



High Wycombe Society

HON.

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

NEWSLETTER NO. 40

SPRING 1980

The Changing Face of the High Street

Recently, Macfisheries and International Stores have announced their intention to close their shops in the High Street during March. Added to this is the retirement of the proprietor of Davy's Toy Shop and the removal to Castle Street of Bernatone who occupied 3, High Street. In one fell swoop, we may well experience the possible loss of four retail trading units in our High Street. International Stores will re-open as a Discount Showroom, and an estate agents and an employment bureau have expressed interest in two other shops. None of these enterprises is the kind of trade we would want to see established in the High Street. Once change of use is approved, then the retail use is lost for ever. We are continually opposing applications for change of use as we feel that a High Street needs shops if it is not to stagnate into a lifeless string of offices. Easton Street is already a backwater - is the High Street to become an extension of that?

Janet Tully

PLANNING GROUP

The Biffa Tip

The Biffa organisation, as expected, has appealed to the Secretary of State against the refusal of their planning application by the Wycombe District Council. The local residents and other local organisations have banded themselves together in support of the Council and have formed an Action Group, the Dereham Valley Action Committee. The proposal to use part of Upper Derehams Farm, Loudwater as a massive refuse tip is a fearful prospect for the locality and one which should be of widespread concern in High Wycombe. We have opposed the application and strongly support the Action Group. One of the immediate needs, of course, is money to pay for legal representation and expert witnesses. We make this urgent appeal to all our members and Affiliated Societies to help in this crucial battle by sending donations to the Hon. Secretary.

Structure Plan

As feared, the objections of the various Amenity Societies have been ignored by the Secretary of State and the amended Structure Plan is now the policy document for the County. The main changes are:-

- a) Insistence on the original (and limited) role of the Green Belt but reducing its permanence by subjecting the boundaries to variation to accommodate "acceptable expansion of built-up areas";
- b) Requiring the County to accommodate (in South Bucks) a larger by 7,500 (not smaller) population by 1991. With this exception, growth should be restrained in South Bucks and both the Green Belt and the AONB should be safeguarded;
- c) Restrictions on small scale industrial and commercial development should be less restrictive so as not to threaten the vitality of rural communities.

We are troubled by the weakening of the protection for areas of open countryside and by the complex statement about the Green Belt boundaries being in line with "acceptable long term expansion of the built-up areas"!

High Wycombe Area District Plan

We have made our comments to the District Council about Policy Papers Nos. 4, 5 and 6 and the following is a brief summary of our response.

Community Facilities and Recreations

We asked that there should be better arrangements for people in many areas of Wycombe with the provision of Health Centres or more surgeries. Elderly people and young mothers with children do need extra help.

We supported the efforts made to provide physical recreation facilities but deplored the complete omission of any references to or plans for the Arts. The need for good hotel(s) was also apparent.

Landscape and the Rural Environment

We agree with the need to protect the urban fringe of woodland areas against the impact of nearby estates.

We believe that there should be careful examination of any further use of open countryside for school use (in view of falling rolls) and for cemeteries.

We agree that wherever possible, public service uses such as telephone cables, should be transmitted underground.

We believe that wherever possible land used for recreational activities should be land of limited agricultural use.

Townscape and the Urban Environment

We supported the intention to pursue a policy of improvement in the Conservation Areas, especially High Wycombe.

We welcomed the suggestion that additional Special Areas should be defined where strict planning controls would be enforced.

We supported the District Council's intentions to insist on the highest standard in the design of new developments and the need for a basic guide would seem to be a very useful aid to applicants. We expressed our concern about the great need to ensure adequate landscaping of new developments, with strict enforcement of tree planting.

We supported the District Council's plans for street tree planting.

We agreed with the sentiments expressed about the protection of Listed Buildings which was at variance with past history, including the attitude of the Council to its own Listed Buildings. We asked that the present niggardly grant be increased.

We supported the Council's intention to improve dismal parts of the town. We drew attention to the appalling approaches to the town from both East and West on the A.40, the Eastern Desert and Frogmoor.

We felt that more prominence should be given to the River Wye which runs throughout the Plan Area and we urged that there be no more culverting or canalising.

Rosemary Shooter

KATHLEEN PEATEY

Our congratulations go to Councillor Mrs Kathleen Peatey who has been elected and will be installed as Town Mayor in May. We value Kathleen as one of our members who has helped the Society a great deal. Because of her Council commitments, she is unable to give as much help to the Society as she formerly did. She is always prepared to fight for what she considers to be right in environmental matters. We all remember her great success as Chairman of the Jubilee Committee and we feel sure that she will be just as successful as the new Town Mayor.

