

The High Wycombe Society

(Registered with the Civic Trust)

Newsletter

"Your town is our concern"

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New committee members announced

Names elected

The following officers and committee members were elected at the Annual Meeting.

President: Mr L J Mayes.

Vice-presidents: Miss M Nash and Councillor Mrs K Peatey JP.

Chairman: Mr R J Lawson.

Vice-chairman: Mrs E Roe.

Secretary: Mr J S Gore.

Treasurer: Mr N Giles.

Committee: Mr C Adams, Mr B Honess, Mrs P Kearney, Mrs M King (Pann Mill Group), Mr J Lee, Mr G Neal, Mrs P Phillips, Mr R J Rippington, Mr J Scruton (Planning Secretary), Mr R L Sims (Minutes Secretary), Mrs J Tully, Mrs A Woodward (Membership Secretary).



11 seats were taken at the Royal British Legion Hall on Thursday 7 April for this year's Annual General Meeting, which preceded the lecture given by Professor Alice Coleman (see report on page 3)

The large attendance made for a lively meeting, which was briskly conducted by our Chairman, Roger Lawson. The reports by the Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer were distributed and accepted by members, as were the changes proposed for an increase in subscription rates, details of which will be sent to all members and affiliated Associations.

The Chairman announced that Jack Scruton wished to retire from the post of Hon. Secretary, which he had held from the inception of the Society in 1968. However, Jack was willing to serve on the Executive Committee as Planning Secretary, but would appreciate help with the ever increasing load of planning applications from any member of the Society interested in this type of work.



ur new president - L J Mayes

Members of the Society are delighted to learn that Mr L J Mayes has consented to be our new President. Mr Mayes is of course well known and widely respected High Wycombe personality. Mr Mayes first came to High Wycombe from Watford in 1932 to be the "trained as assistant" at the then newly-opened Borough Library in Queen Victoria Road. Four years later, at the age of 25, he was appointed Borough

Librarian, a post which he held until his retirement some 17 years ago. He developed an interest in local history, which culminated in the publication of several books on the history of the Borough, on chairmaking and papermaking. With Councillor Avery he built up a working collection of exhibits relating to chairmaking and other local industries, which has been developed into what is now the Wycombe Chair Museum. He also initiated the library's unique collection of local photographs.

Returning to the library after wartime service in the RAF, he started a new venture: making tape-recordings of interesting local people for posterity. Since his retirement, Mr Mayes has been a popular lecturer on a range of subjects relating to the Chilterns and the River Thames (where he lived on a house-boat for a number of years) and the social history of people at work and at leisure. He has recently started recording his lectures as "talking books" for the blind. He keeps fit by walking and cycling in the Chilterns and beyond.

The greatest waxer

I had been a member of the High Wycombe Society for a year before I first met Jack Scruton and became involved. Responding to a Society Newsletter appeal for a Trees Group one bright Spring morning when the sap was rising and energy manifest in all young growth, I telephoned offering help. The voice that I spoke to was youthful, alert, interested - I was a little flippant. Soon after I called on him, unexpected, and my pre-formed image of a dynamic young man to banter with changed immediately. He is certainly dynamic and can be bantered with but no one can talk with Jack on the subject of High Wycombe for more than three minutes without becoming aware of how much he cares for the town, its people and their environment. His care is manifest in his commitment in founding and inspiring the High Wycombe Society for 20 years. Jack has put much of his life into this work - all who have helped know that in giving as much time and effort as we can, he giving much more. His foresight, his ability to see plans - the good and bad aspects before they become creations - and to persuade others to think, see the consequences, consider options, and act, are special talents.

The greater part of his effort has been in planning. Commencing with the Rye Protection Society, which saved the Rye from being seared by a road, then the High Wycombe Society and, among many others, the memorable stand to save H7, an area of open fields between Hazlemere and Widmer End - do you remember the procession of protest through the town bearing banners, urn and effigies? Most recently, through Jack's efforts the ancient Desborough Castle site has been protected from development. In all this and much more Jack has spent hundreds of hours viewing plans, attending Council meetings and speaking for the Society at appeals. The High Wycombe Society viewpoint has not always won. Despite winning the case for The Chequers thrice on appeal, the building was lost by neglect, but Jack has always been too concerned for Wycombe as a whole to be deterred by lost causes. His outlook is positive and directed towards creative ideas as much as opposing bad ones. Jack has resigned the post of Secretary

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but will continue with the Planning Group, scrutinising and responding on behalf of the Society to the ever increasing number of planning applications. His highest accolade (more often given to women than men!) was "a waxer." Jack, you're the greatest waxer of them all. While we welcome John Gore in the brave position of Secretary we thank you for all you have done for the Society during 20 years in that post, and we are very glad you're staying with us.

