

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 84

SUMMER 1992

WATER ISSUES

It was ironical that a heavy downpour of rain almost obliterated a speech by the Prince of Wales reminding us that water is a most vital natural resource and that we are too profligate in its use. The heavy rain of late May will have made up only a fraction of the deficit in winter rainfall over the past few years, and will not be enough to fill our own depleted rivers and streams. The river features in this edition of the Newsletter – see Peter Hazzard's article on page . Our next quarterly meeting on 16 July also highlights water, when Bob Jeffrey speaks about the work of the National Rivers Authority.. The NRA was set up at the time of the privatisation of the water companies to take over the regulatory functions of the superseded water boards. For the first time, there is now a national body responsible for overseeing our rivers from source to mouth, with their catchment areas, locks and weirs. It is also their job to license the abstraction of water: before long they may have to say 'No' to the water companies! Bob Jeffrey is a Pollution Prevention Officer with NRA, pollution prevention being another of

THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY

by Bob Jeffrey

Pollution Prevention Officer, NRA

AT 8PM ON

THURSDAY 16 JULY 1992

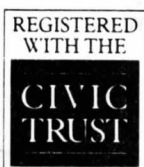
IN THE

REGGIE GOVES CENTRE

ALL WELCOME!

their functions. He has been with the water authorities since the days of the old Thames Conservancy, and will be telling us about their work. Everyone has an interest in water (even those who say it is only for washing, not for drinking), so now is your chance to find out more. Questions will be welcome.

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☐ Recollections of old High Wycombe p8; ☐ Town Centre Forum p9; ☐ Dates p10.



...caring about our town and heritage

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Honorary Secretary, John Gore, 30 Wordsworth Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP11 2UR. Tel: (0494) 526671

PREPARING FOR THE EXHIBITION

by Annie Woodward

Although my calendar tells me today is 22 May, my mind tells me it is the opening of the Jack Scruton Exhibition minus one week. Much has been done by a great many people since the steering committee met to plan Jack's Memorial Exhibition last autumn. Following a brief biography, the exhibition traces Jack's involvement in conservation from the early days of the historic Rye campaign to the development of the High Wycombe Society under his leadership. Olive Scruton has prepared the title panel with simple, striking photographs of our dear Jack and his well-deserved MBE. Janet Tully helped Olive raid the family photo-albums to provide pictures of Jack's early life, his family and his RAF and teaching careers to allow a glimpse of him before conservation 'took over'. Subsequent sections have been prepared as follows:

- *Rye Protection Society* by Evelyn and Roy Roe
- *Early Days of the High Wycombe Society* by Joyce and Syd Spence
- *Planning* by Karen Isaacs
- *Heritage* by the Heritage Group
- *Open Spaces* by Ronald Swains and John Gore
- *Trees* by Barbara Rippington
- *River Wye* by Lorna Cassidy and Peter Hazzard
- *Pann Mill* by Myra King
- *Affiliated Societies* by Norman Belson
- *Transport* by Elsa Woodward

All these contributors have a special interest in their subject and have diligently researched and presented their findings. Many others have helped them.

The penultimate section entitled *Jack Scruton, the Man*, prepared by Olive, shows Jack enjoying the Society's social events, holidays abroad and the company of family and friends. Some rare and wonderful shots are to be found here!

The steering committee resolved that the exhibition should be both a memorial to Jack's work and an opportunity to encourage others to take on his mantle by becoming members. To this end, John Gore has completed the exhibition with the final 'recruiting' section entitled *The Challenge Now*.

The working committee of Olive Scruton, John Gore, Phil Robins and Annie Woodward decided that the considerable efforts which had gone into the production of the exhibition should not be confined to a two-week showing. Good quality display board was purchased. Material has been permanently fixed on it with the help of the Wycombe Local History and Chair Museum for which we are greatly indebted. Only copies of pictures and documents have been used to avoid possible theft or damage. Headings for each section have been printed and captions computer-typed to give uniformity of appearance. Individual panels or groups of panels can be displayed at other events in the future.