Jack Scruton

HISTORIC BUILDINGS GROUP

Operation Barns.

Sunday, 20th January - Rendezvous Rockalls Farm 1400 hrs. An assignment for M1 5? Something much more interesting, an assembly point for a group of members and families of the Society.

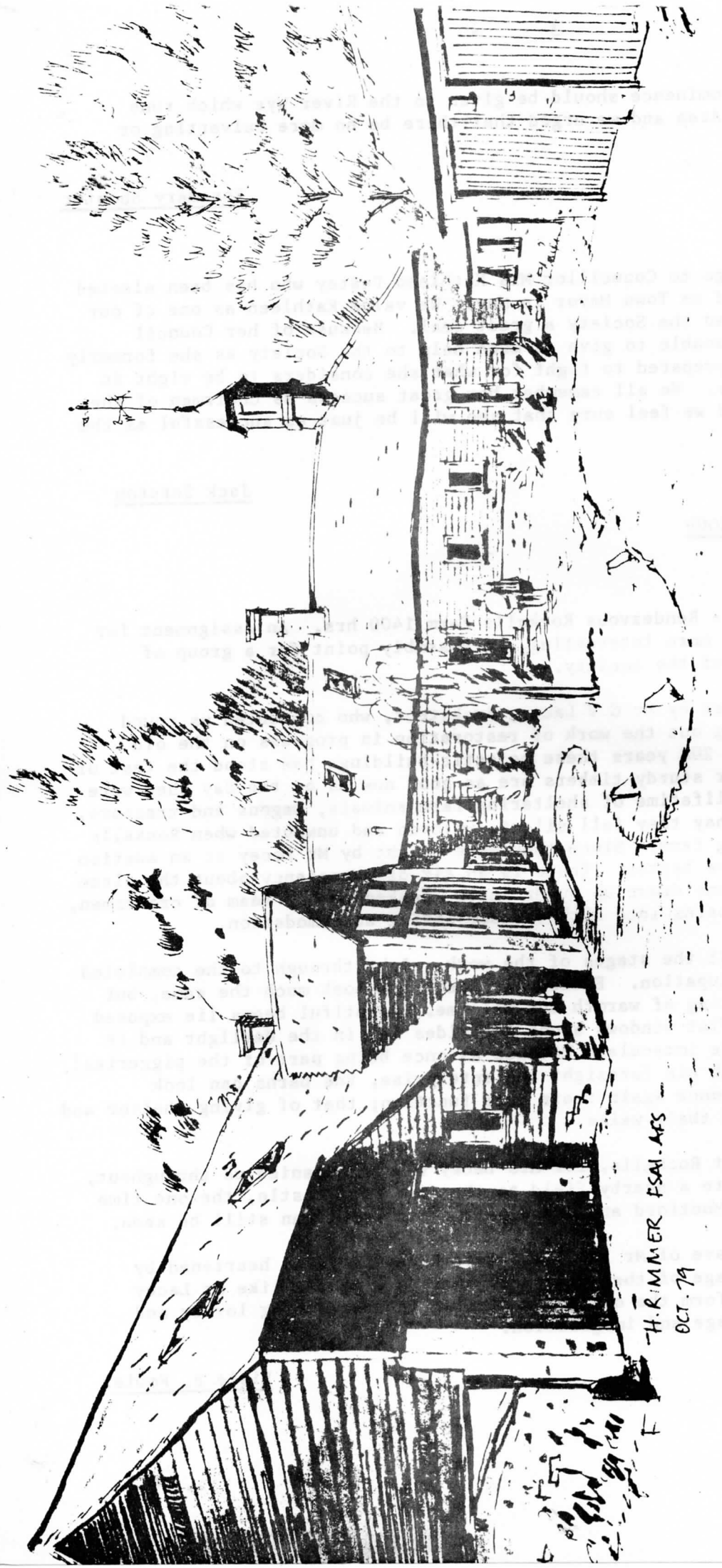
At Rockalls we were met by Mr G V Lacey, Architect, who conducted us round the Farmyard, pointing out the work of restoration in progress on the old farm barns. For over 200 years these majestic buildings had stood the test of time and most of their sturdy timbers are as good now as on the day they were first used. After a lifetime of sheltering farm animals, wagons and tractors, of storing grain and hay they fell silent, unloved and unwanted when Rockalls ceased to be a working farm. Since they were bought by Mr Lacey at an auction all has changed for the better. There is an air of expectancy about the place as the imaginative plans drawn up by Mr Lacey, backed by his team of craftsmen, are transforming the barns into 20th century living accommodation.

