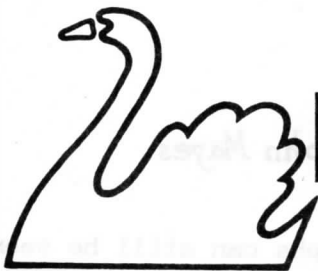


The High Wycombe Society

(Registered with the Civic Trust)



Newsletter

Hon Secretary:
John Gore
30 Wordsworth Road
High Wycombe
Bucks

Your town is our concern

HW 26671

Registered Charity No. 257897

Spring 1991

No 79

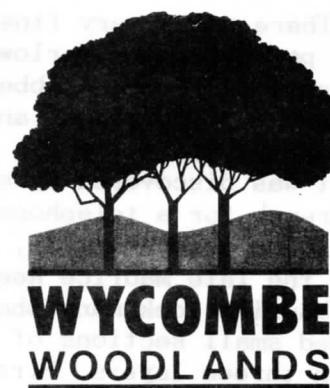
COME TO THE AGM THIS YEAR

All members are warmly invited to attend our AGM on Thursday 17 April at 7.45pm at the Royal British Legion Hall, St Mary Street. There will be reports on Society activities and finances over the previous 12 months, with an opportunity for you to question what the Society is doing. This will be followed by elections of officers and Executive Committee members. Please consider seriously standing for election yourself: the Society needs people with energy and ideas for furthering our aims. What about you? Nominations can be accepted right up to the time of the election. A nomination form is included on page 8 along with an agenda.

The AGM will be followed by an illustrated talk on the Wycombe Woodland Strategy - see below.

Wycombe Woodland Strategy

After the business of the AGM, we will be welcoming Steve Crosby and Ollie Kelly of Wycombe District Council to speak to us about Wycombe's Woodland Strategy. Steve is the Woodlands Officer and Ollie is Landscape and Development Manager. They will explain how the Strategy is being implemented in the District's fourteen woodland sites, and tell us about the problems and the potential. They very much welcome public participation, not only in enjoying the recreational opportunities but in helping to improve the woodlands by scrub clearing etc. They also want to hear from us, the public, on what we expect of our local woodlands. The talk will be illustrated with slides. Do come along!



WYCOMBE UNDERGROUND

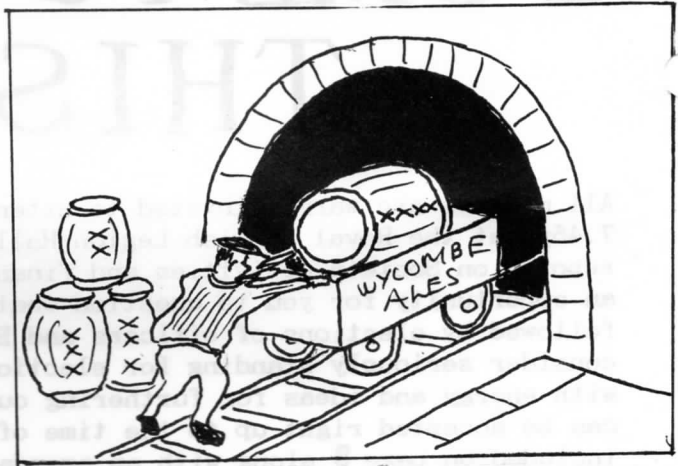
by L John Mayes

No, this is not a new Metro system designed to solve Wycombe's traffic problems. It is an account by our President, local historian L John Mayes, of what he knows by research and practical experience of the underground tunnels in High Wycombe town centre. We are grateful to him for this contribution: he in turn invites readers to tell him what they know of the history of these so-called "mysterious" tunnels.

