

HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

(Registered with the Civic Trust)

Newsletter

Registered Charity No. 257897

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Lorries in the community * The Chiltern Woodland Project * Some
Wycombe Memories * As we were * Booker Motorway Service
Area Inquiry * Vernacular Architecture * The Chair Museum * Planning.

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1990

Presentation of Pann Mill drawing made to Society

Take a look at page 20 of the 1990 Wycombe Phone Book and you will see a fine drawing of Pann Mill, which, as every member knows, is being restored by the Society. Brian Honess, one of our Executive Committee members, spotted it one evening and contacted British Telecom's Phone Book Manager in Oxford. His approach culminated in a ceremony at the Mill during Environment Week when Jeff Prince, BT Sales Office Manager, presented the original pen-and-ink drawing by Susan Hart, suitably

framed, to Society Chairman, Roger Lawson.

It was a fine evening, and Jeff and his colleague, Ian Rideout, were enthusiastic about the Mill and its delightful setting on the Rye. We are hoping to be able to use the picture on cards, notelets, calenders etc to sell to raise funds for the restoration project. This was just one of many projects up and down the country which BT sponsored during Environment Week.

Write with your news and views to the High Wycombe
Society Newsletter % John Gore, 30 Wordsworth Road,
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP11 2UR.

Lorries In The Community:~ Are we on the right road ?

by John Gore.

Lorries play an important part in the operation of Britain's economy. In doing so they can create problems for some people... You can't disagree with that! These are the bland opening words of a new booklet "Lorries in the Community", a study published by the Civic Trust, the County Surveyors' Society and the Department of Transport, which is obtainable through HM Stationery Office. We cannot imagine how our present-day way of life could function without lorries to transport essential goods, yet lorries with their accompanying size, noise and smell are an abomination to other road users and to the inhabitants of streets frequented by lorries.

This booklet reviews the impact made by lorries on the environment, and considers measures that can be taken to reduce the conflict between lorries and the community; for example, special routes, separation by barriers, raised footways, and strategic tree and shrub planting. In residential areas there are numerous traffic "calming" measures which can be taken to deter through traffic and reduce nuisance, all traffic, that is, not just lorries.

Examples are: road humps (sleeping policemen), special road surfaces, road narrowing and landscaping, raising side road junctions to the level of the pavement. Such schemes are common in the Netherlands and West Germany in particular and should be encouraged here.

Transshipment, that is, the use of large vehicles for the major part of the journey and smaller ones for local delivery, is another method of reducing the impact of large lorries on towns. It is argued that transfer of goods at an out-of-town depot is too costly, but what is the true cost to the environment by way of damage and pollution caused by large lorries in towns?

As the maximum size of certain lorry types has been increased this year, and the maximum gross weight of other types will be increased yet again in January 1993, the need for action is urgent.

This booklet will interest all who are concerned about the impact of the lorry on people and places, and that means all of us! Get yourself a copy!

Chiltern Woodland Project

Scene: Derelict Chiltern Woodland. With beech trees either dying or of poor spindly quality.

Enter: Charles Mills, John Morris and Chiltern Woodland Project team.

Result: Well-managed plantation of young beech and other native species with excellent prospects for future profitable economic return and high landscape value.

Charles Mills, who is Chairman of Chiltern Woodland Project Ltd and a Vice chairman of the Chiltern Society became increasingly concerned about the condition of many of the Chiltern beech woods and considered that the woods, one of the essential features of the Chiltern landscape, could disappear within the foreseeable future. The exceptional gales of October 1987 and January 1990 had worsened the situation.

The project was therefore started to encourage owners to manage their woodlands more effectively and more efficiently for their own and the public benefit. Practical work was done to show owners examples of good woodland management. Fortunately in recent years both the Bucks County Council and Wycombe District Council have recognised the need for a forestry programme and are providing the Project with a generous proportion of its funding. It is however becoming increasingly self-sufficient. (Wycombe District Council is about to launch its own Woodland Strategy: we hope to publish more about this in our next edition.)