We were able to see all the stages of the work, right through to the completed barn now ready for occupation. Externally the barns look much the same, but inside there is a feeling of warmth and welcome. Beautiful beams lie exposed against white walls, flat windows along the sides let in the daylight and it was hard to imagine the immaculate kitchen as once being part of the piggeries! Thanks to Mr Lacey with his foresight and enterprise, the barns can look forward to fulfilling once again their true function; that of giving shelter and security to all within their walls.

There is history too at Rockalls, for Mrs Lacey who accompanied us throughout, took a splinter group to a nearby field to the site of a castle, the one time residence of Simon de Montford and where part of the moat can still be seen.

Reluctantly we took leave of Mr Lacey and left Rockalls Farm, heartened by the fact that in this age of the bulldozer, there are people like Mr Lacey who can and will transform the old and neglected into something lovely and useful with great courage and imagination.

Elsie B. Fowler



H. RIMMER PSAL. APS
OCT. 79

The Barns four ashes



Funges Farm

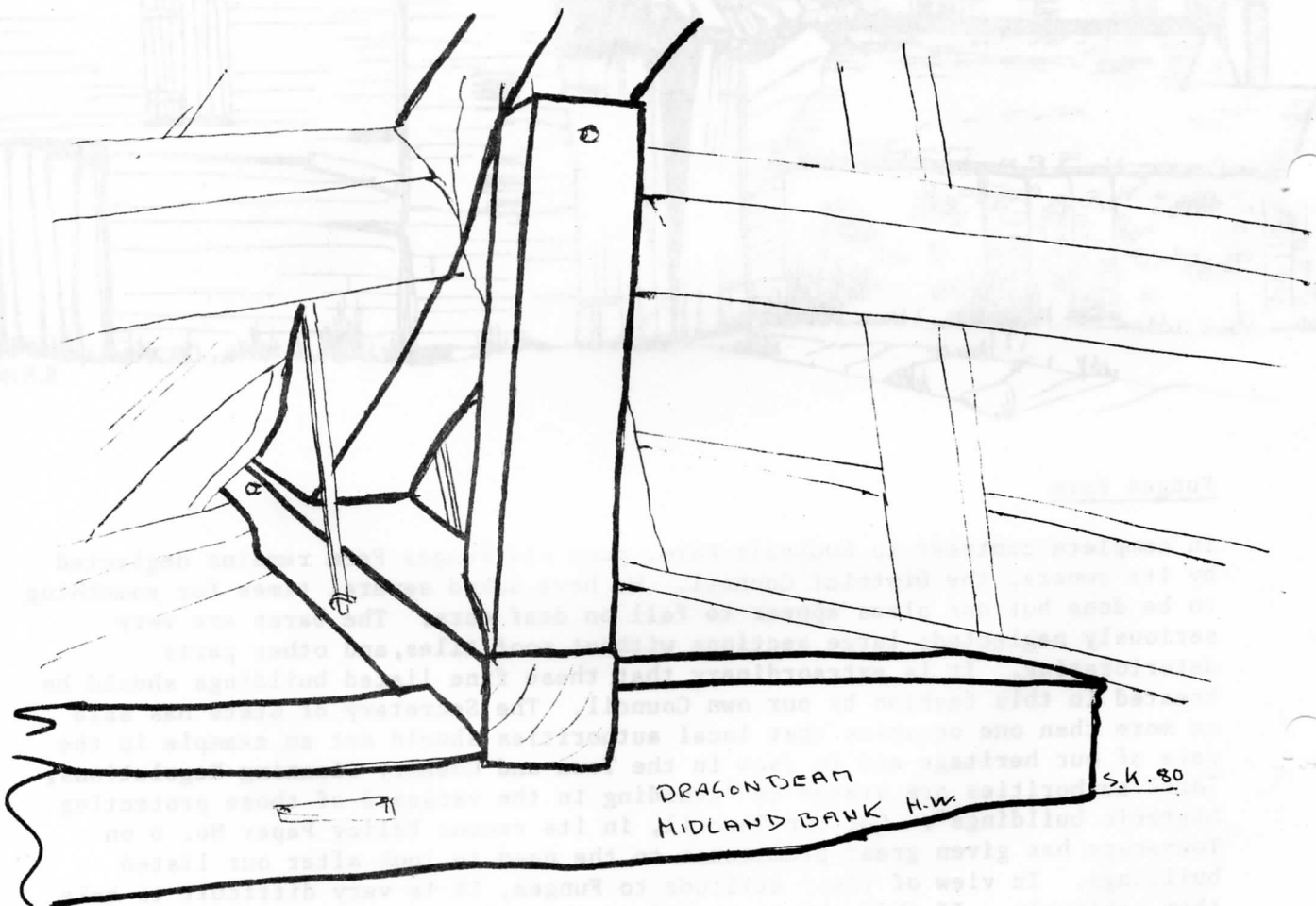
In complete contrast to Rockalls Farm, poor old Funges Farm remains neglected by its owners, the District Council. We have asked several times for something to be done but our pleas appear to fall on deaf ears. The barns are very seriously neglected; large sections without roof tiles, and other parts deteriorating. It is extraordinary that these fine listed buildings should be treated in this fashion by our own Council. The Secretary of State has said on more than one occasion that local authorities should set an example in the care of our heritage and in fact in the Town and Country Planning Regulations, local authorities are stated as 'standing in the vanguard of those protecting historic buildings'. Our own Council, in its recent Policy Paper No. 6 on Townscape has given great prominence to the need to look after our listed buildings. In view of their attitude to Funges, it is very difficult to take them seriously. If they choose to defend themselves by talking about expense, they are on very shaky ground as continued neglect will only greatly increase the cost of eventual restoration. There must be many people like Mr Lacey who would be eager to take over the farm and outbuildings and create an attractive courtyard of residential buildings as has been done at other places such as Flint Hall Farm and Widmer Farm.

