



High Wycombe Society

HON.

SECRETARY: J SCRUTON 17 LONDON ROAD HIGH WYCOMBE BUCKS
Telephone 25933

NEWSLETTER NO. 36

WINTER 1978/79

OUR TENTH BIRTHDAY PARTY

To reach the age of ten is, for an Amenity Society, quite an achievement and one that merits something of a celebration. Your Executive decided that this should be a party and did not have to look far for musical talent. One member had a wife and a sister who sang duets and played the piano; another had a daughter who played the violin; one had a piano playing husband; another was a singer and we knew of others of our membership who could also sing or play.

The venue was the Oak Room Suite, a fine place for a party and the event was held on Saturday, 7th October.

The refreshments, tastefully prepared by members Ted and Lottie Kearney and Ian and Diana Stone, were excellent and so were the musical items supplied by Geoffrey Heath and the Taverners, pianist David Turner, pianists and singers Margaret Cottrell and Mary Johnson, violinist Charlotte Roe and singer of folk songs Walter Newall.

M.C. Jim Cottrell said that the occasion also celebrated the tenth secretarial birthday of Jack Scruton and in his graceful and erudite manner, our President, Patrick Reyntiens, paid tribute to Jack and his work as Secretary.

There was plenty of time for conversation and the evening was rounded off by a clever effort by Eric Alexander, who in two or three minutes wrote a song appropriate to the occasion and played the piano to accompany a singsong exuberantly and skilfully stage-managed by his wife, Frances. Everybody seemed to enjoy the party and hopes we shall have more.

Jim Cottrell



P.S. Your M.C. told stories of itinerant musicians in High Wycombe at the beginning of the century - including this one -

Interested boy - "Excuse me, do you always play by ear?"

Violinist - "Yes, either 'ere or in the 'igh Street."

PLANNING GROUPGreen Hill Farm

We have now heard that a Public Inquiry is to be held on Tuesday, 12th December at the Wycombe District Council offices at 80, Oxford Road in order to hear the appeal by M. J. Jeanes (Developments) Limited against the District Council refusal for housing on what was once Green Hill Farm. This is part of the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and forms a natural boundary to the town. Our countryside is fast disappearing and we feel that the strongest possible resistance must be made against further losses. Approval for housing would pose a threat to Green Hill and the magnificent Hughenden Valley and there is no doubt that the District Council can count on the support of local Residents' Associations as well as this Society.

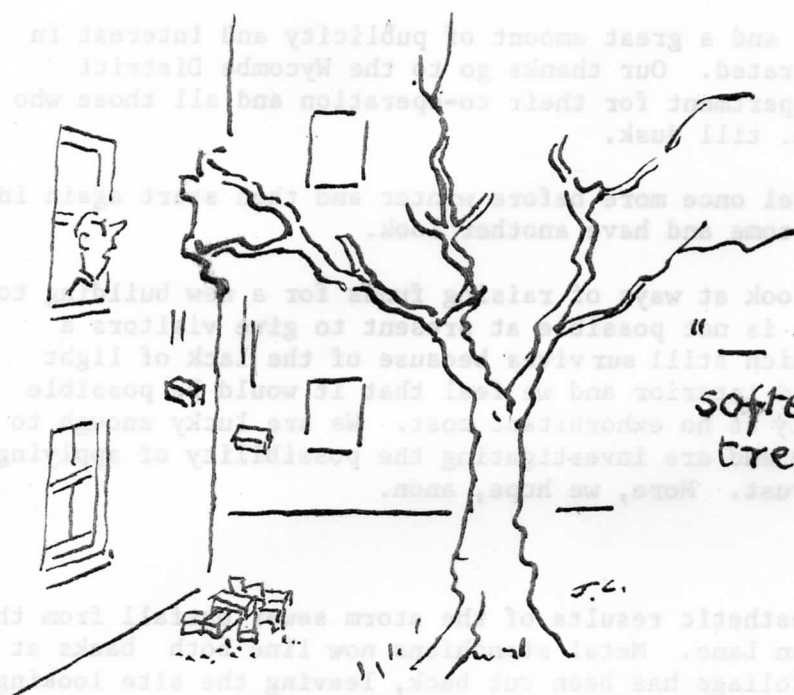


VICTORY!

