



HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

(Registered with the Civic Trust)

Hon. Secretary:
J. Scruton Esq.,
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NEWSLETTER NO. 60 AUTUMN 1985



Planning

HOUSING IN HIGH WYCOMBE AND DISTRICT - A PLEA FOR HELP

As our Members and Affiliated Societies will no doubt know, the Secretary of State still wishes to impose 2700 extra houses on South Bucks, with the Wycombe District allotted the lion's share of 1800. This proposal has been made despite the strong recommendation to reduce the number to 2000 made by the Panel in their report of the detailed Examination in Public, which was held in February 1983. At this Examination the High Wycombe Society was one of 700 objectors to the additional housing, and these included the County and Wycombe District Councils, and many other organisations. The Secretary of State admits that the additional 2700 houses will result in the loss of green field sites, but considers this of less importance than the encouragement of private ownership in places where people wish to live. This is a dangerous philosophy in a place like South Bucks, which is under tremendous pressure and should clearly be an area of great restraint. What it really amounts to is the reluctance of any Minister to admit he might be wrong. The Panel was a distinguished one and their duty was carried out in the most democratic manner possible. To refuse to agree with the most important recommendation made by the Panel makes a farce of the democratic process.

This is a matter of great concern to all those living in Wycombe and District and we ask for the support of all our members and Affiliated Societies in our efforts to convince the Secretary of State that the Panel was right. Although representations are supposed to be sent by 1st October, the D. of E. has stated that a few days grace will be permitted, so please hurry.

The address to write to is:

Regional Director,

Department of the Environment,

Charles House,

375 Kensington High Street,

London W14 8QH

quoting reference E1/5044/490/3

Ted Kearney

Town Centre Strategy

It appears that there is a new opportunity to consider the future of our Town Centre now that the original strategy is in some disarray. The withdrawal of the Bus Company from the plan to relocate the Bus Station behind the High Street must be a severe blow to the District Council, but its disappointment is not shared by large numbers of local people. The Town Centre Strategy document was really thrust upon the town without any real or widespread public discussion, and we hope that much greater general involvement will be sought in the preparation of future plans.

Before the unfortunate combination of Bus Station and Multi-storey Car Park was proposed, the District Council had made a very different proposal in an unpublished Draft Long Term Strategy Statement. In this the plan for the site behind the High Street was considered. It was stated that 'the development of the area South of the High Street makes a positive contribution to the town, and in addition to the public parking mentioned (before) the civic/community complex should also be promoted in this area which adjoins the existing library and town hall. This complex should include an element of specialised small scale shopping and should, if possible, incorporate a centre for the visual and performing arts, and be carefully integrated with the High Street environmental improvement scheme, so as to achieve a development that will re-inforce and enhance the status of the historic part of the town centre'.

This admirable plan was put aside when there was felt to be a need to use the existing bus station for large departmental stores, and the site to the South of the High Street sacrificed for a new bus station and multi-storey car park.

The District Council is anxious to build a comprehensive Arts Centre and this deserves widespread support, although we have heard disturbing rumours that the present Library building is threatened and the Town Hall is to be invaded. Certainly the town needs extra Library facilities, but there is surely scope for considerable extra space without removing a familiar building which fits in very well with the other Civic buildings. In the Town Centre Strategy Document there was no mention of any interference with the Library or the Town Hall.

The one obstacle to achieving great things on a superb site is the present determination of the Council to build a multi-storey car park - something altogether at odds with the need to re-inforce and enhance the status of the historic part of the town centre.

Jack Scruton

No Second Golf Course for High Wycombe

Cows may safely graze on Church Farm, Hughenden Valley, and on Naphill Farm, Naphill, at least for the time being. The fact that dairy farming is no longer as profitable as it was until recently, with butter mountains and milk lakes, was considered an inadequate reason for turning 195 acres of agricultural land into a Golf Course in competition with the Council's own Golf Course.

