

HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

(Registered with the Civic Trust)

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NEWSLETTER NO.65 WINTER 1986/7

Save the Viaduct

The campaign to save the Viaduct adjacent to the railway bridge over Frogmoor is now under way, headed by local artist Lorna Cassidy and supported by our Society.

Lorna discovered that Bucks County Council had a plan to demolish the viaduct as part of the road improvement scheme planned for High Wycombe, and alerted local organisations to this back in the summer. She has been endeavouring to establish ownership of the viaduct and more details of the demolition plan, but has been finding the going heavy due to lack of response from the various people she has written to, mainly local councillors and our M.P. She has ascertained that the viaduct is owned by British Rail and leased to the county council, and has so far failed in her attempts to have the viaduct listed.

The wish to save the viaduct is not simply to preserve it without purpose. Lorna has had the inspired idea that the footpaths from Bellfields could be extended to the viaduct and enable pedestrians to walk right into the town centre without crossing any main roads, exiting from the footpath in Priory Road by Marks and Spencers. This is a first class idea as it would give the viaduct a purpose and provide a traffic-free walk into town for the many residents of Bellfields who regularly walk into town to work or for shopping.

High Wycombe Society is pleased to be supporting this scheme, and as Lorna's campaign is now under way, please give your signature to the petition printed below, and either post it to Lorna Cassidy at 1 Hampden Road, High Wycombe, or drop it into Malcolm Reay and Co, 31 Crendon St, High Wycombe.

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I support the retention of the two viaducts that cross Frogmoor/ Temple End. I wish to see the one no longer in use to be retained as a footpath/cycle-way for the use of local people.

I urge that no action be taken to demolish the viaduct until these proposals have been considered by the relevant authorities.

Signed

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We are pleased to include a special plea from Lorna Cassidy -

Bellfield Development

No-one could miss the huge area of excavated hillside known as Imbies East with its planning permission for 400 houses.

Even as I write and under its covering of snow it represents a grotesquely carved up mess with drain covers rearing up over head-height, and enormous spoil heaps and few trees. This renders even more valuable the wild tract of land beneath it, and the footpath descending into a disused railway track and Bellfield Road.

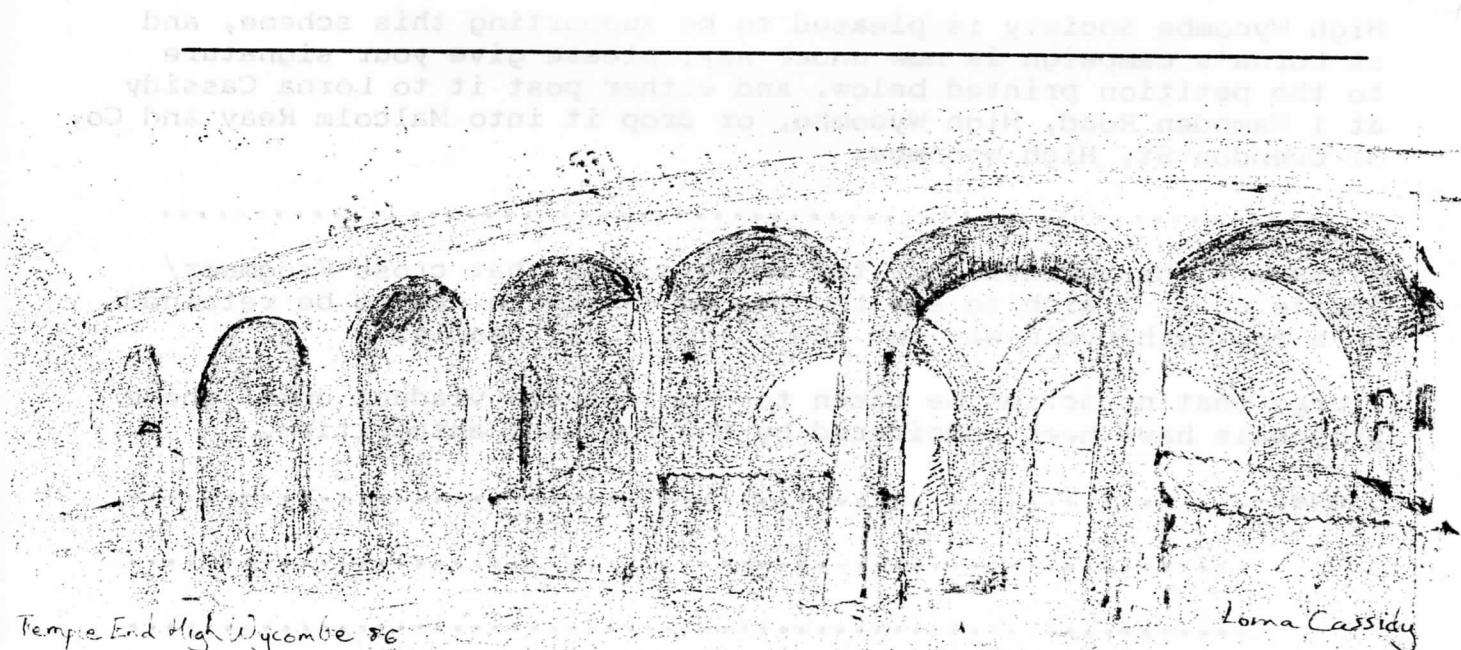
This Area of Special Scientific Interest is named as such because of "Exposures showing tectonic structures important in the geological history of the Chilterns". It is called Pit High Wycombe.