The Society owes a deep debt of gratitude to Clive Rodgers, who has organised the copying of pictures and printing of title boards. He has also given valuable design advice. We are grateful to Elsie Fowler for introducing him to us. Grateful thanks are also due to Syd Spence for all his painstaking photographic work, and to the highly computer-literate couple, Michelle and Phil Robins, who prepared most of the captions. Many others have been 'volunteered' to help and give their time. We thank them all.

We are grateful, too, to the Wycombe Arts Festival for including the exhibition in their programme, and we thank Wycombe District Council Leisure Department for all their help. We are especially lucky to be the first users of the newly refurbished display screens in the Guildhall.

By the time you read this, the exhibition will be over. We hope you were able to visit it and enjoy the fruits of our labours. A word of thanks, too, to the many people who helped with stewarding the exhibition: between them they will have contributed 182 hours of their time!

The Opening Ceremony on 29 May should be a memorable occasion. Many local dignitaries have been invited. Patrick Reyntiens OBE, the internationally-known stained-glass artist, who was the Society's President from 1972 to 1976, has kindly agreed to come from Somerset to perform the official opening.

A final mention must be made of the tremendous effort put into this venture by Olive Scruton. Her amazing energy and enthusiasm have left most of us standing. She was determined to reflect Jack's true nature as a person and as an achiever, and has inspired very high standards of content and presentation.

We hope the exhibition will be worthy of her devotion and of Jack's great legacy to the town.

Annie Woodward has modestly omitted to mention her own tremendous contribution to the exhibition preparation. Without her coordinating skills and intensive efforts in obtaining supplies of material and in nudging people into fulfilling their commitments, the exhibition would never have been made ready in time. She deserves our heartfelt gratitude. Editor.



"It'll be all right on the night" Cartoon by Barry Edwards

COFFEE AT BASSETSBURY MANOR

Several of our members have expressed from time to time the feeling that they would like to meet informally, away from the business of Quarterly Meetings etc., to chat and socialise. Thanks to Elsie Fowler this feeling became realised as a coffee morning held at the newly-refurbished Bassetsbury Manor on Saturday 4 April. What a good idea it turned out to be!

Thank you to all those who came to talk to old and new friends, to enjoy the coffee and cakes provided, and to contribute to and purchase from the Bring-and-Buy stall - especially to Roger Lawson for his fine collection of ladies' unmentionables (impeccable taste, Roger) and to Peter Hale for his generous donation of a beautiful painting. These boosted the takings considerably.

We are very grateful to all who helped and to those who so kindly gave their time and effort in producing the refreshments. Since everyone enjoyed it so much, we're going to do it again, at a different venue.

Please make a note in your diary! The next coffee morning will be on Saturday 18 July at the Wycombe Local History and Chair Museum in Priory Avenue from 1030am to 12midday. Contributions for refreshments and to the Bring-and-Buy stall will again be welcome. If you can help in this way or in person, please contact Barbara Rippington on 0494 526616.

Barbara Rippington

RIVER WYE SURVEY

by Peter Hazzard

Peter Hazzard has been studying the River Wye Survey report recently published by Wycombe District Council, and attended a public meeting to present the report held during Environment Week.

DROUGHT! We are used to hearing of drought in Africa and other parts of the world. Now France, Spain and Italy are suffering drought conditions, but we never thought it would be the same here, with parts of our own town being affected by hose-pipe bans so early in the season.

Our own Pann Mill reflects the effects of hot summers and four successive winters when rain-bearing clouds from the Atlantic have tended to bypass this area. It took five years to restore the water-wheel, and then:

O 1990: blocks were lowered to build up a head of water and the wheel turned nine times a minute – ideal to drive the millstones when in position.

O 1991: blocks were lowered, but after 15 hours, the water level had no chance of turning the big water wheel.

O 1992 (May): On Environment Week open day, the inside looked more like a working mill, but the water level was so low that there was no chance at all of building up a head sufficient to drive the wheel.