The Planning Officer's report to the Planning Committee ran into 9 pages, and even so, this was only a brief summary. Thus, 2 letters from the High Wycombe Society were compressed, very fairly, to a mere 7 lines. There had been 298 other letters of opposition, apart from representations, all more or less unfavourable from the Hughenden Parish Council, County Engineer, County Planning Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, National Farmers Union, National Trust, Ramblers Association, C.P.R.E., and the Chiltern Society.

The application was refused because the proposal would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and no evidence had been adduced to justify the loss of agricultural land.

Walter Kraft

Carnival Day

Sunday 30th June, and the morning sees our Hon. Sec. and Chairman in West Wycombe village transforming a horse and cart into an olde worlde haywain. With an expert piece of carpentry by Colin Adams, decorations by Elizabeth Robins and lettering by Krystyna, it soon looks admirable. A quick pint of Guinness at the Swan for Sammy the horse and he is ready to pull our entry in the Carnival procession. The entourage leaves for Mill End Road.

Owen Hudson, the owner of the horse and cart, and his friend Joan dress up as Cavalier and Cinderella and are joined by Roger Lawson as 16th Century nobleman, young Paul Honess as Robin Hood, Elizabeth Williams, Myra King and Frances Williams as serving wenches. (The costumes were kindly hired to us by Jolliffe's of Marlow at special discount). The procession sets off at 2 o'clock, we bring up the rear in case Sammy leaves a memento on the road.

At the Rye, final destination of the procession, great activity is taking place at Pann Mill. Exploiting our excellent location, a team of members sell homemade cakes and squash (kindly donated by Marks and Spencers) and draw the public's attention to the mill. They are dressed as millers in clothing donated by Rank Hovis McDougal, and we also have sacks of stoneground flour to sell donated by Pitstone Farm. We take £170 which leaves us a profit of £130 after expenses, and this goes to the Pann Mill Project. A large sack of oats is Sammy's reward.

The stalls, arena events and funfair on the Rye all added to the excitement of the best Carnival day ever seen in Wycombe, held in celebration of the 700 years of the Mayoralty. It was undoubtedly a great success for all concerned not least because of the excellent weather. Our special thanks to Owen Hudson for his horse and cart - what would we have done without him!



Illustration by Elizabeth Williams

Little Boxes

It has long been a source of amusement to me to see how when houses change hands they frequently change character too. Extensions are added - outwards or upwards, sometimes in both directions, front doors are changed, porches stuck on, windows are altered and, worst of all, stone cladding appears. Whilst this can be seen as an expression of the new owners wish to impose his/her personality on the dwelling, the change is often so great that I wonder what appealed to them about it in the first place. Almost invariably the house looks sorrier for the change, 'tarted up' in accessories it wasn't made for and doesn't quite know how to wear, out of sympathy with its neighbours and embarrassedly self-conscious, especially in terraces. Apologising for its owners lack of understanding, it evokes pity.

This year's Victorian Society Annual publishes an article by Roger France, tutor in Urban Conservation at Oxford Polytechnic, who writes with deep concern at what he calls 'permitted development or permitted destruction'. Character of places, he says, is defined by a conglomeration of detail - fences, porches, cobbled surfaces, building materials, in the same way that people are defined by complexion of their skin, character of their wrinkles and their hairstyle, rather than by the shape of their skeleton.



This detail on buildings is exempt from planning control. It is permitted under the General Development Order, schedule 1 of Article 3. Here are listed 23 categories where works of development can take place without planning consent including, in the case of dwelling houses:

up to a maximum of 15% of the cubic content of the original house (or up to 10% for terraced houses)

the erection of porches up to 2 square metres in area
vehicle hardstandings

buildings or enclosures incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling house -
(how is this defined?)

Therefore this tacky building development takes place. Tacky because it is rarely undertaken by qualified architects or designers. It is usually done by small builders, 'cowboys' or do-it-yourself enthusiasts, and both the quality of the materials and the workmanship are questionable. And there is a lack of accountability. Stone cladding is causing disquiet in some areas. Lambeth Council has recently warned householders that it can seriously damage their houses, reduce their value and ruin the look of the street, pointing out that water can penetrate the joints, freeze and force off the cladding, as well as increase the risk of dry rot. Islington has warned similarly.