Underground tunnels in Wycombe - fact or fantasy? First, fact: a tunnel running the length of the High Street (the Guildhall side) under the pavement. It is there, part of it at any rate; I was in it only a few days ago. But what is it? I was once told, quite solemnly, that it had been constructed for the Abbey School so that the girls could process to the church without being exposed to the vulgar gaze! Other explanations were offered - not quite so ridiculous though. The fact is that it is a splendid barrel-arched flood relief sewer designed to carry off flood water from Pauls Row, White Hart Street, Frogmore and Watery Lane (now Desborough Road) areas, and deliver it to the tailrace of Pann Mill. It is now redundant, but it was so well constructed that parts of it have been bricked off and enlarged to form fine dry cellars. The section into which I went had been thus adapted, but the fine barrel arching can still be seen.

More fact. There was a very fine underground passage under Marlow Hill, apparently running from the Abbey (how I hate that name - it never was an Abbey!) to Abbey-owned property on the far side of the hill. It was discovered by a workman digging a trench for a telephone cable, and, having been told about it, I enlisted the help of the late Maurice Keen and we went down. Maurice took many photographs and I removed small sections of the walling which was in three layers. First, brick, then a facing of half flints, black side outwards, giving the appearance of a black glass wall, then on this more half flints, white side out, in elaborate patterns.

Copies of the photographs can still be seen in the Library's collection, but the pieces of wall which I deposited in the Museum cannot at present be traced; pity. The tunnel was filled in to prevent possible collapse under present-day traffic. My theory is that the passage was constructed for the Earl of Shelburne, partly as a "folly", partly as a means of communication.



"Here's another XXXX for The Grapes!"

A third tunnel known to me seemed to run from the brewery which once stood in Priory Road where Marks and Spencer's yard now is down to the High Street to where the Grape public house used to be (now Boots'). Photographs of this, too, were in the Library, but I cannot find them now. It is in my memory (it was over 50 years ago) that a little railway track had been laid in it and barrels of beer could be sent down in small open trucks. It seems extremely unlikely that such a tunnel could have been constructed just for this purpose. Could the following be an explanation? John Parker, in his History of Wycombe, quotes Browne Willis as recording that several passages ran from the foot of Castle Hill mount towards the town centre. In the 1870s some excavation took place, and Parker himself inspected what remained of one passage, which was open for only a

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 2)

short distance being then blocked by chalk rubble. Had the passage run from the mount to the High Street, it would have been severed by the cutting of the Railway, and from that point it could, just could, have carried on and formed the early part of the brewery - High Street tunnel. The church would obviously be a possible "terminus" of underground passages, and years ago I thought I had found one. An opening suddenly appeared in one of the churchyard paths. I collected the ever-helpful Maurice Keen and we lowered a powerful lamp and followed it with a camera on a long pole. Many photographs were taken and these showed quite clearly that it was no passage, just a large vault with many coffins, coffins in such good condition that some of the name plates could be read, including one of a former Mayor.

This article is really intended as "bait", bait which may encourage other and better-informed people to come forward with more information.

L John Mayes

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

52 Melbourne Road
High Wycombe, Bucks
HP13 7HD

1 February 1991

Dear Sir/Madam,

CYCLE USERS GROUP

Like many cyclists, I feel frustrated with the precedence given to the motor vehicle regarding finance, planning and other resources, and feel the authorities pay little heed to the needs of cyclists and, especially in the case of Bucks and Wycombe, ignore them altogether.

I am hoping to set up a cycle users group in Wycombe which will hopefully push the authorities involved in traffic planning and management into recognising the needs of cyclists, and to instigate plans to that end; for example, traffic calming, parking places and priority routes.



See page 10 for Society's
Environment Week activities

Join the Heritage Group!

If you would like to learn more about our local heritage and work to conserve it, you are invited to join the Society's Heritage Group. The Group meets approximately once per month and organises talks, visits, surveys, projects etc. concerned with the environment. To find out more, please get in touch with Denise Lindsay HW25948.

There is an established group in Milton Keynes - the MK Cycle Users Group - which is having an influence in the north of the county and is keen to have some group in the south with which it can work and get a better deal for cyclists in Bucks as a whole.

The group, like MKCUG, would be concerned with all cyclists, whether they be children on first bikes or hardened tourists, utility or serious riders.