BUT WATCH OUT IF THE STRUGGLE SHOULD
BE RESUMED.

Deangarden Rise and Wood

Recently we had notification that Ideal Homes had appealed against the District Council's refusal of planning permission to build on the land between Deangarden Rise and the Wood and that a Public Inquiry was to be held on 12th October. To the relief of local residents, this Society and no doubt the District Council, Ideal Homes decided to withdraw the appeal. We are not sure why they took this action but we must be ready always to support the District Council and the Deangarden Residents' Association if the struggle should be resumed. For a number of reasons it is vital that this land should not be developed for housing.



" — harsh outline
softened by established
tree "

Blocks of Flats

Building blocks of flats has become a popular pastime in Wycombe but we are rather worried about some recent developments. Flats can look reasonably agreeable in the right place, such as the Amersham Hill area, especially when harsh outlines are softened by established trees. They can also provide additional homes at reasonable rates. It is when they suddenly appear in the midst of small scale housing in sensitive areas that they seem out of place. Three storey, solid looking blocks can be very aggressive to the inhabitants of small houses in the vicinity. Traffic problems can also result and this is one of the reasons why we have opposed the planning applications to build flats at the corner of Plumer Road and Desborough Avenue and in Beechwood off the West Wycombe Road.

We have just heard that the District Council has refused planning permission for the block of flats at the corner of Plumer Road and Desborough Avenue and this will please the local residents.

Rosemary Shooter
High Wycombe 26964

WATER GROUP

Pann Mill

Those of you who visited the Wycombe Show on 7th September will have seen the great success that the High Wycombe Society had in their exhibition on Water Mills and the turning of Pann Mill Water Wheel. The splendid sight attracted a great number of admiring visitors. Some had worked in or knew the mill during its operating days and assured us it was going much faster than it ever did! Other, more sophisticated, moderns were convinced that we had a motor hidden in the shed! We ourselves were surprised at how small a flow of water was needed to turn the heavy wheel.

Nearly £20 of books were sold and a great amount of publicity and interest in the High Wycombe Society generated. Our thanks go to the Wycombe District Council Technical Services Department for their co-operation and all those who manned the site from 9.30 a.m. till dusk.

We are hoping to run the wheel once more before winter and then start again in the spring, so watch out and come and have another look.

We are now taking a serious look at ways of raising funds for a new building to house the mill machinery. It is not possible at present to give visitors a good look at the machinery which still survives because of the lack of light and the hazards of the cramped interior and we feel that it would be possible to improve matters dramatically at no exorbitant cost. We are lucky enough to have an architect in the Group and are investigating the possibility of applying for a grant from the Civic Trust. More, we hope, anon.

Storm Sewer

We were disappointed at the aesthetic results of the storm sewer outfall from the Rye into Back Stream at Bowden Lane. Metal stanchions now line both banks at the outfall and overhanging foliage has been cut back, leaving the site looking sadly like a drain. The only bright spark is that Wycombe District Council has applied for a compulsory purchase order on the surrounding land which we hope will preserve it from being developed.

