



High Wycombe Society

HON.

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NEWSLETTER NO. 38

Autumn 1979.

As our members will know already, the local Authority has taken drastic action and demolished a large part of the Old Chequers on the grounds of public safety.

We are consulting the Chiltern Society with a view to publishing full details of recent events. Meanwhile all we can say is that we are dissatisfied with the action of the District Council, and consider that it was possible to make the building safe without demolishing such a large part.

As we said in the Bucks Free Press, if the Chequers is demolished it will be a national scandal.

Jack Scruton.



THE CHEQUERS

PLANNING

The problems of car and lorry parking

The Planning Group have been concerned for some time about bad parking in the town and the hazards this generates, both for other road users and pedestrians.

A walk around Wycombe on any Saturday morning will convince both the innocent and the guilty that something needs to be done. At other times long term parking on pavements and grass verges, especially on estates, forces pedestrians into the road and causes havoc when dust carts, milk floats and delivery vehicles try to gain access for legitimate and essential services. There are also such vehicles as ambulances and fire engines!

Much of the trouble is caused by thoughtless and inconsiderate car owners who really should know better. Additionally, the planners and estate developers must accept the blame for the narrow roads on new estates and the steep and dangerous driveways to garages which abound.

We have written to the Press, the Wycombe District Council, Bucks County Council and the Thames Valley Police to see if, in the first instance, a campaign for persuasion can be launched. If this fails then perhaps more drastic action can be taken against the persistent offenders.

So members, please try to set a good example to others - think before you park and use your driveway at home if you can!

Ted Kearney

Wye Estate

We are opposed to the continuing Change of Use from warehousing to industrial use on this estate. It is making life difficult for people who live near the site and they find the increased traffic and problems of parking their cars extremely aggravating. Apart from that we think it is contrary to the policy of the County Structure and Area plans.

Green Hill Farm

Since the appeal by M Jeanes (Development) Limited to allow housing on this land was dismissed, the developers have put in another application for eight houses to be built on Green Hill. We should like to know what local people feel about this application.

H.3 - Imbies Holdings

One of our members has written to the District Council asking them not to build over the footpaths on this site. Using a footpath he can walk to the Council Offices in five minutes, but, if the footpaths are obliterated, it would take him 7 minutes by car, when there is little traffic! Other footpaths take people safely and pleasurably to the town centre and towards Desborough Road. Surely people are the most important part of all planning and if they feel valued other problems cease to exist.

Downley - Mr Rush and his proposed pig farm

Mr Rush has caused a furore in Downley by suggesting a pig farm at the back of houses in Littleworth Road. This action has crystalized local feeling and the Downley Residents' Association has been born.

Rosemary Shooter

PLANNING GROUP

Walkabout in the "Eastern Desert"

On Tuesday, 26th June a small party of Wycombe Society members, led by our Chairman and Secretary, toured the Saffron Platt area to study the sad state in which it presently rests, along with those Councillors who were free to join our party that evening. Councillor Trevor Fowler and Councillor Betty Barratt were able to provide further information on the background problems and our thanks are extended to them for joining us. Unfortunately, our hopes that some of the Tory Councillors might join us were dashed as several meetings occurred on the same night.

The area under review extends from Station Road in the north to Saffron Road in the East and Easton Street in the South. It includes both the Quaker Burial Ground, currently overgrown with a profusion of weeds and clutter from the Irish Club, and the temporary car park by the United Reformed Church.

At present Saffron Platt presents a sorry sight and development is inhibited by the proposal issued some years ago for a new road to run parallel to and North of the London Road. However, the time must surely have now come when rethinking - as shown in the Housing Draft Plan - should be implemented and attention given to clearing away the present disorder to allow for the provision of housing conveniently close to the centre of Wycombe. There must be many elderly folk who would welcome the chance to live a few minutes walk from the shops and station and who could occupy small houses or flats on this site. The Quaker Burial Ground could be cleared and preserved as a quiet green nearby.

