



High Wycombe Society

HON.

SECRETARY: J SCRUTON 17 LONDON ROAD HIGH WYCOMBE BUCKS
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NEWSLETTER NUMBER 39

WINTER 1979/80



FROGMOOR

The Trust Deed of 1877, when the Frogmoor was given to the Town Council by Alderman Griffiths, states:

"Hereby conveyed to the Mayor, Alderman and Burgesses of High Wycombe and their successors to be held and enjoyed for the purposes of a Public Garden, Public Walks or Pleasure Ground and to be maintained and kept up for the use of the Public forever".

Since that time Frogmoor has deteriorated and is now hardly a place of pleasure. The strange thing is that people still congregate there despite the depressing surroundings. Obviously there is a need for an open area and it seems time for the conditions of the gift to be honoured.

In their latest Local Plan document the District Council have suggested that Frogmoor and Temple End should be declared a Special area as it retains some interesting buildings and remnants of Wycombe's old character. There is enormous scope for improvements and we hope the District Council will have another look at the 1973 plan of landscaping which was put aside because of lack of funds. Improvements to Frogmoor would be a real shot in the arm and would do a great deal to lift up our spirits. How much better to sit in a garden instead of a concrete and tarmac jungle!

FESTIVAL EXHIBITION, MARCH 1980

We are planning our contribution to the Wycombe Arts Festival, 1980, and we hope to stage an Exhibition about the Woodlands and Watery features of Wycombe, dealing with our surrounding woodlands, and the River Wye. It is possible that some of our members may be able to help with material, such as old photographs of local woodlands and the River, documents, and other written material. If you have anything which may be useful please let the Hon. Secretary know. Great care would be taken in using material, which of course would be returned to the owner.

Jack Scruton

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS GROUP

The Old Chequers

Our principal witness at the Public Inquiry in 1973 - Chris Wallis - prepared a comprehensive list of questions and queries challenging the action taken by the Wycombe District Council in demolishing the upper storey of the Old Chequers. These were submitted to the Council, but they are not prepared to answer them. We have sent full details of the tragic events to the Secretary of State and we have been informed that a "substantive reply" will be sent soon. It is apparent that the owners of the lease are planning to submit an application to demolish the rest of the building and to replace it with a replica, and in this they will have the support of the District Council.

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The attempt was made at both Public Inquiries by the developers, and supported by the local authority, that a replica should be accepted in place of the genuine historic building. This idea was rejected as such a building was considered of "no historic interest", and a very inferior substitute.

The future of the building and site is very uncertain. If the Chequers is demolished it will be a grievous loss and one which was wholly unnecessary and undeserved. Newcomers to the town will have known only an "eyesore", but 'locals' and those who have been here for a while will remember it before it was imprisoned in its unnecessary scaffolding - a building of great attraction with its triple gables and its vital position in the Conservation Area. To lose the Chequers will mean the loss of the last substantial timber-framed building in the town, and it will be a constant reminder of the vulnerability of our dwindling heritage.

A VISIT TO AVEBURY

We are hoping to arrange a coach trip in the Summer, perhaps in May or June, to visit Avebury, with its Stone Circle, and a wealth of interesting historical features, including fine timber-framed houses, an Elizabethan mansion, and absorbing museums. If you are interested in going on such an outing, please contact Walter Newall, 2 Plomer Hill - Tel. H.W. 21332.

GEORGIAN BUILDINGS

On November 28th a very interesting joint meeting of the Chiltern Society and High Wycombe Society took place in the Guildhall, when Mr Arthur Radley of the Georgian Group spoke about "The Protection of Georgian Buildings", and showed superb slides of buildings lost, saved, or under threat. His talk emphasised the changing mood regarding our splendid Georgian heritage, which was until recent times looked upon by many people with something approaching contempt. Mr Radley inspired us with a determination to do all we can to protect our remaining Georgian heritage. Our thanks again to Mike Hammett for helping with the slides and for providing an interesting mini exhibit of Georgian buildings in High Wycombe. Our thanks too to Janet Tully and helpers for providing in miraculous fashion refreshments, despite the daunting difficulties.

Jack Scruton

PLANNING GROUP

County Structure Plan

The Secretary of State proposed a series of amendments to the County Structure Plan, and all those individuals and organisations who took part in the original discussions were invited to comment before final decisions were made. Some of the amendments were a serious threat to future Green Belt boundaries, and would weaken the protection for other areas of open countryside. Proposals to increase the population figures for the South of the County seemed to lack a sound foundation and would lead to needless loss of our dwindling countryside. We opposed these amendments, as did the Chiltern Society and the Council for the Protection of Rural England. We felt that the boundaries of the town should remain. Otherwise smaller and separate communities near to Wycombe could easily be swallowed. There are many outstanding Planning Applications within the town boundaries still to be taken up, and "desert areas used as temporary" open car parks, or simply lying idle. To use our precious countryside and valuable agricultural land, while there are opportunities elsewhere, would be a move of extreme folly.

We have now heard that the Secretary of State has approved the Structure Plan and the increase of predicted population figures. We do not know yet about the decision regarding our other objections, but we are not optimistic.