Charles Mills made special mention of Project work in Bottom Wood, near Radnage, which is owned by the Chiltern Society. It is well worth a visit. A leaflet about it is available from the Chiltern Society.



? Some Wycombe memories

Part two

by Thelma Elizabeth Vernon

The first sound in the early morning was the hooters. They went off at 6am, one after another. Then work started in the chair factories, so much more hand-work then, requiring much more time than today. Much of the sound came from the west end of the town, but some from the Totteridge Road area. Most of our women servants could do caning and were very skilled at it. The spider-web pattern was a true work of art. Their mothers used to sit on doorsteps in the west end or St Mary Street some fine days, and we liked to watch them if Nanny would stop! Our usual walks were rather dull, right down Priory Avenue, because Esme was in a go-cart, or along Totteridge Road. Once or twice we were taken into a wonderful place where there were a lot of stones, and two simply lovely little stone lambs, and big pieces of white marble to pick up and look at, but not to take away. We talked rather excitedly about "the dear little stone lambs" and Mummy realised it must be the cemetery. So to our great disappointment we were stopped from going there.

I had a room at the top of the house, and used to kneel by the window looking down on Borshams, in a thicket of trees and shrubs, right over the Wycombe valley to Dawes Hill and its trees and park. On a Saturday in early winter I would sometimes watch the sun going down, very red, behind the black silhouettes of trees on top of Tom Burt's Hill, and hear the last strains of a real band playing on the football ground below. In this quieter Wycombe I could hear the Parish Church clock striking, and the chimes that played every three hours until 6pm. On a Saturday they played "There's a Friend for little children, Above the bright blue sky." This one had been given by Grandpa Vernon in memory of his youngest daughter, Aunt Ivy, who had died at 10 years of age before I was born. Then there was the bell-ringing, which I grew to love, especially bell practice on a weekday night when they would ring for an

hour or more. When the wind was in the right direction, I could hear the sweet sound of the bells of Hughenden Church coming along the valley as I lay in bed.

Every Sunday I was taken to morning church, and Denis, too. I longed to see better what was going on. At first I was only half way up to the back of the chair in front. It was exciting when occasionally the Mayor and Corporation came. I was taken with the Mayor's red robe and chain, and I thought the Macebearer and Beadle wonderful men in the clothes belonging to another age. I noted with pride in the procession the majestic bearded figure of my grandfather in his dark blue Alderman's gown. I loved the sound of the organ played by Mr George Andrews. He knew all the psalms by heart and roared away whenever the sea was mentioned. When the Corporation came he got a sidesman with a white handkerchief to stand just inside the south door (no whirly-gig then!), who waved the white signal when the first of the procession took a step inside, whereupon Mr Andrews would fairly let go with "God Save the King" to greet them all the way up the nave.

Mr Andrews was such a good man, and he befriended Old Wally. (This was Walter Simonds or some such name, who had lost some of his wits, and made a sort of living by scraping the roads after the horses and would arrive with his little homemade wooden trolley to sell the manure.) Mr Andrews among other things gave him the post of pumping the organ. The result was that the sight of this strange figure pumping away was too much for the choirboys as they swept past him on their way from the vestry, and they arrived at the choir stalls in a state of giggles.

On a more stately note was the entrance of Lord and Lady Carrington and their family. They came in by the small South door, Lady Carrington leading little Lord

turn to page five

from page four

Wendover, the only son, a lovely child. The came Lord Carrington, who later became the Marquess of Lincolnshire, in morning coat, carrying his top hat. They made for the chancel and their seats there up on the south side. We thought them very distinguished, as they certainly were. The five daughters in their 'teens were handsome girls. My special devotion later was to Lady Myee, who became Viscountess Bury, but alas she died of heart failure before she could become Countess of Albemarle. Lord Wendover died of wounds in the War at the age of 20. The family never got over it. The slaughter in the Great War was beyond words. Much of the cream of Wycombe never came back.

(In our next issue, Thelma Vernon concludes her reminiscences of pre-1914 High Wycombe with recollections of cows pasturing on the Rye and of the transport of the day.)