Ducklings swim in the river outside the District Council offices by Abbey Way, but as they grow up they will be walking in the water like their parents, not swimming, for the river is so shallow.

The National Rivers Authority (NRA) Thames Region are not unmindful of the serious low-flow condition of some of their rivers and are looking at possible solutions. One seriously affected river is the Misbourne through Amersham. To the NRA, the Wye is not at the moment a low-flow problem river. The others must really be bad!

On 18 May, a large audience attended a presentation of the River Wye Survey, a project undertaken by the Leisure and Planning & Development Departments of Wycombe District Council last winter. Two main themes of the survey were the problem of low flow, and issues and opportunities relating to recreation and nature conservation in the river environment.

Number one priority is clearly to establish a reasonable water flow, and recommendations are that:

O The District Council seeks the initiation of detailed studies of the River Wye and the Hughenden Stream by the NRA as a matter of urgency with a view to improving the level of flow.

O There should be a public awareness campaign to draw attention to the fact that water is now a scarce resource, and measures should be taken actively taken to save water.

Recommendations for recreation and nature conservation include upgrading both the linear route footpaths from the Rye to the Thames, and several circular routes; and specific sites to be managed for nature conservation purposes. Included in the survey are proposals to improve the physical condition of the river, the bank and river corridor up to fifty metres.

Questions at the meeting mainly concerned low flow. We were told that local abstraction by the water companies has remained constant for over fourteen years and is not regarded as a major cause. Possible strategies being considered by the NRA to increase the flow of available water include diverting water from the River Severn and making better use of canals in moving surplus water to areas in need. The best and cheapest solution is heavy winter rainfall, but this cannot be relied upon!

The Survey, available to the public in June, may be regarded as an important milestone in the history of the river. Every inch of the river has for the first time been studied and presented in admirable style with a detailed map from the source to the River Thames. It deserves to be read by all who care for the river valley.

The Society will certainly wish to play a positive role in helping WDC improve the river and its environment. However, it should be remembered that the Society has nearly 400 members with many different opinions. For instance, will they all support the recommendation that an 'amenity area' should be created around the waterfall at the end of the Dyke? Or again, would they all agree that, on the Rye, trees should be planted in groups along the bank to partially enclose the river corridor? What do you think? The Council would be very interested to hear your views, and so would the Society.

Finally, the Society wishes to thank the District Council for its public commitment to improve the river, and congratulate those concerned on producing such a superb report.

The Waterfall.

This 18th Century waterfall is a great delight to young and old. To stand and paddle at its foot, and to feel and hear the falling water is a very agreeable experience. The waterfall was derelict a few years ago but the old Borough Council restored it to its original shape of three cascades and two pools. Notice the 18th Century grotto nearby made from flints, and now in need of restoration. The fall of the water aerates the steam below and is of benefit to the water creatures which live there.



'The Waterfall' from Jack Scruton's Water Trail (25p from Tourist Information Centre).

Should there be an amenity area here? See Peter Hazzard's article on the River Wye Survey.



ENVIRONMENT WEEK 1992

This year, our Environment Week activities on Sunday 17 May were blessed with fine sunny weather, ideal for a walk round the town centre conservation area or the Rye, followed by tea at Pann Mill and a look at the garden and the progress being made in restoring the mill machinery. Thanks to all who guided the walks and provided a delicious tea for a very pleasant Sunday afternoon.

NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr & Mrs D Searle, Combe Rise, Sands

Mr & Mrs C F Abbott, Bowden Lane

Mr R Moorfield, Lowdon Close, Keep Hill

Mrs A Fuller, Desborough Avenue

We look forward to meeting our new members at the next Quarterly Meeting.
Please introduce yourself!

