

HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

(Registered with the Civic Trust)

Hon. Secretary:
J. Scruton Esq.,
17 London Road,
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Registered Charity No. 257897

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NEWSLETTER NO. 61 WINTER 1985/6

Dear Reader,

Following on from Bob Geldor's fantastic success in raising money for Ethiopia we would appeal to you for a little help rather nearer home. The amenity societies are the front line of the environmental movement in Britain; Ministers of State, farmers, industrialists and ordinary people are becoming increasingly aware of their surroundings, and more and more people CARE about what is around them.

High Wycombe Society is like all other societies in requiring membership fees and positive contribution from its members in order to flourish.

* So this is our appeals page! *

please please please please please please please please please please

If you have not yet paid your 1985 subscription, send your money to Janet Tulley 10/ Cock Lane, High Wycombe. If you know of anyone who would like to join, phone Janet on Penn 3253.

If there is anything you feel strongly about in High Wycombe and its environs, let us know. If you don't agree with anything we do, write and complain. If you agree, write and support us. If we miss anything of environmental interest, tell us!

If you are, or know someone who is an illustrator, we desperately need someone to do some doodles for the Newsletter.

If you have any interest in Historic Buildings and Heritage, contact Derek Woods on H.W. 20284.

If you care about trees, contact Barbara Kippington on H.W. 26616.

If you would like to help on the Pann Mill Project, contact Roger Lawson on H.W. 2804/ or Brian Honess on H.W. 37242.

If you like mounting pictures or writing captions and can help with the enormous amount of work that goes into putting on an exhibition, contact Jack Scruton on H.W. 25933.

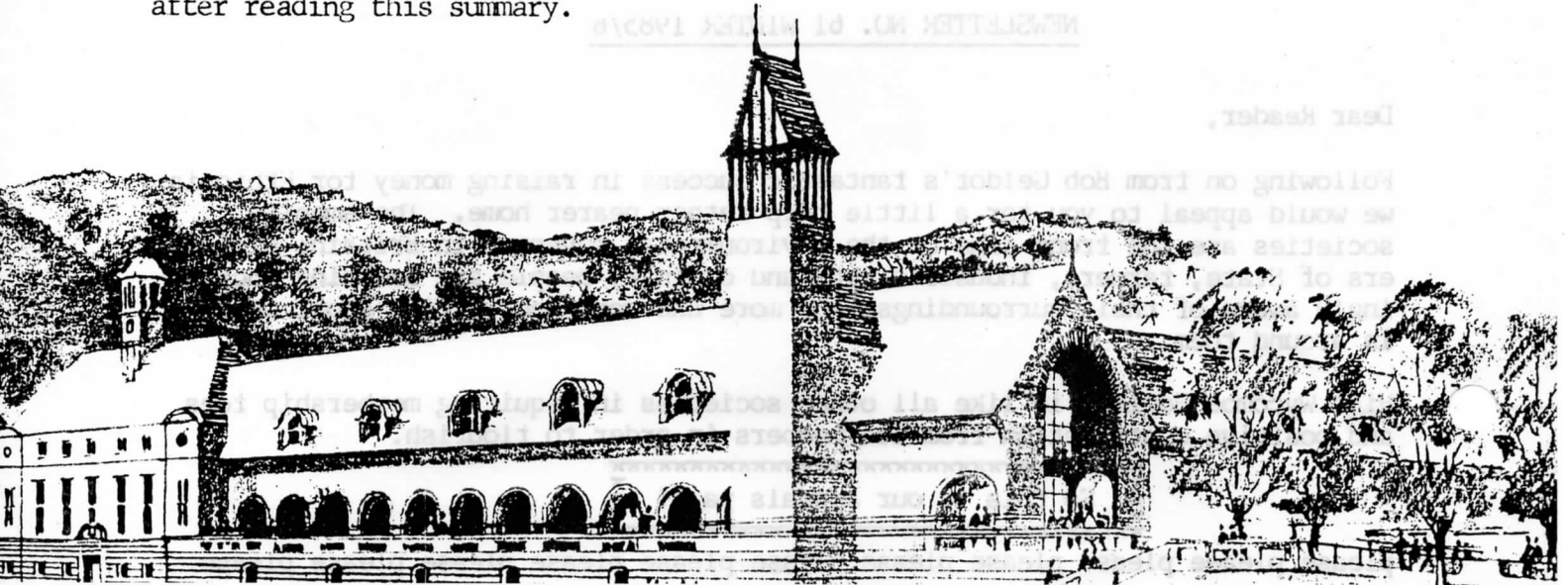
If you have ideas for National Environment Week, contact Annie Woodward on H.W. 27978.