In view of the rapidly worsening condition of the barns and its prominent position in the Conservation Area, we hope that the District Council will carry out urgent repairs and decide as soon as possible the future of the buildings.

Jack Scruton

Midland Bank, High Wycombe

A rare invitation was extended to the High Wycombe Society recently by a firm of architects involved with improvements to the Midland Bank in the High Street. The reason for the invitation was to inspect the roof timbers and to photograph them before they are replaced as a matter of necessity. The timbers are mainly of oak and probably 17th century and may have originated in some other building. The oak timbers are supplemented with some 19th century deal timbers that have been re-used. One of the main tie beams has been sawn through to accommodate a doorway and another has fractured right through. The most interesting feature to my mind was the presence of a dragon beam at one corner. What a pity more such co-operation is not forthcoming from other owners of interesting old buildings contemplating alterations.



Stuart King

Old Chequers

The Department of the Environment has at last replied to the very strong representations we made about demolition carried out by the Wycombe District Council. The secretary of State is 'not in a position to adjudicate' about the Council's action. We are now considering with the Chiltern Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings on our next course of action.

Ted Kearney

HERITAGE GROUP

After a most convivial meeting at a watering hole in the depths of the Western Desert it seemed appropriate to members of the Group that much encouragement should be given to the Wycombe District Council for their proposal to make the Green Street district into a General Improvement Area. Members of the Group (with or without a vested interest) attended a crowded public meeting on Friday, 29th February 1980 at Green Street School when there was general approval for the scheme. This is not going to be an easy task for the Council Officers but with courage and determination they could transform the Western Desert. We mentioned the possibility of the complete demolition of the Belle Vue Engineering Works which lie in the middle of the proposed General Improvement Area. Most of the buildings are very ugly and the kind of work which is carried out is disagreeable and nobody would mourn their disappearance. However, one building is rather different. It is possibly the only surviving wooden cladded timber factory so typical of the early furniture industry. It could be a very fine focal point within the General improvement Area and we feel it should be retained.

Concern was expressed, and action proposed, about the condition of the Guildhall in general. The large number of pigeons that roost in the Guildhall are becoming a serious problem as they disfigure the building and surrounding pavements. We are also concerned about the plans for the improvements of the Guildhall toilets. We do need better toilet facilities but the proposed closure of the passage way would seriously impede the movement of pedestrians who use the Guildhall area.

Matters are still proceeding co-operatively over the facade of Bristol and West Building Society in the High Street. We are hoping that the whole terrace will be redecorated in the near future.

Letters of mutual pleasure were exchanged between the Group and Doug Hodson, owner of Fagins Wine Bar in Easton Street for his splendid restoration of an extremely dilapidated Victorian building and for bringing new life to what was a rather dull corner of the town.