This pit is surrounded by trees and the whole area, including a disused railway track is colonised by an amazingly varied selection of trees and shrubs. The area is under threat because trees around the pit have been cut at about waist height and allowed to lie and topple over the edge of the cutting. People have camped and left their rubbish along with bits of old car bodies. Potential developers have surveyed the area and left pegs in the ground.

It is difficult to know who is responsible. It belongs to British Rail who wish to sell it. I have written, without success, trying to get the natural vegetation along with the cliff face listed. The planners may be able to persuade the developers of Imbies to re-instate the footpath. It is my great wish that this walkway may be allowed to continue alongside the existing railway line and over the viaduct to provide pleasant and safe access by foot, pushchair and bicycle from the hillside to the town centre, and the old disused railway track under the cliff face declared a Nature Reserve.

Go and look at it please and help me with this campaign.

Lorna Cassidy





Planning

Pressures on High Wycombe

Our town has had to contend with a succession of planning assaults in recent years, many of them successful. There was the invasion of the town centre by Estate Agents and Building Societies, to be followed by the triumph of the speculative office blocks. The latest craze is for D.I.Y. warehouses, with a new and much larger Payless, the prospect of a Texas warehouse, the great threat of another at Loakes Park, and four more applications pending on a comparatively short stretch of the A40. If approved, there would be enough items to keep D.I.Y. fanatics happy for miles around. Of course, that's what is intended - to draw custom from well outside the town in large numbers. Hence the placing on main roads. The increased and restless traffic problems, and the welfare of local inhabitants do not enter into the calculations of the would-be developers. The fact that the applications exceed the provisions of our new Local Plan doesn't worry them, but no doubt our Planners are troubled. Let us hope they resist the onslaught and protect the Plan at this vital early stage. They can surely count on the support of the townsfolk in this.

Schools' Playing Fields

A number of schools have been startled by a proposal from the County Council to sell 100 acres of playing fields for housing and other purposes, in order to obtain fairly considerable sums of money quickly. There has been great opposition to this proposal from the schools, parents and others interested in the future of our town, including this Society. The proposal is all the more surprising in view of the earlier resistance from the County when the Secretary of State seemed determined to impose extra housing in South Bucks. We are not sure about the attitude of our District Council to the proposal, but it was encouraging to see the Council's strong opposition to the proposed demolition of Pembroke School at Flackwell Heath, and the attempt to build housing in this part of the Green Belt.

The whole situation is a sad one, especially when it is realised that High Wycombe and District is 500 acres short of playing areas according to the defined target of the National Playing Fields Association, and the aim of the Local Plan to increase the provision of playing areas for the whole community. We hope that the County will have second thoughts about the proposal. Once the playing areas are used, they will be lost forever!

Jack Scruton

Wesley Church

The Wesley Church buildings are in the news again. The latest application seeks the demolition of the Hall and Manse, and the reduction of the Church to a shell, in order to change it to a combination of Church and Hall. To finance the proposals the Church proposes the inevitable office block plus some housing. The application is contrary to the newly published Local Plan, which proposes housing to help the needs of the Church, but does not specify offices. Housing would certainly be appropriate in this town centre position.