If you want to write to the Newsletter, contact Anna Birks on H.W. 28152.

But most of all, let us know you are there. Sometimes we hear from people who need help over an unwelcome planning application, sometimes from people who have achieved a solo success, (see inside), but sometimes we wonder if the Newsletter just vanishes into a great black abyss? We love to see you at our meetings, and we thank you for your support at all our events - but, please, be more vociferous!

Proposed New Arts Centre and Library

The High Wycombe Society was invited to comment on the Council's proposals to build a new Library and Arts Centre, and it was asked to do so as quickly as possible. At a meeting of the Society's Executive Committee, a decision was reached, and a letter with detailed comments was sent to the District Secretary. As there was no time to consult individual members or affiliated Societies, I take this opportunity to inform our members of what was written, and to invite them to let me know what they think. Some of our members may already have sent in comments to the Council and others may wish to do so after reading this summary.



Our first point was to offer our wholehearted support to the concept of a larger library and Arts Centre, and to congratulate the County and District Councils for providing generous funding.

Our second point was, in effect, over the siting of the proposed new Library and Arts Centre. It is perhaps not generally known that in April 1985 the District Council purchased from the Prudential Insurance Company the land just at the rear of the Town Hall, and the present library building, an area of about 1.8 acres. The Council now owns substantially the whole corner of this part of the Conservation Area, up to the river. We thought that it would be obvious to place the new Library and Arts Centre on that site. There would be more than enough space to put there a building as large, or even larger, than the one designed by the County Architect, plans of which were on display. Instead, the Council propose to pull down the present Library building, and most of the Town Hall, to create a space for the new Library and Arts Centre. This would have a number of unfortunate consequences ;

(a) Instead of having the floor space of the existing library and Town Hall, (something in excess of 10,000 Sq. Ft.), plus the floor space of the new buildings, everything has to be squeezed into the new building. It is "putting a quart into a pint pot" as the County Architect, who drew the designs himself, said.

(b) The library would be in the "lower ground floor", accessible only via the "upper ground floor".

(c) The library would be homeless while building operations are in progress.

(d) The library, a fine building, would be lost, and the library garden would have to go. Of course, if a new library is built in another place, the present library would serve other purposes. It could accommodate a Museum, Arts Gallery, and Exhibition Hall, and relieve the pressure for space in the new building.

This is a journalistic summary of a carefully worded document, and anyone wishing to see the full text is at liberty to do so.

When the Council invited comments from the public, it omitted to mention that it owned the land at the rear, and that it might be worth considering whether or not to build the new library and Arts Centre on that land, instead of pulling down the existing library and most of the Town Hall. This crucial choice was never put to the public. In our letter we said so.

Jack Scruton

Environment Week 3-11 MAY 1986

Following on from the success of the first National Environment Week in 1985 the Civic Trust has decided to establish the week on a permanent basis. Plans have been made by the High Wycombe Society for a variety of activities during this week. A visit to the Chiltern Open Air Museum has been arranged for Saturday 10th May.

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A visit to the Chiltern Open Air Museum has been arranged for Saturday 10th May. An exhibition will be held in the library, probably on a theme connected with the Conservation Area. This may also include contributions from local children. Some members have already volunteered to lead walks following the Water and Town Trails during the afternoon of Sunday 11th May. The trails will both finish at Pann Mill where tea will be served. There will also be the opportunity to see current progress on the Pann Mill Project.

A competition for local traders in the form of the best shop window display has been suggested. It is hoped to meet members of the Chamber of Trade soon to discuss this idea. If a competition is organised jointly by this Society and the Chamber of Trade, a suitable theme will be chosen. Valuable and imaginative contributions to recent exhibitions have come from local school children, and we hope to organise an art competition, perhaps on the theme "Wycombe's Treasures and Eyesores", or "Local Buildings I Love/Hate Most".



These are some of our ideas; we hope that individuals or groups of members may wish to organise their own project for this Week. Affiliated societies such as Residents' Associations and Women's Institutes may have their own ideas for schemes to benefit their local environment.

National Environment Week should enable members to spread the message of concern and interest in our local environment throughout the community. We would love to hear some of your ideas - please get involved in some way so that this valuable opportunity is not missed.

Annie Woodward
Membership & Publicity Group



Planning

Since our last Newsletter there has been a great deal of activity on the planning front, with developers and their agents striving for approval for commercial and housing developments. The more important ones are summarised below and these will illustrate the major part that planning plays in the work of the Society.

