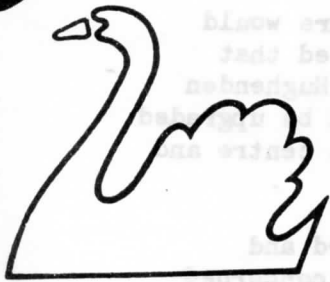


The High Wycombe Society

(Registered with the Civic Trust)



Newsletter

"Your town is our concern"

Registered Charity No. 257897

Contributions to:

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

Tel: High Wycombe 25933

newsletter number 70



Autumn 1988

Fighting to save the remaining Wycombe Wonders

Old-time Wycombe gardeners! Do you remember the time when we had a garden pea of our own, The Wycombe Wonder, obtainable exclusively from Messrs Jones and Rivett, old-established corn and seed merchants of Oxford Street? Sadly their doors have been closed for several years now, but I was reminded of them and the Wycombe Wonder on seeing their old premises being dismantled this August brick by brick. It was never a very distinguished building, but just another familiar feature which will have disappeared forever. The demolition is just one more step in the building of the Frogmoor Diversion, a new dual carriageway road planned to run from the Oxford Road roundabout to a new roundabout in Temple End. The road will enable Frogmoor to be closed to traffic, but it would also be the first stage in a new inner relief road to link Oxford Road and the Law Courts via Temple End, Priory Avenue and the railway station.

Some of the landowners on the route of the diversion were opposed to the compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) which Bucks County Council had served on them to force them to sell land for the road. As a result a Public Enquiry was held in July for the County Council and objectors to air their views before an Inspector appointed by the Department of Transport.

The County Council claimed that their traffic measurements proved conclusively that the existing roads were inadequate, so the new road was fully justified. The High Wycombe Society did not think such massive road works should be built right in the middle of the town centre. Raised roads



Planning

are intimidating to pedestrians and so are subways which shoppers would have to negotiate to go from Frogmoor to Sainsburys. We suggested that if the District Council wanted to pedestrianise Frogmoor, then Hughenden Road traffic should be diverted via Bellfield Road, which could be upgraded if necessary. This would take traffic further away from the town centre and the now derelict land by Dovecote could be put to better use.

Three other non statutory objectors, Lorna Cassidy, Elsa Woodward and Richard Marshall, also put their views. Lorna was particularly concerned about the impending destruction of the 130-year-old Victorian railway viaduct, which once carried Great Western broad-gauge locomotives. She would like it to be put into use again as a pedestrian walkway from Bellfield to the town centre.

The Inspector gave us all a sympathetic hearing and we await his recommendations on the implementation of the CPOs with interest.

- John Gore

Seed of an idea for a Trees Group



Once the Society had a flourishing Trees Group and some members think there is a need to reform it. If you are one of these, especially if you are willing to organise such a group, please contact the Hon. Sec. John Gore on HW 26671.

Environment Week plans for 1989.



Would residents associations please note that Environment Week 89 will take place from 22 April to 1 May 1989. If you are looking for ideas on what to do to make an impact, please write to the Civic Trust, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AW, for a free copy of 'Ideas To Get You Started.'

Day-time meetings for the Society

It has been suggested that there could be a desire among some of our members for daytime meetings of The High Wycombe Society. These could take the form of "afternoon tea" sessions with either a talk, discussion or active work on a particular project or idea. If anyone thinks they would be interested in such an idea please write to the Hon Sec John Gore or phone him on HW 26671.

Don't forget: next quarterly meeting
is Tuesday October 11th at the Royal British
Legion Hall with Amanda Jones of UK2000



Charity stall raises £98

n the 27th August we were fortunate to be able to use the charity stall pitch under the Little Market House; again, this was due to Myra King's amazing intelligence network which 'spots' a cancellation by another charitable body, when it occurs.

Lottie Kearney swung into action and filled a rota of volunteer Society members and encouraged the donation of bric-a-brac and tummy-filling baked goodies, to sell.