However, if the local authority feels, or is persuaded sufficiently, they can act under an Article 4 Direction. Article 3 specifies 'if ... the Secretary of State or the ... local planning authority is satisfied ... that development

continued next page....

should not be carried out in any particular area ... unless permission is granted ... the Secretary of State or the ... local planning authority may direct that the permission granted by Article 3 ... shall not apply ...'

Local Planning Authorities are renowned for saying they are too short of staff, or that they have other more pressing social priorities. It is up to us to initiate proposals and press for agreed standards of acceptability with respect to all features of Schedule 1 of Article 3 of the General Development Orders in our area.

Barbara Rippington



National Tree Week 16-24 November 1985

To mark the 40th anniversary of the end of World War 2 this year, the Tree Council propose 'Harmony Woods', to celebrate the harmony that has since developed between nations, and in hope of harmony continuing.

Two ideas are suggested. One is to plant a new wood on land currently vacant or derelict. The other is to restore to good condition a neglected area of woodland or scrub. We can do either or both. Since 1985 is also International Youth Year with special emphasis on tree planting we should involve as many young people as possible - and we want to involve you.

Can you recommend to us a vacant or derelict plot suitable for planting? Or do you know of a wood or scrubland which needs restoring? Can you help us? Your suggestions will be welcomed by our Hon. Secretary.

Priestfields Arboretum

Did you know that besides the many famous charms that contribute to the beauty of the Chilterns, the area also possesses a small private Arboretum? Almost on our doorstep, at Little Kingshill, Priestfields has over 70 specimen trees, most of which are Conifers, and includes several rare varieties such as Northern Japanese Hemlock, Chinese Sweet Gum and Himalayan Spruce.

Planted by Thomas Priest approximately 60 years ago, the Arboretum became neglected and overgrown but has recently been 'rescued' by Merelene Davis, editor of The Dendrologist, a quarterly journal for tree enthusiasts. After valuable clearance work undertaken by the Chiltern Society Small Woodlands Project Team the possibility of 'opening up' the Arboretum became a reality. The checklist of trees drawn up by Alan Mitchell, author of Trees of Great Britain and N. Europe, twenty years ago had to be rechecked - most were found still to be there - the trees had to be labelled for identification in the Guide, and a route for visitors marked out.

Priestfield, now managed by 'Friends of Priestfield' group, has an Open Day twice a year - the next one will be on Sunday 13th October 1985, and a visit by the High Wycombe Society is planned. Do come and see the nine different kinds of Spruce, (I had to identify these, with books in hand it took me hours!), the Hedgehog Fir and the Cow's Tail Pine. So much variety on a 2-acre site is a delight to see. If you can come with us please contact Barbara Rippington on High Wycombe 26616.

Barbara Rippington

Wycombe Half-Marathon

After four years, the Wycombe Half-Marathon is an established part of the local scene. No other local event attracts such wide spread interest and with over £40,000 being raised by the runners for charity in each of the last two years, it is also the biggest fund raising event in the District with many local organisations benefiting from the efforts of some 2,500 competitors. The ability of individual runners to raise large sums of money through sponsorship is such that many organisations see it as a disaster if their runners are not among those accepted by the closing date. The event is always heavily over-subscribed.

The primary reason for the event in the eyes of the organisers is not, however, as a charity event, but as a large scale promotion of the Sports Council's 'Sport for All' Campaign designed to achieve maximum participation regardless of ability, age or sex. The numbers of people pounding the streets in and around High Wycombe in the weeks and months prior to the event in July shows just how well this objective has been achieved.

Another important impact of the event has been the way in which it has promoted High Wycombe and Wycombe District, whilst the majority of runners come from 20 miles around High Wycombe, the event attracts competitors from all over the country and a number from Europe. The Wycombe Half-Marathon is held in high regard by regular competitors in this type of event and receives favourable comments from some of the country's leading runners. In particular, it is noted for the quality of its prizes, the efficient organisation and its course.

