

The High Wycombe Society

(Registered with the Civic Trust)



Newsletter

Your town is our concern

Hon Secretary:

John Gore

30 Wordsworth Road

High Wycombe

Bucks

HW 26671

Registered Charity No. 257897

Winter 1990/91

No. 78.

A rubbish tip at Warren Wood? ⁷⁸

Biffa want to dump half a million cubic metres of industrial and commercial waste at Warren Wood over a five-year period and then grass it over. This they say would be an "improvement" of the site! Warren Wood lies between Flackwell Heath and Little Marlow in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It was cleared of trees about 25 years ago for gravel prospecting, but since then there has been natural regeneration of trees (some silver birch have reached 20 feet or more), shrubs and other plants, making it a pleasant clearing in the surrounding beech woodland crossed by several public footpaths. Apart from possible long-term damage to the environment due to pollution, there would be, during the five-year dumping period, the additional hazard of nearly 80 lorries per day visiting the site travelling along Dawes Hill Lane/Heath End Road, which already carries a large amount of traffic. Dust, noise and smell would also be a nuisance.

Jack Scruton says this is one of the worst planning applications he has ever seen: he should know, if anyone, so it must be serious! The Society has joined other amenity societies and local residents in objecting to this application. We hope the Bucks County Council will see fit to refuse it



A merry
Christmas
to all members
of the Society

from the Chairman, executive committee
and editor

The High Wycombe Society Newsletter

Evolution of a Parish Church

Four years ago, the All Saints Restoration Appeal was launched to repair the leaking roof, replace rotting plasterwork, deal with dangerous bowing windows and other essential work. Jack Scruton, then our Honorary Secretary, was one of the patrons of the appeal. The £250,000 target has now been achieved and much of the work has been completed, although more money is being sought for the cleaning of two important 18th century monuments. Daphne Middleton, the Appeal Director, has worked tirelessly, organising concerts, fetes, outings, a flower festival and many other events, to raise the necessary funds. In this article, she takes a brief look at the church's development over the centuries.

Since the end of the Second World War, town centres throughout Britain have undergone dramatic changes. Old buildings have been demolished and replaced by stark alternatives, which often in turn have been pulled down to make way for pseudo-replicas of what had been there in the first place!

The parish church is often the only genuine reminder of a town's historic past but, sadly, many of our ancient churches remain firmly shut and a wealth of history is left unexplored for fear of theft or vandalism.

High Wycombe's majestic parish church of All Saints, however, is rarely closed during the day and contains a wealth of interest extending back, surprisingly enough, almost 1700 years!

Although it was only 900 years ago that the Thane of Bradenham built the first church on the site, some of the materials came from the ruins of the Roman villa built on the Rye around 200AD. They were used again in subsequent rebuilding and can still be seen amidst the flint and stone exterior.

It is hard to believe that the present cathedral-sized building could have evolved from that first cross-shaped church with its central tower. The extensions began when Henry II gave the church and its lands to the Abbey of Godstow in token of his



THE PARISH CHURCH
OF
ALL SAINTS
HIGH WYCOMBE

Just over 900 years ago, a Norman cross-shaped church was consecrated by Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester.

Wycombe Parish Church, as rebuilt in 1275, viewed from the north-east. In 1509 the central tower was removed



love for his mistress, Rosamond Clifford ("Fair Rosamond"), who had been buried at the nunnery near Woodstock. The Abbesses of Godstow vigorously pursued their interests in Wycombe and set about extending the church. Burgesses of the borough and London merchants born in Wycombe also took a great interest and, by 1300, the ground plan of the church had almost reached its present size, although the nave had no clerestory and the roof was steeply pitched.

Towards the middle of the 15th century, the nave pillars were remodelled, the walls carried higher and the six western-most clerestory windows created, which permitted far more light into the church.

