HIGH WYCOMBE AS IT WAS

Are you looking for ideas for Christmas presents? Perhaps you can not do better for one of them than to buy our Librarian's latest book "High Wycombe As It Was". Ivan Sparkes has got together a fascinating collection of old photographs and information about High Wycombe in days gone by. It will appeal to all ages and is a very good buy at £1.20 from local booksellers

Registration of the Rye and adjoining lands of Wendover Way.
Keep Hill, Dyke Mead and Holywell Mead as Town Greens.
(Commons Registration Act of 1965)

Derek Woods, the indefatigable Hon. Secretary of the Rye Protection Society, has sent us the following information about the legal argument waged recently at Aylesbury before Mr. Settle, Q.C. concerning the status of the Rye and adjoining lands:

"Wycombe District Council decided to follow up an earlier objection of the former Borough Council to the registration of the Rye and others Town Greens within the meaning of Section 22(1) of the above-mentioned Act. When one bears in mind that Batchelors Acre, New Windsor, - a school playground during the week and a car park at weekends and an area wherein no sports have been played for over 85 years, has been deemed a Town Green, one will find it difficult to understand the reasons for authority refusing to certify the Rye as the local Town Green - which has been in use for the playing of sports for many years. (We have evidence of games being played on the Rye as far back as 1774).

Following a Hearing before the Commons Commissioner at Aylesbury on the 16th October it would appear that on the legal construction of one word in the Chepping Wycombe Local Act of 1927 the inhabitants of this town were denied (although the costs of defraying the presentation of the local act were met by local ratepayers) the right to play games and sports as of right on these lands. That we only wander upon the ancient Rye and play games - perhaps unhindered - by consent of the Corporation.

This is because the word "determined" was inserted into the 1927 Act and has the meaning according to Mr. Settle Q.C., Commons Commissioner, of saying these lands may only be used for certain games as permitted (determined) by the Corporation and not as of ancient right as referred to in Parker's History of Wycombe 1862-1878."