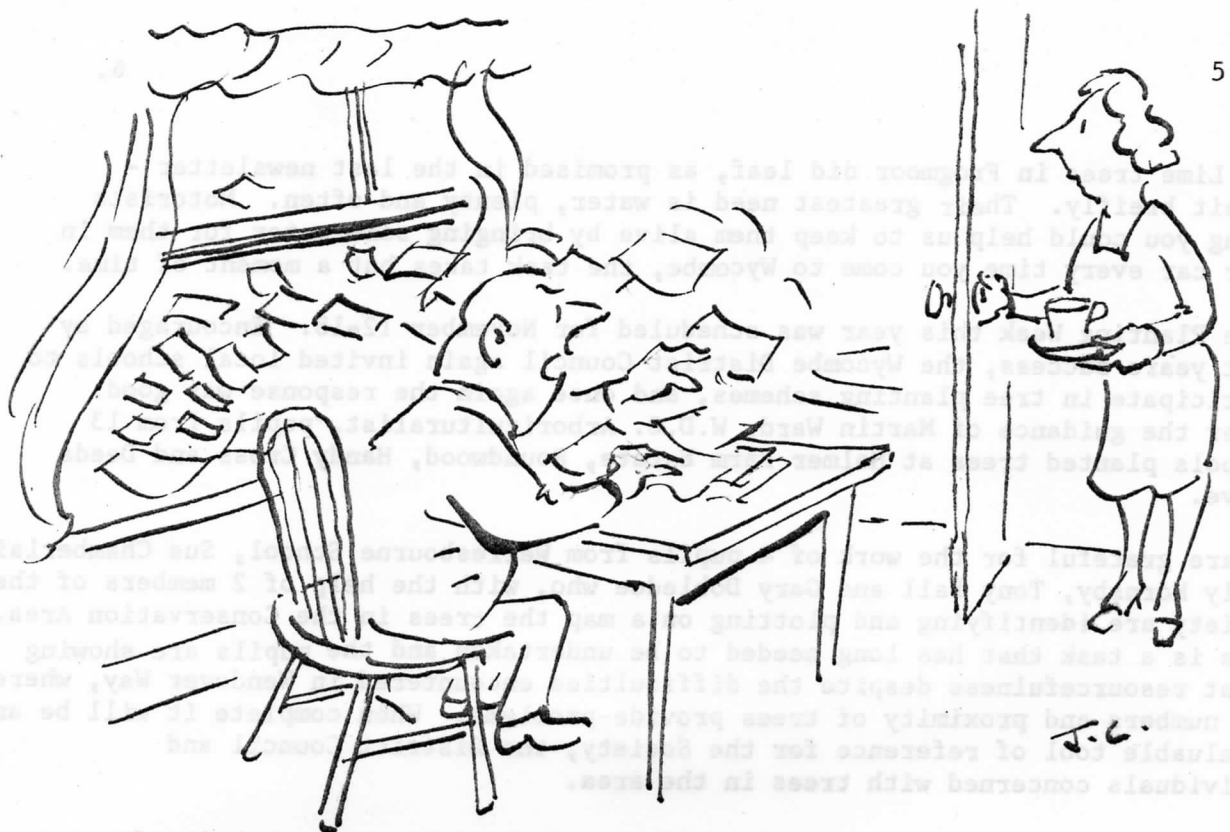
Water Trail

An application for a grant towards the cost of producing a Water Trail (like the Town Trail) around the Rye from Pann Mill to Bassetsbury Mill and Back Stream to the railway line in Bowden Lane has been made to the Carnegie Trust by the High Wycombe Society and we are hopeful that this will enable us to launch the project.

Planning Applications

An application to culvert the River Wye for car parking purposes at Loudwater was opposed by the Society.

We have now heard that the District Council has granted permission to cover up this stretch of river. We are very unhappy about this decision as we were convinced that there would be no more culverting or covering up of our precious river. It seems that the District Council do not look upon our river with the same affection as we do.



5.

"FOR GOODNESS SAKE CLOSE THE DOOR -
THERE GOES MY ANTI-LITTER ARTICLE."

Mayor's Campaign

A representative of the Water Group attended a meeting with the Mayor to discuss the adoption by local organisation of stretches of the river to keep litter free. The Water Group themselves have adopted the stretch from, and including Pann Mill, to Rye Mill Garage. A representative also talked about river clearing and the Mayor's campaign on Wycombe Hospital Radio - though perhaps not surprisingly no patients volunteered their services.

We now have a small nucleus of keen Water Group members and we do our best to keep a close eye on the river, but if you live near the Wye, or pass it regularly, and notice anything 'happening' do let us know so that we can investigate before it is too late.

Sheila Latimer
High Wycombe 30389

TREES REPORT

For many of us trees are at their loveliest in Autumn - and this mellow Autumn we have been able to enjoy their range of colour for a longer period than in some years. One of the finest places to appreciate the many shades of gold is Horne's Lane, Booker, where the trees arch over the road providing a wonderful canopy, complementing the carpet of russets and browns on the woodland floor. For those who have not travelled this road in Autumn it is worth making a special visit.

The Lime trees in Frogmoor did leaf, as promised in the last newsletter - albeit briefly. Their greatest need is water, plenty and often. Motorists among you could help us to keep them alive by bringing some water for them in your car every time you come to Wycombe, the task takes but a moment of time.

