

The High Wycombe Society

(Registered with the Civic Trust)

Newsletter

"Your town is our concern"

Honorary Secretary,
John Gore Esq.,
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Bucks.
HP11 2UR.

Registered Charity No. 257897

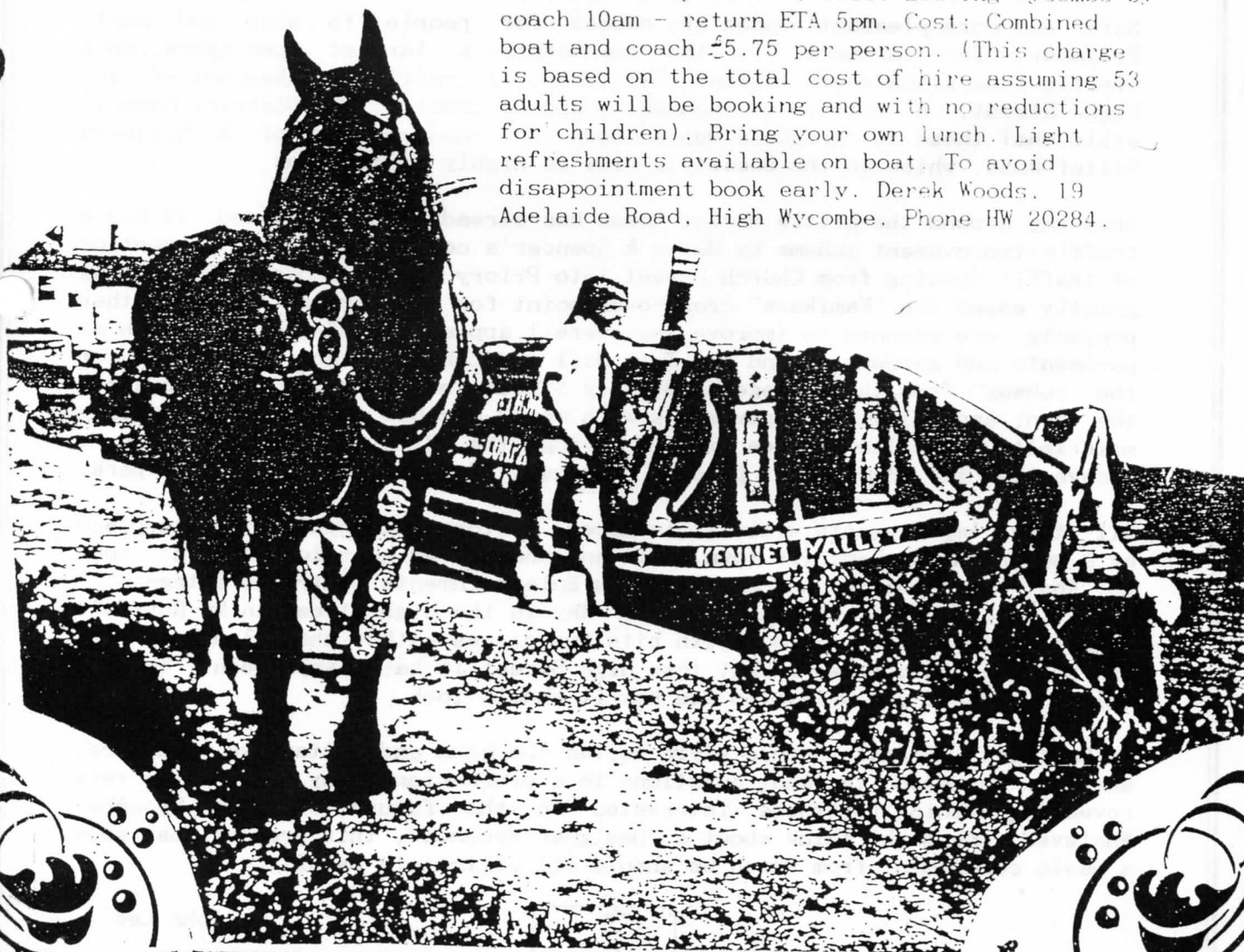
NEWSLETTER NO 72

SPRING 1989

High Wycombe Society 21st anniversary

What better way to spend a day? I have hired the horse-drawn boat "Kennet Valley" for yet another trip on the popular run between Kintbury and Hungerford - a delightful stretch of the Kennet and Avon Canal system. Interested?