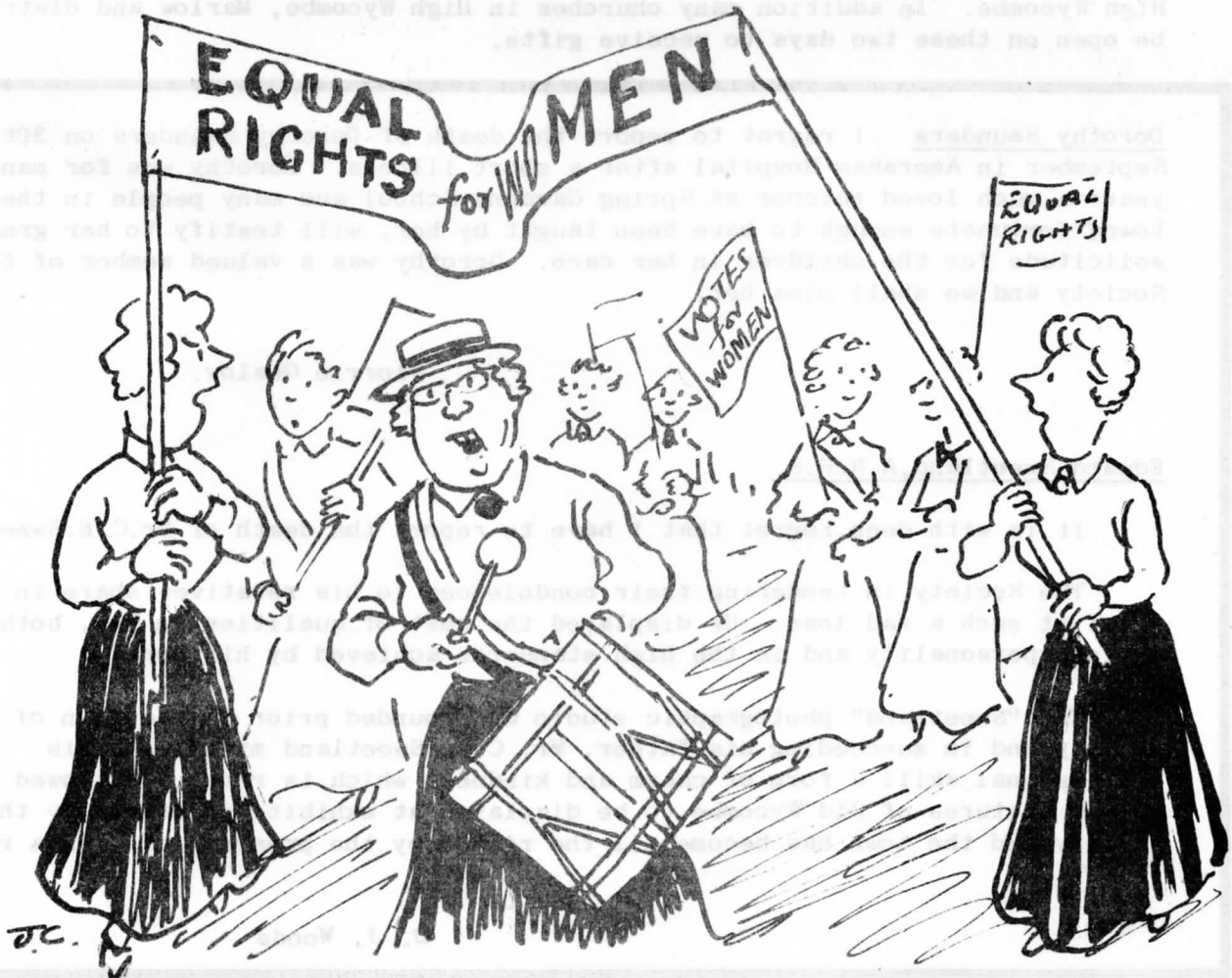
Over the Dyke

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

International Women's Year has not passed by unnoticed in High Wycombe. A committee was set up under the chairmanship of Councillor Mrs. Florence Wright, to organise and coordinate events. There was a delightful Musical evening at Wycombe Abbey School, and Fourways Drama group produced "Petticoat Rebellion". There was a competition for schoolgirls - the results of which were seen until the end of October in the Library. The Business and Professional Women's club donated a garden seat for the use of the elderly residents of Ashbrook in Park Street, and the National Housewives' Register are displaying pictures of notable women in the Bus Station. They have produced an attractive booklet about the portraits and International Women's Year, price 10p available from Jackie Downie (Tel. HW.25000)

International Women's Year is about widening the horizons of all our women-folk, encouraging them to take their places beside men wherever decisions are made, and helping men to realise that everyone has differing talents that may be utilised for the benefit of the whole community.

Frances Alexander.



"HOLD THE BANNER STRAIGHT, WE'RE NOT GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS
(WITH APOLOGIES - JIM COTTRELL)"

QUARTERLY MEETINGS

On 19th September John Ligertwood talked to us in the Guildhall about County Houses in Bucks. This was a most interesting evening, with superb slides of history, and amusing anecdotes. Mr. Ligertwood certainly infected those present with his enthusiasm and love for these unique historic buildings. The message was clear - unless a good use can be found for them they will fall into decay and a vital part of our heritage will disappear.

Our next Quarterly Meeting will be held in the Guildhall in January, 1976. Details of this meeting will be published later.

HELP THE AGED. High Wycombe, Marlow and District Appeal

The High Wycombe Society supports the aims of Help the Aged and we hope that some of our members and Affiliated Societies will be able to support the Annual Appeal to help aged refugees and the destitute overseas.

Money is urgently needed and any donations should be sent to Hon. Treasurer, Help the Aged, L/A High Wycombe, Marlow and District Appeal, Barclays Bank Ltd., 2 Dashwood Avenue, High Wycombe, or 10 High Street, Marlow. Cheques should be made payable to Help the Aged.

Good clothing, especially Lightweight Clothing, and Blankets are also needed. These may be handed in on 4th or 5th November to the Gift Shop at 19, High Street, High Wycombe. In addition many churches in High Wycombe, Marlow and district will be open on these two days to receive gifts.

Dorothy Saunders I regret to report the death of Dorothy Saunders on 30th September in Amersham Hospital after a short illness. Dorothy was for many years a much loved teacher at Spring Gardens School and many people in the town, fortunate enough to have been taught by her, will testify to her great solicitude for the children in her care. Dorothy was a valued member of the Society and we shall miss her.

Florrie Onslow.

Edward Sweetland, A.R.P.S.

It is with deep regret that I have to report the death of Mr. C.E. Sweetland.

The Society in tendering their condolences to his relatives share in their grief at such a sad loss. He displayed the best of qualities in man, both in his own personality and in the high standards achieved by his work.

The "Sweetland" photographic studio was founded prior to the turn of the century and in succeeding his father, Mr. C.E. Sweetland mixed with his professional skill a form of charm and kindness which is rare. He allowed many of his pictures of Old Wycombe to be displayed at exhibitions staged by the Society and the town has become all the richer by the presence of such a record.

D. J. Woods