



High Wycombe Society

HON.

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NEWSLETTER NO. 32 - SUMMER 1977



TWO JUBILEES

Many of our members have contributed to the success of Wycombe's Jubilee celebrations; teacher members in their school activities, others in street parties, and in many other ways.

A special committee under the very capable Chairmanship of Councillor Mrs. Kathleen Peatey, one of our members, worked for weeks to make sure that the Jubilee celebrations were worthwhile, something to remember, and to aid the memory produced an excellent souvenir book, which tells of royal links with High Wycombe, of how local industry has produced special furniture for State occasions, of how Harrisons have produced innumerable portraits of our Queen on postage stamps, and of how Wycombe has changed during the past 25 years. The whole book is beautifully presented and Mr. Sparkes, the Librarian, is to be congratulated on his literary efforts for this book and for his selection of appropriate illustrations. The centre double-page spread of the High Street as it was in the 18th Century, is alone well worth the 75p the book costs. They are obtainable from the Information Centre at the Municipal Offices, from the Library or from the bookshop in Castle Street.

Lorna Cassidy, another member, had an exhibition up the Library staircase of some of her excellent drawings of Wycombe during the past 25 years, and a selection is reproduced in a small book also obtainable from the Public Library.

Another souvenir well worth keeping is the special free one which the Bucks Free Press produced for the occasion. This covered the period of the Queen's reign in articles and photographs.

All in all, this Jubilee had the effect of bringing us closer together and making us more aware of our town. Long may it continue!



Whatever political party we belong to, all of us must congratulate Sir John Hall on the completion of 25 years as our MP. He has always sought to put the needs of his constituents before those of his party and is always available for help and advice. In this he is wonderfully helped by Lady Hall. Both have a love of Wycombe and a desire to serve it.

Jim Cottrell.

PLANNING GROUP

County Structure Plan

The County Structure Plan which will control the future strategy for the development of the County will be examined in public in Aylesbury during September and October. The Society made observations on the Structure Plan to the Department of the Environment, and has been invited to take part in the Public Examination, as have many other County and local organisations. This new style examination is designed to create a friendly, informal atmosphere where everybody will be able to discuss the many problems, free from the inhibitions associated with the usual Public Inquiry.

Wycombe District Plan



~~DON'T BE CAUGHT - THE 24th~~
~~AUGUST IS THE FINAL DATE~~

Following on the heels of the County Structure Plan, comes the Wycombe District Plan. This will govern the plans for High Wycombe and District for the next ten years and is of direct interest to everybody living in the area. The District Council has published an Issues Report which seeks the opinion of local people and organisations, concerning the ways the town should or should not develop. A comments sheet for completion is enclosed with the Report. In view of the very great importance of the Plan, we hope that all affiliated Societies and all our members will respond. Copies may be obtained free of charge at the District Council Offices in Queen Victoria Road, or at Bellfield House, 80 Oxford Road. ~~Replies are needed by 24th August 19.~~

Jack Scruton.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS GROUP

Toll House

The District Council has voted, by a majority of one, to allow the demolition of the old Toll House. The owners, the Sports Club, have neglected the building for the 30 years they have owned it and allowed it to fall into disrepair. Their opposition to restoration is fanatical. To them it is an eyesore, useless, and in the way and, no doubt, they could find other uses for the insurance money, about £1,250, which they received for its partial demolition by a motorist who dropped off to sleep.

To the Society the Toll House is the last of its kind in the district. It was to have been our project for E.A.H.Y. in 1975, and if the Sports Club had not been so intransigent, restoration could have taken place by now, before inflation had increased costs so much. The Sports Club's attitude, as the owners of a Listed Building, is quite astounding. In effect they are saying, "We don't want the Toll House, but we don't want you, the people of Wycombe, to have it either". They seem to have no idea that a Listed Building acquires its status because of outstanding architectural and historical merits. Owners of such buildings have a moral, if not legal, duty to keep them in a state of repair, so that they can be enjoyed by the community at large and not just a privileged few. The Sports Club will accept no compromise with regard to restoration, wanting a completely professional job or none at all.

Unfortunately, the name 'Sports Club' is a blanket term, and we feel that not all the members are against us. However, the ones who oppose us are able to remain anonymous and we are unable to address ourselves to any specific person, either to allay his fears or to ask outright why he opposes the restoration of the Toll House.