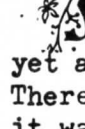
Our thanks are due to these two laides and to all who contributed goods and/or time to enable us to finish with £98 profit, that day. This kind of effort is really most valuable in shoving up our general finances, which tend to be on a hand to mouth basis at the moment.

- Roger Lawson

Heritage: Landscaping in town

ongratulations to Wycombe District Council, their landscape consultants and contractors on the completion of the repaving of Church Square. The new York stone paving and relaid Denner Hill sets combine to make a splendid setting for the Little Market House and All Saints Church. Our only regret is that more use was not made of the Denner Hill sets, a traditional local material, which originally surrounded the Pepper Pot. This project is the first of a series of landscaping schemes for the enhancement of the town centre. At the time of writing, proposals for the remainder of the scheme are on display in the Guildhall. We hope many Society members will have taken the opportunity to look at the exhibition and send in their comments. The Society is, of course, extremely interested and we would welcome the views of our members about the landscaping proposals.

Encore for the Arts Centre

rt lovers will have been bitterly disappointed at the foundering of yet another scheme to build an arts centre in High Wycombe. There was a close vote in council to reject the latest scheme, but perhaps it was always too much to hope that a centre with a 1000-seat hall and a 400-seat theatre could ever be filled sufficiently week in, week out to be financially viable. But what next? Wycombe needs and ought to be able to support facilities for art, drama and music in some form. Should there be a more modest scheme on the same site south of the High Street and/or should an out of town site be considered, for workshops at least, at a redundant school, perhaps. Certainly a theatre would make Wycombe a more attractive place for business visitors as well as tourists and residents, so some financial support by industry and commerce would seem to be justified.

continued...

~4~

What concerns the Society most is that such a fine site right at the centre of the Conservation Area should be used to the best advantage. It would be tragic if the site were to be handed over to commercial interests to exploit on the basis of maximising profit per square foot by building out-of-scale multi-storey office blocks to dominate the High Street. What is needed is a sensitive development with buildings, open spaces and landscaping in sympathy with the Conservation Area, and we believe it should be aimed at bringing a variety of life to the town centre by day and night. To achieve this a diversity of uses is indicated, such as small, specialised retail outlets, civic, cultural, recreational, leisure facilities, to appeal to all sections of the population. And do not let us forget the River Wye, which runs to the south of the site and which should be brought into the scheme for amenity and landscaping purposes.



We sympathise with Wycombe District Councillors who now have to act quickly to prevent fragmentation of the site. We hope they will be able to produce an integrated scheme for the site that will enhance the reputation of High Wycombe.

The fight for the Falcon Inn



The Society has continued its opposition to the proposal to convert the hotel to a combination of retail premises, speculative offices, and as a new home for the public lavatories, which are at present in The Guildhall. We have based our opposition on: Loss of the only town-centre hotel, the long historic association, stretching over 600 years, the demolition of the major part of a listed building, the need for the Falcon as a feature of the future improvements to the town centre. If the Falcon is lost, we are convinced it will be a matter for the greatest regret in the future, as was the similar loss of the Red Lion 20 years ago.

~ Jack Scruton
~ John Gore

Don't forget: Ivan Sparkes will give a talk at the Friends Meeting House, London Road, High Wycombe, on November 11th.



The death of Vere Sutton - our oldest member

Members of the Society were saddened to learn of the death in July of Vere Sutton, who, at the age of 93 years, was our oldest member. He had been a member of the Society for many years and was one of its keenest supporters. He rarely missed a Quarterly Meeting and was usually to be found sitting on the front row.