Date: Saturday June 7, 1989. Leaving Wycombe by coach 10am - return ETA 5pm. Cost: Combined boat and coach £5.75 per person. (This charge is based on the total cost of hire assuming 53 adults will be booking and with no reductions for children). Bring your own lunch. Light refreshments available on boat. To avoid disappointment book early. Derek Woods, 19 Adelaide Road, High Wycombe. Phone HW 20284.



Designer Wycombe

At the January Quarterly Meeting, Mr Christopher Royffe talked informally to the Society about the landscaping proposals for the centre of High Wycombe.

Born in the town, Mr Royffe was educated at the Royal Grammar School and Leeds Polytechnic, and did post-graduate work on urban design at Manchester University. He is now a partner in Landscape Design Associates, a growing company with experience of several town-centre improvement schemes.

Wycombe District Council commissioned Mr Royffe's firm to look at the environment of the town centre including access roads. The first priority in any such study is to identify the problems and the second is to plan how to solve them. Mr Royffe cited examples of town centres such as Peterborough and Norwich which have been made safer and more pleasant by using pedestrian spaces.

In High Wycombe the problems to be faced were the destruction of old buildings by the rash of 60s developments, and traffic which is hostile to pedestrians. While shopping facilities are already improving, the street-scape is not. Mr Royffe's aim was to show what alternatives are available.

Safer and more pleasant places are needed for people to shop and meet. Frogmoor, for instance, is the town-centre's largest open space, so a traffic-free plaza seems logical. Similarly, if traffic is taken out of the High Street, a better environment would be created. The District Council claim that these two projects depend upon the construction of a Northern Relief Road, which in the Society's view is highly contentious.

Repaving around the Little Market House has already been completed, as has a traffic-improvement scheme by Marks & Spencer's corner, where the prevention of traffic turning from Church Street into Priory Road and Castle Street has greatly eased the "Kamikaze" cross-over point for pedestrians. Many other projects are planned to improve the overall appearance of the town, such as pavements and gardens around the Town Hall and Library; the improvement of the subway from the College to St Mary Street; better signposts throughout the town; and relaying of pavements with more durable and better quality materials. A welcome idea is to bring the River Wye back to life by uncovering it where it passes through Bridge Street car park.

All these improvements will, it is hoped, restore High Wycombe to its place as a major Buckinghamshire town, but many unanswered questions remain, such as: What about the Falcon? How will the Entertainments Centre be integrated into the Conservation Area? Why is the High Street in Mr Royffe's illustration so dotted about with bits and pieces rather than looking like the broad classic Bucks market town High Street it has always been? We have only to look at old prints to see how it should look.

Mr Royffe's informal lecture style suited the keen and attentive audience, and he answered the many questions in a professional way. This was a very revealing evening for those interested in the future of High Wycombe. Whatever one might think about a "Designer Wycombe", this project does show a basic commitment from which we should all ultimately benefit.

Future plans for High Wycombe

Important decisions concerning our town and district are about to be made. The Local Plan has reached its final stage, with the recommendations of the Government Inspector now being considered, and the Secretary of State has published his proposed modifications to the County Structure Plan. These two sets of proposals are of the greatest importance for the future of our town. The three principal items are those concerned with housing, the future of the Green Belt and AONB, and road proposals.

HOUSING

There has been a marked difference of opinion between the County and our District Council with regard to the amount of housing which should be provided for the period of 1986 - 2001. The County proposed 7,200. While our District Council proposed 9,840. The Structure Plan Panel proposed 8,600 as a compromise. The Secretary of State observed that the increase proposed by the District Council would almost certainly involve extensive building on the white land around High Wycombe and that there had already been a substantial body of objection to the smaller increase proposed in the alterations. The Secretary of State stated further "that there is a need to deal carefully with the local environment." He proposed therefore that the total number of dwellings should be 6,600. This proposal will most certainly be welcomed by all those who care about the need to protect the countryside around our town. The contributions which will be made by conversions and in-filling within the urban area are difficult to forecast but undoubtedly these will be substantial.