Tree Planting Week this year was scheduled for November 12-18. Encouraged by last years success, the Wycombe District Council again invited local schools to participate in tree planting schemes, and once again the response was good. Under the guidance of Martin Ward, W.D.C. Arboriculturalist, pupils from 13 schools planted trees at Holmer Farm Estate, Roundwood, Handy Cross and Deeds Grove.

We are grateful for the work of 4 pupils from Wellesbourne School, Sue Chamberlain, Sally Hornsby, Tony Ball and Gary Dobledeoe who, with the help of 2 members of the Society are identifying and plotting on a map the trees in the Conservation Area. This is a task that has long needed to be undertaken and the pupils are showing great resourcefulness despite the difficulties encountered in Wendover Way, where the numbers and proximity of trees provide problems. When complete it will be an invaluable tool of reference for the Society, the District Council and individuals concerned with trees in the area.

Similar tasks lie ahead. Several areas around the town need surveying for our own interest, and the Tree Council have asked us to participate in a National Tree Survey, which includes trees in hedgerows, shelterbelts, in groups and small woodlands. We can not undertake these and other tasks without more help. If you are interested and have some time, please do contact me.

Barbara Rippington
High Wycombe 26616.

HERITAGE GROUP

This has been another busy period for the Heritage Group. The Mayor's anti-eyesore campaign has resulted in a close liaison with our Group. A list of suitable blackspots is now being sent regularly and results are hopefully expected. Encouragement has been given to the Bristol and West Building Society for their planning application to change and paint part of 24-27 High Street. It was thought that it would be a good idea if the whole of the terrace could be redecorated, perhaps as a joint project by all the tenants. There has been some concern from the Group that the Curry Restaurant wall project had not been completed, but the Chiltern Venture Scouts hope to continue in the near future.

Opposition has been mooted by the Group to a proposed car park on the site of the old Quaker burial ground as it has been pointed out that there were still Quaker remains in the burial ground. After much discussion, the Group expressed its support for the Dovecote site apropos the proposed market extensions. Our comments have been passed on to the Planning Group and augmented in a letter to the Wycombe District Council.

The war of attrition with the Co-op continues unabated! Letters received from the Co-op and the Wycombe District Planning Officer indicate that many more months of further protracted struggle will take place before the Co-op can be persuaded that blank concrete does not promote their co-operative image.

It was noted that St. John's Hospice ruins are now crumbling and in a very bad state of repair. They are owned by the County and have been designated an Ancient Monument. It was agreed that a letter should be written to the County about possible restoration.

Following a supercilious article in the Bucks Free Press, seemingly supporting fly-posting graffiti on the Guildhall, a letter of protest was published by that paper expressing our surprise at their lack of concern. However, generally we would like to express thanks to the Council for their efforts in ridding the Guildhall of fly-posting.

Bill Willson.

The Assassination of the High Street

"Chain Stores, Banks and Building Societies run neck and neck in the race to destroy the character of Britain's High Streets" is a quote from the SAVE Britain's Heritage Campaign, which has completed a report on what it calls the 'Assassination' of the High Street.

Although Wycombe's High Street has some examples of this 'legalised vandalism' we have achieved some success in preserving a few pleasant buildings and curbing some of the more offensive forms of visual squalor and second rate design. As Marcus Binney, Chairman of SAVE points out 'the Banks (notably Barclays), multiple stores, especially the Co-op, shoe stores and T.V. retailers are often the worst offenders'. We need to keep a constant watch on what was a fine street, with good proportions and some examples of varied and pleasing architecture, lest these should be transformed overnight into a monotonous row of illuminated signs, posters and buildings which have no relevance to the character of the street.

In contrast, Easton Street has been improving gradually and is free of the brand image so prominent in the High Street.

We realise how difficult it is for local authorities to overcome this problem when some firms are already established, but if they do not dig their heels in when faced with future applications, our High Street will be assassinated like so many others in the country.

Marjorie Nash.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS GROUP

The Work of the Historic Buildings Council

The Historic Buildings Council was set up in 1953 and includes among its 18 members for England (Scotland and Wales have their own Councils), Members of Parliament, planning officers, architects, architectural historians and leading figures from amenity and tourism bodies. The Council advises the Secretary of State about, among other things, grants and loans 'towards the repair and maintenance of buildings of outstanding historic or architectural interest' and towards the 'promotion, preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of an outstanding conservation area'.