The plan to destroy the interior of the Church is extraordinary, especially when compared with the fervent expressions in its defence by the Church elders during earlier battles. The fine gallery and other features were referred to as irreplaceable and breathtaking. It is difficult to believe that the present congregation could accept this appalling proposal and we hope the Church authorities will think again about the plan. The Society will press for the defence of the Church and the provision of housing sufficient to fund a new hall.

Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas

Forming a New Group?

For a long period of time the Society had a vigorous and successful Historic Buildings Group, which interested itself in Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas. We would like to begin a similar Group to carry out this work, and possibly extend this to embrace local History now that the local History Society has ceased to exist. We feel sure that the varying interests of such a Group would appeal to some of our Members. If you are interested please contact the Hon. Sec. for further information.

Conservation Areas

One of the pleasing features of the Local Plan is the increase in the number of Conservation Areas, with the addition of eight to the ten which already existed. Here as a reminder are details of all these:

Established before Local Plan

Abbotsbrook
Upper North Dean
Wooburn Green
Four Ashes
Well End
High Wycombe
West Wycombe
Little Marlow
Wooburn
Tylers Green

Added by Local Plan

Amersham Hill, High Wycombe
Downley Common
The Common, Flackwell Heath
Frogmoor, High Wycombe
Hedsor Road, Bourne End
Saffron Platt, High Wycombe
Totteridge, High Wycombe
Wycombe Abbey School Grounds

In view of the proven value of Conservation Areas we feel sure that the additions will be welcomed generally, but it is worth remembering that Conservation Areas place extra work on local authorities if they are to be protected and enhanced. With the new additions this will be a formidable task, with the monitoring and publication of planning applications and the work needed to protect and improve the areas. We feel sure that any help in this work would be appreciated. Who better to act as watchdogs or to have ideas for improvements than those who live in or near these Conservation Areas? We hope that this help will be forthcoming and that local residents will keep a watchful eye on their local environment. If they have ideas for improvements we feel sure that our District Council would be interested. Further information about the Conservation Areas is readily available from the Planning Dept. on the Council Offices in Queen Victoria Road.

Evelyn Roe

Music Hall Evening

One of the most enjoyable weekends I have ever spent was at Denman, the W.I. College, at a course on the History of the British Music Hall. I am absolutely delighted that three of the course tutors have agreed to come to High Wycombe on Friday 10th April 1987 to organise a music hall for us. This will be a rather belated 18th birthday celebration for the Society, as well as a pleasant social function in the weekend before Easter.

There will be 8 artists, 4 ladies and 4 gentlemen, 3 of whom, Terry Lomas, Dick Playle and Don Job are active members of the British Music Hall Society, and all are dedicated and talented performers. Mr. Lomas will be the Chairman and Mr. Job piano accompanist.

The event will take place in the Royal British Legion Hall, St. Mary Street, tickets £4 each; waitress service for the bar will be available all evening and light refreshments will be served. We want to create the right atmosphere, and the best way to do this will be for everybody to dress in period costume - however this won't be enforced! It need not be difficult or expensive, and here are some tips to help you.

Ladies

Long skirt; high-necked blouse; cape or shawl of fur, velvet or silk; hat shaped like a toque (for which trim a pillbox type with a large flower at the back or frothy veiling; muff or tiny artificial posy and gloves.

Gentlemen

Wing collar; cravat; high-buttoned waistcoat; buttonhole; walking cane; gloves; walrus moustache, hair parted in the middle and flattened down; a few false whiskers; gloves.

Pince-nez or lorgnettes will, of course really complete the picture!



And there will be a prize for the best-dressed lady and gentleman.

G. Jolliffe and Co. of 48 Chapel St, Marlow have a good selection of Edwardian and Victorian costumes for hire, and they also sell the moustaches. If 10 or more of us hire, they have offered a 10% discount, so state that you are from the High Wycombe Society when hiring. Hire charges are from about £12 for an outfit.

Do make a note in your diary now, and tell your friends. Mr. Lomas has specially selected the performers for us - they regularly take part in music halls in the London area, and the standard is most professional. I can guarantee the show will be of the highest quality, an excellent evening's entertainment. The organisers will do all they can to make it a success, but remember the words of Leonard Sachs - it is "mostly yourselves!"