GREEN BELT

The Secretary of State considers that

the future of the Green Belt and the white land, much of which is in the AONB, should be a matter for the local plan to decide. He turned down the possibility of including Walters Ash and Naphill in the Green Belt, and this will be a great disappointment to the local residents. The Local Plan Inspector suggested that Green Belt land west of Hammersley Lane and at Rayners should be taken out of the Green Belt, which would place the land in a much more vulnerable position. The suggestion met with fierce local opposition and the District Council decided to retain the two areas in the Green Belt.

TRANSPORT AND ROADS

Following the Public Enquiry into the Local Plan held last May at which the Society made representation about several matters, notably on the proposals for new roads, the Inspector has now published his comments, conclusions and recommendations. His report is available for inspection, and indeed purchase, at the Planning Office at the District Council Offices. The new roads which the Society were, and still are, particularly concerned about are the Frogmoor Diversion, the Northern Relief Road from Temple End to the Law Courts and the A404 diversion from Hazlemere to Temple End. Whilst the Inspector had no power to recommend any alterations to the Plan in respect of roads, he did make some interesting observations which justified the points made by the Society and other objectors. He wrote: "Although the Plan presently seeks to protect possible routes, the case for the objectors must be relevant in that the proposals, whether appropriate or not, are based on very old studies. The solutions were arrived at when less was known and appreciated of the impact of new roads on the built environment. The

objectors seek and are entitled to have more detailed information. Some of the road proposals are still distant and beyond the period of the Plan. Nevertheless the contribution of the Highway Authority to the Plan might have been a new traffic study, some detailing of proposals and a balancing of highway and environmental factors." We hope the

District and County Councils will act on the Inspector's suggestions and initiate new studies into traffic problems. We confidently expect that such studies would come to the conclusion that driving new roads through built-up areas comes nowhere near solving the problems, but on the contrary, creates new problems or shifts them elsewhere. John Gore.

Tomorrow's town

THE High Wycombe town centre proposals are reported elsewhere in the Newsletter. These proposals by the District Council were put to the public last August to obtain their reaction and to seek their opinions and ideas. About 76 people responded to the consultation. This is very disappointing as it was an exciting opportunity for those interested in the town centre to make their views known on the proposals which will set the pattern for the next 5 to 10 years and could be expected to last some 20 to 30 years.

The Heritage Group responded on behalf of the Society, and its ideas and opinions, which may help other members to formulate their own, are summarised as below:

 **FALCON INN:** It was considered that the fate of the Falcon Inn was an early test of the District Council's resolve in meeting its own recommendations in respect of planning for commerce and leisure hand in hand, and emphasising the history and character of the town.

 **NORTHERN RELIEF ROAD:** As the town will only be getting a pedestrian priority system instead of a fully pedestrianised system, is the cost of the road together with its environmental impact fully justified?

 **FOCAL POINTS:** The group suggested focal points of interest which could take the form of sculpture or statues sponsored by local industries and enterprises and incorporated into an overall theme.

 **DISABLED PEOPLE** As people become older, many are liable to find themselves disabled in some form or other. If they are confined to a wheelchair then the riding quality of the footway will be important to them. If they have difficulty in getting up from the sitting position then arm rests on public seats will help. The careful use of different textured paving material can assist partially-sighted people to find their way.

The group also commented on paving materials, tree planting, street furniture, parking and the positioning and arrangement of seating.

Finally, if the District Council is to be encouraged to continue to seek public opinion, particularly on matters related to the town centre, then members must make a point of responding individually whenever the opportunity occurs.

DON HIDE



Planning

STEWART AND ARNOLD CHOCOLATE FACTORY

With regard to the future of this important site, further discussions have taken place with the County Planning Officer and County Engineer, and serious objections have been made about the amount of employment and traffic generation if the site is used solely for office development. As a result the application has been refused and further discussion will no doubt take place. It is hoped that the site will be developed for more appropriate town centre uses, which may include a mix of retail, office and community use. Certainly there is an opportunity to incorporate some kind of town centre housing.