SOME AIMS OF THE SOCIETY

- To defend the surrounding countryside.
- To oppose the loss of open spaces and playing fields.
- To encourage a good standard of housing in the right places.
- To protect historic buildings, ancient monuments and conservation areas.
- To protect woodlands and help to improve them.
- To work for the deculverting and upgrading of our waterways.
- To restore Pann Mill.
- To oppose urban motorways and work for an integrated transport policy.
- To foster an interest in local history and archaeology.
- To encourage children in environmental education.
- To help local residents' associations and individuals troubled by planning applications.

Jack Scruton

AGM 1992

The Society's 1992 Annual General Meeting was held on 16 April in the Reggie Goves Centre with about 50 members being present. The Chairman, Roger Lawson, referred to the death of Jack Scruton and his posthumous MBE. As one of the Society's founders and leading figures for many years, he would be greatly missed. He then called on the Secretary, John Gore, to report on the year's activities (copies of the report are available to members on request to the Secretary and the supply of a stamped addressed envelope), and on the Treasurer, Nick Giles, for his financial report to the end of the 1991/92 financial year. He reported a closing balance of £1218=93 compared with an opening balance of £291=44. The year's income had included a generous gift of £1000. Nick Giles then explained the need to increase annual subscriptions for the first time in three years. The resolution to implement this increase was adopted by those present. The new rates are as follows:

Individual membership £4=50; Family membership £6=00; Retirement pensioner £2=00(unchanged);

Individual life membership £35=00; Affiliated societies £5 for first 50 members or part thereof, plus £2 for each subsequent 50 up to a maximum of £15.

Following a request made at the 1991AGM the Executive Committee proposed a resolution to amend the wording of the aims and objectives of the Society. The wording as set out in Newsletter No 83 Spring 1992 was agreed by the meeting.

In the subsequent elections, the following were elected:

President: Mr L J Mayes;

Vice-Presidents: Miss Marjorie Nash and Mrs Kathleen Peatey;

Chairman: Mr Roger Lawson (528047);

Vice-Chairman: Mrs Evelyn Roe (532575);

Honorary Secretary: Mr John Gore (526671);

Honorary Treasurer: Mr Nick Giles;

Executive Committee: Mrs Pauline Cauvain

(529224); Mr Ian Guy (716997); Mr Peter

Hazzard (447949); Miss Marilyn Isherwood

(436805); Mrs Myra King (523968) (Pann

Mill); Mr Phil Robins (451996); Mrs Olive

Scruton (525933); Mr Ron Sims (440800)

(Minutes Secretary); Mr Ian Stone (533605);

Mrs Noreen Talbot (534882); and Mrs Annie

Woodward (527978) (Membership Secretary).

Mr Philip Crouch (523852) was coopted after the AGM to complete the Committee.



THE RYE: PLAYING FIELD OR OPEN SPACE?

Derek Woods, one time Secretary of the former Rye Protection Society, writes:

At the recent AGM, someone asked the question "Is the Rye classified as a playing field or an open space?" Since the meeting, I have received authoritative advice to the effect that **no**, repeat **no**, change has been made to the designation of the Rye, which remains an open space.

The Rye, High Wycombe

(from the letterhead of the Rye Protection Society)

There is a subtle difference between the two terms: *playing field* implies land to be used solely for the playing of games, whereas *open space* like a common may be more generally used for recreation apart from and in addition to sporting activities. Stronger legal protection has been accorded to open spaces in planning matters in the past, although in the more recent past this has been less apparent.

THE FUTURE OF WYCOMBE MUSEUM

'Museum and Garden'! The handsome new cast-iron finger signs in the town-centre conservation area point the way to Wycombe Local History and Chair Museum at Castle Hill. This restrained publicity is just one method of increasing the public's awareness of a valuable asset in High Wycombe's heritage. After the AGM on 16 April, Philip Crouch, newly-appointed Museum Officer, gave an enthusiastic account of Wycombe District Council's plans to develop the museum's usefulness and attractiveness to the public. Plans include: increasing educational

facilities for schools; providing displays to appeal to all age ranges; making use of the whole site, not just the buildings, but the historic mound and pleasant grounds as well; rearranging exhibits into themes etc. We can also expect to see more special exhibitions organised by the museum in the Guildhall during the summer months. Philip confidently expects to double the museum's annual attendance of around 7000. Perhaps it is time we all paid a visit there to see what changes have taken place and in the process help him to achieve his ambition?