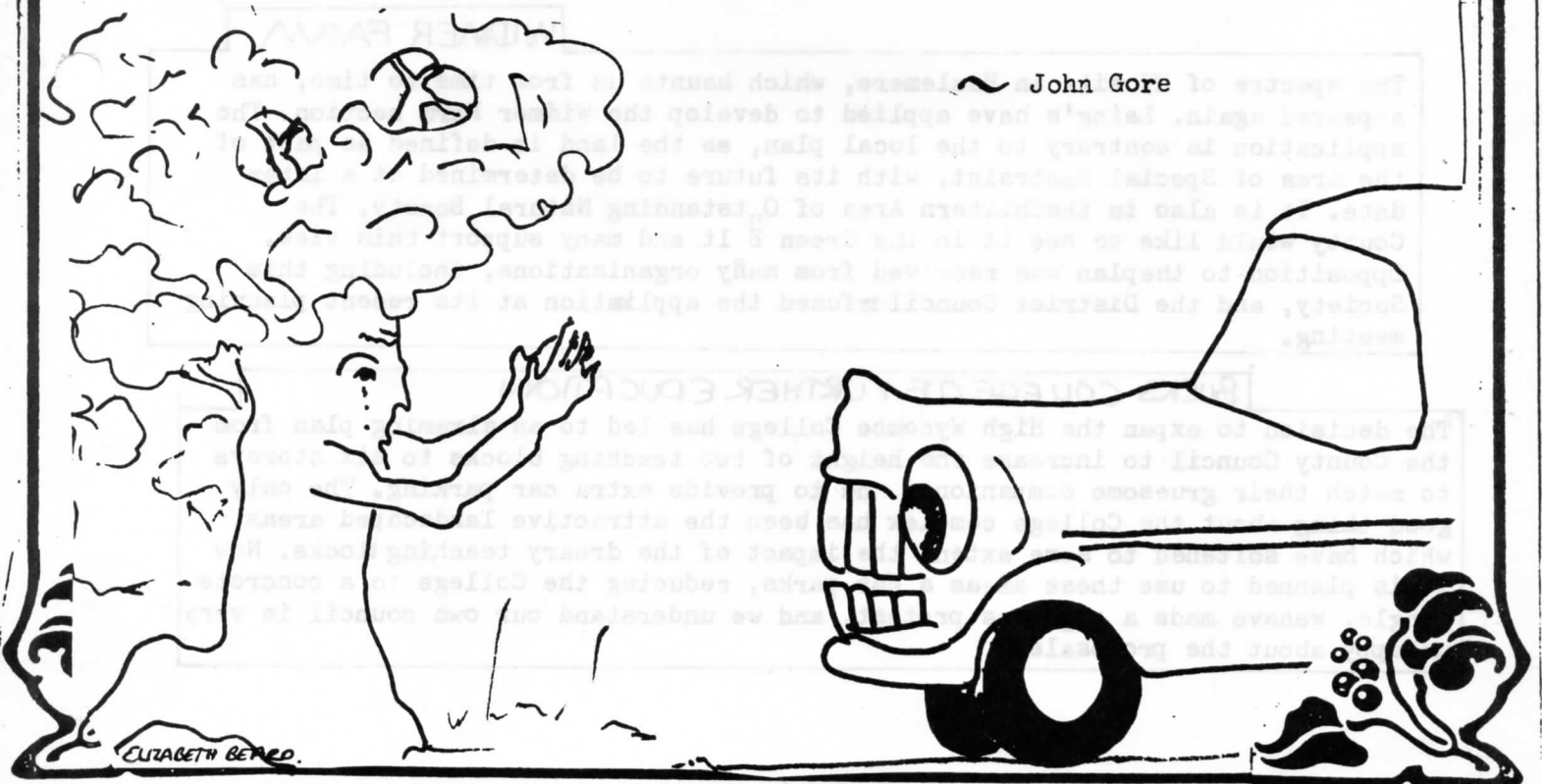
A lifelong High Wycombe residents, he used to recall the exciting day back in 1906 when, as a pupil at the Royal Grammar School, he saw the first passenger train from Marylebone draw into High Wycombe Station on the then new Great Western and Great Central Joint Railway Line via Beaconsfield.

My late father-in-law always spoke highly of Vere. By a coincidence they were both posted as 19-year-olds to the same Royal Engineer Signals Unit just behind the front line in France in the 1914-1918 War. When my father-in-law first arrived he was amazed to see someone reading a copy of the Bucks Free Press; it was of course Vere Sutton. They maintained contact from that day.