JOHN NORTH PLAYING FIELDS, MARLOW HILL

Like many other authorities, the Bucks County Council is complying with government wishes by seizing every opportunity to dispose of playing fields which are considered to be surplus to requirements. This short-sighted and relentless pursuit of profit is causing great concern in many quarters, which is not surprising in view of present and future needs of recreation and open space. The fine site of the John North Playing Fields is now the subject of an application for 98 detached houses. We understand that the plan does not please the District Council, which is not surprising. The plan lacks imagination and is

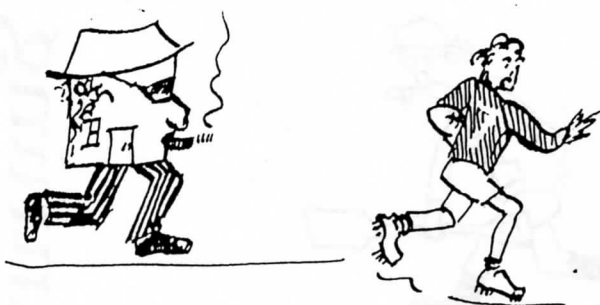
contrary to the Local Plan, which proposes a mixture of housing types in large developments. We support the District Council and have pressed for something better on this site.

FROGMOOR DIVERSION

We reported on previously on the Public Enquiry relating to the compulsory purchase of land for the new road to bypass Frogmoor in our Autumn 1988 newsletter. The Secretary of State for Transport has now decided that the scheme should go ahead. This means there will be a new roundabout at Temple End, and a dual-carrigeway road from there to the Oxford Road roundabout passing between the Clock House (former Intimate Theatre) and Sainsbury's store. Access from Frogmoor to Sainsbury's will be by subway. Sadly, the old Victorian railway viaduct will have to be demolished to make way for the road. We still think that Bellfield Road could have carried the traffic which needs to be diverted to enable Frogmoor to be pedestrianised.

CONINGSBY ROAD

Many areas of High Wycombe have suffered development pressures, but Coningsby Road must surely be the most unfortunate victim. A once pleasant and comparatively quiet residential road is now overwhelmed



FMB.

with all kinds of problems and especially traffic. The latest application for housing on the adjacent old allotment land is causing considerable concern to local residents and others further afield, including this Society. The prominence of the site and other factors should have persuaded the District Council that this was not the place for housing, but the opposition was of no avail. The site needs very special skills far removed from those displayed in the plans submitted. We hope the District Council will do everything possible to reduce the impact of the development. After all it is Council land!

FLORRIE ONSLOW

It was with a great sense of loss that we heard of the death of Florrie Onslow. She had been a loyal member of the High Wycombe Society for many years and had a great love for her native town, and a desire that its beauty should be preserved. The many tributes from her previous pupils prove that she was loved and respected by them and that her interest in the town and its environment had been passed on to them and remembered to this day.

Florrie was a warm hearted, intelligent woman, with a commendable sense of order and discipline (sadly lacking today!). I shall always remember the courage and complete lack of self pity during the last years, when from a very active life she was confined to her house, but still welcomed her friends with her usual bright manner and talked interestingly of old Wycombe and friendship, still remembered vividly and with much affection.

We shall miss Florrie. She was a character in the best sense. Her affection for Wycombe and its people will long be remembered, not only by members of the High Wycombe Society, but by her many friends. I was proud to be one of them.

Marjorie Nash

HUGHENDEN VALLEY APPEAL

Attached to this newsletter is an appeal notice from the National Trust in respect of Naphill Farm. This Society took a prominent part over a long period in the successful battle to save the Hughenden Valley from the golf course development. In order to complete the protection of this most important approach to High Wycombe it is necessary for the National Trust to complete the purchase of Naphill Farm. We make a very special plea to all our affiliated organisations, members and friends to help this very worthy cause by responding to the appeal. It is important that the lovely Hughenden Valley should be kept for the benefit of the whole community, so please be generous.

Roger Lawson, Chairman

National Environment Week

This is the one week in the year when the environment - everyone's local surroundings - is in the centre stage, when voluntary groups, councils, firms, schools, the media, and people like ourselves pull together to help make Britain's Environment Better.