Good news also was received in that a reprint has been ordered of our Town Trail (7,000 copies sold). Our trails and Rye booklet continue to sell very well. This has been due, to a large extent, to the sterling efforts of Bob Curtis at the Environmental Studies Centre in Gordon Road. Since these publications are being sold in large numbers to school children, this serves the dual purpose of inspiring interest and pride in our town and restoring the funds of our Society.

Recently it was proposed that some vital parts of our Conservation Area should have tarmac instead of paving stones. The reasons given seemed to be largely ones of safety. Fortunately, the councillors rejected the proposal and we find this encouraging. Tarmac is a most depressing feature of far too many of the town's pavements, especially in the Conservation Area. It is doubtful if it is safer than paving stones and it is far less durable and uncomfortable in hot weather. It could be that the substitution of tarmac would be far more expensive in the long run. It is the duty of the District Council to enhance Conservation Areas and we have asked them if they would consider substituting paving stones for stretches of tarmac in the Conservation Area.

Bill Willson

NATIONAL TRUST, WYCOMBE CENTRE

The Wycombe Centre of the National Trust held its first Annual General Meeting on 25th February in the British Legion Hall and about 150 members attended. The programme for the coming season was attached to the last newsletter and it includes talks on 'The Avon and Kennet Canals', 'Ceramics at Clandon Park' and 'The Thames into Oxfordshire' and also outings to Waddesdon Manor and Chelsea Flower Show. Cliveden Open Air Theatre this summer will include performances of 'Twelfth Night' and 'The Merchant of Venice'. Some members will be able to give practical help to the Trust by stewarding at these performances, by recruiting and guiding at Trust properties and by helping with car parking at Hughenden Manor. The Centre's own project is to raise £150 for a collecting box on West Wycombe Hill.

Olivia Price

WYCOMBE ARTS FESTIVAL EXHIBITION 1980

This article was written just before the Festival Exhibition opened on Monday, 17th March and with an anxious exhibition team hoping that it would all come together in the end. We believe that it will be very colourful and the theme of 'Trees and Woodlands of Wycombe' is certainly one of the most important ones that could have been chosen. We are indebted to a large number of organisations and many talented individuals for the wonderful response and we are grateful to the members of the Society who have agreed to look after the Exhibition. We hope that large numbers of townsfolk will visit it!

Barbara Rippington

QUARTERLY MEETING

Tony Aldous, well known writer and journalist spoke to our Society at the Quarterly Meeting held at the Guildhall on Wednesday, 23rd January 1980. With his attractive personality and his wide knowledge of environmental problems, his talk was most interesting and encouraging. He ranged widely over all aspects of Conservation and then dwelt particularly on the protection of our historic buildings and Conservation Areas. He stressed that we must expect changes to occur but that there was no reason why historic buildings should disappear or be mutilated and that great thought must be given to improving the familiar townscape. He felt that Wycombe had still many attractive features and that our handsome High Street deserved some kind of traffic restriction. The one place that had sent a chill down his spine was the bus station! We are sure that most of us would agree with him.

Roger Lawson

ARCHAEOLOGY FROM THE AIR

This was the title of a lecture at Bucks College on Wednesday, 30th January 1980 given by Mr D R Wilson assistant to Professor St. Joseph at Cambridge University. Although not arranged by the Society, we were well represented in the audience. The slides showed the remarkable difference in sites when viewed from above the ground and how some features undetected at ground level became clearly visible once airborne. Crop marks, the different rates of growth in crops and grass, attributable to lack of moisture because of remains of previous buildings under the ground, was the basis of his lecture. He went on to explain how this could not only help to detect archaeological sites not otherwise discernible, but also help 'digs' in progress find the most advantageous places to explore further. It was a most interesting talk and his enthusiasm for his work came over strongly.

Janet Tully

FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS!

Chesham Walkabout

A Walkabout in Old Chesham has been arranged between the Chesham Society and the High Wycombe Society on Sunday, 11th May at 2.30 p.m. Councillor A H J Baines M.A., C.C. currently the Mayor of Chesham, will conduct the walk with particular emphasis on the many interesting and ancient town buildings. The afternoon will be concluded with tea on the lawn of a typical Chesham town cottage, by courtesy of the Chesham Society.

The Historic Buildings Group put great importance upon these interchanges with other Societies. Apart from the social aspect, exchanges of views and experiences can only be beneficial. Only a limited number can be catered for so please let us know at an early date if you wish to come. Please ring Janet Tully - Penn (81) 3253.