With some £2,500 worth of prizes, a medal for every finisher, together with fruit and chocolate all donated by local businesses, the prize list is one of the most impressive amongst the many events up and down the country.

The organisation represents 12 months work by a small enthusiastic Committee with some 300 volunteers on duty on the day to ensure that all runs smoothly. A major community effort.

For those unfamiliar with the course, the hill through the grounds of Wycombe Abbey School leaves a never to be forgotten memory, but the magnificent setting of the Rye provides an equally spectacular backdrop for the start and finish of the event that few others can match.

Typical of the reaction of first time visitors this year was the enthusiasm of runners from High Wycombe's Twin Town to be, Kelkheim, who were overwhelmed, firstly by the manner in which so many people turned out and took the runners to their hearts and secondly, by 'your magnificent Rye'.

Wycombe Half-Marathon has captured the imagination of many people, but isn't it nice to see the Rye used in this way by so many enthusiastic people intent of enjoying themselves.

W.J. Wells
Race Director



We are delighted that the Half-Marathon is so successful and makes such excellent use of our wonderful Rye. Our thanks to Bill Wells for contributing this article, and to him and his committee for putting in such long hours voluntarily to organise the Half-Marathon each year.

Ed.

WEA

Berks Bucks & Oxon

WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Contact Mr. Newton
Bourne End 25083

The WEA have written to inform us that they are running an evening course 'Monks, Rakes and Cavaliers', commencing 23rd September at Wellesbourne School, Kingshill Road, High Wycombe for ten weeks from 7.30 - 9 pm. Unfortunately this Newsletter is going to print after the start of the course, but nevertheless some of our members may well wish to attend the remaining lectures.

The subject will be country houses near High Wycombe, (though the title 'Monks, Rakes and Cavaliers' does not make this immediately obvious!), and some of the people who have lived in them (ah! clarification!) from the middle ages to the twentieth century. The course will include:

Medieval and Tudor beginnings - Stonor, Mapledurham and the Catholic fight for survival, and Bisham with its crusading knights and rich Tudors.

Civil War Divisions - Claydon and the Verneys

Baroque Grandeur - Blenheim and the Churchills

Eighteenth Century elegance and decadence - Basildon Park and West Wycombe and the Hellfire Club

Nineteenth and twentieth century wealth and political intrigue - Waddesdon and the Rothschilds, Cliveden and the Astors, Hughenden and Disraeli.

The fee for the ten-week course would be £12.00, but it will be possible to join the course and pay pro rata, and there are reductions for OAPs and the unwaged.

Country Towns

'Country Towns' is the latest phrase to be coined to fill every Green Belt Protector's heart with dread. A consortium of nine of the largest house-builders in Britain has come up with this idea, and have already planned several which they would like to build a few miles outside the M25 ring road. Tillingham Hall in Essex, a 760-acre site of productive farmland has already been planned in outline by the consortium and the plans embrace 5000 houses for a population of 15000 plus a million square feet of factory, office and warehouse accommodation.

CPRE report on this in their magazine 'Countryside Campaigner' and also reveal that the consortium have pooled their resources and will be prepared to spend £½million on each appeal for the 'country towns'. Not all are planned for the Green Belt, but Tillingham Hall is, and could there be one for Bucks?

The builders obviously have great confidence in their ideas, and are arguing that the Department of the Environment have miscalculated future housing requirements for the South-East, and that an extra 3000 acres a year should be made available for building. It seems almost certain that a public inquiry will be held into Tillingham Hall, probably early in 1986. It will be very interesting to see what the outcome will be.