LOCAL PLANS

Continuing their policy of consulting the general public about the creation of a Local Plan for High Wycombe and District, the Wycombe District Council has now published three more documents for discussion.

These are No. 4 Community Facilities and Recreations (20p)

No. 5 Landscape and the Rural Environment (30p)

No. 6 Townscape and Urban Environment (30p)

The Wycombe District Council would be very pleased if as many people as possible would read the documents and make their comments on the form provided. The procedure is a simple one. We hope many of our members will do this. The Local Plan will affect all of us very closely and the Council is anxious to produce the best possible plan.

Copies are on sale at the Wycombe District Offices at 80 Oxford Road and Queen Victoria Road.

THE "BIFFA" APPLICATION

The Planning Application by the Biffa organisation to use land in the Green Belt near Loudwater as a dump for waste materials was refused by the Wycombe District Council, with nearly all the Councillors vehemently opposed to the plan. The campaign against this serious threat to the Loudwater area had the support of all the local residents and organisations, including the High Wycombe Society. The fierce opposition was justified and we hope the County Council Planning Committee will feel the same way.

JACKSON'S MILL, BOURNE END

An application has been submitted to demolish industrial buildings at Jackson's Mill site at Bourne End and to build two very large warehouses - one to replace the industrial buildings, and the other to swallow land which once formed part of the well known Jackson's Playing Field.

The Bourne End Residents' Association have opposed the application because of the very serious consequences which could arise, with regard to the effect on local residents, the increasing traffic, the loss of the open area, and the probable destruction of fine trees. We have supported them and we hope that the District Council will not allow this enormous intrusion into an area incapable of absorbing such punishment.

The District Council has said that Bourne End lacks proper residential facilities. Here is a remedy for this situation. Jackson's Old Sports Field should be bought or leased for the benefit of the local residents.

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OLD WATERCRESS BEDS, BOWDEN LANE

Our efforts to save the land lying between Bowden Lane and Bassetsbury Lane have failed. This land was earmarked on the Town Map for use as Public Open Space, but the District Council failed to seize the opportunity to buy the land, and it has now received planning approval for one house.

All our pleas to officials and Councillors fell on deaf ears, apart from one or two notable exceptions. The community has lost a piece of land which could have been a very fine continuation of the Rye and Holywell Mead, and a stretch of the attractive back stream will remain always in private hands. This is a most disappointing and disheartening result.

TREES GROUP

Rosemary Shooter

Braving bitterly cold weather 28 First and Middle Schools from Wycombe and Marlow took part in National Tree Planting week from November 10th to 18th this year. This is now firmly established as an annual event and was obviously enjoyed by all who took part, including the Mayor and Mayoress of High Wycombe, Councillor and Mrs Robinson, and Mr Ensor, Chairman of the Wycombe District Council. Trees were planted at Imbies Holdings Phase I, Holmers Farm Estate, Hughenden Park, the Cemetery in Hampden Road, and the Ridgeway and Bobmoor Lane, Marlow. The selection of trees chosen to plant was very pleasing, and included Oak, Hornbeam, Poplar, Beech and Robinia.

On Saturday, December 8th, members of the Society planted a Hornbeam tree on the Rye in memory of Jim Cottrell. Patrick Reyntiens, speaking to the sizeable gathering, said he was sure that whilst Jim would enjoy Heaven - Heaven would enjoy Jim. Jack Scruton outlined briefly the very active part Jim had taken in Wycombe life. We are grateful to Martin Ward, Wycombe District Council arboriculturalist, for giving his own time to supervise the planting.



We hope you have all seen the fine plaque made by Martin Kipping and now installed in Paul's Row Garden to inform the public of the origin and purpose of the garden. This was unveiled by the Mayor of High Wycombe in a simple ceremony on Saturday November 3rd. Ideas for improving other derelict areas by creating gardens are being circulated. The task is not difficult, but volunteers are needed. Please contact Jack Scruton if you are interested.

WATER GROUP

Barbara Rippington

GOOD NEWS! PROPOSED CULVERTING OF THE MILL STREAM AT RYE MILL GARAGE

In our last Newsletter we mentioned a Public Inquiry which had been held to decide the application by Rye Mill Garage to culvert the Mill Stream, and use the covering for displaying cars.

The decision of the Inspector was against the Garage and in favour of the District Council supported by the Society. He considered that the display of cars in such close proximity to our beautiful Rye and the adjacent Conservation Area would be unwise, and would mar the sudden and unexpected view of the open space when approached from the East. He considered that although the Mill stream had been neglected, it was a public amenity, and should not be covered up.

Since the Inquiry the Mill stream has been cleaned by the District Council and now looks far more attractive.

NOT SUCH GOOD NEWS. PANN MILL MACHINERY

Although we managed to get planning permission for rehousing the Pann Mill machinery, we have failed to get a grant to pay for the work. The District Council has just informed us that the application was considered by the Lottery Sub-Committee, the Recreation and Amenities Committee, and the Finance and General Purposes Committee, but they felt unable to approve a grant at the present time despite feeling a great deal of sympathy for the project. This is a great disappointment as it would have been a worthwhile venture. The wheel and machinery are interesting pieces of our industrial archaeology, but housed in a very dismal way. The Pann Mill site is a very beautiful one and ought to have something a good deal better in this prominent position.