- Barbara Rippington



Cutting crime and sharp comments from the Professor



he guest speaker at this lively and stimulating meeting was Professor Alice Coleman, eminent Geographer and Director of the Land Research Unit at King's College, London. Land use and living conditions are Alice's particular interests, revealed in her publications which include *The Planning Challenge of the Ottawa Area* and *Utopia On Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing*. She initiated and directed the second Land Utilization Survey of Britain in the 1960s, working with 3,000 volunteer geographers, and she has since studied the problems revealed by the land use maps, 120 of which have been published. At present her main concern is the effect of bad housing design in promoting crime and social breakdown. Her work and views on this have been well documented in the national press.

Professor Coleman has followed research undertaken in America by Oscar Newman, who listed 12 variables, which if included in building design, encouraged crime. When she applied these variables to building in Great Britain the number increased to 16. Her research, back by graphs and statistics, shows that improved design can alleviate and eradicate many of the problems. This is proved by some of the important work she is responsible for on large blocks of flats in inner cities. For example, by removing walkways and partitioning corridors the multiplicity of escape routes for criminals is reduced, and strategic sites for missile throwing are removed. Housing residents at ground floor level and adding gardens provides opportunity for better surveillance of the area and reduces anonymity, besides encouraging neighbourliness. Accumulated litter has been more than once found to be a hiding place for dead bodies.

Professor Coleman's message was earnest: good design and remedial work to improve poor design is far more cost-effective and of greater long term benefit than cosmetic face-lifts and costly policing. The Dept of the Environment is expected shortly to commission Alice Coleman to propose redesign plans for further selected estates.



"Walkers? I thought they were those new moving targets!"

cartoon by elizabeth beard

Planning



THE decision by the Secretary of State to allow Wycombe Wanderers to move to establish a new ground at Sands in the Green Belt and Chilterns AONB is one which has been greeted with consternation in many quarters, including the Council's Planning Department. It seems that in this case the policies protecting the Green Belt and ONB were discarded, as the Inspector considered that the needs of the hospital must be satisfied at all costs. On the surface that seems a worthy reason, but for those of us who attended the Inquiry feel very differently about the result. The decision not only means a massive intrusion into attractive countryside and a great impact on the people of Sands. It also enables a large developer to ride to victory on the back of the hospital, enabling him to establish another DIY warehouse in the place originally meant for housing and community use.



THIS recent inquiry was held to determine the application to change the two farms into a golf course, together with establishing farm buildings as accommodation for visitors. The great controversy has been the subject of several applications, with frequent amendments, using the policy of "changing the goal posts" to weaken resistance. After a series of refusals, the Wycombe District Council finally succumbed, but pressure from many quarters, including the Society, resulted in the setting up of a Public Inquiry. There is widespread and well founded opposition to the application, as it is obvious that a change to a golf course would have the most serious effect on this delightful and historic valley.



HAVE you heard of the latest craze of the adult version of cowboys and Indians? Apparently this is becoming a lucrative venture for owners of woodlands and entrepreneurs, with groups of adults being lured into woodlands at some expense in order to satisfy their innate longing to recreate their childhood by by taking part in War Games. The pastime is supposed to make

them more alert and able to take swift decisions, and no doubt make them more successful in the new enterprise culture. Unfortunately the games inflict damage on woodland and their wildlife, and interfere with the normal use by walkers. A recent application to use part of Deangarden Wood was opposed by the Society, Keep Hill Residents and Deangarden Residents, and by the Countryside Commission, and fortunately the application was refused by the Council. We have now heard from Deangarden Wood R.A. that a woodland at Lane End is in use for the games. We wonder if planning approval has been given. We will investigate.