Meeting - 20th May 1977

At the Friends' Meeting House, Mr. Bedford of the National Trust spoke with fine illustrations on the Trust's work nationally and locally. He was so interesting that we have asked him to return and speak to the whole Society at a quarterly meeting. He also spoke about the possibility of setting up a local branch of the National Trust, and hoped that someone in the Society would be interested in helping to set up and run such a branch. If you are interested, our Secretary would be happy to pass on your name.

Janet Tully.

Your Society Needs You!

On a cold Sunday morning in January two members of the Historic Works and Buildings Group set out to take a close look at the "Western Desert". Our main reason being to look for areas which might be considered as "Special Areas". During the course of the morning we found ourselves constantly returning to the river. Anyone who has listened to Mr. Mayes speaking about the Wye will know that the river brought industry, and thus prosperity, to the town. The more we explored, the more we began to feel that there was a gap in the Society's work. What was it? We felt the term Industrial Archaeology summed it up.

At the next meeting of the Group we discussed our findings, and two areas have been put forward for consideration as "Special Areas".



We also discussed our feelings about the river and Wycombe's industrial history and decided to ask you, our members, whether you feel we can set up yet a further group and ask you for your support. Many of you will be familiar with the term Industrial Archaeology. Hopefully, we may have a knowledgeable enthusiast ready and willing to form a group. Others may say "what is Industrial Archaeology?" Broadly speaking, it is the recording, and preservation where possible, of items, objects, buildings, etc., which are part of our industrial history. The interpretation varies widely from person to person. Some people specialise and "collect" pillar boxes, by means of photography and additional notes regarding the known history of each box, e.g. "moved from the town hall when the road was widened in 1924". Others are fascinated by canals, some are steam train enthusiasts, collecting and buying old tickets. Nothing is too big or too small for consideration from a double-decker bus down to the tickets which the conductor issued. For some of us, recording the history of a building would be incomplete without delving into the social history - how the people lived, what they earned, what type of clothes they wore, etc. The possibilities are endless. There are some excellent books for those seeking an expert grounding in the subject, and, of course, museums such as Ironbridge. As for High Wycombe, it's up to you. What do you feel about such things as the pump near the little Market House, ancient place names, chair factories, old mills, etc.? Please let our Secretary, Mr. Jack Scruton, have your opinions and ideas, because the Society is only as lively as its members.

This brings me neatly to my next point - Farmhouses. During the past nine months the Historic Works and Buildings Group has looked at several farmhouses. Some because a member has shown concern over dilapidation, others because of a planning application. With the area suggested in the High Wycombe Area District Plan, it is felt that we really need two people who would be solely concerned with farmhouses. We need a comprehensive list of all the farmhouses in the area, plus a report on their condition, details of listings, etc., so that immediately we are asked to consider an application, we can refer to this list and to the members responsible. Have we two such people amongst our members? Again, please contact the Secretary of the Society.

Next point - what would happen if the Secretary of the Society was laid up with gout, the Planning Committee all suffered an attack of food poisoning, the Trees Group all caught dutch elm disease, and the Water Group drowned? Answer:- the Society would grind to a halt! With the school holidays looming ahead, many committee members will be unable to attend meetings and we all lead busy lives. Does the Society lean too heavily on too few members? Do we all too often happily re-elect "willing horses"? Do we rest on our laurels because the quarterly meetings and social functions are well attended? What is the true role of the Society and is it being fulfilled? How do our affiliated Societies feel, and do they participate fully in our activities?

These, and many other topics could be aired if we had a "Letters" section in our Newsletters. Again, it's up to you, our individual members. I wish I could say "please write to our editor", but, alas, this post remains vacant. Any volunteers? All offers to our overworked Secretary, who would be delighted to relinquish the task to one of our members.

To re-cap:- please consider (and respond if possible):-

- Special Areas : Suggestions welcome.
- Industrial Archaeology : Can we form a new Group?
- Farmhouses : Two members needed to take over this responsibility.
- Letters Section : Would you like a sounding board for your views?
- Newsletter : Editor required.

Heather M. Hoare.