Anybody interested in getting the small nucleus of the group going please ring me on High Wycombe 440105.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Roland Crothers

Footpaths - a step in the right direction!

The new Rights of Way Act 1990 offers a massive step forward in footpath protection. No longer need walkers argue about whether a farmer has ploughed a footpath or whether a crop is an obstruction. The Act requires occupiers who disturb the surface of a path (a) to make good within 14 days of the first disturbance for that crop or within 24 hours of subsequent disturbance, and (b) to make the line of the path clear on the ground. Since 88 per cent of walkers in the countryside will only go where the path is obvious, this is very important.



How a footpath should look - Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society, on Footpath 119 at Turville.

Where no width is recorded, the minimum widths of paths to be restored and kept clear are, for cross-field and field-edge footpaths, 1 metre and 1.5 metres respectively, and for bridle-ways, 2 metres and 3 metres. Local authorities can, after giving 24 hours notice, themselves reinstate or clear the paths and invoice the farmer. It is the occupier's duty to obey the law, no matter who does the work for him.

All this is excellent, but it will be useless unless local authorities act swiftly and resolutely. It is up to walkers amongst us to send prompt reports of infringements to the Council.

(Extracted from *Open Space* Autumn 1990, the magazine of the Open Spaces Society.)

COMMONS CAMPAIGN

The Open Spaces Society is disappointed that the Government will not after all be legislating to enact recommendations of the Common Land Forum. These would have given the public the right to roam on all commons, subject to limited restrictions and bye-laws. Instead, the circumstances in which access may be *restricted* are being stressed. The hoped-for parliamentary bill would also have rectified anomalies in the 1965 Commons Registration Act by which deregistration of commons has been all too easy. The OSS will be pressing for a short bill to deal with this problem.

Meanwhile, the 8675 commons and 3624 village greens in England and Wales will come under increasing threat from development, intensive agriculture and neglect, and the OSS has a rapidly growing case load of requests to help local communities to resist these pressures. They have set up a Commons Campaign Fund, and our Society has donated £20 to this.

JACK SCRUTON

Many of our members will already be aware that Jack Scruton has been fighting a virus infection over the last few months, which has involved some short spells in hospital and has been very debilitating. At times he has experienced difficulty in walking far and speaking. Everyone knows what a stubborn fighter he is, and in this battle he has had wonderful support from Olive. We send them both our best wishes for an early recovery.

PLANNING MATTERS

ADAMS PARK

Wycombe Wanderers Football Club have applied, for the fourth time, for permission to lay down a training pitch parallel to the main pitch at Adams Park. This time, permission is also being sought for an additional 150 parking places. The problem is that the land involved is in the Green Belt and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Green Belt is the Green Belt, and if it is to mean anything it must be kept sacrosanct. The District Council has turned down the three previous applications, and we hope they will stand firm this time. We consider that the right course now would be for the Department of the Environment to call in the application and conduct a Public Inquiry.

SALVATION ARMY CITADEL

The Salvation Army wish to demolish their long-established Citadel in Frogmore and rebuild on the same site, with a shop at the front. The Citadel has been a well-loved landmark in Frogmore since 1904, and it incorporates commemorative stones laid by local dignitaries, including the then Lord Carrington. We should like to see at least the facade retained.

KINGSMEAD

An application has been made to lay down three netball pitches at Kingsmead. This fine open space, much enjoyed by the local community, has already suffered in recent years from a surfeit of buildings, concrete and tarmac. Although sport is to be encouraged, it does not seem right that recreational space for the many should be sacrificed for providing sporting facilities for the few. These should be at the Sports Centre. We hope the application will be reconsidered.