The area to the East of Saffron Road might need more thought as it backs on to a number of gardens. Perhaps as garages are in short supply in the area, three or four houses could be provided with integral garages.

The tour started and ended at the "Masons Arms", some members setting the seal on the evening by ending inside! The walkabout did, however, highlight the need for some action, thought and money to be provided for the desert which, lying close to a conservation area, needs sympathetic treatment by our planners to ensure that it doesn't become more of an eyesore than it already is.

E. W. Lewcock.

Heavy Lorries

In the Spring Newsletter I said that we would be letting our candidates for the European Parliament know our feelings on the EEC's proposals for Heavy Lorries. Well we did write to all of them and had only one response, which was from the Rt. Hon. Baroness Elles.

She made the following points in her letter:

1. Heavier weights do not necessarily imply longer lorries.
2. National legislation could impose restrictions on the passage of transport for environmental reasons.

Contd...

3. It is in the interest of the country to find a common standard for lorries throughout the EEC. This would give us greater opportunities to sell lorries abroad.
4. "Environmental reasons" are not grounds for excluding any progress or co-operation. On the contrary it is up to us as a nation and within our local communities, to ensure that safe and efficient motorways are constructed so that heavy lorries are kept out of towns and villages, so preserving our homes, but encouraging efficient trade.

Ian Stone

HISTORIC BUILDINGS GROUP

Farms and Barns

Grange Farm, Widmer End

For a very long time the District Council, supported by the Chiltern Society and High Wycombe Society, has tried to persuade Messrs. Lovells to restore this very interesting farmhouse with its early medieval cruck timber framing. Our efforts have been in vain and the farm is now in a very dangerous state with parts of the roof fallen in and the building seemingly beyond repair. This pleasant and important listed building was certainly "left to rot" and can be seen as an illustration of the weakness of our present legislation. We have suggested a meeting with the District Council, the Chiltern Society and Messrs Lovells to see if anything can be salvaged.

Rockalls Farm

Not far away is an entirely different situation. Rockfalls Farm has been sold, is occupied, and is in fine condition, while the four barns which once formed part of the farm have also been sold. These are now being converted into four homes and will incorporate the original structures. This exciting and adventurous project reflects great credit on the courage of the owner in carrying out the project. It is something he has always wanted to do and is a good example of what to do with redundant barns.

Old Chequers

Despite continuous pressure from the Society there does not seem to be much progress with the restoration of the Old Chequers. The most recent letter from the British Land Company, the owners of the lease, said

"The situation is very frustrating but we will continue to press for some kind of positive action."

Jack Scruton

A Walkabout in Wooburn

Lawrence Linehan, a member of the group, arranged a very interesting walkabout in Wooburn on 13th July. For some time we had wondered about the wealth of historic buildings in Wooburn Green and Wooburn Town, and a walkabout seemed the best way of finding out.

Illustrated talks on Historic Buildings

The Historic Building Group of the Chiltern Society has arranged three illustrated talks in association with local Societies and they are hoping for large attendances. The talks should be very interesting and relevant to local problems. Admission will be free but a collection will be made. Refreshments will be provided.

Future programme.

Wednesday 28th November 1979 at 8 p.m.
Carrington ~~Road~~, The Guildhall.
Room

Mr\$ Arthur Radley of the
Georgian Group.
Subject: Georgian Buildings
and their Protection.

Tuesday, 19th February 1980 at 8 p.m.
The Malthouse, Chesham.

Mr Elliott Viney F.S.A.
Subject: Listed Buildings
and their problems.

Please support these meetings, in particular the one in High Wycombe in which the High Wycombe Society is involved.

Wycombe Show

Janet Tully.

An enthusiastic band of Water Groupers once again joined forces on 1st September to get Pann Mill water wheel turning, to add the High Wycombe Society's contribution to the Wycombe Show. This magnificent spectacle attracted hundreds of interested vistors, greatly encouraging our belief that this rare piece of Wycombe's heritage should be preserved and the machinery rehoused to display it to the general public.