Extension of Conservation Area

The High Wycombe District Council has recently extended the Conservation Area to include parts of Priory Avenue and Priory Road. Included within this area are the Wesley Methodist Church, Priory Road School, All Saints Vicarage and the Castle Hill Museum and grounds. A great deal of the best of Victorian buildings in Wycombe is contained within this area, and we applaud the District Council's decision to extend the boundary of the Conservation Area.

We would, however, like to see the Conservation Area extended in the town centre to include the north side of Church Street. At the present moment the south side is within the Conservation Area, while buildings on the north side are merely 'adjacent to the Conservation Area'! Another place where the protection of the Conservation Area needs to be employed is the piece of land at Bowden Lane, formerly the old watercress beds, and recently the subject of a planning application.

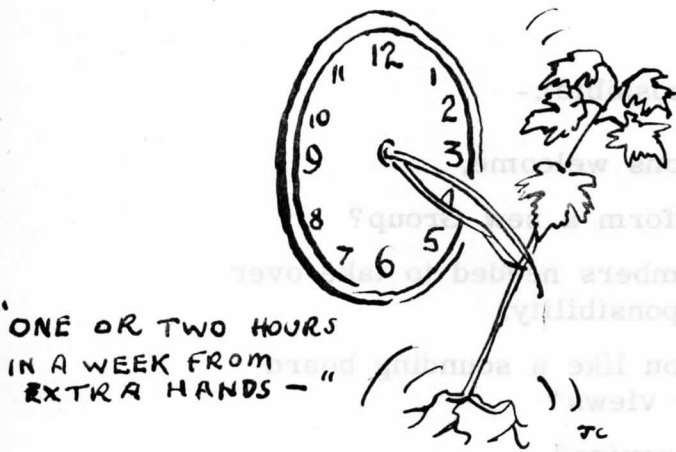
Special Areas

Another innovation that has taken place is the designation of Special Areas. Although not enjoying the protection of a Conservation Area, any plans concerning these areas will receive careful consideration by the District Council. Downley, Lane End, Flackwell Heath and Easton Terrace, have so far been chosen. The Historic Buildings Group has put forward to the Charter Trustees and the District Council two areas - one at Temple End, and the other in the area of Shaftesbury Street. It was felt that these two areas portray the character of Victorian industrial Wycombe, and should be given special consideration. The District Council do not seem to agree that they are "special", but we hope to resume the argument.

Janet Tully.

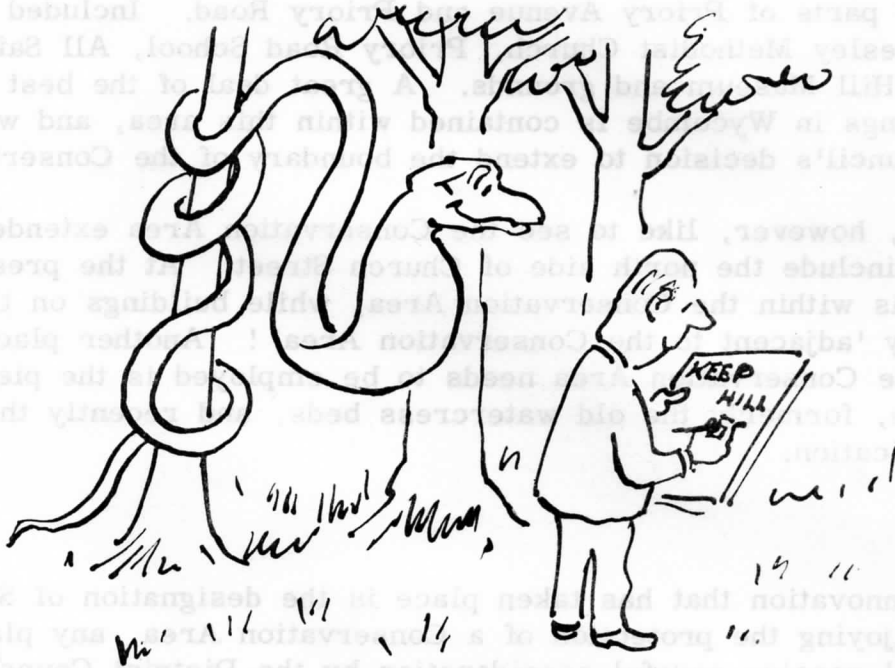
TREES GROUP

Following last year's long hot summer, this year we seem to be having no summer at all, but the weather is good for tree growth and, thanks to the rain, the majority of trees planted this Spring are surviving - vandalism excepted.