Although the word "Environment" is increasingly linked with the world-wide concern for the vast and extremely important issues of acid rain, the destruction of the tropical rain forests, the depletion of the ozone layer and the disposal of toxic and other waste, what can and does affect the happiness and well-being of vast numbers of people is the noise, scruffiness and other pollutants of our surroundings, and the threat of planning proposals which leave us at a disadvantage.

In Environment Week the spotlight is on the local scene and on finding ways to tackle local blackspots. A lot is being attempted in High Wycombe and district. Watch the local press for initiatives by the County and District Councils and other groups. Here in the High Wycombe Society we have a full programme in preparation and hope that as many members as possible will participate.

On Saturday 22 April we are planning to have a Litterblitz to clear up some open spaces with the agreement of the District Council, probably in association with the Boys' Brigade. Please contact John Gore HW26671 for details. Strong gloves and gum boots should be brought along.

On Sunday 23 April we will be joining the Wycombe Urban Wild Life Group for a guided walk through Keep Hill Woods. Please phone Roger Wilding HW438374 for details.

Our April Quarterly Meeting will take place on Thursday 27 April at 7.45pm at the Royal British Legion Hall at which the speaker after the AGM will be Maurice Young of BPONT and his subject will be *WildLife in the Wycombe Area*.

On Sunday 30 April we will be repeating our popular Town and Water Trails starting from the Parish Church and Pann Mill respectively at 2.15pm. Refreshments will be available at Pann Mill at the conclusion of the walks.

Our affiliated societies will also be playing an active part in Environment Week. Hazlemere Residents Association are taking part in a Litterblitz in cooperation with Hazlemere Parish Council, and West Wycombe Women's Institute are giving a talk on local history in Environment Week. They will also be offering guided tours of the village and St Lawrence's church (the one with the golden ball) later in the season.

Please help to make this year's Environment Week the best yet!

— Supporting —
ENVIRONMENT

SATURDAY 22 APRIL **WEEK** 1 MAY MONDAY

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National Environment Week

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TRUST

Explore hidden depths of Wycombe

Forget about the weekend in Paris!
Leave your bucket and spade at home -
it will be too chilly at the seaside!
Instead venture forth into the heart
of High Wycombe on May Day Bank
Holiday Sunday, 30th April.

Town and water trails will be
organised to follow the society's
published walks.

The Town Trail begins at the Parish
Church Porch with a guided tour of
All Saints by John Gore. The walk
then explores the centre of the
Conservation Area, ending up on the
Rye.

The Water Trail starts at Pann Mill,
walking along Wendover Way by the
Dyke to the back stream and returning



along the River Wye. Both trails
start at 2.15pm, finishing at
approximately 4.15 at Pann Mill,
where refreshments will be available
and progress on restoration of the
mill may be seen.



The walks were popular and well-
attended last year, so do bring your
friends and ensure another enjoyable
afternoon. We cannot promise
uncharted terrain, but we can show
you parts of The Rye and town centre
you have never seen with treasures
and curiosities you have never
noticed. We look forward to your
company.

Jack Scruton
Barbara Rippington
Annie Woodward

We wish to extend a warm welcome to the following new members:-

Ms B Thompson of Dashwood Avenue, High Wycombe; Mrs V J Beadle of Hill Farm Road, Marlow Bottom; Mr and Mrs C S Jones of Willow Chase, Hazlemere; Ms M A Bassett of Amersham Hill, High Wycombe; Mr and Mrs B M Andrews of Amersham Road, High Wycombe; Mrs S H Connor of Little Missenden; Mr T McAvoy of Meadow Walk, Tylers Green; Mr C J Gregory of Easton Terrace, High Wycombe.

Heritage



drawing by Lorna Cassidy

THE OLD HIGH SCHOOL, BENJAMIN ROAD.

Since the closing of the school with the departure of the Lady Verney girls, we have been concerned about the future of the site, and especially the fate of the original Edwardian building. We have always considered that for historical and architectural reasons this building should be protected.