As We Were

AS WE WERE - FROM THE NEWSLETTER FILE

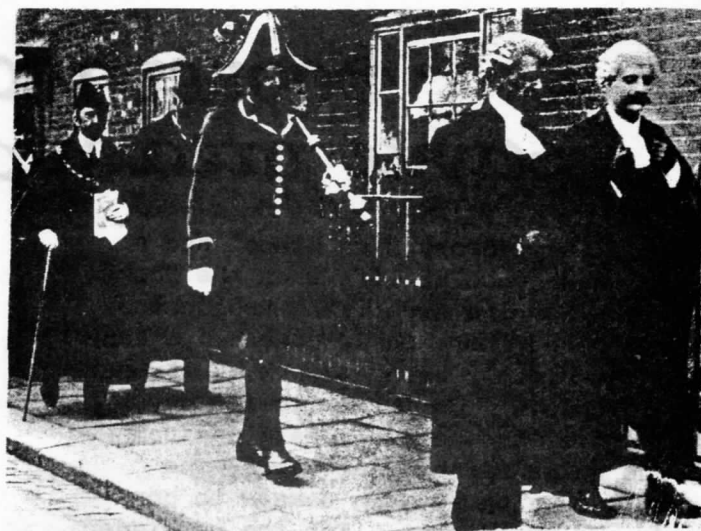
10 YEARS AGO (NO 41) SUMMER 1980

Wycombe District Council Plan Policy Document on Transportation published: Society opposes all options as these involve massive road works; Cressex housing development: Cressex Residents' Association fears higher density housing will place intolerable burdens on roads and other amenities.

20 YEARS AGO (NO 5) MAY 1970

Vice-President Patrick Reyntiens' thoughts on how to improve the River Wye; Society submits proposals for conservation areas at Terriers Green and West Wycombe; Society opposes erection of 107 houses by Deangarden Wood: Deangarden Wood RA formed; Battle to try to save Old Chequers Inn continues.

The Mayor in procession in 1908:



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1990 AGM was held on 19 April, about 60 members being present, and with Roger Lawson in the chair. The Hon Sec's Annual Report showed that 1989/90 was another active year for the Society, with the celebration of our 21st anniversary being a highlight. Membership had increased to 372, and affiliated societies had also increased in number to 34, including 16 residents' associations. The Hon Treasurer's report showed that the Society's finances were in good shape with a balance of £1025 at the end of the 1989/90 financial year. Subscriptions would therefore remain unchanged. Tributes were paid to the many people who had contributed to the Society's activities.

The following Officers and Executive Committee members were elected:

President: Mr L J Mayes
Vice-presidents: Miss M Nash and Cllr Mrs K Peatey JP
Chairman: Mr R Lawson (HW 28047)
Vice-chairman: Mrs E Roe (HW 32575)
Hon Secretary: Mr J Gore (HW 26671)
Hon Treasurer: Mr N Giles
Committee: Mr C Adams (HW 28996), Mr B Honess (HW 37242), Mrs P Kearney (Publications), Mrs M King (HW 23968) (Pann Mill Group), Mrs P Phillips (HW 31049), Mr R J Rippington, Mr J Scruton (HW 25933) (Planning Secretary), Mr R L Sims (HW 440800) (Minutes Secretary), Mrs J Tully (Penn 3253), Mr R Williams, Mrs A Woodward (HW 27978) (Membership Secretary)

This leaves one vacancy on the Committee which may be filled by co-option.

Booker motorway service area inquiry ~ J. Gore

The old Lady Verney High School had a brief resurgence of life when the Booker Motoring Service Area (MSA) Public Inquiry opened there on 24 January. Vandals had clearly been at work, but worse was to come. On the following day, the roof of the assembly hall was damaged in the gales which swept across the country causing so much damage to our woods and buildings. For the remainder of the Inquiry, a dozen buckets collected raindrops coming in through holes in the roof. Mobil Oil Co Ltd were appealing against Wycombe District Council's rejection of their planning application to build a MSA on both sides of the M40 between Booker Common and Wycombe Air Park. Ranged against Mobil were the Department of Transport, who wants to put the MSA at Tetsworth in South Oxon, WDC, Booker Common and Woods Protection Society, Chilterns Against MSA Ltd (CAMSA), Wycombe Air Park, the Chiltern Society, the local Ramblers' Association, our own Society and others. Booker Gliding Club unexpectedly withdrew their opposition at the last minute.