Office Blocks. There is continual pressure to build yet more offices, especially in the Oxford Road area, with the old Norman Reeves building a centre of attraction, and other land adjacent. The District Council is now taking a much stronger line in dealing with applications for offices and the Society strongly supports it in its recent refusals. Invariably these go to appeal to the Secretary of State, and it is important that we continue our opposition in that quarter.

Housing. There have been serious attempts to obtain permission to build houses on green field sites, using as support the Secretary's proposed additions to the housing figures for South Bucks - figures which have not yet been resolved finally. An application to build houses at Downley was opposed by the Society in support of local residents, and the District Council refused permission. Costains made two applications to build on Terriers Farm at Hazlemere, and these were opposed by many organisations, including the Society. The applications have been refused by the District Council. Jeanes have made yet another application to develop Green Hill, offering part of the land as Public Open Space in order to soften the opposition. We have opposed the application and hope that the District Council will continue to resist the intrusion into the beautiful Hughenden Valley.

We have supported some recent applications for housing, albeit with reservations in some instances concerning traffic, landscaping and design. These are applications to build within the town, using parts of back gardens sold by the owners. It is difficult for the District Council to refuse these applications as the land is designated "residential", and in any case it is sensible to encourage housing within the town rather than allow our countryside to disappear. The Council has insisted on sensible densities, and has been keen on proper landscaping and the need to minimise the effect on local householders. The most important applications are in West Wycombe Road, London Road, and Coningsby Road. In the latter instance we have expressed worries about the effect on traffic using this residential road.

Historic Buildings and Conservation Area

The pressure on historic buildings in the Conservation Area is a permanent feature of Planning, and the Society has remained vigilant about harmful applications. Some recent examples will reveal the kind of problems which arise.

No. 1/ High Street

Extensive interior repairs are being carried out by the Abbey National Building Society. An application has been made to insert illuminated signs and other devices in the "shop window". These would disfigure this listed building and we have opposed them.

The Antelope Public House, Church Square

This attractive listed Public House is threatened by the brewers. They call it "returbishment", (which is the euphemistic term sometimes used by brewers for tearing the place apart). In the Antelope they would

like to replace timber framing with steel joists, and walls will disappear. The charming interior would be "opened up" and the whole atmosphere would disappear. In addition, permission is sought for extra illuminations and advertisements on the outside of the building. We have opposed this savage attack and we look to the District Council to refuse the application.

No. 23 London Road

This listed house was occupied illegally by a firm of local Solicitors. This move infringed its residential use and was also in direct conflict with the District Council policy for the protection of this important part of the Conservation Area. We supported the Council in their strong refusal of permission, which was sought later. A Public Inquiry was arranged, but the Solicitors chose to move out before this took place! This was a most significant stand by the Council. Otherwise the policy governing the area would have been ruined.

No. 37 London Road

A similar case nearby affecting this residential property occurred about the same time, when a local Insurance Company sought permission to use the house as offices. This was again contrary to the Council's policy and was resisted by the District Council, supported by the Society. The matter went to appeal and this was dismissed by the Inspector, who supported the Council entirely.

These two unsuccessful attempts to overturn the Council's policy will no doubt ensure the continued protection of residential properties in this part of the Conservation Area.

Ted Kearney

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Success Story

Congratulations to Caroline Pudney, who took on Courage, the Brewers, single-handed, and won. Caroline found out that Courage had drawn up plans to erect lamp standards outside the "Yew Tree" public house at Totteridge. She didn't agree with this, and wrote to Courage stating her dislike of their idea and explaining her reasons. She received a reply in due course advising her that they were dropping their plans, and thanking her for her interest.

We admire Caroline's initiative, and thank her for letting us know about her single-handed success.

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Elizabeth Williams

We are sorry to have "lost" Elizabeth Williams, who has contributed so many beautiful illustrations for our Newsletter. The last sketch she did for us is published in this issue with the article "Growing Wild". Her permission to stay in Britain ran out last month, and the Home Secretary has required her to return to South Africa. Her talent and personality are a great loss, and we hope she will be able to return again one day.

Growing Wild

A year or two ago I heard on the radio of a Professor in Oxford who, , so delighted with the success of having converted his mown lawn and flower beds to an ecologically favoured wild garden, was enthusiastically trying to persuade his neighbours to follow suit. I was probably not the only listener to think 'what a good excuse to be lazy'. After having read an increasing number of articles advising how to make the garden a wildlife sanctuary. I now know one can't be lazy about it - but it is an appealing idea, birds, butterflies and other wildlife are an additional bonus to flowers and leaves.