An exhibition on the newly published Water Trail was mounted, displaying the original drawings which appear in the publication and which have been sp greatly admired. It attracted a great deal of interest and many hundreds of Water Trails were sold during the day, together with Town Trails and bookds of the Rye. We were most grateful for the help of all members of the Society who turned up to help man the stall.

As the sun set slowly in the west the boards diverting the river to the millstream were removed, the water ceased to flow and the mighty wheel ground to a halt! The end of a perfect day.

We very much enjoy this yearly event for not only do we gain a lot of publicity - and, incidentally, new members - sell a lot of publications, but it does give us fresh encouragement to pursue our conversation aims.

We now have planning permission for the proposed rehousing of the mill machinery, though no news of a grant as yet to enable us to go ahead.

Shiela Latimer.

WATER GROUP

A Poem by Michael Latimer, aged 11½

The Demon

The enemy comes with its ideas to corrupt our pastures,
The Demon, known as an architect, invents the deadly weapons, houses,
Once you could ride your bike along country lanes -
Now it seems the trees are being knocked down for the Demon
Smoke smothers the beautiful scent of the countryside
Spreading pollution around
Once there was a sight of grass,
But now its used for houses, the enemy.

Public Inquiry - Proposed Culverting of the Mill Stream at Rye Mill

On Thursday, 30th August a Public Inquiry was held at the District Council Offices to decide on a proposal by the owner of Rye Mill Garage to culvert part of the Mill Stream by the A.40 in order to display yet more cars. The District Council opposed the application on the grounds that the whole stretch of water was an attractive public amenity. The Society supported the Council and we feel sure that many people in Wycombe resent proposals of this nature. They have seen enough of the River disappear in culverts.

Jack Scruton.

Trees

The garden in Paul's Row has looked better than ever this year, thanks to the regular care taken of it by Mike Hammett. Martin Kipping has produced a neat and attractive sign stating that the garden was created by the High Wycombe Society for the benefit of everyone. The sign will be placed in the garden in a ceremony this Autumn.

National Tree Week is to be from November 11th to 18th this year. The importance of Planting trees cannot be overstated. The Tree Council informs us that "England and Wales alone have lost over 50 million trees in the past 25 years and some counties have only 20% of the trees they had in the early 1950's. Disease, drought, old age and land development all contribute to this continuing problem. Merely to regain lost ground it is estimated that 100 million trees will have to be planted in the next 25 years. If our tree heritage is to be saved for future generations, not less than about 3 million trees annually must be planted through non-government agencies!"

As usual we shall be liaising with the District Council and local Schools to plant in and around the District. Will you plant a tree too?

Barbara Rippington.