Everyone acknowledges that MSAs are needed at intervals along motorways, but all of Mobil's opponents pointed out the gross unsuitability of the Booker site: it is in the Green Belt and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONB); it is dangerously close to an airfield, which, surprisingly, has the third highest number of aircraft movements in the UK after Heathrow and Gatwick; it would cause some pleasant public footpaths between Booker and Lane End to be routed through what would undoubtedly be an urban-style development; and, finally, it would create additional pollution affecting human, animal and plant life.

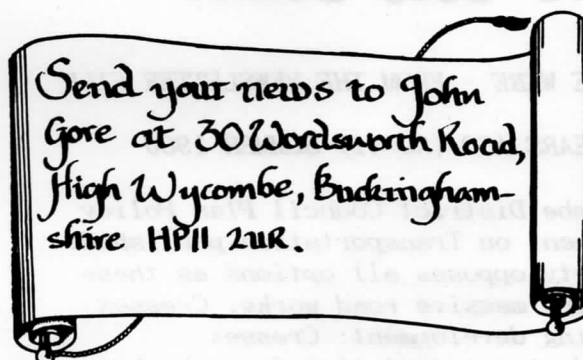
Booker Common and Woods Protection Society led by their Chairman, Allen Duggin, and their legal representative, Herbert Pollard, had assembled comprehensive evidence and had briefed expert witnesses to support their cause in a David v Goliath-type contest. They deserve

to succeed in their fight to preserve their ancient common and woods intact for the enjoyment of future generations.

The Inquiry closed on St Valentine's Day (14th February). As befitted the day and to celebrate the end of a 3-week hearing, during which at least a ton of paper must have been filed, erstwhile opponents good-naturedly exchanged jokey Valentine cards.

It will be some months before the Inspector (Mr. Cummings) makes his recommendations, probably not before the Public Inquiry into the Tetsworth MSA application which, not surprisingly, South Oxfordshire District Council and local residents there are also opposing.

JOHN GORE



Send your news to John
Gore at 30 Wordsworth Road,
High Wycombe, Buckingham-
shire HP11 2UR.

Litterblitz :

The environs of Wycombe were litter-free at least for a while in early-April, thanks to the efforts of some of our affiliated societies: Hazlemere, Hughenden Park and Widmer End Residents' Associations were among those taking part in Litterblitz 1990 at the end of March.

Vernacular Architecture

The classically-proportioned Oak Room was an appropriate setting for Roger Scruton's Wycombe Arts Festival lecture (15 March). Our Planning Secretary, Jack Scruton, whose good offices had made it possible for his eminent son to accept our invitation to speak, had feared that the title 'Vernacular Architecture' would be offputting. He need not have worried. In the event, all seats were taken, and late-comers filled the back and sides of the hall.

Roger, who is Professor of Aesthetics at Birkbeck College, London University, was devastatingly critical of much modernist architecture. Many modern tower blocks, he said, consisted of tier upon tier of identical floors piled one on top of the other; some reminded him of sets of dentures. Reinforced concrete buildings did not have the flexibility of use of classical designs, and were not welcoming to people; often it was difficult even to find the entrance. They were not even cheaper to run taken over the long term. Followers of Le Corbusier, the so-called father of modern architecture, had ignored the pleasing proportions and attention to detail which characterised classical design. They had forgotten how to make use of shadow and sunlight. From the late 18th to the early 20th century, even local builders had access to catalogues showing details of classical columns, plinths and entablatures enabling them to produce satisfying vernacular buildings which blended harmoniously with their surroundings. Learning how to draw classical designs should be put back on to every modern architectural student's training programme.

To those of us who instinctively dislike tower blocks and multi-storey car parks, Roger Scruton gave a reasoned philosophy of why we prefer classical buildings.

