



HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

(Registered with the Civic Trust)

Hon. Secretary:
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NEWSLETTER No. 57. WINTER 1984/85.

SEASON'S GREETINGS.

This Newsletter may reach you after the Christmas holiday and at a time when you are not feeling so full of cheer, with the dreary days of winter to be got through somehow! Your Executive Committee hope that you had a very happy Christmas and that 1985 will be a good year for all our members and affiliated Societies. We look forward to your continued support during the year - it looks as if we are going to need it more than ever.

Ted Kearney. Chairman.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.

Congratulations to the Chamber of Trade (and the Wycombe District Council), for providing lights for Christmas in the Town Centre. The notion to invite Howard Jones to switch on the lights certainly set the town alight. The journey in an open top bus along the High Street and into a crowded Frogmoor was exciting and showed the Wycombe people at their best, with people of all ages to greet their pop star and to applaud the switching on of the lights. And what a relief to the Chamber of Trade when the lights came on without a hitch! The Chamber deserves praise for its perseverance, and so does the bus driver for avoiding all the young fans who dodged perilously in front of the bus! We hope that local traders will benefit from all their efforts.

Jack Scruton.

PLANNING.

New Bus Station and Multi-Storey Car Park.

Apparently we are not alone in opposition to the plans to build a new Bus Station and Multi-Storey Car Park behind the High Street. The British Legion in St. Mary Street is most apprehensive about the impact which would be made on its building and outlook, and is convinced that the total effect will be ruinous. The Liberal Club is also worried, and we believe the Prudential Insurance Company is also resisting. A Compulsory Purchase Order has been submitted by the District Council to the Department of the Environment, and a Public Inquiry is likely.

Green Hill.

Between 6th and 12th November took place the important Public Inquiry concerning Green Hill, where Jeanes Developments are hoping to build houses on the beautiful slope running from Green Wood and Green Hill Wood down to the Hughenden Road. Houses we may need, but not in this part of the Chiltern Area of Natural Beauty, and the application aroused fierce opposition from the local residents and from this Society in support of the Wycombe District Council. It was encouraging to see the large number of local residents who attended, some of whom spoke on behalf of the Brands Hill and Green Hill Residents' Associations. Two Ward Councillors, Councillors Secker and Sherwood, spent a great deal of time at the Inquiry in support of their constituents.

The final decision will be crucial, in view of the great importance and beauty of the Hughenden Valley. We must all hope that the Inspector will recommend refusal of the application and that the Secretary of State will dismiss the Appeal.

Wesley Church, Hall and Manse.

The Wesley Church, backed by a firm of developers, made a further application to build an office block on the Priory Road site, and in the process to demolish the Church Hall and Manse. From the proceeds a new Hall was planned and funds would be provided for long term maintenance, with of course substantial reward to the developers for bringing it all about.

We supported the Wycombe District Council in their opposition to the proposals, and there were other bodies who were also disturbed, including the Victorian Society, the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, the Bucks Housing Association, and most of all the residents of Castle Place, who would have had a fearful outlook in the overpowering presence of a towering office block and external car park.

We appreciate that the Wesleyans do have maintenance problems, but to attempt to solve these in the fashion proposed would have caused serious problems. The Wycombe District Council rightly refused the application for overwhelming reasons.

There is no doubt that a sensible and much worthier solution would be to explore the possibility of housing, which is sorely needed near the Town Centre. The money gained would not be so great, but the contribution to the Town's welfare would be so much more beneficial.

It is surprising that the concern over maintenance voiced by the Church is not matched by simple prudence. For a very long time several slates have been missing from the Hall roof, allowing a great deal of water to penetrate the building.

Walter Kraft.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT WEEK - 27th APRIL TO 6th MAY, 1985.

The Civic Trust has decided that it is time the Amenity movement came out of the shadows and showed the people in each locality the kind of work carried out by each Society. There are a 1000 or so Societies, all playing a useful part in their communities, but it is doubtful if people outside the movement have much idea of their achievements.

In order to bring this work to the notice of the whole country, the Civic Trust has decided to ask all Societies to support an Environment Week, from 27th April to 6th May, 1985. Your Committee feels very strongly that we should support this campaign, which will probably be given prominence on T.V., Radio and the National press.

We hope to stage an Exhibition in the Public Library depicting the work of the Society, and also arrange a display and activity on the Pann Mill site. We hope to publish an illustrated booklet about the Mill, giving an account of its long history. We are also planning a musical evening with supper in the Oak Room on Saturday, 4th May, which we hope will be well supported. We have arranged with the County Architect for the floodlighting of the Hospice Ruins to celebrate both the 700th Town Anniversary of the Mayoralty and of Environment Week. We are hoping that the Bucks Free Press will look kindly on our work and give generous coverage.

We hope that our members and affiliated Societies will help us to make the week a great success. If any members have ideas about further ways of celebrating the week, your Hon. Secretary would be pleased to hear about them.

PANN MILL - FLOUR OF THE WYE.

