



High Wycombe Society

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NEWSLETTER NO. 37

SPRING 1979

JIM COTTRELL

The death of Jim Cottrell is a most severe blow to his family and we extend our deepest sympathy to his wife, Margaret and daughters Jill and Alison. We shall miss him terribly in the Society as he had such outstanding qualities in a rare combination. He was a quiet, gentle man but a great fighter as well. He was modest about his talents but we were all aware of them and turned readily to him for help and advice, which was always forthcoming. He was well known throughout the town for his activities in music, the Arts Festival and for his artistic gifts. Above all, he was a dedicated member in the Rye Protection Society and our own Society. He was in the forefront of the Rye campaign, masterminding the great Town Petition and collecting the fighting fund. Perhaps keeping the Rye intact could be a fitting memorial to Jim. His capacity for collecting money was unique and one we shall miss. He was responsible for the rather intricate Old Chequers Fund which enabled us to win two Public Inquiries and he also looked after the Toll House Fund, the money from which will help in its rebuilding. Jim was Chairman of our Historic Buildings Group and a most valuable Executive Committee Member. His work for the Newsletter and other published material was outstanding, especially his whimsical cartoons and we will miss the hand of Jim in the future. Many people feel that we should instigate some permanent memorial to Jim, and your Executive Committee would welcome any proposals to commemorate his work.

Jack Scruton

PLANNING GROUP

HIGH WYCOMBE AREA DISTRICT PLAN

For some time now the District Council has been preparing the way for a new High Wycombe Area District Plan and recently they published the first three papers for public discussion on Housing, Employment and Shopping and we hope that at least some of our members and affiliated societies made their views known.

The Society welcomed this opportunity and we were in general agreement with the policies suggested. Some of the more important points which we made were as follows:-

- Housing:
- i) We supported the policy of restricting the growth of the High Wycombe area. We hope that the areas of white land adjacent to the town will be transferred to the Green Belt.
 - ii) We support the District Council's attempts to reserve new housing to satisfy local need but we realise that this is a very difficult problem to solve.
 - iii) We believe in the improvement of existing housing stock. We hope that at least one run-down area will be designated as a General Improvement Area.
 - iv) We hope that more provision will be made for people to live in the Town Centre. To accomplish this we urge the need to build in the 'desert' areas.
 - v) The Society will continue to oppose change of use whereby houses are threatened by change to offices or industrial accommodation.

- Shopping:
- i) We agree with the District Council's presumption against major increases in shopping.
 - ii) We hope for a much higher standard of shop fronts in existing premises.
 - iii) We believe that some areas of the town are starved of shopping facilities and need some local shops, especially to help older people who have difficulty in reaching the town centre.
 - iv) We deplore the loss of normal shopping in the High Street due to the inroads made by banks, building societies and estate agents. This has led to a great loss of character and liveliness and we hope to see this trend halted.
 - v) We support the retention of specialist shops and the expansion of open air markets.

- Employment:
- i) We agree with the policy of restraint and the need to place an embargo on new industries in the town. Preference should be given to the limited expansion of existing local industry within its own curtilage, or by occupying premises left empty by firms which have foundered or left the district.
 - ii) We feel that the real solution of the lack of skilled labour lies in the expansion of the local facilities for the training of young people now living in the area.
 - iii) We agree with the District's Council's proposals for the re-location of some industry which at present does not fit in with local residential areas, although we have some reservations about proposed sites at Bourne End and Wooburn.
 - iv) We believe that some industry which does not present any pollution problems can fit in happily with some of our residential areas and can, in fact, make these places much more interesting than a bleak, wholly residential estate.

Green Hill Farm

We have now heard the result of the appeal by M. J. Jeanes (Developments) Ltd. against the refusal of the District Council to allow housing on what was once Green Hill Farm. The appeal was dismissed and the Council's refusal upheld. It was stated that in view of the fact that a new plan was being prepared for the High Wycombe District, allowance of housing there would be premature. The proposed site is part of the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and it is hoped to extend the Green Belt coverage to include most of this area of land.

This was a significant victory for the town and the local residents played a prominent part, aided by the Chiltern Society and the High Wycombe Society.

Biffa and the proposed Loudwater Tip

How would you like to have a large container lorry passing your door once every five minutes, for ten hours a day, for a period of twenty five years? That is just one of the hardships to be inflicted on many Loudwater residents if Biffa receive planning permission to use part of the precious Green Belt land lying between Loudwater and Beaconsfield. Of course, there are many more reasons to object - various threats of pollution, traffic dangers, loss of yet another scarce dry chalk habitat with destruction of chalk plants and animals and a general deterioration in the whole neighbourhood. No wonder that all the local organisations and many individuals have risen up against this appalling application. The High Wycombe Society has made the strongest possible objections in support of local feeling.