JOHN GORE



Professor Roger Scruton

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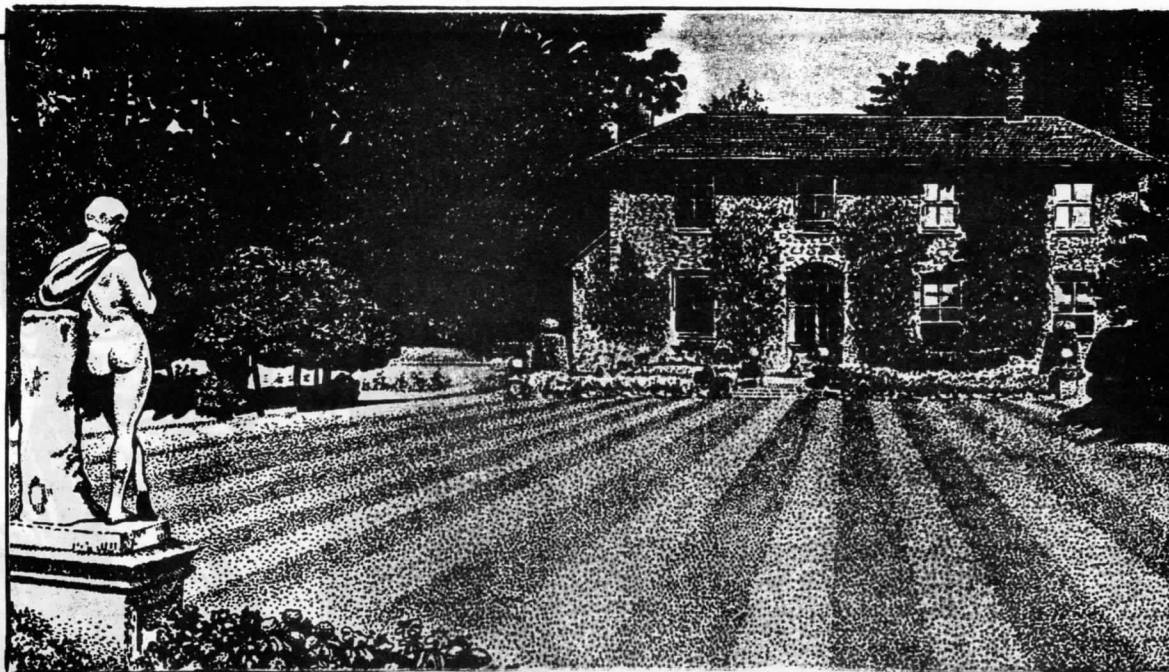
new affiliations:

We are very pleased to welcome the affiliation to the Society of:

Wycombe S D P
Wycombe Peace Council

We also warmly welcome the following new members:

Miss T O'Brien, Church Lane, West Wycombe
Mr M G Stone, West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe
Mr R F S Vere, School Close, High Wycombe
Ms J Wassell, London Road, High Wycombe



At the January meeting of the Heritage Group, Neridah Wyatt-Spratt, the new Museum Officer, came to talk to us about her work at the Museum and plans for the future. This made for a very interesting evening, and Neridah clearly has unlimited dedication and enthusiasm for her task. She explained that her chief priority is with the care, collection and documentation of items, and was pleased to report that there had been a very good response to a recent appeal for volunteers to help with the various projects. Apparently, there are many artefacts in the Bodger's Hut at the back of the building which need sorting. Also, some 1000 unidentified photos have been discovered.

Neridah is determined to make the Museum more popular and accessible, and aims to encourage children to visit. The educational material is to be updated in accordance with the new National Curriculum.

A fire alarm and security system is being fitted, and the Museum will be closed for a time in 1991 for some refurbishment.

Last November, I accompanied a party of seven and eight year olds from my daughter's school (Sands First) on a visit to the Museum and the Urban Studies Centre in Gordon Road. I hadn't been on a school outing since I was about twelve, and I thoroughly enjoyed myself - it made a great change from doing my husband's office work or battling round the supermarket!