Sheila Latimer

HERITAGE GROUP

The Group has approached the Wycombe District Council about two problems which have defied solution for a long time - the possibility of a traffic free High Street, or something approaching that, and the need to do something about poor old Frogmoor, (See page one).

TRAFFIC IN THE HIGH STREET

We have again stressed that the removal or reduction of High Street traffic would not be a novelty peculiar to High Wycombe. Similar schemes operate successfully all over this country and throughout Europe, and have benefited everybody, including local traders. The shoppers and other pedestrians of High Wycombe have suffered long enough and some kind of speedy action is needed.

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CO-OP STORES, HIGH STREET

Have you noticed the Co-op Stores in the High Street? After years of neglect the dull concrete slab has been painted, new sash windows inserted to match adjoining buildings, and a much superior shop front installed. We have moaned about the building for a long time, but now let us praise this fine effort - and hope they will carry on the good work on their listed building next door.

QUARTERLY MEETING

Bill Wilson

On 17th October, Mr Robert Huddleston, a practising landscape architect, spoke to us about "British Landscaping in Decline", and showed some fine slides to illustrate his point of view.

Since the great days of the 18th and 19th Centuries, we seem to have lost ground compared with other countries, and much of our landscaping today is shoddy and unattractive. He considers that we should pay far more attention to tree planting and durable schemes including paving, and not be so obsessed with bedding plants and grassy areas, which often create maintenance problems and are not cheaper in the long run. He was optimistic about the future. Some of our landscaping equals the best in the world and he feels sure we can reach the top once more.

Mr Huddleston was most interesting and deserves our praise too for his willingness to travel from Bristol and return there after a very demanding session in the Guildhall.

FUTURE EVENTS

Jack Scruton

Wednesday
23rd January 1980
7.45 p.m. in the Guildhall

Quarterly Meeting. Tony Aldous,
Environmental and Architectural Journalist
Topic of his own choice.

Wednesday
30th January 1980
7.30 p.m. in the Lecture
Hall of the College of
Higher Education
Queen Alexandra Road.

Meeting arranged in conjunction with the
Bucks Archaeological Society and the
High Wycombe Society. Lecture on "Air
Photography and the Archaeologist" by D R
Wilson, Senior Assistant in Research to
Professor St. Joseph at Cambridge University

Friday
25th April 1980
8 p.m. in the Guildhall

Annual General Meeting of the Society
Film Show:
"A Better Britain" and "Environment in
the Balance".

Friday
4th July 1980
8 p.m. to midnight
Wednesday
22nd October 1980
8 pm in the Guildhall

Dance to music of New Crusaders Steel Band
Venue to be arranged.

Quarterly Meeting. Tom Porter, writer and
Senior Lecturer at the Oxford Polytechnic,
will give illustrated talk on "Colour in
Architecture".



JIM. COTTRELL'S
HORNBEAM FROM
THE RYE.

HEAVY LORRIES

A National Inquiry is now undertaking a wide ranging study of heavy lorries and their effect upon people and the environment. Many Amenity Societies, including our Society, have submitted evidence to the Inquiry panel, and the Civic Trust has compiled a comprehensive report based upon evidence from all quarters. The Trust has consistently opposed the increase in numbers of heavy lorries and the constant pressure from the road lobby to introduce heavier lorries.

Recent reports confirming the extensive damage to our roads by the heavy lorry should be timely ammunition.

The Civic Trust has drawn attention to the ever worsening situation and has stated that unless the nature of the problem is properly understood, deterioration will continue.

Ian Stone

POSTMEN - AND WOMEN^o.

We would be unable to distribute so many letters and Newsletters but for our valiant "postmen" and "postwomen", who plod around their area delivering them. If we had to use postage stamps for all our correspondence we would soon be bankrupt. We are very grateful for this great help and would like to hear from anyone else willing to help in this way. Volunteers should contact the Hon. Secretary.

AGM of the Historic Buildings Group

This was held in the Guildhall on 5th December, with Ted Kearney in the Chair. Janet Tully produced a comprehensive report of the year's activities, and a new Committee was elected, comprising the previous members plus two new ones - Louise Scull and Ena Perkins.

The Main attraction of the evening was the County Field Archaeologist, Mike Farley, B.A., who gave us a very interesting talk on the Archaeology of Buildings. It was a change for the Group to hear about looking for evidence of buildings under the ground or just on the surface, rather than those that we see all around us and which are in everyday use. Mr Farley started by saying that most evidence of early buildings of the Neolithic times consisted of post holes. These were excavated, measured and then drawn on a plan. With a little imagination it was possible to create a fairly accurate picture of those early times. We were then taken on a journey through the Iron Age, the Roman occupation, Saxon settlements, right through to deserted Medieval villages. The slides used were excellent and we are indebted to Mr Farley for a fascinating evening.

Stuart King