HOARDINGS

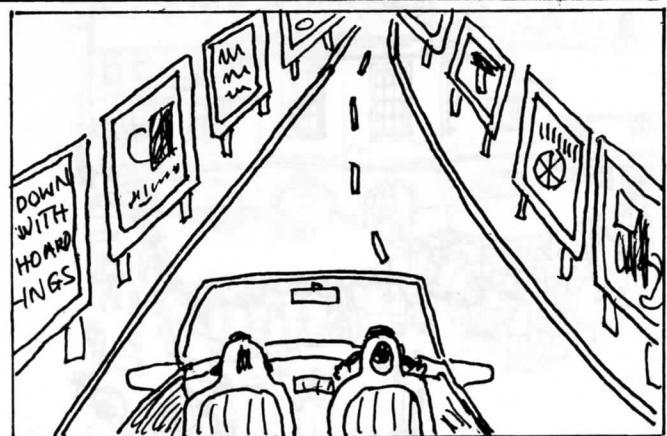
There has been a worrying rash of applications for the erection of advertising hoardings in various parts of the town. They have an adverse effect on the town's appearance and reputation, just like flyposting on empty shop windows. We hope none of them is allowed.

WARREN WOOD REPRIEVED

Sighs of relief went up all round when Bucks County Council rejected Biffa's application to dump commercial and industrial waste at Warren Wood, near Flackwell Heath and Little Marlow (see Winter 1990/91 Newsletter). Why not visit Warren Wood at the centre of some attractive countryside on one of your local rambles this Spring? It is crossed by public footpaths LM9, LM10 and LM11 (see Chiltern Society Footpath Maps Nos 1 and 13 @ £1=25 each from the Tourist Information Office and local bookshops).

GOOD NEWS FROM TERRIERS!

After a Public Inquiry last year, an Inspector of the Department of the Environment supported the rejection of a planning application to build 160 houses on Redford's Field at Terriers. Bucks County Council wanted to sell the "surplus" land to raise money for capital projects. However, the Inspector agreed with objectors, including our Society, that far from being surplus, Redford's Field provides a vital recreational space in a built-up area. Congratulations to TRAC (Totteridge Residents' Action Campaign), one of our affiliated societies, who organised the campaign and worked so hard to save Redford's. Mike Russell, their Chairman, has written to Jack Scruton, our Planning Secretary, thanking him for his advice and support. It is hoped that the land will be purchased by Wycombe District Council to ensure its future as an open space.



"This must be High Wycombe!"

The Charity Market Stall

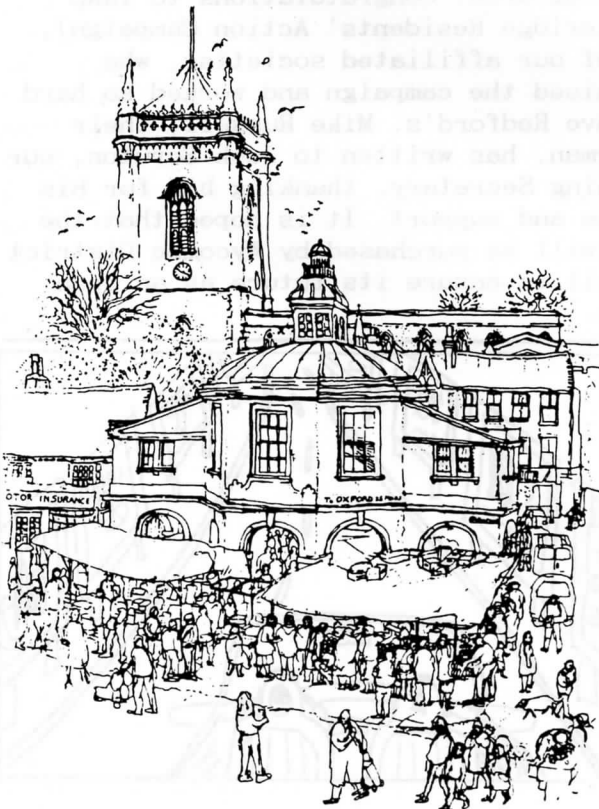
Lt. Market House

The High Wycombe Society enjoyed the privilege, once again, of manning the Charity Stall on a (pretty chilly!) Saturday morning in early February.