In 1984 The High Wycombe Society were celebrating the completion of a new Mill building on the Pann Mill site. A donation from Marks and Spencer in their centenary year made it possible for the Trees and Water Group to pursue our dream of restoring the last remaining working water wheel on the River Wye and selling stone ground flour to the people of Wycombe. A large workshop has been built on the back of the site where the wheel's buckets

starts and bolts have been stripped, painted and now await their replacement on the wheel. We aim to have a fully operational wheel for Wycombe Show in September. Many other aspects of restoration work have continued alongside the wheel. For instance, repainting of the walls of the mill race and a fine set of oak sluice boards to replace the originals. Weather proofing the mill boarding is a continuing process, but essential as many fine artefacts are stored within. Together with general maintenance of the grounds, Wycombe District Council have replaced the willow tree, blown down in the October gales. We are lucky to have a resident gardener in Margaret Simmons, who is planting shrubs and wild flowers and keeping our site tidy. The enthusiasm for this project is evident at the Sunday morning work parties. Helpers are invited to share in the activities. Can you help? We are looking for a person to make an all-weather display board to give a brief history of this unique wheel for permanent display on the site. And can anyone donate old garden tools for our site?

by
Myra
King

- Myra King (High Wycombe 23968)

Pann Mill:
exciting times
on the way



"...person wanted to make an all-weather display board..."

ENVIRONMENT WEEK

On the trail of a celebration



The High Wycombe Society's contribution to National Environment Week took place on May Day - May 2nd - when the Water and Town Trails were walked. These were advertised in the town by Sid Spence's excellent posters. We are also

indebted to the Bucks Free Press for the publication of a prominent piece about the events.

About 12 people enjoyed the Water Trail during a bright afternoon of sun and spring showers, under the guidance of that inveterate explorer of the Rye, Jack Scruton. The Town Trail began with an excellent guided tour of the Parish Church by John Gore. This was both informative and inspiring. The 35 people present were then divided into two groups to complete the town trail, one with Barbara Rippington as guide, introducing a new chic elegance to the Society, and the other with me. All groups finished at Pann Mill where Diana Stone and her helpers of had provided tea and a superb array of home-baked goodies. Everyone had enjoyed the afternoon.

Meanwhile Myra King and the Pann Mill volunteers had an open afternoon. Many visitors called to inspect the restoration work so far, to see the many artefacts on display and to generally enjoy the opportunity to explore that corner of the Rye. The enthusiasm and interest of many local people was most encouraging.

- Annie Woodward

THE following affiliated societies have undertaken environmental improvements in their areas as their contribution to Environment Week: West Wycombe WI have planted shrubs by the village hall; Keep Hill RA have cleared the footpath to the Dyke; HW Morning WI have collected litter from Pann Mill site. Hughenden Park RA have tidied up part of Tinkers Wood and Loudwater RA cleared litter from hedgerows in Dereham's Lane.



In stall for a real treat

We are most grateful to Wycombe District Council for allowing the Society to have the charity stall under the Little Market House on Easter Saturday, 2nd April, following the withdrawal of another charity. Due to the short notice wide publicity of the venture was impossible. However, about 14 members agreed to bake, supply items for sale and to man the stall. Home made cakes and biscuits, plants, second-hand books and bric-a-brac were sold. Items ranged from a decorated cake, trays of seedlings and a wide range of paperbacks to a tin of haggis.

The stall was bustling with customers from 8am (some eager shoppers were even there before we were!) until 1pm when supplies and helpers were exhausted.

We were surprised and delighted to make £129 for the morning work. Very sincere thanks are due to the relatively few people who helped and contributed so energetically.

