

HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

(Registered with the Civic Trust)

Hon. Secretary:
J. Scruton Esq.,
17 London Road,
High Wycombe,
Bucks. HP11 1BJ.

Tel: High Wycombe 25933

Registered Charity No. 257897

NEWSLETTER NO. 58 SPRING 1985

WYCOMBE CELEBRATES

A mere 50 years to the third quarter millenium celebrations of Wycombe's Mayoralty, and we need volunteers now! Never again must we try to put this type of exhibition together in just six months. Our Hon. Secretary's skill (if he will accept a bouquet) is to persuade everybody that he or she is the most important person. So I came to think that I could more or less do this exhibition by myself. Just a few scripts, a few captions - which I did. The libraries of the Society and the local Council would provide a few photographs, and there you are. I soon learned that much more was required!

Members and friends contributed a great deal of material, in addition to what was readily available. All this had to be typed, mounted, arranged and put on cards. Thanks are due to the inventor of Blue Tack, without whose invention we, rather than the exhibits, would have been stuck.

Thanks are due to Mr. Ashford, not only for allowing us to use his book on the history of High Wycombe, but above all, for writing it. If I may say so with all modesty, it is not the only book I have read, or the first book, but it is easily amongst the best.

Most of the things we wanted to know, they were right there. Thanks are also due to Mayes and Mr. Sparkes for permission to use their books. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Reference Library who were most cheerful and helpful in response to the most unusual requests. I know they can't have read all the books, but often it seemed to me as if they had. A tribute is due to the comprehensive stock of books held in the library. When I wanted Coats of Arms, I went specially to the College of Heraldry in London, when I was told that they could not help, but that I would find what I wanted in the Victorian History of Bucks - which is on the shelves of our library.

Thanks to Krystyna Barrow for her outstanding posters. Thanks are due to Ron Goodearl and Bob Mead for the use of their photos. Lovell PLC lent us the screens, and Electric Installations of Desborough Road lent us lighting. Many thanks to them. Thanks are due to the Wycombe District Council for the use of the Guildhall and the Arts Festival Committee for including this event in their programme.

There is more to it than I had space to mention, so this must serve as thanks to everyone who has helped.

Walter Kraft

THE CHILTERN SOCIETY SMALL WOODLAND PROJECT



In 1982, during which time I was Chairman of the Chiltern Society, I became alarmed by reports of the poor health of the Chiltern woodlands and statements by the foresters that many woods, particularly areas of less than 10 hectares, were unlikely to survive more than another thirty years without drastic action. As no other body appeared able or willing to intervene it was decided that the Chiltern Society must take the lead.

There followed negotiations with the Countryside Commission, the Bucks County Council, Chiltern Standing Conference and the Manpower Services Commission. This latter body agreed, under the provisions of the Community Programme, to fund wages and some of the running costs; the rest of the running costs are provided by the Chiltern local authorities, Countryside Commission and by donations from owners in return for work done by the project team.

A Project Officer, John Morris, who had been working in Dorset woodlands, a work party of six men (three of them part-time), a supervisor, and a part-time typist were engaged. An office was provided by the Forestry Commission, a work base provided by the Wycombe District Council and a minibus was purchased. The Project was ready to go into the woods; work began on 22nd August 1983.

The objects of the project are to encourage owners of small woods to adopt approved management techniques. The Project Officer visits owners, gives advice, draws attention to sources of grant aid and, if required, prepares a management plan. Where an owner shows enthusiasm he may be offered help by the work party. This help is normally confined to a small section of the wood as a demonstration of what is required and in expectation of the owner continuing on the same lines. The party has thinned trees where there is overcrowding, re-established old coppice, cleared scrub and weeds and planted trees. By the end of February the Project Officer had visited 53 woods (15 in Wycombe District), in 28 of which the work party was involved (6 in Wycombe District). This winter 3,500 trees have been planted in 12 woods.

During the first year we spent £42,145 (£34,783 from the M.S.C.). The project is concerned with the whole of the Chilterns; it was originally intended to continue for three years, but is now expected to be extended to five years.