An application has now been submitted by the Wycombe District Council for outline permission for housing development on the site. There is no doubt that the use of the site for housing is sensible and much to be preferred to commercial development in view of its position, but we consider the original buildings should be kept and allowed to play their part in any new development. A number of attractive uses spring to mind such as a communal centre for local people, especially the elderly, or for other community purposes. We have asked the District Council for a meeting to discuss this important building.

Jack Scruton



THE FALCON HOTEL

Despite the recommendation of the Planning Officer to allow the Falcon Hotel to become retail shops, the Planning Committee refused the application, and a Public Inquiry will be held. We shall continue to press for the retention of our only town centre hotel, and it is encouraging to see that our councillors think as we do.

THE RYE AND HOLYWELL MEAD

The road by the Health Centre has been much improved, but cars are still parked there illegally by those who are not bona-fide visitors to the Centre. Many of the owners work in the town and the cars are left there for long periods to disfigure the entrance to the Rye. The District Council has found it difficult to solve the problem. Another problem is the abuse by motorists and motor cyclists who use the approach road to the Swimming Pool area at Holywell Mead. Excessive speeds are a threat to adults and children using the open space. We are asking the District Council to replace the speed limit notice and to install ramps.

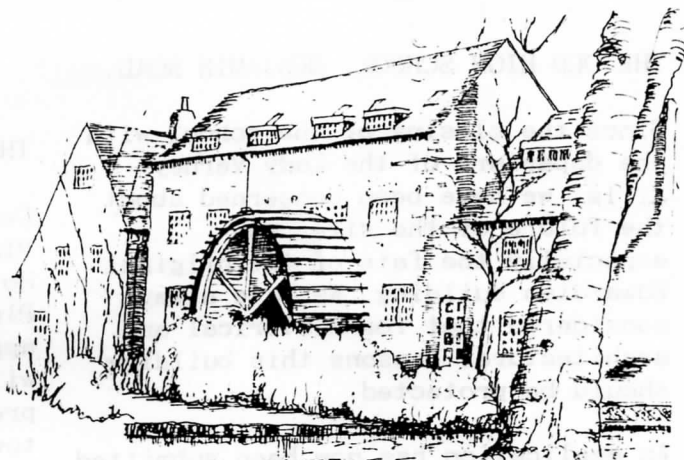
heritage continued...

CASTLE HILL, HIGH WYCOMBE

We are very relieved that the threat to the beautiful house and grounds at Castle Hill has been lifted. The District Council had toyed with the idea of transferring the Chair Museum when the new Entertainments Centre is built in the town centre, and then disposing of the Castle Hill site. We made the strongest possible objections to the suggestion, and are pleased that the Leisure and Amenities Committee has turned the plan down. The site is of the greatest importance historically, architecturally and as a place of beauty in the midst of the hurly burly of the town. It is certainly the right place for the Museum and other leisure activities, and it also includes the site and remains of a Motte and Bailey medieval castle, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The site is a centre of interest for large numbers of visitors, including many children from local schools. Have you been there lately?

CORRECTION

The last Newsletter (Christmas 1988) should have been Number 71, not Number 70. Would you please amend your copy if you keep them.



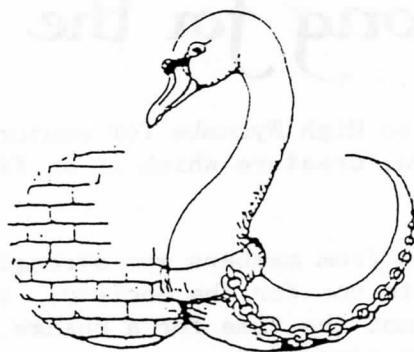
SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Now that Spring is in the air, why not get out and explore High Wycombe with the aid of one of the Society's Trails: *High Wycombe - a walk through the conservation area* and *A Water Trail round the River Wye in High Wycombe*. Both are good value for money at 25p each, and they are available from the Tourist Information Bureau at the District Council Offices or at one of our Quarterly Meetings. There will be guided tours round these Trails on Sunday 30 April during National Environment Week: see elsewhere in this Newsletter. A leaflet on the history of Pann Mill is also available at 25p.

We are happy to reproduce this cartoon by the late Jim Cottrell which first appeared in Newsletter No 22 in Autumn 1974, by kind permission of Mrs Margaret Cottrell.