Removal of Sycamore saplings at Keep Hill will continue throughout the summer months and any youngsters with time on their hands in the summer holidays are welcome to join us. Normally this sort of work would be restricted to autumn and winter, but the trees grow so vigorously that their removal is urgent. It is not arduous work - one or two hours in a week from extra hands would be a great help.

Members of our Group, together with others from the Society, met David Gantzell and others from BBONT, together with Mr. C. Smith, lecturer in Environmental Studies at Newland Park College to walk the Keep Hill Nature Trail in May, with a view to revising and expanding its coverage. Many useful ideas were put forward, and a further walk will be undertaken in September.



Few who walk our local woods can fail to have noticed that vast numbers of seedlings from last year's heavy crop of Beech mast. This is usual following a hot summer, and we can expect the next few years to show little or no flowers.

November 6th - 13th this year is designated National Tree Week. We hope as many as possible will plant trees to commemorate the week.

Barbara Rippington.

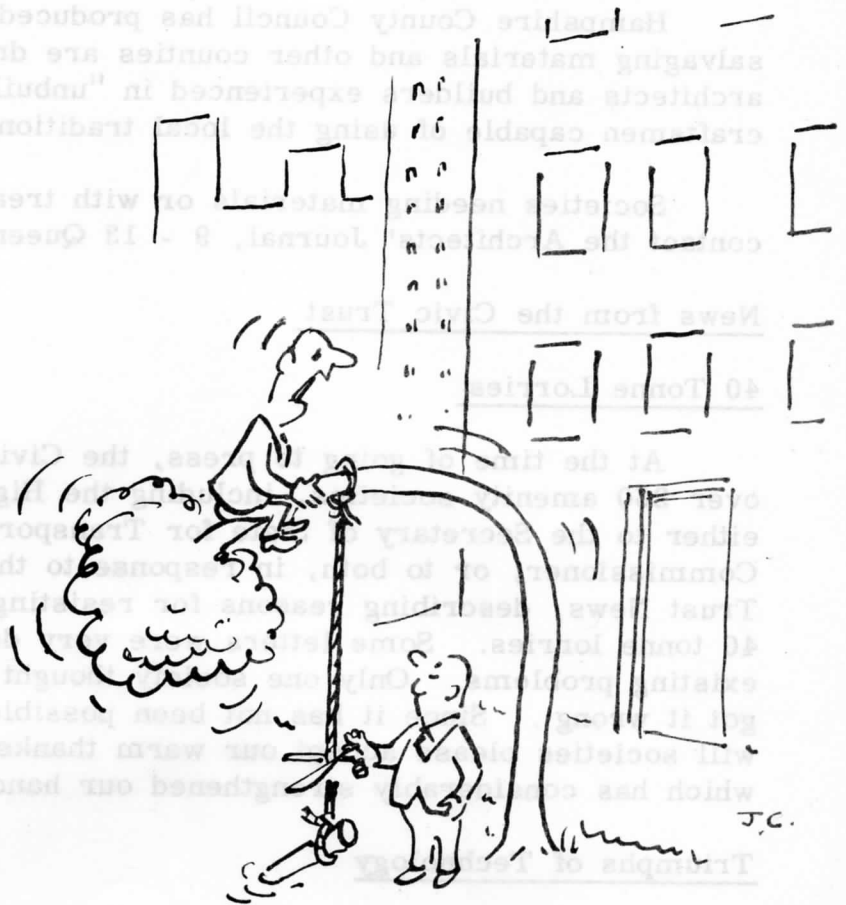
On Friday evening, 1st July, Mr. Hendry, the warden of the BBONT Nature Reserve at Buttler's Hangings, West Wycombe, very kindly conducted a party of members, including children, over this interesting area of chalk grassland. This reserve is the home of many butterflies, and Mr. Hendry provided much interesting information about the relationship between the butterflies and the various food plants. It was a most enjoyable evening, and we all realised again how valuable is the work of people like Mr. Hendry, who carry on this voluntary unpaid work for the splendid BBONT organisation.