For 1985 the staff has been increased by an assistant project officer, a charge hand, a part-time graphics expert and three part-time labourers. The address of the project is: Forest District Office, Upper Icknield Way, Aston Clinton, Aylesbury, HP22 5N4

C.E. Mills
Vice-Chairman
Chiltern Society

OBITUARIES

We regret to report that two of our older members who have been loyal supporters for a long time died recently. We extend our sympathy to their families. They were Mr. F. Winter and the Rev. Firth.

THE THREAT TO RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

Our District Council is particularly anxious to keep all residential properties as homes, but the policy is under constant threat of change of use to office or other commercial activities. The Council has to be vigilant all the time to protect homes, and in this the Society supports the Council entirely.

It may puzzle some as to why these changes are sought, when there is so much office accommodation lying empty. The answer of course is expense - residential accommodation is so much cheaper to acquire. This problem is of the greatest importance for Wycombe as it is essential for homes in the town to be retained. Housing people is of far greater importance than providing extra office accommodation.

In the eastern part of the town, the District Council has been particularly anxious to protect the houses in the Conservation Area which face the Rye, many of which are listed buildings. A number of houses over the years have been changed to office accommodation, but the District Council set a very firm policy in 1973 to prevent further losses. This has not prevented further serious attempts to change some of the remaining residential accommodation into offices or other commercial use. All these applications have been refused by the District Council.

This did not deter one firm of local Solicitors. They have moved boldly into No. 23 London Road despite the refusal of their application. They have appealed against the Council Enforcement Order and by further planning applications they seek to prolong their stay and perhaps win the battle. This kind of behaviour is certainly unexpected having regard to the profession concerned. A similar application for change of use was applied for at No. 37, but the applicants involved prudently did not move in and the application has subsequently been refused.

We shall support the Council very strongly in its stand. To allow this change of use would mean that all the residential properties in the area would be under serious threat. London Road would lose its character, valuable homes would be lost forever, and the great mistake of Easton Street would be repeated.

Jack Scruton

T.W.I.G.

The Group has slowly declined in numbers, mainly due to members leaving the district for sunnier or not-so-distant climes. This has resulted in sparsely attended meetings. Although regular monthly or bi-monthly informal gatherings have helped us in the past to keep up the momentum of the Group activities, it has now been decided to meet only at the special request from a member. Regular discussion meetings will be re-introduced when T.W.I.G. has increased with active participants.

Therefore anyone within the Society who would like to consider an active part in Trees 'n' Water Interests activities should contact Roger Lawson on H.M. 28047. We would be very pleased to hear from you.

There is however one aspect of our programme which we are determined to keep rollin' - and this is work on the Pann Mill Project. This has naturally slowed down during the recent bad winter weather. Full marks have to be awarded to Brian Honess and Mike Horwood for dedication to duty; they repaired Brian's garage to work on the new sluice gate whilst snow lay thick upon the ground.

The Wycombe District Council have shown a welcome and continuing co-operation by presenting the requisite planning application for a temporary workshop at Pann Mill to the planning committee of councillors, with approval being granted.

Construction of this workshop, to protect the materials for the mill machinery, has now commenced on the mill island. Anyone wishing to contribute some effort and a little of their time to the Pann Mill Project should contact Brian Honess on H.W. 37242 to register their interest.

The considerable earthworks created by the Council on the Pann Mill site during the flood alleviation work on the river channel will be landscaped by them when the new foot bridges have been completed. We hope to contribute some practical further enhancement of this landscaping, in the form of plants or shrubs, so that the mill island will soon revert to peace and tranquility again, in a natural setting.

Roger Lawson

CANAL CRUISE

What better way to spend a day! I have hired the Horse-drawn boat "Kennet Valley" for yet another trip on the popular run between Kintbury and Hungerford - a delightful stretch of the "Avon & Kennet" Canal system.

Interested?

Date: Saturday 1st June 1985

Leaving Wycombe by Coach 10 am.