By 1509 the central tower was giving cause for concern, so it was decided to take it down and rebuild that area, adding two more clerestory windows. The present magnificent tower was built in 1522, apart from the pinnacles which were added by the Earl of Shelburne in the 1750s. Since then the main structure of the building has remained substantially the same.

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continued from page two.

To stand in All Saints and ponder the complexities of such massive alterations, spanning several centuries, brings awe and admiration for those early craftsmen who tackled the work with such limited resources, and gives an added sense of purpose to the current £250,000 restoration programme.

Present-day craftsmen have scaled considerable heights to repair and renew vast areas of the roof and exterior stonework, to replace badly deteriorating Victorian windows with clear glass, gouge out rotting internal plaster and finally to redecorate throughout. Still to be completed are new lighting, floor repairs, provision of storage space and the cleaning and restoration of two fine 18th century monuments by eminent sculptors.

The prime purpose behind preserving this ancient Grade I listed building lies in ensuring that Christianity can radiate from the heart of High Wycombe as it has done for 900 years.

Daphne Middleton



High Wycombe Parish Church as it is today
- drawing by Eric Fowler

Christmas cards:

Some fine colour photographs of local views taken by Syd Spence, one of our members, form the basis of a range of calendars @ £2-35 each and Christmas cards @65p each now being sold in aid of Society funds. These items are available from the Tourist Information Office, Cornmarket or from Lottie Kearney HW447511 or Annie Woodward HW27978.

More new thinking on transport...

The Society's report "New Thinking on Transport" was published in July of this year. Since then some 200 copies have been distributed free to County and District Councillors and officials and to a variety of interested organisations such as the Civic Trust, Friends of the Earth, the Chiltern Society and many others. We are now taking steps to follow up some of the ideas incorporated in the report; for example, we are hoping shortly to have discussions with County representatives.

The report suggested ways in which smart-card technology and postcodes might be used to organise convenient public transport for rail passengers to and from the station. A project to investigate this is being arranged. The Society has also written to the District Council welcoming the proposal to establish Park-and-Ride facilities at Cressex over the Christmas period, and has suggested some further

measures to get the maximum benefit from the scheme. The Society hopes the Park-and-Ride will become a permanent facility and that it will be the first of many measures such as have been developed in other towns designed to reduce the number of car journeys within the town-centre area.

Since the report appeared, transport everywhere has become a very prominent issue in the media. Some of our members have agreed to monitor the main daily and Sunday newspapers for relevant articles. However, the topic is now such hot news that reports on the subject are often to be found in other publications. We would be pleased to receive appropriate cuttings to help us keep abreast of developments elsewhere.

Elsa Woodward

Look out for the new swan

This attractive new seal, which you will find on future Society publications has been designed by Dunsterville Craft and Design of Coningsby Road (HW28785). Jane Dunsterville is a member of the Society.



Wycombe District Local Plan: 2001

The Society, along with other amenity groups, parish councils etc, was invited by the District Council Forward Planning Group to put forward proposals for inclusion in a new District-wide Local Plan to run up to the year 2001, and then to have a discussion with them. This we did; and, in September, four members of the Executive Committee took part in the talks, which we hope will prove to be fruitful.

Our main points were as follows:

- * Areas of Special Restraint, notably Grange Farm, Hazlemere and Gomm Valley should be put firmly in the Green Belt to prevent the coalescing of villages such as Penn and Tylers Green into the Wycombe conurbation.
- * No destructive new roads should be envisaged, and measures in line with the Society's publication *New Thinking on Transport* should be pursued.
- * Intensive development of Victorian and Edwardian housing should be restrained, and residential use of over-the-shop premises should be encouraged.
- * The River Wye should be opened up wherever possible
- * Our open spaces should be protected from commercialisation.

* The Council's policy of environmental uplift of run-down areas should be continued.

We can expect to see a draft Plan which will incorporate the existing Local Plans for High Wycombe, Marlow and the rural areas in Spring 1991, to be followed by a period of public consultation.