News from the Civic Trust

Back to the Ground

A presidential order has been made in France that no new building in towns of over 30,000 population should exceed seven storeys, and in smaller towns and rural areas, four storeys. The order was made public in the midst of the municipal elections, in which candidates campaigning on ecological issues gained 12% of the vote in two districts of Paris and 13% at Mulhouse.

Prefects - the departmental governors - have also been asked to veto any building in formerly unexploited rural areas, until a national land use plan is completed.



" IF WE LIMITED OUR BUILDINGS TO FOUR STOREYS LIKE THEY'RE DOING IN FRANCE WE WOULDN'T NEED TO GO TO ALL THIS TROUBLE EVERY TIME THE LIFT BREAKS DOWN. "

Jubilee Tree Scheme

The Tree Council are organising Trees for the Queen's Silver Jubilee - a scheme to assist local amenity societies and authorities to promote fund-raising for the purchase of trees.

Copies of commemorative prints of trees painted by Graham Rust are available free from the Tree Council, on the undertaking that they will be used only as acknowledgements of gifts of £10 or more to the local tree fund. Everyone making such a gift may have their name entered in the Royal Tree Record, to be presented to the Queen at the end of Jubilee Year.

Further information and application forms from the Tree Council, Room 202, 17/19 Rochester Row, London, SW1P 1LN.

Any Old Iron, Stone, Etc.

An initiative by the Architects' Journal is providing much needed information on architectural salvage, and could lead to a nationally structured salvage scheme. Seventeen local authorities are known to have storage facilities and one, Derbyshire, has established no less than 11 stores around the county.

Hampshire County Council has produced a useful list of instructions on salvaging materials and other counties are drawing up and publicising lists of architects and builders experienced in "unbuilding" historic buildings and of craftsmen capable of using the local traditional building materials.

Societies needing materials or with treasures to offer are invited to contact the Architects' Journal, 9 - 13 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1.

News from the Civic Trust

40 Tonne Lorries

At the time of going to press, the Civic Trust had received letters from over 260 amenity societies, including the High Wycombe Society, addressed either to the Secretary of State for Transport, or to the E.E.C. Transport Commissioner, or to both, in response to the article in the last issue of Civic Trust News, describing reasons for resisting the E.E.C's outline proposal for 40 tonne lorries. Some letters were very detailed in their description of existing problems. Only one society thought that the Civic Trust 'this time have got it wrong'. Since it has not been possible to acknowledge all these letters, will societies please accept our warm thanks for this almost solid response, which has considerably strengthened our hand.

Triumphs of Technology

With the opening of the new Dover relief road in February, the ever increasing number of lorries trundling to and from the Eastern Docks will be able to shave minutes of their journey times. Well, at least as long as the wind doesn't blow too hard, they will. Where the new road is carried high on a viaduct, there is a risk that some lorries will be blown over when they emerge from the shelter of the East Cliff cutting, and so as soon as winds reach force five or six, the new road will have to be closed. Reports that the Ministry of Transport has been renamed the Ministry of Transport and Climatic Control, are said to be without foundation.



I KNOW IT'S NOT RAINING - BUT THERE'S ALWAYS
THE POSSIBILITY OF A LORRY BEING BLOWN OVER

Greater Triumph

High winds will not be the only source of delay to drivers on the new Dover by-pass, it was revealed at the annual parish meeting in Shepherdswell on 16th March. A local farmer with land on either side of the new road asked for a bridge, so that he could move his cattle from one pasture to another. The bridge was not provided, and so each time the cattle need new grass, the police have to be called to stop traffic on the by-pass. Perhaps someone in Whitehall got their priorities right after all?

RYE PROTECTION SOCIETY

The Rye - Town Green or Recreational Ground

The Rye Protection Society took steps in 1966 to register the Rye as a Town Green. Three years later the former Borough Council lodged objection to the registration. The Society, having regard to the special provisions regulating the use of the Rye in the Chepping Wycombe Corporation Act 1927, did not press the issue. It was thought that the Rye was worthy of being deemed in law a Town Green, as without doubt, the Rye had served the local community in this way from time immemorial. A former Borough Town Clerk had described the Rye as 'The Jewel in Wycombe's Crown'. The Legal Officers to Bucks County Council directed the Society to present the matter of registration to a Commons Commissioner for determination, and still not satisfied with the Commissioner's ruling, and having regard to the opinion of learned Counsel in matters affecting open spaces, invited the Society to lodge Notice of Appeal to the High Court.