Before the War was out, Vere was unfortunately wounded in action, but there was a happy outcome, for in hospital he met, as one of the nurses, Florence, who was to become his wife.

After the war, he returned to High Wycombe to work in his father's factory, but at the time of the depression, he decided to take up teaching of the violin, the talent for which he became well known. Vere Sutton will be sadly missed; we should like to express our condolences to his family.

~ John Gore



CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The number of applications to build on back gardens, or to clear whole groups of houses to make way for smaller units, shows no sign of lessening. The following are some examples and about which the Society has made representations:

21-29 Carrington Road, 17 small dwellings in back gardens. There are severe traffic problems in Carrington Road. 54-56 Priory Road where permission is sought to convert two fine semi-detached houses into 20 flats! Clearly an over-development with almost complete loss of front and rear gardens to create car parking. Cock Lane - application for 60 2-bed flats. Interview sought with Planning Officer. Lane between Peasant Drive and West Wycombe Road. Meadow land threatened with housing. 184-192 Kingsmead Road - application made to demolish to make way for 19 smaller units. Kingsmead Road is severely threatened with wholesale clearance. 8 or 10 dwellings on Marlow Hill near Wycombe High School. Likely to be a difficult traffic problem.

PLAYING FIELDS AND THE COUNTY COUNCIL

The County Council has continued its assault on School Playing Fields, and is now planning to sell land which was used by Lady Verney School and the College of Further Education. The council is well aware that the two applications are contrary to the new Structure Plan proposals and the High Wycombe local plan, but seeks to cover itself by stating that the two plans are awaiting approval and can therefore be ignored. This piece of hypocrisy has startled the District Council and effectively removed the respect we had for the County. We feel that the ardent support we gave to the Structure Plan proposals was a waste of time. Clearly the County has not behaved honourably and cares nothing for the urgent recreational needs of the town, with its growing population.

WIDMER FARM

The spectre of H7 site in Hazlemere, which haunts us from time to time, has appeared again. Laing's have applied to develop the Widmer Farm section. The application is contrary to the local plan, as the land is defined as part of the area of Special Restriction, with its future to be determined at a later date. It is also in the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The County would like to see it in the Green Belt and many support this view. Opposition to the plan was received from many organisations, including this Society, and the District Council refused the application at its recent planning meeting.

BUCKS COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

The decision to expand the High Wycombe College has led to an alarming plan from the County Council to increase the height of two teaching blocks to six storeys to match their gruesome companions, and to provide extra car parking. The only good thing about the College complex has been the attractive landscaped areas, which have softened to some extent the impact of the dreary teaching blocks. Now it is planned to use these areas as car parks, reducing the College to a concrete jungle. We have made a vigorous protest, and we understand our own council is very unhappy about the proposals.

The Sands Of Time

I moved to Sands seven years ago, and in that time I have seen the disappearance of the butcher's, the ironmonger's, two general stores and the baker's, where "real bread" was baked on the premises. The butcher's has become a double glazing showroom, the ironmonger's is an office equipment supplier, the adjoining store became a video hire shop, the old corner shop now sells sofa beds, and rumour has it that the redundant bakery will soon make way for a few more flats. Our red telephone box was taken away last year too! I felt a real pang when I witnessed this piece of our heritage languishing on a trailer in the rain, while two blase workmen casually cleared up the debris.

We live in New Road, in a house built in 1930. In fact, most of the houses in Sands were built in the 20s and 30s, though there are several older dwellings, late Victorian and Edwardian, plus some much older cottages in Barn Court (more about that later). Our house and those adjoining it were built on fields which I am told had belonged to one Farmer Gillett, and I would guess that Gilletts Lane takes its name from this man.

Chatting to local senior citizens, or anyone who has lived here twenty years or so is a great way of learning local history. A casual over-the-fence conversation with our neighbour revealed that there used to be a Police Box (remember those old blue ones?) on the corner of Mill End Road and New Road, which had been removed in the 1960s. I have tried to find the appropriate square in the pavement where it had stood, but this has proved difficult as the pavement has been "bodged up" so many times!