Anna Birks

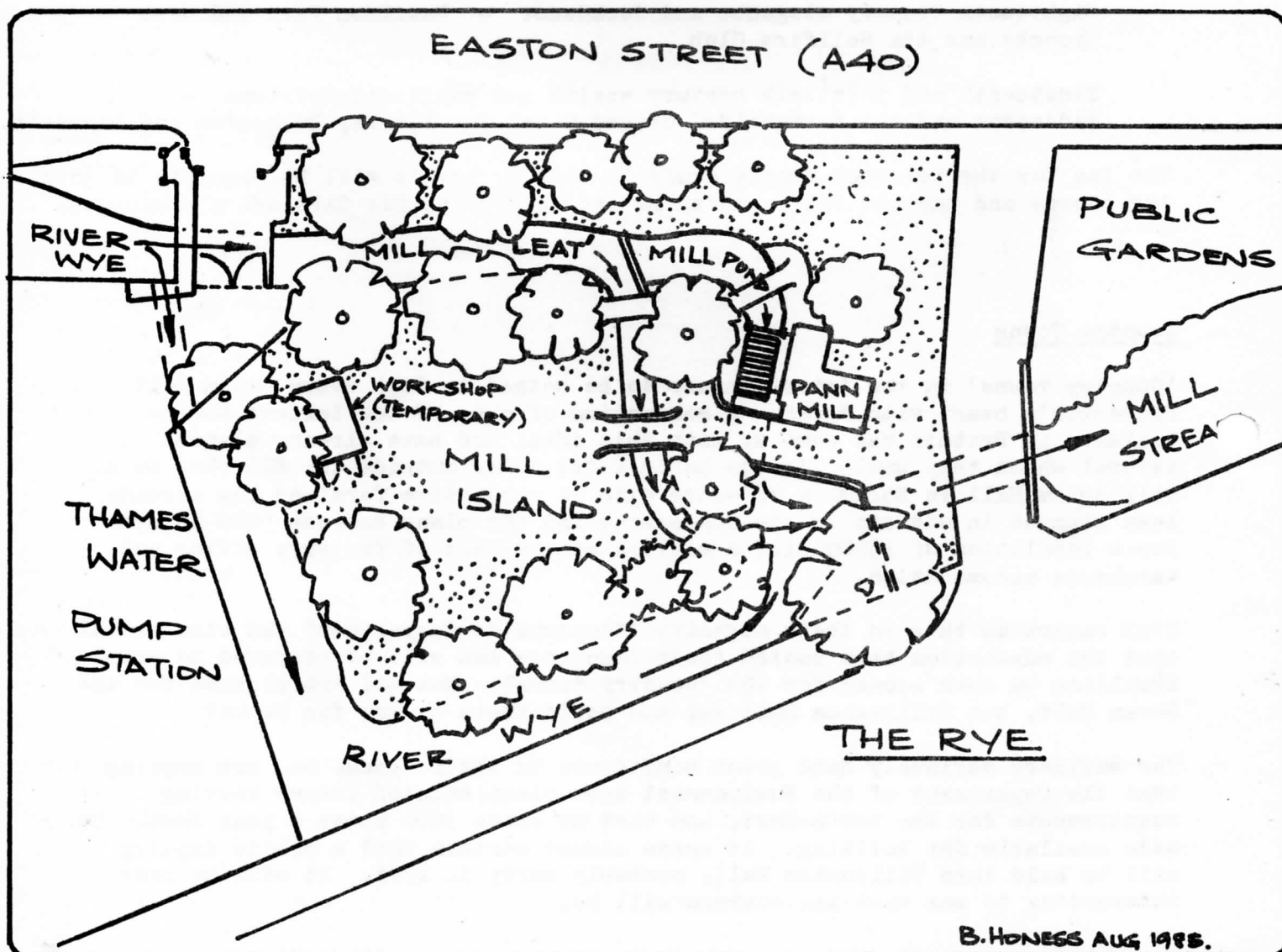


Pann Mill Restoration Group

Wintry weather of hail, rain and wind, this most 'typically English' summer has naturally slowed down the progress of construction of the much needed large workshop on the Mill Island.

As if the bad weather wasn't enough, Society volunteers have also suffered the unwanted attentions of thoughtless vandals who have gradually broken every pane of glass in the workshop windows. Recently our chairman Ted Kearney and I put our heads together and we feel that our new ideas will solve the vandal problem.