Long & Hambly

We have opposed yet another serious planning application - this time from Long & Hambly of Slater Street. They wish to build a huge structure along Gordon Road against their present factory. It would dwarf the surrounding residential property and would have a bad effect on the nearby, newly established old people's housing. It would be seen from all quarters and the view from the Rye area would be particularly uninviting! The present factory has often been the cause of complaints from local residents because of noise. The District Council cannot do anything about the unfortunate position of the factory but at least they can limit severely any expansion and this would be in accordance with their policy concerning industry situated in this kind of unsuitable location.

Rosemary Shooter
High Wycombe 26964

The Danger of Heavy Lorries

The proposals of the E.E.C. to 'harmonise' lorry dimensions was not approved at their November meeting. The Civic Trust believe that the Secretary of State's (and the Government's) ideas were changed by the outcry from the Amenity Societies. The protest was sparked off by the Civic Trust after the Guardian newspaper leaked a Department of Transport document last year. The Trust know of 79 letters that were sent either to the Secretary of State, the EEC Commission, or Members of Parliament.

The three technical points raised by societies were:-

- i) The extra length would make the lorries less manoeuvrable so causing more damage and danger in confined streets.
- ii) An increase in cab size would enable a bunk to be more easily accommodated which would result in even more indiscriminate overnight parking.
- iii) The extra length would encourage 3 axle tractor units which would pave the way to a heavier lorry.

The EEC's proposals would have increased the length of an articulated lorry from 15.0 metres to 15.5 metres and its width from 2.5 metres to 2.6 metres.

The EEC has now formally submitted its new proposals for dealing with lorry weights alone. The old proposals for weights and dimensions remain on the table, but as the weights part has been removed, it can be effectively regarded as dealing with dimensions alone.

The weights proposal, as it is now, has to go before the European Parliament for an opinion first, which means that it will not go before the EEC Council until the end of 1979.

Briefly the proposals are as follows:-

35 tonnes on 4 axles

42 tonnes on 5 axles

44 tonnes on 6 axles

It also allows for 11.55 tonnes on drive axles - mind your toes!

The High Wycombe Society will be letting our candidates for election to the European Parliament know our feelings.

Ian Stone

WATER GROUP

Pann Mill

All the energies of the Water Group have been spent this winter on our project to rehouse the remaining mill machinery at Pann Mill.

Colin Kennedy, our Architect member of the Water Group, has drawn up plans for this, incorporating all that is left of the original structure and exposing the machinery to public exhibition behind a protective screen. A meeting has taken place with the Planning Officer of Wycombe District Council and a planning application is currently being submitted. You will no doubt have seen our plans at the High Wycombe Society's Exhibition during the Arts Festival.

We have applied to the Civic Trust for a grant towards this scheme and also to Wycombe District Council, to whom the site belongs. The existing corrugated iron shed in no way enhances this part of the Conservation Area and we are hoping that recognition of this fact will produce a sympathetic financial response from both sources.

This project is only taking up a little space, but what a lot of work it encompasses! The forms, the letters, the meetings, the photographs, the maps, the plans and the costing! Our greatest thanks go to Colin, without whom we should have no scheme at all, and our greatest hopes lie in these grant applications - a successful outcome of this project would be a tangible and satisfying proof of an active, caring High Wycombe Society. Please keep your fingers crossed for us.

Sheila Latimer
High Wycombe 30389

HISTORIC BUILDINGS GROUP

Left to Rot

This is the title of a report compiled by "Save Britain's Heritage" from details submitted by many local authorities and amenity societies. The report highlights the fact that while it is difficult to obtain consent to demolish a listed building, no such consent is necessary to allow a building to fall into decay - hurried to its downfall by the ravages of weather, time and vandals.

In fact, neglect and decay are bigger destroyers of our heritage than the wicked speculator who is usually held to blame.

It is farcical to deem a building worthy of preservation and then take no firm steps to ensure that restoration and repairs are carried out. At present, listing a building merely means that due consideration be given before it is destroyed. There is not enough compulsion on the part of local authorities and the Department of the Environment to serve Building Repairs Notices.

The Report concludes by listing fourteen recommendations, the first being a complete overhaul of the Historic Buildings (Repairs) Act whereby the compulsory purchase sanction should be replaced by the simple power to do repairs to any listed building at the expense of the owner.