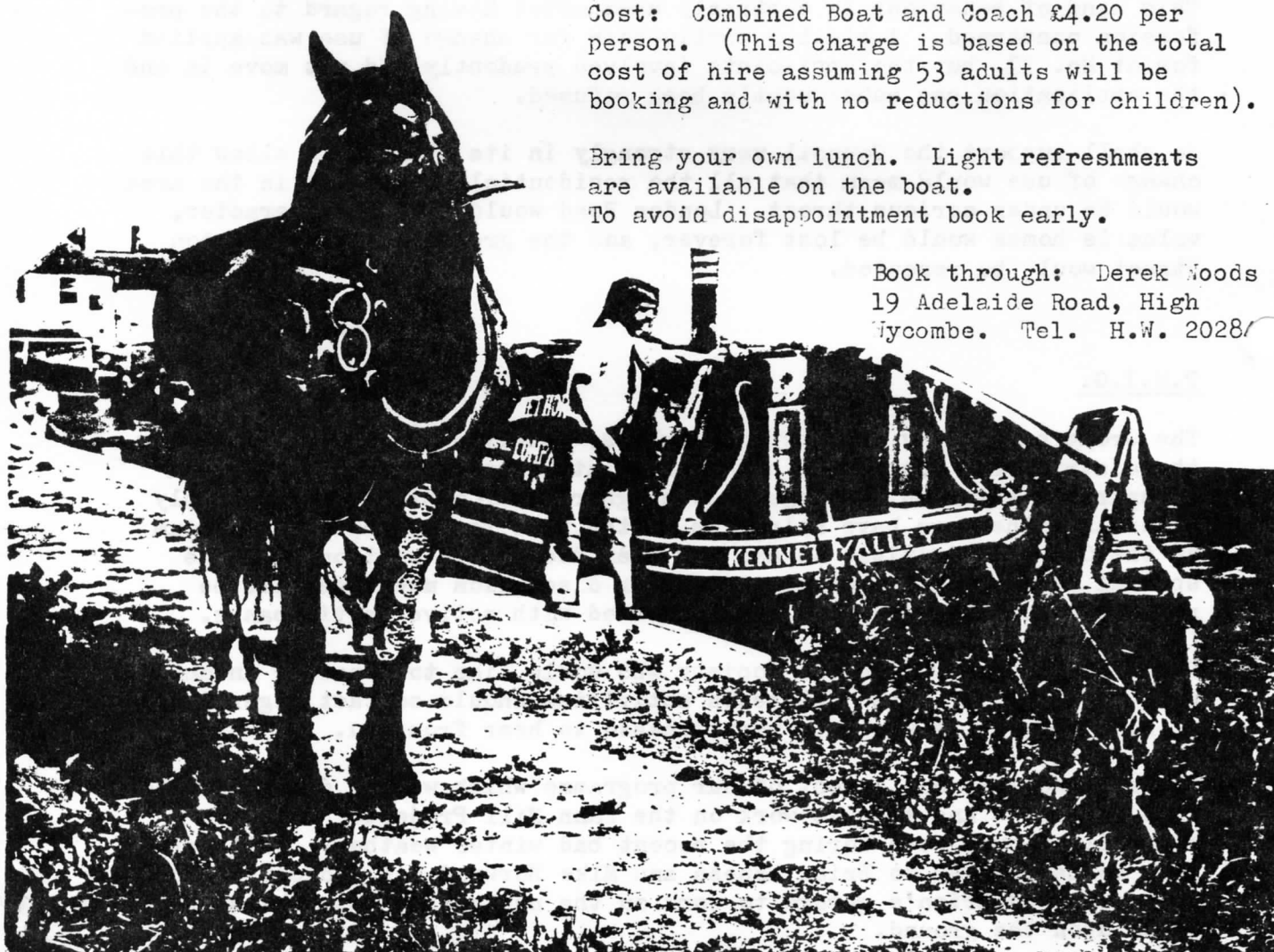
Return Wycombe E.T.A. 5 pm.

Cost: Combined Boat and Coach £4.20 per person. (This charge is based on the total cost of hire assuming 53 adults will be booking and with no reductions for children).

Bring your own lunch. Light refreshments are available on the boat.

To avoid disappointment book early.

Book through: Derek Woods
19 Adelaide Road, High
Wycombe. Tel. H.W. 2028/



MOTORWAYS

The conflict of interests over motorways approved and proposed rumbles on like the juggernauts. The reborn Council for the Preservation Rural England voice their concern over a number of issues in their spring edition of the "Countryside Campaigner". The latest battle concerns the Department of Transport's wish to push a £113 million dual carriageway through the north Northamptonshire Uplands, hard by the historic civil war battle site at Naseby. This would eventually link the West Midlands with the industrial heartlands of the Ruhr in West Germany via East Anglia's Haven Ports.