Myra King had booked the fixture, organised the marshalling of the goods to be taken to the stall, and had whipped up the enthusiasm of the helpers. Due credit and thanks to Myra for making such a super effort on behalf of the Society.

An enormous variety of ephemera, books, records, home-made cakes, fruit pies etc had been donated by members of the Society and their friends; our sincere thanks to all of those kind persons for contributing so generously the type of merchandise that sells well.

For those of you who have never before helped in manning a market stall, a word of advice: it's great fun, and new skills are acquired in selling some (fairly) surprising items of apparel on these occasions!



Little Market House

Drawing by Lorna Cassidy

We have to thank Rita Belson, John Gore, Prue Meek, Joan Johnson, Lottie Kearney, Barbara Rippington and Ron Sims for manning the stall, and for inciting the general public to buy - and buy again. The morning's trading produced £168 for the Society's general fund, just when we needed it most!

Roger Lawson

Modesty prevented Roger Lawson, our Chairman, from mentioning his own name as being a successful salesperson, particularly where the aforementioned surprising items of apparel were concerned!

Conservation Area Uplift

Many local people will have noted with approval the high-quality street furniture: cast-iron litter bins, lamp posts, old-borough bollards etc which the District Council have installed in White Hart Street and around Church Square and the Churchyard. These add distinction to the Town Centre Conservation Area, marred only by such things as fly-posting on empty shop windows.

Now for a couple of ideas from other towns which Wycombe might emulate:

* In the 1990 Civic Trust Awards, a Commendation went to Market Drayton in Shropshire for clearing their Conservation Area of clutter. Over fifty unsightly traffic sign poles and lamp standards were removed, with signs and lighting fittings being transferred to walls to create a dramatic improvement.

* Another observation from a nearby town, in this case, Reading. In their Conservation Areas, the well-designed street name plates now include the name of the conservation area as well as that of the street. This seems to be a useful addition to increase public awareness of the conservation area and its purpose, and well worth considering here.



Sponsored by

STEETLEY

One of the chief aims of the Civic Trust Awards scheme over the years has been to promote the very best of contemporary design as well as high quality conservation and refurbishment. In 1990, 1002 schemes were submitted, but in the judges' opinion, standards in new development have not kept

with the quite dramatic improvement in the calibre of restoration and conversion work. It appears from the evidence of the 1990 entries that, due to market forces and the tendency to treat both buildings and surrounding space exclusively in economic terms, the result is overdeveloped sites and stress on the surrounding environment; for example, outskirts of towns suffer from a plethora of primary green, red and blue crinkly tin sheds masquerading as industrial sites. However, not all is so depressing. There are some signs that the value of a good environment in investment terms is now more fully appreciated, and some examples of corporate patronage lead not just to expensive buildings but to exciting designs as well.

In all, 22 Awards were made and 106 schemes received Commendations. There were also 12 Special Mentions.

In 1990, for the first time, local amenity societies such as ours were invited to submit nominations for awards. Some 40 out of 1000 societies did so, and one, not so far away from High Wycombe, was successful. Reading Civic Society, which had campaigned for a decade to prevent their Victorian Town Hall from being demolished, and then urged its restoration and adaptation, put it forward as an entry, and it won an Award. Congratulations to them!

Only one entry from Bucks received any sort of recognition: this was the Moot Hall at Milton Keynes which had a Special Mention.

BOOKSHELF

High Wycombe Then and Now by Frances Alexander, illustrated by Lorna Cassidy £3=50. Norma Riddell, Headteacher of Hughenden County First School, commends this book, which is by two High Wycombe Society members, by saying it will help parents add to the enjoyment and purpose of outings with their children, encourage observational skills and foster their interest in the local environment. It guides its readers to places of historical interest, most within the town of High Wycombe, and is suitable for children from about 8 years upwards. She goes on to say that its research projects and study content provide opportunities for developing experience and skills which meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.

The book will soon be available from local outlets such as the Tourist Information Centre; alternatively, contact Frances Alexander on HW439481.