BASSETBURY MILL AND MANOR

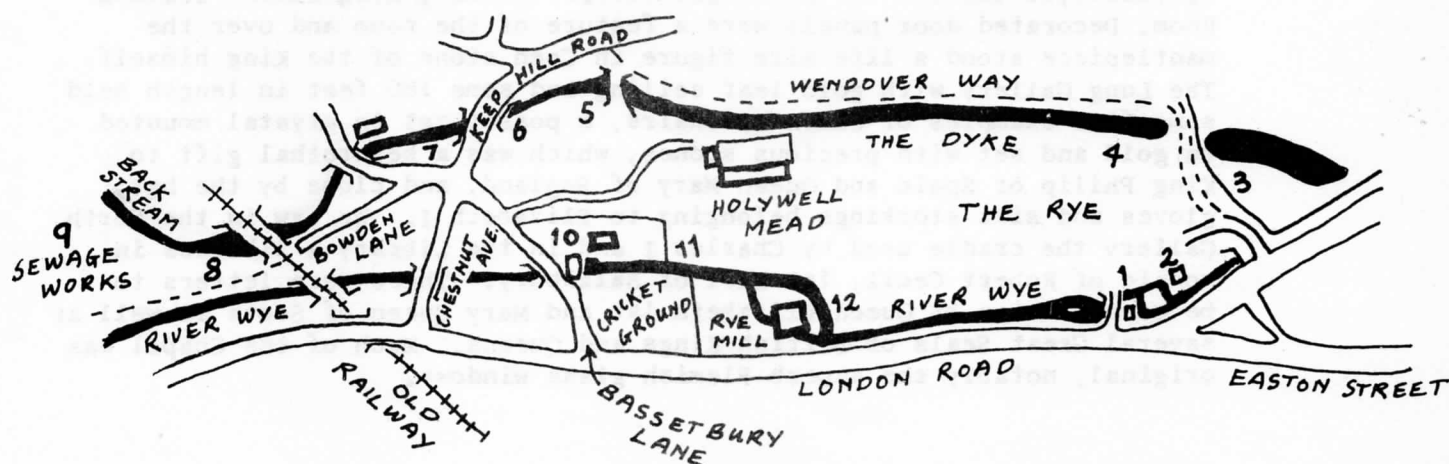


Water Trail:

The Society has now received the Water Trails from the printer and they are available at 10p each. They are good value for money and worth following for the interesting walk round the Rye and Bowden Lane as far as the Sewage Works. Copies can be obtained from our Secretary, Jack Scruton, individually or in hundreds, also from W.H.Smith, Wycombe Book Shop, the Museum in Priory Avenue and the Information Section of the Municipal Offices. The trail, complementing the previous Town Trail, represents a source of useful funds for the Society to continue its work and we are now looking for willing volunteers to help sell these pamphlets.

It is surprising how one can walk round an area time and time again and not know how much one is passing by on the way. These Water Trails help to open the eyes of those who think they know the area well and could well have missed seeing many of the things the Water Trail draws attention to. To the person who doesn't know the area the Water Trail can be an invaluable aid to finding out what is there. Please do your bit towards making the Water Trails the success to the Society, which they deserve to be.

R. L. Sims.



HERITAGE GROUP

As the work of this group is characterised by a policy of gentle persuasion it is difficult to accurately assess our influence - things get done, but can we claim that action is due to our initiative?

Recent responsive owners we have contacted are notably British Rail for the repainting of the railings on the retaining walls in Totteridge Road and Priory Avenue, their two bridges and the tunnel beneath the railway from Duke Street. Courage's have also done good redecoration of 'The Three Tuns' in the High Street after our appeal against its tawdry state.

Several owners who acted without any nudging have been commended for their improvements.

The High Street Co-op's dreadful appearance still causes grave concern and pressure is being maintained for proper action towards the general improvement of the premises.

The ravages of last winter have seriously affected the St. John's Hospice ruins in Easton Street and we have expressed our opinion to the County Council and expert attention is urgently required to arrest decay.

Current cases include improvements to poor paving in the central areas, appeals for redecorations, the control of 'fly-posting' and the major improvement of Frogmore landscaping.

Mike Hammett

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Outing to Hatfield House on 19th May

What a day for an outing! After waiting in pouring rain a bedraggled party of members and friends thankfully boarded the coach, glad to be in the dry. Macs and umbrellas were stowed away and spirits rose as we dried off on the journey. On arrival at Hatfield House we made a dash from the coach through the continuing downpour but once inside the weather was forgotten.

Home of the Cecil family, Earls of Salisbury, since the early 16th century, our guided tour took us into the Marble Hall with the Minstrels' Gallery at one end and a carved screen at the other. Portraits of two Queens looked down from the walls: the tragic Mary, Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth I bedecked with jewels. At the top of the Grand Staircase, elaborately carved and gated at the foot (to prevent dogs running upstairs), we entered the principal reception room, King James' Drawing Room. Decorated door panels were a feature of the room and over the mantelpiece stood a life size figure in Caen stone of the King himself. The Long Gallery with gold leaf ceiling and some 180 feet in length held some fine examples of James II chairs, a posset set in crystal mounted on gold and set with precious stones, which was a betrothal gift to King Philip of Spain and Queen Mary of England, and close by the hat, gloves and silk stockings belonging to Elizabeth I. We saw in the North Gallery the cradle used by Charles I and in the Library a likeness in mosaic of Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury. There were letters to be seen written by Queen Elizabeth 1st and Mary Queen of Scots as well as several Great Seals of British Kings and Queens. Much of the Chapel was original, notably the superb Flemish glass windows.