The CPRE is contesting this idea fiercely nationally, as they also did with the M40 proposed extension to Birmingham, alas now to become a reality.

The CPRE's case is to support a far more sensitive alternative route rather than the most direct line between A and B cutting a swathe through virgin countryside. This idea is considered now to be completely out of date, England being too small and heavily populated to afford this sort of luxury (paraphrasing Lady Juliet Townsend of CPRE's Northamptonshire Branch).

Detailed evidence by the CPRE's national planning specialist Tony Long shows that a major new road can give rise to land use pressures attracting super-stores, warehouses and the like to Green Belt sites, (our fears for the extension to the M40). Yet these side effects are ignored at Road Inquiries which concern themselves solely with traffic. The Department of Transport dumps the consequences of its activities in the laps of local people.

To add a further twist to the problem, the influential National Economic Development Office has just published a new report called "A Fairer and Faster Route to Major Road Construction". This urges the Government to make sharp changes to public inquiry procedures. Suspicions have already been voiced that the proposed changes could simply make the road lobby's job easier. There is also an implicit threat to national environmental bodies such as the CPRE in that they could be excluded from particular inquiries.

In the same issue there is a report on an interview with Tony de Boer, Chairman of the British Road Federation and lobbyist par excellence. In answer to the question "Do you think public transport inquiries should look explicitly at this development issue; in other words the wider and environment costs of new roads" he replied:

"We can't deny the point you're making. Roads can have two obvious and opposite effects. They bring goods and investment to an area. And, equally efficiently, they can take them both out. But we say that planning procedures should protect against over-development and ensure as far as possible that development remains attractive in its own right in relation to the transport opportunities. No road should ever be built unless it can be justified in terms of social and environmental benefits. We would want to see that formula being as rich and significant as possible at public inquiries".

The BRF does claim to have the "ear of Government" at the moment. But from what has happened recently one of those ears must be deaf - or perhaps the Government does only possess one ear.

Ted Kearney

SUBSCRIPTIONS

It will be proposed at the A.G.M. to increase the subscription rate; if your sub. is due, why not pay now and avoid the increase!

ENVIRONMENT WEEK - APRIL 27th to MAY 6th

by Michael Middleton C.B.E., Director of the Civic Trust

There is an intrinsic contradiction within the amenity movement. Its history, in this country, goes back 150 years. It comprises a thousand or so local societies including High Wycombe. Its combined membership of around 350,000 is larger than that of some of the national political parties. Yet, by very reason of its local loyalties, local commitments, its collective 'image' remains more shadowy than its collective achievements warrant.

An opportunity to correct the balance is offered in 1985. The Civic Trust is initiating 'Environment Week', to run between Saturday 27th April and Monday 6th May inclusive, the aim being for all registered societies to mount projects and programmes between those dates, aimed at stimulating public concern, strengthening their own position, and extending understanding of the movement.

If 1985 proves the success it promises to be, there is no reason why 'Environment Week' should not build up steadily, year by year, until it is a recognised event in the national calendar - a clarion call to the wider public, an unprecedented shopwindow for societies locally and nationally.

Many urgent problems press in upon the nation today. As they clamour for our attention it is easy to lose sight of that special element in the quality of life which has come to be called 'amenity'. But environmental quality is not, in the view of the Civic Trust, an optional extra. It bears directly upon such matters as the readiness of industry to relocate, to the nature of the 'product' offered by the tourist industry, to public morale in decaying areas. Society's standards generally are the touchstone to its health and the quality of the environment, in our view, has a very direct bearing upon national self-respect and local pride.

Today our environmental problems are so complex that it is beyond the capacity of any single organisation to solve all but the smallest. The demands for available funds are becoming ever more competitive. Local authorities are having to cut back in all directions. In these circumstances the challenges and opportunities facing local societies are greater than ever before. Societies are committed and self-motivated; unencumbered by big administrations they can move speedily and flexibly; they have no axe to grind - other than that of quality - and can afford to take the long view. They are thus in a very special position to initiate proposals, for partnerships, carry the wider public with them.

'Environment Week 1985' offers a marvellous opportunity for the amenity movement to extend its constituency, increase its membership and its resources, and to contribute to a national campaign in a way that has never before been possible.