Diana Stone
and Annie Woodward

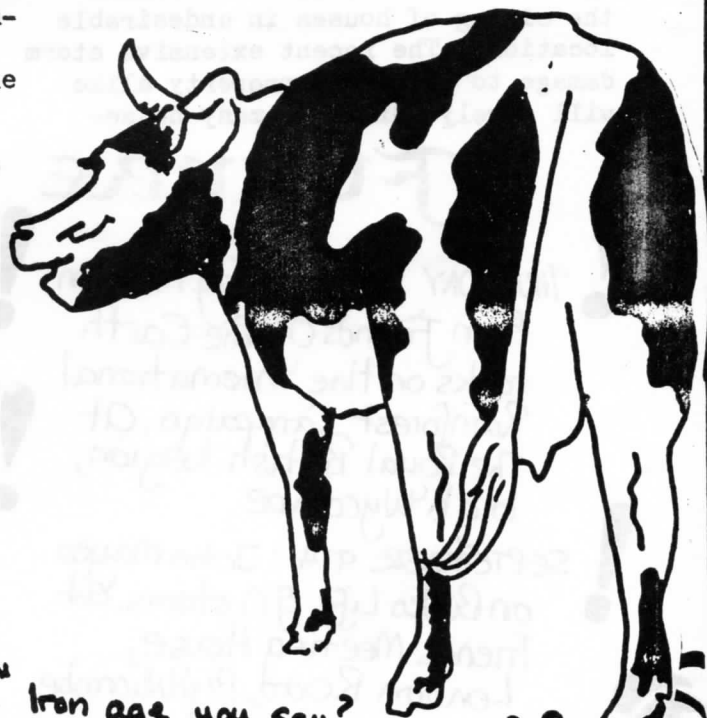
High Wycombe Society Heritage Group



bout a year ago The Heritage Group was reformed by a dozen members for the purpose of pursuing the following objectives: protection of conservation areas, investigation of planning applications, liaison with other societies, outings and talks, and raising public awareness. As its first task the Group undertook to resurvey the Wycombe Town Centre Conservation Area, a task originally carried out by the previous group during European Architectural Year in 1975. The survey called for comment on such features as buildings, street furniture, traffic conditions, townscape and other paraphernalia. The report includes suggestions to improve the environment with the object of interesting the District Council and traders in taking some action. Copies have now been distributed to Council Officers and various interested parties and we are seeking a meeting with them.

The report was later used as a basis for a pictorially mounted exhibition at Wycombe Library. In view of the favourable comments received, it is hoped that further use of this material will be made by interested schools. The Group gave some thought to what it could do to qualify for monies, about £2,000, offered by the District Council to implement a scheme for European Year of the Environment. We proposed the installation of signs giving details of historic importance. The District Council considered the proposal to be very worthwhile but felt it was something which could be undertaken by the Council. The greatest need of the Group is to find a Secretary. Are there any volunteers?
- Don Hide.

THE High Wycombe Society waved its flag during Wycombe Festival with a stand at the superbly organised (by the Rotary Club) Leisure '88 exhibition. The stand featured our model of the Market Square. The Society also organised a talk by Miriam Moir of the Chiltern Open Air Museum and her tale of cows eating the roof of their Iron Age House found its way into the Wycombe Star, then Today newspaper and was even mentioned by Derek Jameson on Radio Two...from little acorns.. A trip to the Open Air Museum is being organised by the Society and details can be found on page 8.



Iron age you say?

Not a bad vintage!

Drawing by Elizabeth Beard

Householder, spare that tree...

THIS LETTER BY OUR CHAIRMAN, ROGER LAWSON WAS FIRST PUBLISHED AS A READER'S LETTER IN DENDROLOGIST - A PUBLICATION FOR THE (SUBSCRIBING) TREE ENTHUSIAST:

"There has been a continuing and, I venture to suggest, an increasing tendency for builders and developers of residential estates to plan their estate and plot layouts so that individual houses are frequently sited immediately near to mature trees. This has assisted the developer to build as many units as possible onto the available ground. Inevitably, in time, the purchasers of the house have felt obliged to cut back, or fell, the immediately adjacent trees (with or without planning consent where stipulated) in order to alleviate their own fears that damage may be caused to their property. This is hardly natural justice, since the trees were there first, and it is only the relentless desire of developers to 'cram em in' that causes the siting of houses in undesirable locations. The recent extensive storm damage to trees and property alike will surely influence many house-

owners to look with apprehension, at the trees near their properties in South East England and to decide, probably without real justification, that some safe and majestic tree fairly near their house has got to be severely lopped or felled to protect their interest in the family home.

Consequently I fear that the considerable storm loss of trees in South East England, will now be followed by a long period of pruning, lopping and felling by developers who can use, with greater liberty, the excuse that "these trees are dangerous and would have to be felled anyway if our proposed houses were not built there." All tree aficionados should beware of the 'mini hurricane' of tree felling which is likely to occur. The local District Council Arboriculturalist is likely to be even more on the defensive than normal, when dealing with the correctly completed applications for felling or lopping in areas where TPOs abound, but residential properties are increasing."

- Roger Lawson

FUTURE Programme

THURSDAY JULY 21: Kay Thomson from Friends of The Earth talks on the International Rainforest Campaign. At The Royal British Legion, High Wycombe

SEPTEMBER 9TH: John Mayes on Bucks Life & Customs. At Friends Meeting House, London Road, High Wycombe

TUESDAY 11TH OCTOBER at Royal British Legion, High Wycombe. Amanda Jones: project officer of UK 2000

NOVEMBER 11TH at Friends Meeting House, London Road, High Wycombe: IAN SPARKES will give a talk.

18th SEPTEMBER: visit to Chiltern Open Air Museum's Craft day
Phone H.W. 25933 for information

The Editor of the High Wycombe Society Newsletter is Alan Cleaver, 65 Amersham Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP13 5AA.