Stuart King

Canal Trip

Instead of the trip we had hoped to plan for Avebury as mentioned in our last Newsletter, we have instead arranged a Canal Trip on the delightful Kennet-Avon Canal. As those who have been on previous canal trips will testify, this is a most pleasant experience at a tempo far removed from everyday life. The horse drawn boat travels through the gentle Berkshire countryside broken only by the sound of horsehooves upon the towpath and the rush of water from the paddles filling the locks.

The coach will leave Stewart & Arnold's (Newlands) at 10.30 a.m. and arrive at approximately 11.45 a.m. at Kintbury. The Canal trip is from 12 noon to 4.00 p.m. to Hungerford Turn and Back. The Coach returns to Wycombe at approximately 5.15 p.m. A packed lunch will be needed but there is a tea-shop and bar aboard. If you would like to come on this trip, please get in touch with me as soon as possible. Price £3.00 inclusive of coach and canal trip.

Derek Woods
19, Adelaide Road
H.W. 20284

Dances

Last year we held two dances. The first, in January, was a great success and we were asked to hold another in the Barn Dance style. The second, in July, was an even greater success and arrangements are already in hand for a repeat performance for the enjoyment of the Society's members. This year it is hoped to improve on last year's tally of two dances and hold three and possibly other social events as well. It is felt that the social side of the Society could be built up and raise funds to pay for the non-paying work done by the Society.

Last year at the Annual General Meeting our President, Patrick Reyntiens, offered the Society the use of his hall for the purpose of holding a dance and arrangements are now being made to take up this kind offer on Saturday, 26th April. For the benefit of those who do not know it, the hall is situated next door to the Parish Church at Beaconsfield and entrance to it is obtained from Windsor End. The wide gravel verge in Windsor End will provide space more than sufficient for car parking. The Casa Loma Orchestra will provide

the music and application has been made for a licence. Tickets will cost £2.50 to include a buffet supper and will be available strictly on a 'first come, first serve' basis from Ron Sims at 19, Wordsworth Road, High Wycombe. Telephone: High Wycombe 40800.

We expect demand for tickets to be greater than space will allow so we urge members to apply early to avoid disappointment.

The Swimming Pool on the Rye has been booked for the Summer Dance and also the New Crusaders Steel Band. This will be held on Friday, 4th July. Details of prices and tickets will be available later.

The Society will be twelve years old in November and it is felt this is a cause for celebration of some description. Watch this space!

We would like to go further and hold more events with even greater variety. This depends on whether we can recruit additional members to help in the Social activities. If you would like to help with this interesting work, please contact me at High Wycombe 40800.

Ron Sims

FUTURE PROGRAMME

Friday, 25th April 1980

Annual General Meeting in the Guildhall
7.45 p.m. for 8.00 p.m. Films to be shown
are 'A Better Britain' and 'Environment in
the Balance'.

Saturday, 26th April 1980

Dance at Beaconsfield 8.00 p.m. - Midnight
Tickets £2.50 each to include buffet supper
from Ron Sims - H.W. 40800

Saturday, 10th May 1980

Canal Trip on the Kennet - Avon Canal.
Coach leaves High Wycombe (Stewart & Arnold's)
at 10.30 a.m. Return to Wycombe approximately
5.15 p.m. Please bring a picnic lunch.

Sunday, 11th May 1980

Walkabout of Old Chesham in company with
members of the Chesham Society. Please
contact Janet Tully - Penn 3253.

Friday, 4th July 1980

Grand Dance at the Open Air Swimming Pool
Holywell Mead. 8.00 p.m. - Midnight with
music of the New Crusaders Steel Band.

Wednesday, 8th October 1980

Susan Cowdy of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon
Naturalists Trust will give an illustrated
talk on 'Wild Life of the Chilterns'.
8.00 p.m. in the Guildhall.

Wednesday, 22nd October 1980

Quarterly Meeting in the Guildhall 8.00 p.m.
Tom Porter, writer and Senior Lecturer at
the Oxford Polytechnic, will give an
illustrated talk on 'Colour in Architecture'.

OBITUARY

The Society has suffered two sad losses recently in the deaths of Sam Tordoff and Walter Newall. The Tordoff family have been strong supporters of the Society almost from the beginning and we extend to Mrs Brenda Tordoff and family our deepest sympathy. Walter Newall played a prominent part in so many Societies and gave a great deal to our own. He was a member of our Executive Committee and the Historic Buildings Group and we shall miss him for so many reasons, not least his extraordinary gifts in folk singing which enlivened our social occasions. We extend to both families our profound sympathies. With their agreement, we intend to commemorate Sam and Walter by further tree plantings on the Rye in the Autumn.

Jack Scruton