The money allocated to the Historic Buildings Council has increased only slowly over the years while the Arts Council allocation has increased tremendously. One reason put forward by Mrs. Jennifer Jenkins, Chairman of the Historic Buildings Council, for the comparatively meagre amount of money spent on historic architecture was the attitude of the media. The restoration of old buildings or areas did not have the same news value as a new play or a new national theatre. However, millions of foreign tourists come here every year and well over threequarters of them visit at least one historic building whereas only a few thousand can visit the operas or theatre because of the number of seats available. After all, the American tourist can go to the theatre at home but he has to cross the Atlantic to see a Norman castle or a medieval market town.

Mrs. Jenkins also thought that industry had a part to play and that banks, building societies and other commercial concerns could do a good deal more to modernise and convert buildings that they own or could buy for that purpose. With regard to amenity societies, she would like to see them do more to monitor the condition of historic buildings and when they saw a building left empty or allowed to decay, they could take this up with the local authority.

Bassetsbury

In a corner of Wycombe there stands a complex of buildings, all Listed, Bassetsbury Mill, Bassetsbury Manor and Bassetsbury Barn. The Mill is in private ownership and good shape. The Manor is owned by the District Council and well maintained but for some reason that we are unable to comprehend, Bassetsbury Barn, which is also Council owned, is the Cinderella of the buildings. Unkempt and uncared for, it presents a forlorn and neglected appearance in contrast to its spruce and attractive neighbours. The windows are broken, the tiles and slates slipping off the roof and the timber cladding needs attention. We are completely at a loss to understand why the District Council should maintain and improve Bassetsbury Manor but ignore the Barn. It is a Listed Building and ought to be kept in good condition so that all three buildings can contribute to the town in terms of historical and architectural merit. We have in our town a barn listed as 17th Century or earlier, that in more enlightened areas would be a focal point of a Conservation Area but our Council appears to regard it almost as a nuisance and unworthy of attention. Why can the District Council not be a Fairy Godmother and wave the magic wand over our poor Cinderella?

Janet Tully.

QUARTERLY MEETING

Wattle and Daub Rules O.K!

The July Quarterly meeting of the High Wycombe Society welcomed as guest speaker Mrs. Monica Dance, MBE, Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, who delighted her audience with graphic descriptions of battles, lost and won, in an unceasing campaign to protect ancient buildings from the unwelcome attentions of speculative redevelopers and 'professional vandals' alike.

Aided by colour slides of many fine buildings of considerable historical and architectural worth, Mrs. Dance was able to reveal how some had been lost forever and asserted that 'professional vandals' had operated in this country for at least 200 years.



"I can't decide whether it's a fine old building or a hideous modern reproduction."

However, there were also heartening accounts of buildings saved and restored to bring a renewed grace and dimension to their surroundings in all parts of the British Isles. The audience was treated to a remarkable account of the renovation of an East Anglian farmhouse by the traditional wattle and daub method whereby hazel twigs and a local wet clay mix were plastered to the exterior walls to render them as good as new.

Mrs. Dance was proud to point out that the S.P.A.B. was the longest serving national amenity society from which had evolved the National Trust whose work in repairing and maintaining architectural treasures was widely recognised and valued.

Mrs. Dance closed her talk with praise for the interior restoration work on the Guildhall in High Wycombe which had once been under threat of demolition by the road wideners. Fortunately, the efforts of local conservationists, aided by the S.P.A.B., had forced a withdrawal of the proposal.

Roger Lawson.

A NEW CONSERVATION CORPS FOR HIGH WYCOMBE

The Bucks, Berks Border Conservation Volunteers have been set up recently to carry out Nature Conservation and amenity tasks in the Chilterns, South Bucks and East Berks regions. Many tasks are planned for the High Wycombe area and examples from

the current task programme are footpath work at Samll Dean Farm near Saunderton, scrub clearance at Butlers Hangings near West Wycombe and pond management at Downley.



"So you've been scrub clearing - well we'll do a bit more before you sit down to tea."