Cities are good for us by Harley Sherlock £10 available from Transport 2000, Walkden House, 10 Melton Street, London NW1 2EJ. The author argues quite logically that city housing built at a density high enough to support all the necessary local facilities is the sensible solution to the problems of traffic congestion and urban housing. When people's homes are near to shops and other essential facilities, many car journeys can be eliminated. Out-of-town hypermarkets are the very antithesis of this thinking, and are magnifying our road problems and degrading our environment.

MRS PEGGY PHILLIPS

We regret to record the death of Mrs Peggy Phillips just before Christmas. Peggy had been a member of the Executive Committee for the past three years. All who knew her will agree that she had a very warm and friendly personality, and was a whole-hearted organiser and supporter of the Society's activities. She will be sadly missed. We extend our condolences to Mr George Phillips and his family.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CIVIC TRUST SOCIETIES

The Civic Trust has just set up a democratically elected National Council of Civic Trust Societies (NCCTS) to represent the views of local amenity societies such as ours of which there are now over 1000 across the country. Our "constituency" is the North Thames Region comprising Berks, Bucks, Herts and Essex, and our two elected representatives are Mrs Jennifer Moss, Secretary of the Chesham Society and Mr Andy Rutter, Secretary of the Harwich Society. They hope the NCCTS will develop a pool of expertise for member societies to draw upon.

OVER TO YOU!

You are invited to contribute items of local interest for publication in the Newsletter: a sketch, an opinion, a poem, a favourite walk, perhaps. Just send your contribution to the Hon Sec at the address on page 1. Publication is, of course, at the Editor's discretion. Oh, and if you would like to try your hand at editing, please apply to the Chairman, Roger Lawson, HW28047 or to the Hon Sec. The post is currently vacant.



AGENDA FOR THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY TO BE HELD ON THURSDAY 18 APRIL 1991 AT 7.45PM AT THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION HALL, ST MARY STREET

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19 April 1990
- 3 Matters arising
- 4 Honorary Secretary's Report
- 5 Honorary Treasurer's Report
- 6 Election of President and Vice-Presidents
- 7 Election of Committee:
 - (a) Chairman (b) Vice-Chairman (c) Honorary Secretary
 - (d) Honorary Treasurer (e) Members of Committee
- 8 Election of Auditors
- 9 Any other business

To be followed by an illustrated talk by Steve Crosby and Ollie Kelly on Wycombe District Council's *Woodland Strategy* (see page 1)

To: Mr J S Gore, 30 Wordsworth Road, High Wycombe, HP11 2UR

NOMINATIONS FOR 1991 AGM

I nominate _____ to stand for election as
Chairman/Vice-Chairman/Honorary Secretary/Honorary Treasurer/Committee
member.

Signed:

Date:

I second this nomination: Signed:

Date:

I agree to stand:

Signed:

Date:

Archaeology in Buckinghamshire

Pauline and Stanley Cauvain spoke at the Society's January Quarterly Meeting about their rather full-time hobby of archaeology. Here, Denise Lindsay gives her impressions of their talk.

When I told some of my acquaintances that I had been to a talk on archaeology, reactions were predictable and frustrating; a polite "Oh well, each to their own", or a blunt "Rather you than me!" But I don't care, it's a fascinating subject, and Pauline and Stanley easily conveyed this fact when they gave their illustrated talk at the Royal British Legion Hall in January.

The evening began with some slides showing hardy enthusiasts walking across fields, usually in the depths of winter, to find out where would be a worthwhile place to dig. For example, a blackened area beneath the surface could be evidence of a kiln, there may be "lumps and bumps" to survey, or a light sprinkling of frost or snow could show up a tantalising "something".

We were then asked to try to imagine the Wycombe area in prehistoric times. Pauline and Stanley have been lucky enough to find pieces of worked flint in their back garden, and there is evidence of flint mines in this area, with references having been made to them when the railway cutting was dug.