More money needs to be made available to the Historic Buildings Council for grants to all listed buildings. These funds should be kept ahead of inflation and on a par with money given to the Arts Council. After all, architecture is as much a part of the arts as theatre, ballet or opera.

There should be monetary incentives in the form of tax relief and zero VAT rating for materials used in repairs.

Finally, perhaps the most important recommendation, is a follow up by the Department of the Environment and local authorities to see that refusal of consent to demolish listed buildings does not lead to flagrant disregard of the decision to preserve and put to beneficial use.

Bassetsbury

Since our last Newsletter when we pleaded for the restoration of Bassetsbury Barn, the Fairy Godmother has waved her magic wand! Repairs have been carried out to the barn and especially to the roof. In addition, the old shed which lay against the fine brick and flint wall at the entrance to the Manor has been removed and the wall repaired. This is a very splendid introduction to Bassetsbury Manor and deserves to be listed!

Janet Tully

VISIT TO HATFIELD HOUSE

We are arranging a visit to the celebrated historic house at Hatfield on Saturday 26th May, 1979. The coach will leave at 10.30 a.m. and will return to High Wycombe at approximately 6 p.m.

Hatfield is a house full of splendid things of great historical interest and we hope to have a guided tour. In addition to the house, there is the nearby Tudor brick building where Elizabeth I lived before becoming Queen. The grounds are attractive.

The inclusive cost will be £2. Those wishing to go should send the payment to Derek Woods at 19, Adelaide Road, High Wycombe, as soon as possible. We hope all those who have already expressed an interest in going will support this venture.

Historic Buildings Group Meeting - 12th February 1979

"Beer, men and gossip" might have been the medieval utopia by comparison with the present day "Wine, women and song" but during his talk on 'The Pubs of Wycombe', Mr. L.J. Mayes did not take us on a drinking mission around the town nor refer to the ghosts that haunt some of them

He told us about their inception and the part they played in the local community. Reading from the Corporation Ledger Book and other documents he drew attention to the antiquity of the former Red Lion and "other" inns along the High Street; the use of trade tokens during a scarcity of small change and the close association between drinking houses and back-yard chair workers spending their earnings while waiting for the landlord (who was also their employer) to pay their wages. Many pubs were 'ordinaries' where certain groups of people gathered. Lawyers to one, farmers to another and the Bucks Militia met in the old Antelope in the High Street. In fact, training of army officers took place there but when the pub became too crowded, land was purchased at Sandhurst and so the Royal Military Academy has its foundations in a Wycombe inn!

He referred to the statistical information to be gleaned from the local Directory for 1875 - a pub for every 20 or so male inhabitants based on the population of the borough at that time; adding that the pubs were generally the places for procuring information. We must extend our sincere thanks to Mr. Mayes for such an interesting and informative evening.

NATIONAL TRUST WYCOMBE CENTRE

Derek Woods

We have received the following information concerning our local National Trust Centre. Any of our members who are also members of the National Trust would be very welcome to join the Wycombe Centre. Further particulars may be obtained from Olivia Price.

"The Wycombe Centre now has about 340 members and this number is steadily increasing as the Centre becomes more widely known. The summer programme has been issued and includes outings to Stourhead and Polesden Lacey, talks on Bleinheim Palace and one on the work of the National Trust. A Centre Newsletter is now being produced and this keeps members informed of what is going on both in the Trust and nearer at home in the Wycombe Centre.

There is to be a season of plays at the Cliveden Open Air Theatre which is open to the general public. Centre members have been asked to offer help with stewarding and selling programmes.

As the Centre becomes more firmly established there are opportunities for members to become involved in the work of the Trust, to increase membership and to raise funds for its various projects.

The Wycombe Centre is in the Northern Home Counties Region for which Hughenden Manor is the Regional Office."

Olivia Price
High Wycombe 27042

HERITAGE GROUP

24 to 27 High Street

The Bristol and West Buildings Society have written to say that discussions should take place soon with other occupants of the terrace and there is hope that the terrace will be redecorated in accordance with an overall scheme.

No. 4 Easton Street

George and George appreciated our letter of praise for the restoration of this property.

No. 23 Easton Street

The Public Services Agency were pleased with our letter about the redecoration of this building and are hoping to clear up some of the items which were overlooked.

Railway Bridge and Duke Street Tunnel

We have thanked British Rail for painting the bridge above Castle Place and for removing the offensive slogans from the tunnel under the railway.