IT'S EASY WITH THE PAMPHLET.



Urban Wildlife Group forms

The last newsletter announced the formation of an urban wildlife group in High Wycombe. At present the group merely consists of representatives of local organisations and a few other persons interested in nature conservation who are meeting once a month to discuss arrangements for the launch of the group during Environment Week in April. The final pre-launch meeting of the group will be held at 7.30pm on April 4.

If you care about the conservation of wildlife within the confines of High Wycombe and are interested in joining other people who share your concern and wish to help with wildlife surveys or practical management tasks, take part in guided walks, attend indoor meetings about wildlife subjects or are interested in creating your own wildlife garden, the Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group has

something to offer you in return for a small annual membership fee.

The Group's launch event will take place on Sunday April 23 to coincide with the start of Environment Week when a guided walk is planned around Keep Hill Woods. It will start from the Swimming Pool, Holywell Mead, at 2.30pm. One of the walk's leaders will be Maurice Young of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Naturalists Trust (BBONT). He is talking on the subject of "Wildlife in the Wycombe Area" at the Society's annual meeting on April 27: no doubt a commercial on behalf of the Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group will be introduced at some point during his talk.

Once the details of the launch walk have been finished there will be plenty of local publicity. If you want to take part and are not sure of the details please give me a ring on High Wycombe 438374.

Roger Wilding

Wildflowers in Wycombe District

Dr A J Showler delighted the Heritage Group and friends at their February meeting when he told them about the many and varied types of wild flowers which have been observed in High Wycombe and district. He and some colleagues have been participating in a monitoring scheme for the Botanical Society of the plant population of the British Isles. One of the sample areas under observation was a 10km square centred on High Wycombe and including surrounding countryside and villages such as Bradenham, Lane End, Flackwell Heath and Hughenden Valley. Some 663 species have been identified to date, out of a total of over 2000 extant in the British Isles. This is above the national average for an area of this size, and is due to the surprising variety of habitats which we enjoy in these parts. We were particularly pleased to see slides of over 30 types of orchid which thrive locally. Plants are just one more part of our heritage which we must make every effort to conserve.

No swan song for the swan

"An emblem that has honoured High Wycombe for centuries should not be thrown out." "The swan is a graceful creature which is a fierce protector of its environment."

With comments like these from members who strongly maintain that the swan logo is the most appropriate one for the Society, the Executive Committee has decided that this is not the time for a change. Swan lovers can breathe again! Thank you to all who responded.

You may have looked in vain for the solution to the logo quiz in the last Newsletter. Sorry for the oversight. The answers are, of course, as follows: (A) National Trust (B) Midland Bank (C) Chiltern Society (D) World Wildlife Fund for Nature.

John Gore

Some dates for your diary...

Saturday 22 April - Monday 1 May

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT WEEK
(See elsewhere in this Newsletter)

Saturday 22 April 1989

Litterblitz - all members welcome
Details from John Gore HW26671

Sunday 23 April 1989

Wycombe Urban Wild Life Group:
Guided walk through Keep Hill Woods
Details from Roger Wilding HW438374

Thursday 27 April 1989 7.45pm
at Royal British Legion Hall

Annual General Meeting, followed
by *Wild Life in the Wycombe Area*
Maurice Young BBONT

Sunday 30 April 1989am

Keep Hill Woods Nature Trail
Details from Jack Scruton HW25933

Sunday 30 April 1989 2.15pm

Town Trail starting at Parish Church
south porch
Water Trail starting at Pann Mill
Teas 4.15pm approx at Pann Mill

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Saturday 17 June 1989

Trip on Kennet & Avon Canal by
horse-drawn barge. For details and
booking, please contact Derek Woods
HW20284

Thursday 22 June 1989 8pm
at Royal British Legion Hall

The Future of Leisure in High Wyc-
combe W N Roberts Leisure Manager
Wycombe District Council

Thursday 5 October 1989 8pm
at Royal British Legion Hall

Open Spaces of Britain
Kate Ashbrook Open Spaces Society

Friday 10 November 1989 8pm
Oak Room, Town Hall

21st Birthday Celebration of High
Wycombe Society (details later)