By Denise Lindsey

When we arrived at the Museum, we were met by David Dyson, a gentleman imbued with an infectious enthusiasm, particularly useful when dealing with children! The children's project was centred on Windsor chairs, so we were told the history of these, looked at many examples, and the pupils had a work sheet with questions to answer, and some drawing to do. We also spent some time in the Bodger's Hut, and the children were allowed to spend some money in the shop. Later, we all walked down to the Urban Studies Centre, housed in part of the old school in Gordon Road (near Butler's). It is always a great pity when schools are closed down, but this building has at least been put to very good use, and in fact, part of it is used as a Nursery School. I had never been to a Centre before, so this was quite a treat for me! There are lots of books, models and exhibits concerned with the history and development of the town and its buildings, and I was sorry I didn't have more time to look around. Anyway, the children were shown a short film on the history of chair-making, and then had a go at making a tiny model of a Windsor chair. All too soon we had to go. I am sure that the children enjoyed their day and really did learn something - I know I did!

And the Urban Studies Centre is a great concept. Every town should have one!

news on the planning front

APPEALS AND PUBLIC INQUIRIES

The number of appeals against refusal of planning applications seem to be increasing all the time and they cause a great deal of extra work for all concerned. Often we support the District Council by means of written statements to the Department of the Environment, but some call for attendance at Public Inquiries.

Two Inquiries are pending and the Society hopes to support the Council and local residents by appearing. One concerns the proposal to build 100 to 120 houses on the John North Playing Fields of Marlow Hill, and the other is concerned with the threat to the Redfords Playing Field at Totteridge, which is such a great asset to local residents.

Both inquiries are the result of the County Council's determination to dispose of the playing fields for the maximum profit. Mr Patten, the Minister for the Environment, has recently made the encouraging statement that the policy for the use of urban land "is not a call to sacrifice the playing fields, allotments and private gardens which provide such valuable opportunities for recreation in our towns and suburbs."

Football Ground - Practice pitch at Sands:

The renewed application for a second practice pitch at Sands was refused by the District council. We must remain vigilant about further applications to gain permission. We hope our Council will maintain its defence of the Green Belt and AONB.

Growth of High Wycombe:

There is growing concern in some quarters, and this is shared by your Committee, that the increase in housing and other developments in High Wycombe and District are causing problems with traffic and the infrastructure generally. Structure plan figures, which should exercise some control, seem to have been left far behind, and the town seems uncomfortably full, with a serious loss of open areas, gardens and playing fields coupled with increasing traffic. There is a general feeling that the town needs a break from the relentless pressure in order to come to terms with recent developments. It would be interesting to hear the views of our members and affiliated organisations.

HERITAGE GROUP

Old Grammar School, Easton Street:

Despite strenuous efforts by our District Council and this

Society, the old Grammar School in Easton Street is doomed, except for the mockery of a front facade, and in its place there is to be a large speculative office block, which will be contrary to all accepted policies. There will be a very considerable increase in traffic at the heart of the Town Conservation Area and the loss of the unique sequence of Grammar School education in the town. This is a very serious blow and the result of Government policy in persuading the County to use its assets to gain maximum profit.

Buildings at risk and fly posting:

The number of buildings which are boarded up in the town centre has increased, and this is worrying, especially with regard to listed buildings and the effect on the Town Conservation Area. The increase does, however, please the stealthy, nocturnal band who creep round the town covering the empty buildings with posters. The Heritage Group hopes to carry out a survey in order to help the Council reduce the menace, but we all realise it is a difficult problem.

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The pictures on pages 5 and 8 are copied from *The Book of Wycombe* by Ivan Sparkes, published by Barracuda Books.

## ~~~~~ Diary dates :-

Thursday 7 June 1990 8pm  
Royal British Legion Hall  
St Mary Street

Thursday 25 October 1990 8pm  
(Note change of date)  
Royal British Legion Hall  
St Mary Street

*Caring for the Environment* David  
Turner of the Forward Planning  
Group, Wycombe District Council

*Regeneration of Historic Towns*  
Roger Higman, Campaign Manager,  
Civic Trust Regeneration Unit