Adjacent to the Great House was the banqueting Hall with its fine roof of oak and chestnut, remaining an example of 15th century architecture. It formed one side of the Old Palace of Hatfield completed in 1497 for Cardinal Morton, Bishop of Ely. The Palace was in the form of a rectangle and in 1608 the first Earl of Salisbury pulled down three sides of the building, leaving the Hall intact. Using the bricks he set about building the present house in what was then the modern style. Two wings joined by a central block form the letter E, the initial of the Great Queen. It was at the Old Palace that Princess Elizabeth became a virtual prisoner of her sister, Queen Mary, and here, sitting under an oak tree that still survives.

Just time to stroll round the gardens, now that the rain had stopped, before returning home with many thanks to Derek Woods for arranging such an interesting day.

In view of the success of the trip we hope to arrange visits to other historic houses; any proposals from members would be welcome.

Elsie E. Fowler.

Poolside Revels

The Holywell Mead swimming pool, near the Rye, was the unusual venue for the Society's Summer Dance on 6th July to the sound of the New Crusaders Steel Band.

The price of the ticket included a free swim for those intrepid enough to take a dive. An excellent cold buffet meal was served after careful preparation by Daphne Thomas, assisted by Ann Woodward, and this duly swept away any feeling of evening fatigue. The poolside revellers returned to the dance with renewed vigour and determination to syncopate at least part of the night away.

This event continued the Society's lively and successful tradition of steel band musical events, which formerly echoed around the wooded groves of Burleighfield House in years gone by.

All due thanks to Ron Sims for booking this event earlier in the year, at a time when snow was still on the ground and summer revels must have seemed a long way off.

Roger Lawson

160 people attended the dance and flying on its success we have booked the pool, the band and the bar for Friday, 4th July 1980. The price of tickets might have to be increased a little if we want to benefit the Society's funds and match this year's profit of £87.45.

R. L. Sims

Special Notes

Memorial for Jim Cottrell

Many members of the Society have expressed a wish for a memorial to Jim. This has been discussed and approved wholeheartedly by the Executive Committee and it now remains to decide on a fitting and lasting tribute to a much missed, gentle and humorous man who did so much for the Society.

It may be that a forest tree, planted on his beloved Rye, would be most suitable but we must bear in mind that no plaque would be allowed. An alternative memorial could be an art prize.

I am inviting members to offer suggestions and would be pleased to hear from you (37 Dean Close, High Wycombe). Alternatively please contact the Hon. Secretary.

When the decision has been taken we shall let you know and seek your support to enable us to carry it out.

Future Events

Wednesday 28th November 1979
at 8.00 p.m.
Carrington Room, The Guildhall

Arthur Radley of the Georgian Group. Illustrated talk - "Georgian Buildings and their Protection".

The Annual General Meeting of the Historical Buildings Group will be held on Wednesday 5th December 1979 at the Shelbourne Room, Guildhall, High Wycombe commencing at 8.00 p.m. Mr Mike Farley, an archaeologist from Bucks County will give a talk on the "Archaeology of Buildings".

23rd January 1980 at 7.45 p.m.
The Guildhall

Quarterly meeting: Tony Aldous,
Environmental and Architectural
Journalist. Subject to be arranged.

The Society will be 11 years old ⁱⁿ November and we are hoping to hold some sort of celebration either as a Birthday Party or Christmas Party, depending on the availability of a hall and the form of entertainment chosen. We are also planning a Barn Dance for early in 1980 to repeat our success of January of this year but we have not yet fixed a firm date.

R. L. Sims.