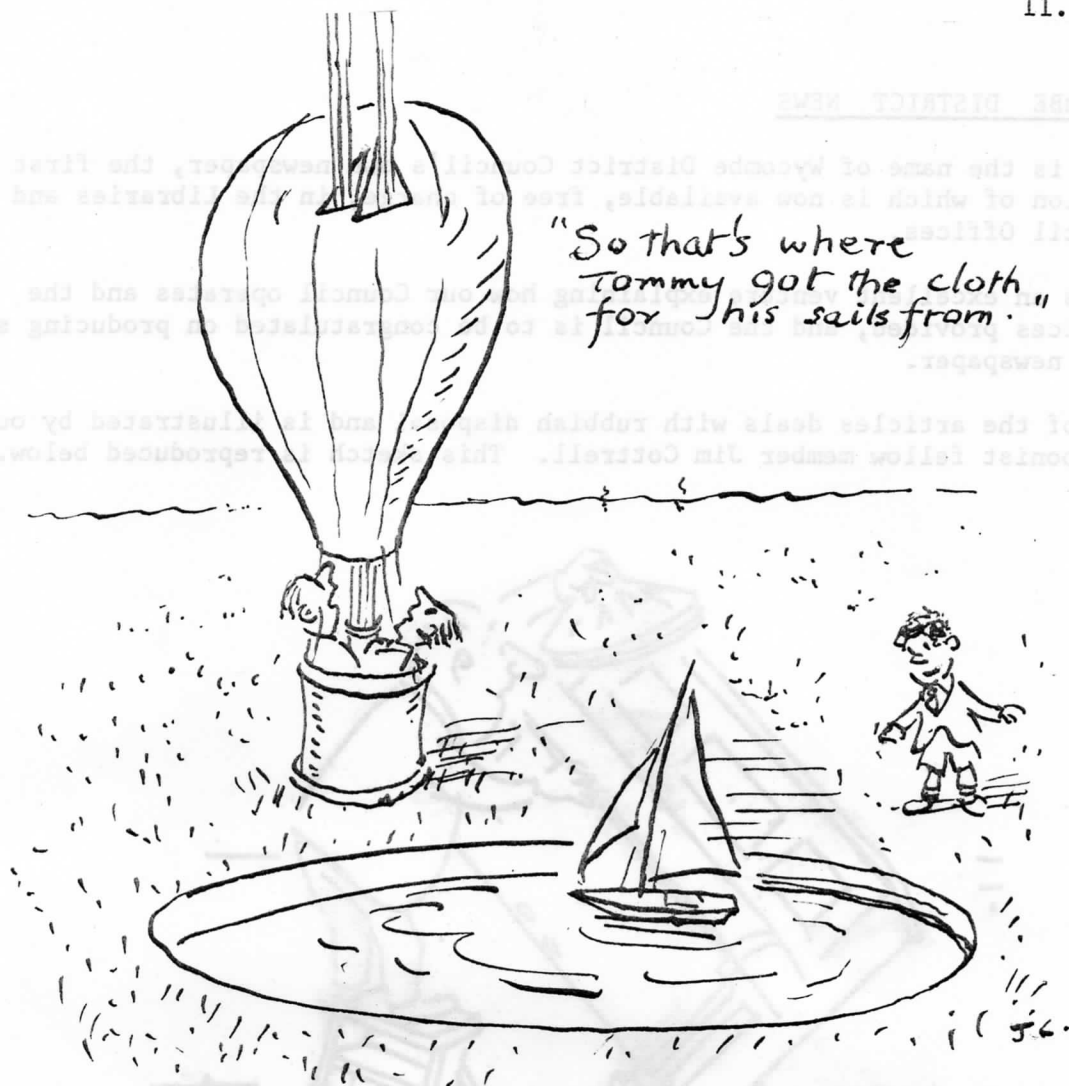
The Group also hope to do some scrub clearing on the proposed cemetery site at Cock Lane, where it is possible that the Chepping Wycombe Parish Council will allow some of this to be used as a mini Nature Reserve for many years to come. The Society has pressed for this for some time in view of the rich variety of flora in this chalk field.

If you are between 16 and 70 and would like to help in this valuable work you would be most welcome. For further details and the latest task programme, contact Keith Mellen at 176, West Wycombe Road or ring Alan Wiseman on Maidenhead 37360.

Roger Lawson.