A generous donation of some massive hinges together with all the necessary fixings has been made by a very friendly blacksmith, Mr. Eric Meakes of The Forge, Lane End, for the heavy workshop doors, and we are greatly indebted to him for his generosity. When completed this large workshop will provide Society volunteers with real comfort and space to carry out a wide variety of restoration work, all year round, until Pann Mill is in full order once more. Please phone Ted Kearney on H.W. 447511 or Brian Honess on H.W. 37242 if you can spare some time on Sunday mornings, so that the workshop is finished before the real winter is upon us.

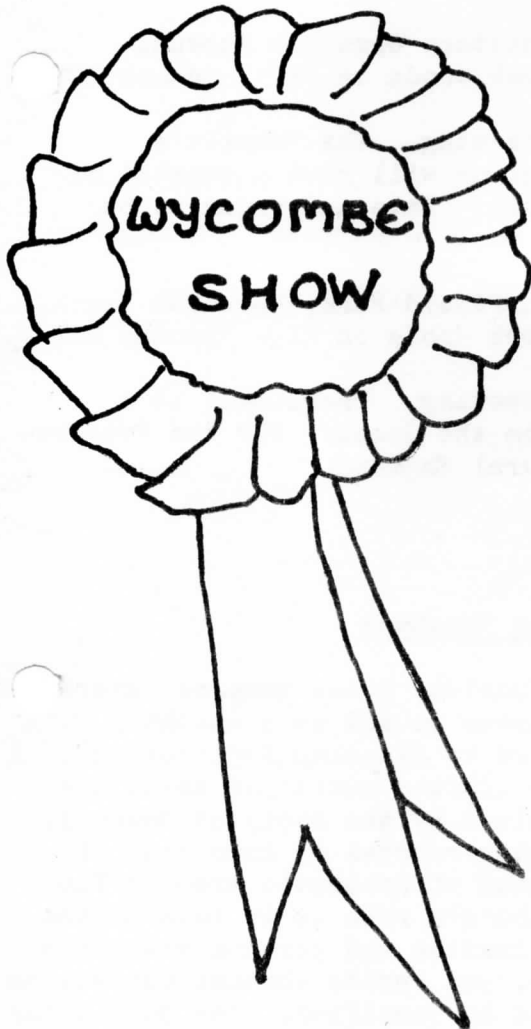


Historically, corn mills all down the River Wye had plenty of fish in their mill ponds, and Pann Mill was no exception according to the records. With this thought in mind I contacted the Fisheries Section of 'Thames Water' in Oxford. Their fisheries expert, Mr. David Jenkins, kindly visited Pann Mill in mid July and what a helpful, knowledgeable man he proved to be! He soon confirmed that Pann Mill's deep 'Leat' was absolutely ideal for fish, especially Brown Trout, once some well placed boulders are introduced to create the gentle 'swirls and eddies' that fish love. The shade provided by the trees and the shelter under boulders are just what the fish require in summer.

Mr. Jenkins has written to our District Council explaining his plan, which is typical of similar fisheries elsewhere, and if he receives a favourable reply then he will willingly stock the Leat with Brown Trout, because given this environment they will settle quickly and should breed well.

If these restoration and conservation efforts are allowed to succeed then all the time spent will have been worthwhile.

Brian Honess



Wycombe Show

The 38th Wycombe Show on 7th September proved to be the best in recent years and the High Wycombe Society was pleased to take part. Some of our Festival Exhibition material was displayed in the marquee celebrating the 700th Mayoral Anniversary. This included the early maps of the Borough, archive documents on the history of the mayors and models of paper-making, the 19th Century market scene and Pann Mill. The marquee was full of interest with displays of caning, lace-making and brass rubbing, together with a wealth of old photographs.

We are delighted that the maps and documents we loaned are currently being used as resource material for study at St. Augustine's Combined School. (This will also please many who toiled for hours with the Hon. Sec. and Walter Kraft in the preparation of the Exhibition material. It was worth it after all). It may interest other local schools to know that we have quite a collection of material suitable for local history studies. Please contact the Hon. Sec. for details.