Wycombe Local History and Chair Museum
Priory Avenue, High Wycombe

You are warmly invited to a

COFFEE MORNING

*at the Chair Museum, Priory Avenue
on Saturday 18 July 1992*

10.30am - 12midday

Admission 75p each

with Bring and Buy stall

Come and bring your friends

RECOLLECTIONS OF OLD HIGH WYCOMBE

by Lucie Elmidoro

Lucie Elmidoro is a native of High Wycombe and has many memories of the town in earlier times. We are grateful to her for these recollections, and hope she will tell us more in a later issue of the Newsletter. She has been a member of the High Wycombe Society for many years.

Bonays, the double-glazing firm in Frogmoor, now occupy my grandfather's old house. He was George Worley, and came to the town from Chalfont St Giles to learn chair-making. He eventually had his own chair factory.

He was a fit and energetic man, and became a volunteer fireman. We have a silver medal he won at a contest in Maidenhead for being the fastest man to roll out the hose-pipe.

He owned a cart and horses, and, as stables were in short supply and there was no back entrance to the house, the horses were led through the parlour to the stables at the bottom of the garden.

In those days, round about 1900, chairs were transported by horse and cart, mostly to the big London stores. At the chair factory the chairs were skilfully wrapped in plaited straw and paper to protect their highly-polished surfaces. They were usually collected in the late afternoon and evening and carefully packed onto the cart.

The carters set off one behind the other for London. They met up at inns along the way – the French Horn at Gerrards Cross being

a favourite. When my father, also named George, was ten years old, it was his job to accompany his older brothers, with a trace horse, to pull the heavy load up White Hill to Holtspur. He then rode the horse home.

The loaded cart went on its way to London, with the driver sitting on the shafts, while the horse plodded through the night, to arrive at the stores in the morning.

It was a hard life for the driver, especially in severe weather, and sometimes they were way-laid and robbed.

One night, when my father was old enough to take the load all the way to London, the horse was jogging along the road on a particularly dark night, when it suddenly shuddered to a halt and refused to move. My father went to see what had upset it and found a travelling showman and his large brown bear asleep on the grass verge. He had to lead the terrified horse past them.

When my grandparents died, my aunt and uncle lived in the house and it became a grocery store. I spent many happy hours there in the old house with my cousins, and still regard it with affection when I pass by.



TOWN CENTRE FORUM

by Pauline Cauvain

It was my pleasure to accept an invitation to attend meetings of the Town Centre Forum at the District Council Offices to represent the High Wycombe Society Heritage Group.

The Forum consists of officials of the District and County Councils (people attending from these two groups vary according to the subject being discussed), together with representatives of District Councillors elected for the old Borough of High Wycombe (Charter Trustees) and of various groups whose interest lies within the town, such as the retail trade, commerce, market traders, licensed victuallers, the police, the disabled, elderly and youth, plus, of course, the Heritage Group.

The area covered is the town centre from Easton Street to roughly the end of the carpark in Oxford Road, taking in the museum, but excluding Priory Road.

The aim of the meetings is to discuss proposals for the improvement of the town centre, such as landscaping, and how the town can be promoted. It involves looking at the amenities the town has and how they can be improved; what we have to offer in the way of shops; and how we can bring

more people to High Wycombe. We are looking at the proposal for the closure of Pauls Row and the High Street to traffic, how it can be made to work, what better facilities it will offer the pedestrian and, at the same time, how it will benefit and improve access for the disabled and elderly. We are also currently discussing the development options for the western area of the town centre, including the bus station and Oxford Road/Bridge Street carpark, and to what better use the area can be put in the interests of the people of High Wycombe.

Traffic flow within the town also comes within our purview, as does cleaning, lighting and entertainment.