A NEW CONSERVATION CORPS FOR HIGH WYCOMBE

The Bucks, Berks & Oxford Conservation Volunteers have been set up recently to carry out Nature Conservation and amenity tasks in the Chilterns, South Bucks and East Bucks regions. Many tasks are planned for the High Wycombe area and examples from



A NEW LOOK AT THE ENVIRONMENT

Members of the Society seem to possess many talents, from folk singing to carving miniature chairs; from cartooning to making delicious cream cakes. Peter Morgan, who is a Captain of British Airways flying Vanguards all over Europe, has been developing his great talent for ballooning during the last five years. In his spare time he floats over the countryside with his friend Alan Dorman with a 360° view of all that lies below. This silent world, away from the snarl of traffic and all the other impediments of daily life, must be truly heavenly.

Peter and Alan have demonstrated their skill by winning events in Spain and France and they have been ballooning in Canada. Recently, they won the British Championship and they hope to compete in the World Championship in Sweden in January. We wish them every success. Apparently hot air balloons are fairly accurate in the hands of skilled balloonists and they can be directed with some precision to a particular place. Of course, a lot depends on map reading and that must let out most of us! Peter is trying to collect pictures, prints, accounts and books about balloons, especially from the early balloon days. If any member has anything which they can spare he would be glad to receive the material. His address is: Chequers, Bassetsbury Mill, Bassetsbury Lane, High Wycombe. Tel. High Wycombe 22799.

WYCOMBE DISTRICT NEWS

This is the name of Wycombe District Council's own newspaper, the first edition of which is now available, free of charge, in the Libraries and Council Offices.

It is an excellent venture explaining how our Council operates and the services provided, and the Council is to be congratulated on producing such a fine newspaper.

One of the articles deals with rubbish disposal and is illustrated by our own cartoonist fellow member Jim Cottrell. This sketch is reproduced below.



If it's too big for the dustbin, phone...

Meeting on 29th September

It was an evening to be remembered when Miss Mollie Dodds came to the Friends' Meeting House and spoke on her trip to South America.

Through her slides we followed the eight week journey by bus from Rio, going south through Brazil and the Argentine to Baralochi in the foot hills of the Andes. Changing buses here, the journey continued north to the Bolivian border, across the High Plateau and into Peru to Cusco, the ancient capital of the Inca Empire, ruthlessly destroyed by the Spaniards. A look at Machu Picchu, the Inca city so skillfully hidden; it was never found until 1911. Finally to Lima and thence back to England.

Throughout this fascinating tour which covered a wealth of lush as well as arid countryside in high altitudes and deep valleys, the Spanish influence could be seen in the buildings in the towns and villages and also in the colourful costumes worn by the local people gathered in the market places of South America.

Elsie B. Fowler.

National Trust Wycombe Centre

The Wycombe Centre of the National Trust has now been re-formed and already has a healthy membership. Its purpose is to enable members of the National Trust to enjoy fully their membership, to arrange lectures, outings and social events which members of similar interests will enjoy and to increase support of the Trust by enrolling members and supporting its projects.

Events already planned include a film show about the National Trust, a Cheese and Wine party, an illustrated talk about walking the Pennine Way and an evening of drama.

If you are interested to know more, please contact the Secretary:-

Mrs. Olivia Price,
18A Lucas Road,
High Wycombe.

Tel. High Wycombe 27042

Olivia Price.

NEWS FROM THE CIVIC TRUST

38 Tonnes - and faster too?

Although the Secretary of State for Transport has denied having any proposals for heavier lorries and says he has had no formal consultations on the matter, it is known that thoughts lurk not far below the surface.

Although unlikely to emerge before a General Election two ideas are being considered by the Government for increasing efficiency in the road freight industry. One is to increase the speed limit from 40 mph to 50 mph on dual carriageways because lorry drivers tend to ignore the existing limits anyway. The other is to increase the maximum gross weight of 5-axle lorries to 38 tonnes. Since there are no formal consultations yet there can be no formal response, but environmentalists will be getting their arguments ready. They will certainly want to know, if these ideas surface, how the Government will satisfy itself, as the Secretary of State has repeatedly said it must, that an increase is consistent with safety and environmental considerations. Does the Government have ideas below the surface for stabilising the growth in road freight?