As all know about the grand Roman villa which stood on the Rye, but the Roman "Mr Average" had to live somewhere, too, and, it seems, he lived in the Micklefield area (and obviously other places) for Pauline and Stanley discovered the remains of a Roman farm in the garden of a house in which they were living! They found pottery and a coin, which revealed a date: 110 AD.

Archaeologists have to be prepared to drop everything at a moment's notice in order to go and dig - even if it does rain for the whole weekend. This was the case back in 1976, when a JCB driver on a site near West Wycombe noticed some bones. Pauline and Stanley were allowed on the site for a weekend, and uncovered some fourteen skeletons. They had been buried in coffins in around 270 AD.



Another weekend dig took place quite recently behind Wesley Church in Priory Road. This was the site of a medieval homestead, and pieces of pottery were discovered, from around 1180-90, and also animal bones.

Pauline and Stanley then spoke to us about the tile and pottery kilns which flourished in Penn and Tylers Green from medieval times up until the 15th-16th century. The pattern on the tiles is best described as something like transfer printing, and was apparently a fairly cheap way of producing them. Penn tiles have been discovered on an upper floor in the Round Tower at Windsor Castle, as well as in Pitstone Church.

Finally, we were shown several slides of local canals, kiln sites and mills. Then we all went home to dream of finding something ancient and significant in our own back gardens. A stuffy subject? Rubbish! Pass me a shovel!

Denise Lindsay

TRANSPORT NEEDED?

If you need transport to come to Quarterly Meetings of the Society, just telephone an Executive Committee member and we will try to arrange for someone to pick you up. Oh, and why not arrange with a member or members who live nearby to share a car when you come to a meeting? This would save patrol, save money, ease the pressure on parking and help the environment!

Environment Week

11 - 19 May 1991

This year the Society will be involved in two events, and your support would be appreciated.

* *Environment Fair* On Saturday 11 May, Wycombe District Council are organising a Fair in the Guildhall from 10am until 4.30 or 5pm at which societies and groups with an interest in conserving the environment will show their wares and invite support from the public. We have accepted an invitation to participate and will need a lot of people to staff our stall. If you are able and willing to help, please contact John Gore on HW26671.

* *Town and Water Trails* Once again we will be running our two trails to show people points of interest in our local heritage. Both trails will commence at 2.15pm on Sunday 15 May, the Town Trail from the Parish Church porch and the Water Trail from Pann Mill. Both trails will finish at about 4 to 4.15pm at Pann Mill, where refreshments will be served and there will be an opportunity to inspect progress in restoring the mill machinery. Make a note in your diary now!

AS WE WERE

From the Newsletter Files

TEN YEARS AGO NO 43 SPRING 1981

Fears for open (white) land at Hazlemere, Green Hill and Gomm Valley as Secretary of State for the Environment increases housing allocation for S Bucks to accommodate 7500 more people by 1991; Secretary of State decides not to "call in" the application to demolish the Old Chequers: "historic buildings are still without proper protection"; Green Street General Improvement Area to go ahead; High Wycombe Society Arts Festival Exhibition "Shopping in Wycombe - Past and Present".

TWENTY YEARS AGO NO 8 FEBRUARY 1971

Proposal to build "The Dove" Arts Centre mooted; Further consideration of High Wycombe & District Planning Review: assumed population growth "disturbing"; Public inquiry into housing development at Downley; High Wycombe Society Arts Festival Exhibition "High Wycombe - Today and Tomorrow".

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 18 April 1991 745pm
Royal British Legion Hall
Sy Mary Street

11 - 19 May 1991

Saturday 11 May 1991 10am-4.30pm
Guildhall

Sunday 12 May 1991 2.15pm

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

Thursday 28 November -
Sunday 8 December 1991

AGM followed by a talk on Wycombe District Council's *Woodland Strategy*
Steve Crosby and Ollie Kelly

Environment Week 91

Environment Fair (Please contact John Gore HW26671 if you are able to help) (See this page)

Town Trail: meet at Parish Church
Water Trail: meet at Pann Mill
(See this page)

Water Quality
Speaker to be announced

National Tree Week 1991