Our second appearance at the Show was at Pann Mill, where we sold trails, cards and a recently published pamphlet on the restoration of Pann Mill. Much interest and support was expressed in the project. Thanks are due to Evelyn Roe, Brian Honess, Colin Kennedy and Ron Simms for their valuable help.

We were also pleased to be able to help two of our members, Jane and Ian Barratt who had a stall for Wycombe Live Aid on the Pann Mill site. Besides being a worthwhile cause, the selling of tee-shirts and balloons brightened up the corner and the approach to the Rye.

The crowds certainly enjoyed the Show's wide variety of attractions and events. But, of course, the most welcome visitor, making a special rare appearance this summer was - THE SUNSHINE!

Annie Woodward



Future Programme

Sunday 13th October 1985

Visit to Priestsfields Arboretum, Little Kingshill. Contact Barbara Rippington High Wycombe 26616

Friday 25th October 1985 at the Oak Room, Town Hall at 7.45 pm

Edward Cullinan, eminent British architect giving illustrated talk

January 1986

Quarterly Meeting. To be arranged.

Wednesday 5th March 1986 at the British Legion Hall, St. Mary St, High Wycombe at 8 pm

Quarterly Meeting. There will be an illustrated talk by Roger France, Tutor in Urban Conservation at Oxford Polytechnic, on 'Positive Preservation'.

Thursday 24th April 1986 at the Royal British Legion Hall, St. Mary St, High Wycombe at 7.30 pm

Annual General Meeting followed by an illustrated talk by Christopher Stanley on 'Archaeology from the Air'.

Sunday 10th May 1986

Visit to Chiltern Open Air Museum. Contact Derek Woods on High Wycombe 202 .

June 1986

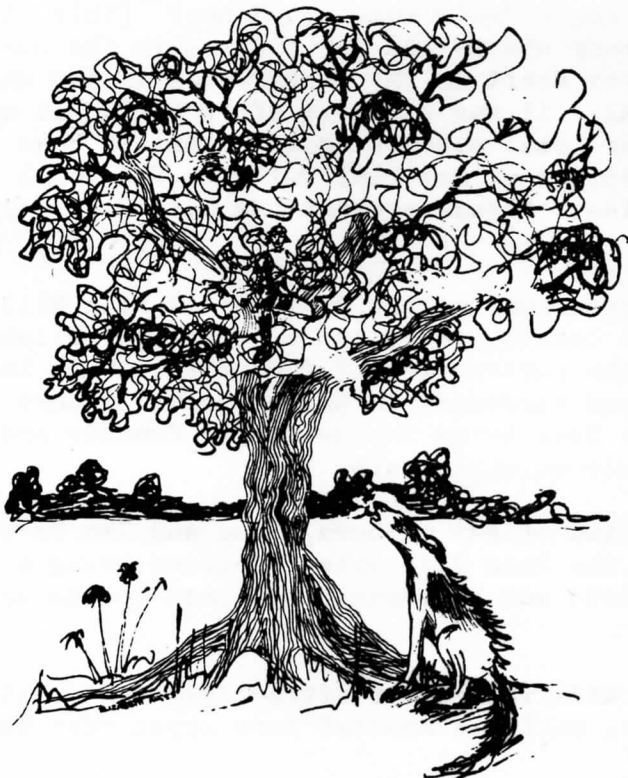
Quarterly Meeting. The 'Musick's Monument' group will give a recital of Baroque Music. Date and venue to be arranged.

September 1986

Visit to Sheffield Park, Haywards Heath. Contact Derek Woods on High Wycombe 20284.

October 1986

Quarterly Meeting. There will be a speaker from the Council for the Preservation of Rural England.



Trees Watchdog

The Society needs someone interested in trees to act as a watchdog with regard to Planning Applications. A very limited number of these are received by the District Council, seeking removal or some kind of pruning of protected trees. The watchdog's role is to look at the application and perhaps visit the site, and decide whether opposition would be justified. The job is far from onerous and could be a great help to the Society. Anyone interested should contact the Hon. Secretary.