John Gore

Collective Memories

Did you manage to visit the Collective Memories exhibition at the Guildhall during Summer and Autumn? It consisted of a selection of items from the Wycombe Local History & Chair Museum recalling local industries and activities of past times. Featured in the exhibition were samples of Penn tiles supplied by Pauline and Stanley Cauvain, local archaeologists and Society members. It so happens that they will be speaking on their fascinating subject at our next Quarterly Meeting on Thursday 17 January 1991. Don't miss it! By the way, have you visited the Museum at Castle Hill House recently. It is well worth while!

The Pann Mill wheel turns again

Our exhibition and open day on the Rye during Wycombe Show weekend is what the Society has come to know as the real Wycombe Show! Hundreds of visitors came to Pann Mill to relax by the Wye stream, wander round the grounds and soak up the atmosphere created by the rush of water as the powerful water-wheel turned.

After many hours of preparation by volunteers, the unique wheel was coaxed into action. This is always a worrying time for us until we are sure there is sufficient water to drive the wheel continuously. A minimum of four people is needed to operate the wheel turning process: two strong people to lift and replace two sets of sluice boards by the Water Board premises, one to operate the sluice gate next to the wheel, and a fourth to regularly oil the machinery and to keep children away from moving parts inside the mill. Once running, the internal machinery was almost silent, amazing when you consider the weight and power of the many interlocking parts.

Also within the mill, we showed visitors what we know of the history of Pann Mill and the Wye stream. It is gratifying to know that so many people are interested in the fate of this mill, the last to survive when once there were 39!

The Society has now formulated a plan for the refurbishment of the interior in order that we can grind corn again. Chris Wallis, a wind and water mill expert, is advising the group on the refurbishment for which we are most grateful as he is renowned for his love and sympathy for old buildings and ancient machinery. After all, he has spent more than ten years helping to restore the

unique smock mill at Lacey Green.

Thanks to the kindness of several of our members who gave their time, we were also able to run a stall to help raise much needed funds for the Society.

If you missed the real Wycombe Show, do come next year to see what is happening on this very worthwhile project, or if you would like to be part of the team, ring me on HW23968.

Myra King

AS WE WERE FROM THE NEWSLETTER FILES

TEN YEARS AGO NO 42 AUTUMN 1980

Battle for Old Chequers continues: WDC Planning Committee decides to permit demolition, Society appeals to DoE; Prudential propose large office block south of the High Street; Society objects and proposes mixed retail and residential instead (Note This is where the new Entertainments Centre is now under construction); Terriers Farm: Costains apply to build 109 houses, but WDC refuse; Society members visit Chesham and Lacey Green windmill.

TWENTY YEARS AGO NO 7 NOVEMBER 1970

Old Chequers: Public Inquiry held in October, great fight by Chiltern Society, CPRE, SPAB and the High Wycombe Society; Town Centre Conservation Area approved by Bucks County Council; Derek Woods produces series of Christmas cards of Old Wycombe at 9d(4p) each.

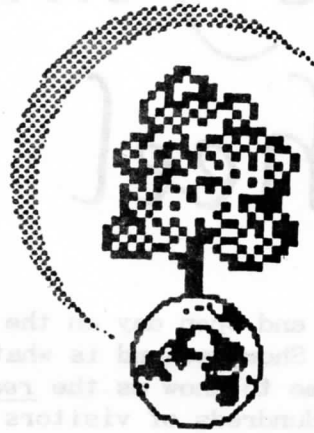
New tree campaign takes root

Barbara and Roger Rippington represented the Society at Operation Treelink in November. Here, Barbara writes about the day's events, while Roger cleans the mud off their boots!