1984 was certainly a very good year for the heritage of flour milling on the River Wye. Pann Mill, whose corn milling history started in Saxon times, had by June, 1984, received a splendid new building with sufficient internal space for winnowing, milling, and sieving wholemeal flour, together with internal sluice gate controls, a sack hoist, and electricity generation, all from the power of water! This building is the first important step towards corn and grist milling once more, on this unique mill site. Marks and Spencer celebrated their centenary year in High Wycombe by giving our town the mill building in 1984, aided with timely financial help from the Lottery Fund administered by the Wycombe District Council, who own the site.

Every weekend since the end of June, volunteers of the Society have made considerable progress on the outside of the mill building. Historic timbers, mill parts, and materials for a temporary workshop have arrived in preparation for the time when internal restoration begins in earnest. The Water Wheel is nearing completion of the lime scale descaling stage, and will soon be ready for "shot blasting", followed immediately by a modern paint system to protect the wheel in the years to come. New paddles, new cast iron "starts", large bolts and their nuts, will also be needed to fully restore the 16 foot diameter undershot Water Wheel to its former glory!

Essential millwrighting tools have been purchased from a newly formed "Pann Mill Fund". The Airflow Community has provided the initiative by donating £1000, and is to be congratulated for this generosity, and in being the first to come forward now that the machinery is being restored.

We will always need money, but other Companies and individuals are helping with the offer of materials and services free of charge. "Barnes Branch", of Brook Street, have delivered English oak timbers for a new water wheel sluice gate, and Isontool Company, of Baker Street, are supplying the stainless steel tie bars and associated blocks and washers. Even an Enfield, Middlesex, Company called "County and Capital Metals Ltd." has supplied the stainless waterbar material free of charge. All money, materials and services donated will receive full accreditation in the form of a permanent display for visitors to see inside the completed mill.

Christopher Wallis of the Chiltern Society, has been of enormous help to the restoration, with generous gifts of historic timbers, milling parts, workshop materials, and not least his time! This in spite of heavy commitments in restoring many historic mills throughout the country.

Finally, whilst 1984 was a very good year for Pann Mill, the top priority for 1985 will be the erection of a temporary workshop close to the Thames Water Pumping Station on the mill island. If any High Wycombe Society member wishes to share the privilege of restoring Pann Mill, then he or she can do no better than help to erect this workshop soon. So please don't hesitate to phone High Wycombe 37242 and ask for Brian!

Brian Honess.

SPRING NEWSLETTER.

If any members of Affiliated Societies have any articles or other material for our Spring Newsletter, please send it to reach our Editor by 15th March, 1985. The address is:

Anna Birks, Inver Farm, Radnage, Bledlow Ridge, Bucks.

CIVIC TRUST AWARD SITE.

We would be remiss if we failed to congratulate the District Council for its efficiency in re-instating the Civic Trust Award site by the side of the Council offices. Indeed it gives us great pleasure to do so, as its former delightful appeal is almost completely regained.

The provision of an access road to the rear of the Council offices was a necessity, Council officials felt, for the safe transfer of cash to security vehicles, and the new brick road has been sympathetically designed. Perhaps the metal poles are rather unsightly, but the motoring public needs to be prevented from transgressing.

Could we simultaneously award ourselves a pat on the back for the preservation of this part of the award scheme area? We feel that it is due in no small way to our efforts that the turf has been relaid. Some members of the Council thought it would be a good idea to put the whole area under hard surfacing for extra car parking. But the Society's determined resistance to each new planning application played a large part in persuading the Planning Committee that the site must not be used as a Car Park, and ensured that the green grass returned.

Anna Birks.

FUTURE PROGRAMME.

Please make a note of these in your diary and give them as much support as possible.

Ron Sims.

Wednesday, 23rd January, 1985. 8 p.m. in the Royal British Legion Hall, St. Mary Street.

Mike Farley, County Field Archaeologist. An illustrated lecture looking at recent discoveries of the County's buried past.

Tuesday, 23rd April, 1985. 7.45 p.m. in the Royal British Legion Hall, St. Mary Street.

Annual General Meeting of the Society. To be followed by musical entertainment. Refreshments available.

Saturday, 16th March, 1985 to Saturday, 30th March, 1985, in the Guildhall, High Wycombe.

Wycombe Arts Festival Exhibition from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily except Sunday. To celebrate 700th Anniversary of Town's Mayoralty. (At the moment there is some uncertainty concerning provision of screens).

Saturday, 27th April, 1985 to Monday, 6th May, 1985.

National Environment Week with a variety of activities. Further details in this Newsletter and later.

Tuesday, 11th June, 1985, in the Royal British Legion Hall, St. Mary Street, at 8 p.m.

Brian Williamson, Field Officer of the B.B.O.N.T., will give an illustrated talk about B.B.O.N.T. and its Reserves.

At a date to be arranged - possibly in September or October, 1985.

Edward Cullinan, well known architect, will talk about his work and architecture in general. Further details later.