You don't need a big garden, and an abandoned wilderness full of weeds threatening to invade next door is not the intention. The lawn can be divided into three areas. The first area is regularly cut short - no closer than 1½ inches. The second area is cut from July onwards to encourage Spring flowers, and the third area is cut in September to favour tall late Summer plants. Wild flowers can be chosen for height, low growing (daisy, speedwell), medium (cowslip, catsear), tall (knapweed, Field Scabious).

Since the most colourful meadow flowers grow in poor soil we are recommended to strip off top soil if it is rich, and sow grass seeds such as Bents and Fescues mixed (never Perennial Rye grass), at a rate of 10 gms. per square metre and mixed with sawdust or silver sand for even cover.

Flower beds or borders can be sown with wild flower seeds chosen for their pollen, nectar and seedheads, and flowering in a continuous sequence. We are told to mulch the soil surface with chopped bark, to let the plants grow into each other to cover all the bare ground, and to leave dead stems and seedheads until late winter. Also we have to mow edges and paths regularly to keep them neat, to remove all clippings to avoid disease and never to use chemicals or pesticides.

Extras in the form of nest boxes, birdtables, bat boxes and log piles will increase the range of wildlife.

How successful this advice may be the High Wycombe Society is about to find out. With 12 packets of wild flower seed a group of us intend to plant around Pann Mill. See future Newsletters for our sightings there of Finches, Kestrels, Owls (we're optimistic), bankvoles, shrews, weasels and stoats - or if you see them in your wildlife garden, let us know!

For further information:

Wildlife Garden Pack, published by Avon Wildlife Trust, 209 Redland Road, Bristol BS6 6YU (£1.30 + 30p P & P)

The Back Garden Wildlife Sanctuary Book by Ron Wilson, pub'd by Penguin Books 1981

The Natural History of the Garden by Michael Chinery, pub'd by Fontana 1978

Handbook of Urban Nature Conservation by Chris Baines, pub'd by RSPB

Chris Baines Wildlife Garden Notebook by Chris Baines, pub'd by Oxford Illustrated Press 1984



Barbara Rippington



National Tree Week 16th - 23rd November 1985

Last year the Tree Council suggested the idea of Harmony Wood to mark this event, which could be provision of a new wood on derelict or vacant land, or restoration of a neglected area of woodland or scrub.



THE TREE COUNCIL

Agriculture House, Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7NJ
Telephone 01-235 8854

It was with great pleasure that the Society accepted the invitation of the Wycombe District Council Parks Dept. to organise local schools in joining them and Mrs. Audrey Moore, Chairman of the District Council, in planting on vacant land at Downley. On a frosty sparkling morning on the Tuesday of this Week children from the 4th Year environmental studies class of Brenchwood School, and others from Tinkers Wood Combined School, enthusiastically and energetically planted the first of 200 trees, comprising cherry, beech, ash and oak, in holes previously dug by the Parks Dept. Instruction in the method of planting and tying was given by Assistant Parks Manager Paul Cunningham and his team, and willing feet vigorously danced and trampled to firm the ground on completion of each planting. "Better than lessons" was a frequently heard chortle - yet a lesson had surely been given.

The event was also celebrated at Priestfield Arboretum, Little Kingshill. Here the owner, Mrs. Carton had invited Michael Denison and his wife Dulcie Gray to undertake a ceremonial planting of the first new tree for 60 years. A Chinese fir, (*Cunninghamia*) was chosen to add to the fine selection of specimen trees here and on the damp and murky Sunday a strong contingent of Friends of the Arboretum gathered as supporting cast for a splendidly cheerful and workmanlike performance. As replacement for one of the trees which will in the future have to be felled, Mrs. Carton planted a Honda Spruce (*Picea jezoensis*). The Arboretum will be open to the public again in June this year, details in the next Newsletter.

Barbara Kippington

Edward Cullinan, Architect

A packed audience filled the Oak Room on 25th October 1985 to greet Ted Cullinan, the eminent architect, who gave an illustrated talk about his work and beliefs. This talk was wide-ranging, covering many different buildings, from the simple to the very complicated. Mr. Cullinan emphasised that his architecture did not try to imitate past styles or forms. When extending existing buildings, he designed in a totally modern way, refusing to produce a pastiche. This determined approach had often resulted in strong criticism, and this meeting was no exception. One of our members, who lives near to Ted Cullinan's additions to the Nationwide Building Society's Conference Centre at Four Ashes, complained about these very forcefully. Mr. Cullinan understood the misgivings expressed, but remained convinced that time was a great healer, and that his work would be accepted eventually as something better than imitating the past. We are indebted to Ted Cullinan and to all those who gave their support at the meeting.

J. Scruton

Rules for Pedestrians

It wishing to visit Marks and Spencer make sure your affairs are in order and your will is up to date.