As you can see, a great deal is being done to enhance the town centre, and great care is being taken by the District Council to GET IT RIGHT! Your views and problems are always welcome. Either let me know at 97 Guinions Road, High Wycombe HP13 7NU, or write direct to Mr David Turner, Chairman, Town Centre Forum, District Council Offices, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe HP11 1BB.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

A TALE OF A TREE

I had been trying for some time to get the Council to take action to replace a dead tree outside the High Wycombe Law Courts, facing towards Abbey Way, just by the traffic lights. Also, for several years, there had been an empty space in the paving adjacent to the dead tree, where presumably another tree had once been. At long last, I established that it was a County Council matter, not a District one, and having pursued them, I was delighted when one day they replaced the dead tree and planted another in the empty space next to it. So we now have two new trees, both acers, which have joined the one healthy acer that was already there.

With best wishes.

Yours etc (name and address supplied)

(Congratulations to our member for succeeding in a one-person campaign to improve the environment. Have any other members got similar stories of how to get official wheels turning? Editor)

TOWN CENTRE DIARY

Thanks to Wycombe District Council, improvements are steadily being made to the town centre, some being more apparent than others. The face-lift and the new paving at the rear of the Guildhall are very acceptable changes, apart from the obtrusive metal cabinet which presumably could not easily be shifted. But has anyone noticed the repairs to the Little Market House stonework, which has quietly upgraded its appearance. The new dark-green finger posts are most welcome, too, but low marks for the pedestrian area signs at the entrances to Church Square, unless they are effective in keeping parked cars out of the square.

On a darker note, it is sad to see how many old-established local retailers are being forced to close down due to a combination of high rents, the prolonged recession and, last but not least, out-of-town shopping centres. The council is doing its bit for the town centre, but the greatest need is for local specialist shops, not just branches of the national chains.

LOCAL BOOKS

JACK SCRUTON 1915-1991: A PIONEER IN CONSERVATION

64pp £3=50

This book is an obvious 'must' for all Society members. Lovingly compiled by Olive Scruton, it consists of tributes to Jack from many, many friends, colleagues and sparring partners representing all aspects of his life, in prose, poetry and drawing. Distribution arrangements are not yet fixed, but copies will be available at Society events and from Olive herself.



A CENTURY AT LORD'S: 100 YEARS OF IRONMONGERY IN A FURNITURE TOWN

Horace Lord 134pp £4=95

This is the story of Isaac Lord's, the Desborough Road ironmonger, founded in 1892 by Isaac Lord and his wife, Elizabeth, without whose enterprise he would not have succeeded. They made their name catering for the requirements of firms and workers in the furniture trade for tools, as well as serving the general public as an ironmonger. Happily, the firm is still in the family and still thriving. Long may it continue.

GREAT MARLOW: PARISH AND PEOPLE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Marten 168pp £5=95

This is an interesting study of the local history of Marlow in the mid-19th century using the 1851 census returns as a starting point. It is well illustrated with maps, photographs, drawings and newspaper cuttings of the period. A corresponding book about High Wycombe would be well received.

(left) Jack and Olive's front door

Drawing by Stuart King from the book

'Jack Scruton 1915-1991: Pioneer in Conservation'.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 16 July 1992 8.00pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

The Work of the National Rivers Authority
Bob Jeffrey, Pollution Prevention Officer,
National Rivers Authority.

Saturday 18 July 1992
10.30am - 12noon
Wycombe Local History &
Chair Museum, Priory Avenue

Coffee Morning with Bring-and-Buy Stall
Entrance 75p. Please bring your friends to enjoy
the delightful museum grounds.

Saturday 5 September 1992
Sunday 6 September 1992
See local press for hours
The Rye

Wycombe Show on the Rye. We will have a stall
in the Conservation Tent. Pann Mill will be open
to visitors on the Sunday 11am - 5pm

Thursday 22 October 1992 8pm
Venue to be announced

We hope to have a speaker from Hetherington
and Seelig, managers of the Wycombe Swan.
See Autumn Newsletter for details.