DO PLEASE COME! (in costume!)

Annie Woodward

National Tree Week 29th November - 7th December 1986

Did you see our photograph in the local press? We were impressed by the thinking of the photographer who had, throughout the week, taken so many shots of trees being planted to commemorate this week in the same style - tree being held upright in the hole whilst V.I.P. smiles at the camera, spade held ready - he was bored.

This photograph was to be different. We were asked to carry the tree on our shoulders. Good idea. Difficult to accomplish when we lined up with our various heights, (Ian Stone 6' +, Marjorie Nash 5' +), which explains why some were shouldering the tree whilst others were reaching for a fingerhold, and why the stereotyped pose will probably remain favourite.

Our tree, an Ash, was painted in traditional style in the Castle Museum grounds on Saturday 7th December to commemorate National Tree Week 1986. An enthusiastic gathering of members felt encouraged at hearing Mr. Len Hampton, Chairman of Wycombe District Council, describe the High Wycombe Society as a nuisance at times, but a valuable one nevertheless and we must continue to express our views. We must continue planting trees too. As buildings increase in number, trees decrease. We need National Tree Week activity every week of the year.

Barbara Rippington



Environment Week 25 APRIL - 4 MAY 1987

Our Committee have begun to plan activities to celebrate this week, and guided tours of the town and the River Wye are being prepared. There are many more ways in which we can participate, and we would like to involve a lot more of our members. The Civic Trust has published a useful booklet "Ideas to Get You Started" - and brimful of ideas it is.



For example: Improvement of our town by planting flowers, trees or shrubs, individually or in small gardens;

"adopting" a building or woodland, roundabout or stretch of water;

surveys, which can be on environmental matters such as parking on pavements - when? where? damage?

Or litterbins - are there enough? in the right places? emptied frequently? design?

Roadsigns - intrusive? legible? too many or not enough?

Is our town environmentally satisfactory for old people? cyclists? disabled?

Could we re-establish some of our avenues as tree-lined roads?

Would anyone like to organise a guided tour of our churches or pubs?

These and many more ideas are in the booklet. We want your ideas too, and we would like to liase with other clubs, associations or organisations. If anyone is interested, please contact the Hon. Sec. Jack Scruton (portrait on the right!)



Thursday 12th February
British Legion Hall, St
Mary St, at 8 p.m.

Mr. Christopher Swanwick, Chief Planning Officer of Wycombe District Council, 'Planning Ahead'.

Friday 6th March
Oak Room of the Town Hall,
Queen Victoria Rd at 8 p.m.

Brain Limbury, Deputy Director of the
Civic Trust, 'Environmental Problems'
Our contribution to Wycombe Arts Festival

Friday 10th April
British Legion Hall
at 8 p.m.

Music Hall, details in this Newsletter

28th April in the British
Legion Hall at 8 p.m.

Annual General Meeting, followed by a talk about Urban Wildlife sites by a representative of BBONT.

27th April - 5th May

National Environmental Week

12th June in the British
Legion Hall at 8 p.m.

Musical Evening with Alan Weyman and
Friends

22nd October

Mr. John Boyes, Society for the
Protection of Ancient Buildings -
'Wind and Water Mills'

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A New Year's Message

The arrival of a New Year often brings thoughts of hard-to-keep New Year Resolutions, but we in the High Wycombe Society must make some practical efforts to make and keep conservation resolutions that will influence events in the High Wycombe area throughout 1987.

We have appealed previously through the Newsletter for volunteers to contribute their time and talents to vacant posts in the Society, such as:

Secretary, Historic Buildings
Planning Secretary
Planning Watchdog
Secretary, Trees and Woodlands

If you can contribute in one of these tasks, or in any other way to the work of the Society, please get in touch with Jack Scruton, Hon. Secretary.

Finally, it is appropriate for me to express, on behalf of the Executive Committee, our best wishes for 1987 and (hopefully) your involvement in some part of our activities during 1987.

Roger Lawson, Chairman

Residents' Associations

We are pleased to welcome the affiliation to the Society of the Naphill and Walters Ash Residents' Association, which looks after the interests of those living in this important district of High Wycombe - an area subject to constant pressures for development, and clearly in need of this vigorous Residents' Association.