There were representatives of local industry, forty-eight schools, the Rotary Club, Bucks Conservation Trust Volunteers, Men of the Trees and us, representing the High Wycombe Society. Armed with trowels, forks and spades, with the foresighted in wellies, we were in Castlefield Wood to get "dug in", and to replant four acres of Castlefield Wood wiped out by last winter's gales, with whips from Aberdeen Tree Nurseries. The Society had responded to the Chairman of the District Council's appeal to participate in Operation Treelink 1990 on 21 November. In an imaginative scheme organised locally by the Rotary Club, half of all Operation Treelink donations go towards trees at home and half for trees in the Third World. The Society donated £20, and here we were to plant our twenty trees.

The organisation was admirable. In a carnival atmosphere, police escorted the droves of children, arriving at timed intervals, across the road. St John's Ambulance people waited by in case of mishap: cuts from flints or spiked limbs were looked out for, but fortunately no such accident had occurred by the time we left. The Bucks Free Press bus relayed cheerful music and distributed paper hats and literature, whilst Wycombe District Council had badges and lapel stickers, and free sweets for the children, donated by Sharps, Rowntrees and Nestles.

The wood had been cleared and ploughed. All over the bare hillside, beribboned with orange tape to mark planting areas, were groups of children scrambling to their designated plots, or eagerly planting, encouraged by their teachers or other officials "Dig a nice big hole now!" (I fear some trees were buried rather than planted) "That's good, you'll be able to come back and watch that grow, won't you?" Enthusiasm was tremendous, and we enjoyed being part of it, carefully bedding in our "forester's score": 14 ash and 10 rowan.



Many have asked why the wood could not have been left for natural regeneration to take over. The reasoning is that the old stock was very poor, and seed from such inferior specimens would reproduce the poor characteristics. New stock has to be introduced to ensure good trees and longevity of the wood. A healthier wood, too, is promised by planting a variety of trees - ash, rowan, beech, cherry, oak - to avoid continued impoverishment of the soil by mono-species, formerly beech.

We look forward to the growth of this new wood, the rest of it being replanted by the District Council, and we expect to hear news of its progress when Steve Crosby, Woodlands Officer and Olly Kelly, Landscape and Development Manager of Wycombe District Council come to talk on Woodland Strategy at our Quarterly Meeting on 18 April next year.

As previously mentioned, Operation Treelink is organised by the High Wycombe Rotary Club, and in association with them the Berkely Reafforestation Trust will undertake the second stage of the link by planting trees in the foothills of the Andes in Ecuador.

Barbara Rippington

Aylesbury Society



are
the
hosts

Market Square, Aylesbury between 1907 and 1912. Drawing by Edward Stamp

On a warm Sunday afternoon in September, Aylesbury Society showed members of the Heritage Group and friends over their old town conservation area. This was in return for their visit to High Wycombe in June.

Fifteen of us in two groups began the walk in the enormous Market Square, where comparisons with Wycombe started to form: we have a Market House and a wide High Street! When our visit ended at the Friends' Meeting House we were on more familiar ground.

Guides of the famous and infamous, including Hampden, Cromwell and Wilkes, gave added interest to the tour of the old town. Did Cromwell really stay at the King's Head Hotel which dates from 1450?

So well placed is Aylesbury's ancient town centre on a low hill that it has been readily by-passed by heavy traffic; hardly a car was seen all afternoon. Contrast this with the heart of Wycombe in its narrow valley.

Developers seem to have been reasonably kind to the ancient part of the town with whole streets, especially Church Street, full of distinguished old houses. Around the church all is centuries old, including the old Grammar School, now a museum. Some buildings showed a round plaque recording

Aylesbury Society's successes in saving fine buildings for posterity. (This could be an idea for the High Wycombe Society to pursue.)

We were left with the feeling that old Aylesbury is made up of one large square, Market Square, several mini-squares and many attractive old buildings; a world of its own that might even be encircled with a city wall. A most enjoyable walk indeed.

In case readers get the impression that the town is in a time warp, it should also be said that concrete walls of the 60s were pointed out to us on one side of the Market Square enclosing a 1967 shopping centre. Since the visit a report has stated:

"Work on the £70 million redevelopment of Friars Square is due to start early in 1991, and the new shopping centre will be open by the end of 1993. There will be three major stores, 46 shops, an indoor market, an integrated bus station and parking for 4300 cars."