Heritage in figures

We suspected that fewer buildings were being listed following the cool winds blowing through the Department of the Environment and now we know precisely how many fewer. The number listed in England in 1977 (9,900) was 31% down on those added in 1976. When the cuts in listing staff and the less generous attitude to 'marginal' buildings have been in force for a full year the drop may be as much as 50%.

The figures are taken from the latest 'English Heritage Monitor' published by the English Tourist Board (£3 from the Board at 4, Grosvenor Gardens, London, S.W.1.) Its 20 tables include the distribution of listed buildings by county, public expenditure on conservation, historic properties open to the public and ancient monuments by type. There are several pages of commentary, some of it quite trenchant. It notes that the Historic Buildings Council's allocation has done no more than keep pace with the increase in building costs while museums and art galleries are to receive 78% more money for purchase than last year. 'These differentials persist despite the huge increase in visiting to historic buildings, and the much greater interest shown by local authorities in conservation over the past few years'.

Day by day by day

Five years ago to the issue a leader in Civic Trust Newsletter intoned that Britain's architectural heritage was being depleted at the rate of 'one listed building almost every day'. This neat statistic has been widely quoted since, but does it still hold good today? It does, as the figures for the last five years show; 1973 - 445: 1974 - 276: 1975 - 351: 1976 - 431: 1977 - 306. These are the numbers of listed buildings in England and Wales for which consent has been granted for total demolition. If partial demolition was included the figure would be far higher - for example in 1977 there were 652 partial against 306 total.

There are well over a quarter of a million listed buildings in England and Wales so the proportion being bulldozed is low. Even so it is chilling to realize that in only nine years officialdom has formally acceded to the loss of 2,697 listed buildings.

Nought for the DoE

The Historic Buildings Council's Annual Report announced that consent was given in 1976 for the total or partial demolition of only 104 grade II* or II buildings - a staggering reduction on previous years. Should we be celebrating this new determination to protect listed buildings? I think not, for an undisclosed DoE source tells me 'an odd nought got left out' and the figure should be 1004!

OBITUARYNancy Hall

Much has been said and written about Nancy Hall and the tragic loss to the town so soon after the death of Sir John, but we would like to add our tribute. Lady Hall was always a very keen supporter of the Society's work and she showed this in so many ways and with many acts of kindness. She had a great love for High Wycombe and was a passionate supporter of all those things which improved the quality of life for the townsfolk. She will be sadly missed by many people and organisations and not least by members of our Society.

Ted Kearney.
Chairman.

Peter Phillips

Another sad loss for the Society was the sudden death of Peter Phillips, one of our life members. Peter was deputy head at Downley Middle School and this must be a severe blow to the school. His work for the Education service extended far beyond his work at Downley, as he was a prominent and hard working member of the National Union of Teachers and occupied a number of important roles in local Union organisations. He was a kindly man, well liked by all who met him, and he set a fine example in his work for the community.

Jack Scruton.

BARN DANCE

Question: When is a square not a square?
Answer: When square dancing! - and there's no better way to alleviate January jaundice than to come -

ON Friday January 19th 1979
AT Townfield House., Totteridge Road.
TIME 8p.m. to midnight

SQUARE DANCING with JEFF DEAN (caller) and his band.

Refreshments available to purchase. Licensed bar.

Tickets at £1 from Barbara Rippington : 26616
Janet Tully : 3253 (Penn)
Jack Scruton : 25933

We promise you a lively evening.

Programme of Future Events.

Friday

19th January, 1979.

Barn Dance - Townfield House, Totteridge
Road. 8.00 p.m. - midnight.
Admission £1.00. Refreshments to purchase.

Wednesday

24th January, 1979.

Quarterly Meeting in the Guildhall at
8.00 p.m.
Showing of Environmental films (in colour)
"The Shadow of Progress"
"The Living Woodland".

Monday

12th February, 1979.

Friends' Meeting House, 25 London Road at
8.00 p.m. John Mayes will speak about "The
Pubs of Wycombe" from a Social history point
of view.

SEASON'S GREETINGS.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy
New Year to all our members and
Affiliated Societies, and a big
thankyou for your loyal support
in 1978.

Ted Kearney

CHAIRMAN