There used to be a nursery in Sands, on the corner of Mill End Road and Gallows Lane, which was closed down and demolished about six years ago. (I was expecting our daughter at the time too). It was a prefabricated building, put up during the last war, to accommodate the children of mothers doing war work. Nowadays, a residential home for mentally handicapped adults stands on the site. When the foundations of this building were being dug out, I fervently hoped that something interesting and historic would be discovered, for I was sure that the name Gallows Lane must mean something! I was convinced that hangings had taken place on the corner site! I am not a ghoulish person, but I did wonder if coins and other artifacts might have come to light. Nothing did however, and one day, a chatty octogenarian told me that hangings used to take place in the woods off of what is now Dashwood Avenue! Incidentally, Gallows Lane is notable for its three old swan-necked lamp posts, the only examples in this area.

I mentioned Barn Court. This place intrigues me. I call it the Secret Village. It is situated between New Road and Lane End Road, where the road forks. I have discovered that there used to be a farm there, but that's all I know. Barn Court now is a collection of old cottages accessible via a private right of way, though it is possible to walk through part of it to reach Roundwood Road (I think!) I can appreciate how much residents must value their peace and seclusion, because this really is a little bit of old England.

Sands is a village of contrasts. Down here on the main road where we live, it is incredibly busy, en route to two industrial estates, and in the peak times (in fact at most times) the traffic from four major roads converges in a swirling mass outside our front gates. Meanwhile, about ten minutes walk away in the area of Pinewood Road, you can be in the heart of the country. Personally I don't mind the busyness. I am used to it, and I am grateful for the good bus services here as I do not drive.

In spite of the traffic problems and "lost" shops, Sands

is a pleasant place to live in. We still have a Post Office, newsagents, pub (the Hour Glass, built in the early 1920s or just before, and was the scene of a crime of passion murder in 1937), two schools, and a bright modern village hall used regularly by the playgroups, senior citizens' club, W.I., and dancing classes, as well as private functions. I like it here!

~ Denise Lindsay.



The reign of rain forests

TORRENTIAL rain fell in High Wycombe as Koy Thompson, International Rainforest Campaigner for Friends of the Earth began his talk at our quarterly meeting on July 21 this year, on the subject of Tropical Rainforests.

The disappearance of the Rainforests is dire, and with urgency Mr Thompson explained to us the rapidity of destruction and the consequences. We learned of the great diversity of wild life in the forests including 80,000 different edible plants, and that between a quarter and one third of plants used in medicines available for our benefit came from rainforests. The destructiveness of Man globally causes the loss of one species of wildlife per year - except in the Rainforests where six species are lost per hour and at the present rate 20 to 50 per cent of all wildlife species will be lost by the year 2000. The Rainforests are being felled at 600 acres, the equivalent of 20 football pitches, per minute.

Why, Mr Thompson was asked, should we worry since large destruction of forests has taken place in Europe throughout history, yet we survive. The difference is that Europe's temperate climate and gentler rainfall allows for regeneration when trees are felled, but the torrential rainfall in the rainforest regions causes rapid soil erosion and flooding where no trees remain for protection and the impoverished soil, washed clean of all nutrients, cannot support regrowth. Nor can it support the lives of people living there.

Without trees to promote water retention in the soil and transpiration through their leaves rainfall decreases - as in the Panama Canal region where rainfall is now 1.5% less per year and the canal is silting up from soil washed in from the newly exposed land around and drying up. Unless the situation improves the canal will become un-navigable.

At the present rate of destruction, in 80 years time no rainforest will be untouched by development, and in 30 years only protected rainforests will remain. What can we do? Timber users - furniture manufacturers etc., are asked to buy only well managed timber from producers who are attentive to the ecology of the region and to replanting; Friends of the Earth has a list of recommended names. We are asked to write to our local member of the European Parliament, Simon Elles, sixteen letters on one subject constitutes pressure sufficient to be taken notice of. We are urged to consider the facts and treat them not as food for thought but as stimulus for action.

~ Barbara Rippington