Stand on the pavement. Close your eyes, offer up a prayer and go.

If you're between 16 and 22, and an athlete, you should make it.

Handicaps such as a push-chair or middle age are high risk factors.

Well, there's another Marks in Reading which is probably easier to reach.

Historic Buildings and Heritage Groups

It has been proposed that we should make a serious attempt to form again a group to become interested in the work which was once carried out by the Historic Buildings and Heritage Groups. This valuable and interesting work is needed very badly by the Society. It has been suggested that if a Group is formed, it should have a wider scope and should include an interest in local history.

In order to find out how members feel about this, we have arranged a meeting in the Friends' Meeting House, 25 London Road, High Wycombe, on Saturday 8th February, beginning at 8 p.m. After this discussion, I would be very happy to show some of my short films about High Wycombe. These would be:

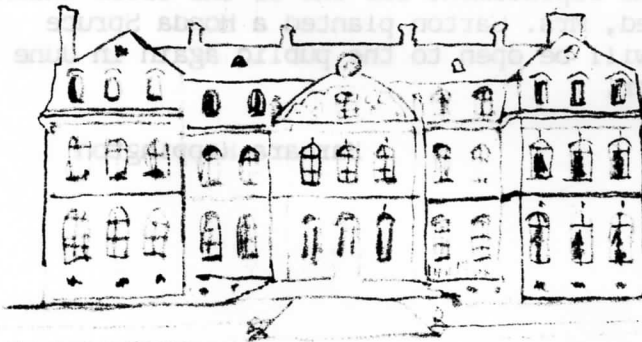
"Silver Jubilee Celebration in 1977"

"The Carnival Celebrating the 700th Mayoralty, 1985"

"Steam Revival, 1985" and "Pann Mill, 1985"

We hope that all those interested in this wide ranging topic will support this meeting.

Derek Woods



Holidays and Sunny Days Ahead

If you, like others these days, like to show the flag from whence you have come, you might like to know that Derek Woods (H.W. 20284) has had produced a number of tee-shirts featuring at the left-hand breast position the High Wycombe Society "Swan Logo" above a scroll containing the words "High Wycombe". The shirts are white with a blue motif; also blue with a white motif. Other colour combinations may be added according to demand. The cost of each shirt is £3.95 adult sizes and £3.40 children's sizes. These would make very attractive gifts - enquiries to Derek Woods.



Pann Mill Restoration Group

Superb efforts by Society volunteers, and our new friends from the Community Service organised by David Eels in Aylesbury, has brought about a transformation of both the mill and its grounds, including extensive riverwork. A newly introduced rota system is helping the volunteers to share the "privilege" of restoring the last mill on the River Wye.

Mr. John Jordan, owner of the famous "Jordans Mill", Biggleswade, is to be congratulated on giving up so willingly a whole afternoon, when I was invited up to Biggleswade for a tour of his lovely mill on the River Ivel. There was so much to see, and absorb, but with careful guidance a lot was remembered for Pann Mill's benefit. Later we carried out a "whistlestop" tour of the locality, with more sights to delight me, but none finer than a "brand new" (in 1936!) 48 inches diameter x 12 inches thick Derby-peak "Bedstone". Provided Mr. Jordan can persuade his farmer friend to donate this "Bedstone", then Pann Mill will have reached the half-way stage in terms of millstones!

Two colourful brochures, produced by hand, have been my latest task over the Christmas and New Year period. They are intended to encourage our local banks, and building societies, to donate funds to this community project. Rank Hovis & McDougal have expressed an interest, and so, in the near future, we hope to meet their Corporate Relations Executive, Mr. Eric Towers. Let's hope they offer their support to the mill project.

As we go to press, I've heard the wonderful news from our Hon. Sec. that Compair Broomwade Ltd, have written to offer the project a £1000 donation! In addition, when required, to patterns supplied by the Society, Compair will donate all the ferrous castings needed to complete the project. What a marvellous New Year gift!

The Society's thanks go to Compair's directors, and in particular to Paul Millson, their Publicity Manager, who has played such a large part in achieving this kind offer to Pann Mill.

Brian Honess





Future Programme

Friday 31st January 1986 at the Royal British Legion Hall, St. Mary St, High Wycombe at 8 p.m.

Quarterly Meeting. High Wycombe Film Society will be showing local films. Arranged by Derek Woods.

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

Wycombe Arts Festival. 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 p.m.

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

3rd - 11th May 1986

National Environment Week. Programme being arranged, details in next Newsletter.

Sunday 10th May 1986

Visit to Chiltern Open Air Museum. Contact Derek Woods on High Wycombe 20284.

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.