The visit ended with tea and cakes as our hosts continued to answer questions about their town and Society, and we had a chance to look at and buy some of their publications.

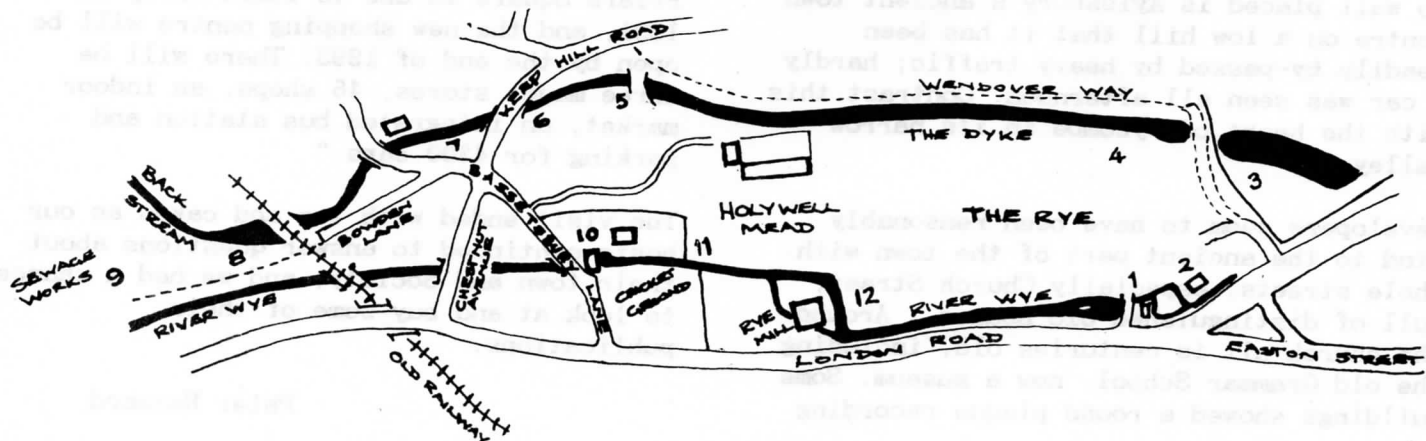
Peter Hazzard

Open Spaces

Jim Porter of Wycombe District Council Leisure Department, who is Head of Client leisure Services, spoke to representatives of affiliated Residents' Associations and members of the Heritage Group in September. He described current policy which is increasingly to invite tenders for undertaking tasks hitherto performed by Council staff. In his case this takes in open spaces, woodlands, leisure centres and the River Thames. He assured those who feared a falling off of standards, for example, neglect of trees, that the Council would still employ wardens and would fully investigate a sample of contracts as a matter of routine. Complaints from the public would also be dealt with. He was positive that our open spaces were proof against commercial exploitation and excessive car parking. There followed a wide-ranging discussion which covered litter, graffiti, vandalism, parking, dogs, gypsies, leisure space on new housing developments and the River Wye, which Mr Porter agreed should be protected against further culverting. This full and frank exchange of views was most rewarding and in line with the District Council's policy of greater openness to the public.

John Gore

Explore High Wycombe's premier open space, the Rye, and the River Wye, following the Society's Water Trail! Copies available at Quarterly Meetings and from the Tourist Information Office.



Car boot sale boosts our funds

More help for the Society's hard-pressed funds came from a car boot sale on 7 October in Harrison's car park. Although there were not so many customers as at some such sales, just over £87 was taken. Thanks to all who contributed goods, and to Myra King, Barbara Rippington and Annie Woodward who did the organising.