HOSPICE RUINS

You may have noticed a small paragraph in the Bucks Free Press informing everyone that the Hospice Ruins are now floodlit, and crediting the High Wycombe Society with helping to bring this about. As these are the most familiar ruins in High Wycombe, the Society is pleased to be associated with their floodlighting, and would like to extend thanks to Mr. Paul Markrow, County Architect of Bucks County Council, who listened to our pleas and made it happen.

PAVEMENTS ARE FOR PEDESTRIANS

Chances are that at some time in our lives we are all pedestrians, motorists, and cyclists. Traditionally motorists and cyclists (except those under a certain age) were allocated the road, and pedestrians the pavement if there was one. However all this seems to be changing. Pavements are not now, it seems, the sole preserve of pedestrians, but also double as free car parks and cycle tracks for those cyclists too petrified to risk their lives on the main roads.

I must confess to being one of the latter, but only on very under-used pavements where they occur alongside particularly dangerous roads. I know that I am breaking the law, but I prefer to do that and risk the consequences rather than risk being killed by cycling on roads which have no provision whatsoever for cyclists. Such I believe is the rationale of the growing number of cyclists who now cycle on the pavements.

Car parking on the pavements cannot be justified on the same grounds of self-preservation, and is, I believe, purely due to bone idleness and lack of consideration for others. Many times when my children were in a pram, my wife has had to push the pram off the pavement into the main road in order to get past a car or lorry parked so as to block the pavement.



High Wycombe is a town where car parking appears to be at a premium, or will be if all the latest development proposals go ahead. Surely this is a good reason for encouraging as many people as possible to walk or cycle in and out of town. There is in fact considerable evidence that more people would cycle if it were safe to do so.

The pavements are indisputably for pedestrians, and it is to be greatly regretted that the strategy document for High Wycombe makes not one single reference to future provision for cyclists. Motorists will get their very expensive car parks, and will no doubt continue to park on the pavements. Pedestrians may get a pedestrianised town centre if they permit the construction of the inner relief road. The inner relief road, because of the increased traffic flow it will permit, will drive more cyclists on to the pavements, or will lead them to put their bikes away forever, and that would be a great shame.

Malcolm Barnett

700th ANNIVERSARY OF WYCOMBE MAYORALTY

By now everyone in the town will (hopefully) be aware that 1985 is the 700th Anniversary of the Mayoralty in High Wycombe. Many events are planned to take place throughout the year, but the prime event is going to be the Anniversary Carnival, which will take place on Sunday 30th June.

This will be starting with a procession of floats departing from Mill End Road at 2.30 pm and ending on the Rye between 3.30 and 4 pm, where there will be stalls and more events taking place. The office of 'Town Crier' is to be re-instated, and a competition will be held to discover who will occupy this position. The stalls will be both charity and trade, and a funfair will be in full swing.

High Wycombe Society will be having an Open Day at Pann Mill and this will give good publicity to our achievement so far in its restoration programme. The mill is particularly relevant to the 700 years celebrations as it is one of the few things that are known still to be in existence since 1285.

So if you still haven't visited Pann Mill, make 30th June the day you do, and enjoy the Carnival at the same time!

Anna Birks

FUTURE PROGRAMME

The following events have been arranged and we hope you will make a note of these in your diary.

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

Wycombe Arts Festival Exhibition from 10 - 6 daily except Sunday. To celebrate the 700th Anniversary of the Town's Mayoralty.

Tuesday 23rd April 1985 in the British Legion Hall, St. Mary St, High Wycombe at 7.45 pm

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

Saturday 27th April - Monday 6th May 1985

National Environment Week. Exhibition in Central Library.

Friday 4th May 1985 in the Oak Room, Town Hall, High Wycombe at 8 pm

An evening's entertainment of music with supper, bar available, tickets £4.

Saturday 1st June 1985

Canal Trip. See details inside this Newsletter.

Tuesday 11th June 1985 in the Royal British Legion Hall, St. Mary St, High Wycombe at 8 pm.

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

Friday 11th October 1985 in the Royal British Legion Hall, St. Mary St, High Wycombe at 8 pm

Edward Cullinan, one of Britain's most famous architects, will give an illustrated talk.