Bill Willson
High Wycombe 33981

FESTIVAL EXHIBITION 1979

We took part again in the Wycombe Arts Festival by staging an Exhibition in the Guildhall from 19th to 31st March. The theme this year dealt with some aspects of the past, present and future of High Wycombe. It included entries from local Schools and Residents' Associations, and the District Council provided help and material. The Exhibition was very successful and we owe a great deal to those members who manned the Exhibition and to those who supplied photographs, models and other material. We are particularly indebted to Martin Kipping for producing so many photographs under great pressure, and to Krystyna Barrow for her beautiful posters and headings.

Jack Scruton

PARISH COUNCILS

Many people may be unaware of the work carried out by Parish Councils, which is extensive, very varied, and carried out with close attention to the needs of the local community.

As an example we have just heard from the Chepping Wycombe Parish Council that among the numerous activities, trees and woodlands play a prominent part. The Parish Council has just signed a lease on Fennels Wood, Flackwell Heath, and provision made for the waymarking of footways and the installation of gates and stiles. This acquisition should be of great benefit to the people of Flackwell Heath.

The Council is planning extensive felling in King's Wood, this being in accordance with a programme arranged with the County Forestry Officer and Forestry Commission. Replanting will follow. King's Wood needs this kind of rejuvenation, so high praise to the Chepping Wycombe Parish Council for their willingness to tackle the problem.

Barbara Rippington
High Wycombe 26616

BUCKS BERKS BORDER CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

Although only six months old the Conservation Corps is well into its stride and has accomplished a great deal already. Recently, at the suggestion of the Society and with the approval of the Chepping Wycombe Parish Council, they cleared hawthorn and dogwood from the proposed Cock Lane Cemetery site in order that the field can be used both as a cemetery and as a mini Nature Reserve for local Schools. The field is well known for its wealth of chalk flora and fauna.

The Group is planning to tackle a number of interesting projects and would welcome new members over 16. Anyone interested should contact Keith Mellen, 176 West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe, Tel. High Wycombe 442458.

GLOVES

Have you lost a pair of gloves?

The Hon. Secretary holds two pairs, found as follows, so if they belong to you please let him know:

Pair of black leather type gloves - found in Townfield House after the barn dance on 19th January.

Pair of cotton jersey fleecy lined brown gloves - found in the Guildshall after the Quarterly Meeting of films on 24th January.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Barn Dance

After a day of snow, which thankfully turned to rain, a warm and gay evening was enjoyed by 80 people, most of whom professed themselves unable to dance and for whom this was an initiation into Barn Dancing. With an excellent caller, Jeff Dean, and lively band, willingness to enjoy oneself was the only requirement and this was in abundance on this night. After many demands for the occasion to be repeated, we hope to hold a second Barn Dance at the end of the year.

Summer Dance 6th July 1979

Those of us who remember the two dances at Burleighfield House have been hoping that the Committee would be able to repeat the occasion this Summer. Fortunately, we have managed to book the New Crusaders Steel Band for Friday, 6th July, to play from 8.00 p.m. to 12.00 midnight at the Open Air Swimming Pool on Holywell Mead. This may seem a rather curious place to have a dance but really it has a great deal to offer. There is plenty of room: it is set in pleasant surroundings and there is ample car parking space. You can even have a swim if you wish! Refreshments and a licensed bar will be provided. Tickets are available NOW at the reasonable price of £2.00 inclusive of food. Your friends would be welcome. Please help us to make this another memorable evening. Tickets are available from:-

Barbara Rippington	26616	Roger Lawson	28047
Helen Willson	25966	Pat Howard	30698
Anita Turner	21967	Ted Kearney	
Elsie Fowler	21456	Bill Willson	33981
Majorie Nash	28488	Ron Sims	40800
Sheila Latimer	30389	Doug Hodgson	29492
Evelyn Roe	32575	Syd Spence	22624
Frances Alexander	25915	Alan Weyman	39629
Janet Tully	81 3253	Patrick Abrahall	28398

FUTURE PROGRAMME

Saturday, 26th May, 1979	Visit to Hatfield House and Grounds with a a guided tour.
Friday, 6th July 1979	Summer Dance to the New Crusaders Steel Band at the Swimming Pool on Holywell Mead. 8.00 p.m. - 12.00 midnight. Tickets £2.00 each including refreshments. Bar available.
Wednesday, 17th October 1979	Quarterly Meeting in the Guildhall at 7.45 p.m. 'British Landscaping in Decline' an illustrated talk by Robert Huddleston.
November or December 1979	A Barn Dance to be arranged.
23rd January, 1980	Quarterly Meeting in the Guildhall at 7.45 p.m. Tony Aldous, Environmental and Architectural Journalist. Subject to be arranged.