Planning

17-21 QUEENS ROAD

In the High Wycombe Area Local Plan, Wycombe District Council designated certain sites as "badly sited users", and stated its policy of moving them to more suitable areas. Those who know Queens Road will remember the old machinery on the site opposite the entrance to Harlow Road. Now a developer is applying to erect a new office block on the site, which will dominate the street scene and clash with existing buildings. What is more, extra traffic and parking problems would be generated. Local residents are naturally very concerned and we have joined them in objecting to the application.

Regeneration: A Civic Trust Campaign.

CIVIC
TRUST

Caring for Places where People Live and Work

The Society's Quarterly Meeting in October featured a talk by Roger Higman, Campaign Manager of the Civic Trust Regeneration Unit. The Unit was set up in 1987, and its main aim is to improve the surroundings and therefore the quality of life of those people living in derelict and run-down areas. The Unit receives much support from international company Grand Metropolitan, as well as several other organisations, including the English Tourist Board.

Professional staff carry out feasibility studies to see how a regeneration scheme could help local people; they set up and run projects, give advice on finance, help with professional services, and generally spread the word about their work.

Roger Higman spread the word with conviction and enthusiasm. He showed several

slides illustrating various projects in towns all over the country, from depressed industrial areas to declining seaside towns. For example, in Ilfracombe, a redundant church is now set to be used as a community centre. Work has also been carried out in towns along the Kent coast, in the Midlands and the North. One of the first projects was at Wirksworth in Derbyshire.

All in all, this was a very interesting and informative evening, and it is great to know that organisations such as this exist!

Denise Lindsay

For further information contact: The Regeneration Campaign, Regeneration Unit, Civic Trust, 17 Carlton Terrace, London SW1Y 5AW.

Welcome newcomers!

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Mr & Mrs R Clark, Hampden Road

Mrs E J Cullip, Ashley Drive, Tylers Green

Mr D Dobinson, Plumer Road

Mr & Mrs M V Haddrill, Bassetsbury Lane

Mr J L Langley, Lower Lodge Lane, Hazlemere

Development Advice Notes

Wycombe District Council has produced a series of Advice Notes to give guidance to developers and indeed to anyone interested in enhancing the environment. For example, Advice Note No 8 gives a wealth of information about our local Conservation Areas (Did you know that there are as many as 56 in the District?) and the regulations that exist to protect them. Other Advice Notes include:

- No 5 Landscaping
- 6 Tree Protection
- 7 Protecting trees on development sites
- 9 Listed buildings
- 10 Shop fronts and shop signs

Advice Notes are available from the Planning Department reception area at the District Council Offices and are free of charge.

On the Buses!

Those of us with very long memories will remember the days before bus regulation when bus companies competed fiercely for passengers especially on the busiest routes. Paul Lacey in *A History of the Penn Bus Company 1920 - 1935* 28pp £2-50 recalls those days when Frederick Sugg's buses used to race the Thames Valley along the London Road to Loudwater, together with other anecdotes, photographs and details of the buses and services of the company until it was split up between the London Passenger Transport Board and the Thames Valley in 1935.

The same author has also brought out a book on the Penn's larger rivals *Thames Valley - the British years 1915 - 1920* 52pp £2-95. Both books should be obtainable from local bookshops or post free from the author at 17 Sparrow Close, Woosehill, Wokingham, Berks RG11 2UQ Tel: 0734 794097.

Dates for your Diary

Thursday 17 January 1991 8pm
Royal British Legion Hall
St Mary Street

Archaeology in Buckinghamshire
Pauline and Stanley Cauvain

Saturday 2 February 1991
Little Market House

Charity Market Stall
Goods and produce wanted!

Thursday 14 March 1991 8pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

Wycombe Arts Festival Lecture

Thursday 18 April 1991 7.45pm
Royal British Legion Hall
St Mary Street

AGM followed by a talk on Wycombe
District Council's *Woodland Strategy*

11 - 19 May 1991

Environment Week 91

Thursday 11 July 1991 8pm
Royal British Legion Hall
St Mary Street

Water Quality
Speaker to be announced