"HOW MANY NAUGHTS IN A MILLION?"

This step had to be taken within a statutory period and during vacation. Bucks County Council undertook to meet the initial expenses and to place the matter before the Highways Committee, with a view to the further expenses of the Society being underwritten by the Bucks County Council. The Highways Committee did not choose to follow the stand previously adopted by its officers and the Rye Society in consequence, found itself faced with High Court proceedings set down for hearing on 16th March last.

Although learned Counsel was right in the opinion expressed to the effect that the Society should succeed on one of the grounds of refusal set down in the decision of the Commons Commissioner, the judge rejected the appeal based upon a set of facts which were not under discussion before the Commons Commissioner, namely the rights of a Corporation to acquire land for recreational purposes as embodied in the Public Health Acts, and thought that Parliament did not envisage the Rye in consequence as falling within the definition of a Town Green.

Bucks County Council, having withdrawn from the proceedings for the reason stated above, the Society found themselves faced with costs amounting to £410, and are now making every effort to raise this sum by means of jumble sales, canal excursions, 'Old Wycombe' slide evenings, etc., and appealing to friends for financial help.

The decision of the High Court will at least prove to future generations that the Society has chosen to assert recreational rights, and to confer upon the Rye the special kind of status which was paramount in the mind of the Mayor of Wycombe at the ceremony in 1923, when the Charity Commissioners vested the Rye in the local corporation.

Derek Woods.

The Rye Appeal

Since it was formed, in order to keep the Inner Relief Road off the Rye, the courageous Rye Society has battled continuously to keep the Rye intact and safe for the people of Wycombe. If it had not been for their efforts, our beautiful, invaluable asset of the Rye would have been seriously mutilated. The recent struggle in the High Court was worthwhile, despite the unaccountable decision, but it has left the Rye Society in serious financial difficulties. They need £410 to clear their debt! The town needs the Rye Society. They must ^{not} be allowed to founder. Derek Woods, their tenacious Secretary, has given many hours of unpaid and highly complicated work on behalf of the Society. We appeal to all our members and affiliated Societies to help him at this critical time! Donations to rescue the Rye Society would be gratefully received by Derek at 19 Adelaide Road, High Wycombe.

Ted Kearney
Chairman.

A SUMMER CONCERT

On Saturday, 2nd July, in the Oakley Hall, over 80 members and friends listened to a Summer concert provided by the Grove Players under their conductor, Ian Farquhar, and Geoffrey Heath's singers, the Taverners. Afterwards, a buffet meal with wine was much appreciated.

Our thanks to all the performers and to all those who helped to make the evening a success. In particular, a very big thank you to Louise Scull, Jane Wardrop, Sheila White and Lottie Kearney for all their very hard and highly successful efforts in providing their food.

PROGRAMME OF COMING EVENTS

The following programme has been arranged for members, so please make a note of the dates in your diary. We hope that as many as possible will support these events, especially members from Residents' Associations and Affiliated Societies.

Ron Sims.

- Friday, 9th September : Arthur Newell will talk about Chairs and Chair-Making and will show a film.
7.45 p.m. in the Friends' Meeting House.
- Friday, 16th September : A Walkabout in Old Beaconsfield led by John Broadbent.
- Wednesday, 12th October : Quarterly Meeting at 7.45 p.m. in the Guildhall. Christopher Smith, Senior Lecturer in Rural Studies, Bucks College of Higher Education, will give an illustrated talk on 'Natural History, Ecology and Conservation in the Chilterns'.
- Friday, 2nd December : Illustrated talk on 'The Changing Face of Wycombe' by Stuart King in the Friends' Meeting House at 8.00 p.m.
- Wednesday, 25th January 1978 : Quarterly Meeting in the Guildhall at 7.45 p.m. Hermione Hobhouse, Secretary of the Victorian Society, will give an illustrated talk on 'The Battle for Victorian Buildings'.