

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 87

SPRING 1993

OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY! CELEBRATION PLANNED FOR JUNE

The High Wycombe Society was formed in November 1968, but the 25th anniversary will be celebrated in June to take advantage of what we hope will be fine weather. The event is being planned to take place in the attractive grounds of the Wycombe Local History and Chair Museum. See the notice on page 5 for details. Please get your ticket as soon as possible.

1993/94 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership subscriptions for 1993/94 are now due (as from 1 March). Please send yours to the Membership Secretary, Mrs Annie Woodward, as soon as convenient. There is a form on page 7 for you to use when doing so, and subscription rates are given on the reverse side, which is on page 8.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1993 Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 14 April, when there will be reports of the past year's activities and elections for officers and Executive Committee for 1993/94. The agenda is to be found on page 7; please bring it with you to the meeting. There are some vacancies on the Committee, so if you would like to stand for election or can persuade someone you know to stand (a member of the Society, of course) please fill in the form also on page 7. After the AGM business, there will be some refreshments, followed by presentations by the active groups of the Society: Heritage, Pann Mill, Planning and Membership & Publicity. This is by special request. Please come along and give your support.

On other pages: ☐ What future for former Health Centre? P2; ☐ Rye Battle Anniversary/January Quarterly Meeting/Pedestrianisation P3; ☐ Planning P4; ☐ 25th Anniversary P5; ☐ Water Watch P6; ☐ AGM Agenda/Subscription Form P7; ☐ Book reviews/Museum Update P8; ☐ Vic Day P9; ☐ Notices, Membership and Dates P10.



...caring about our town and heritage

Registered Charity No. 257897

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

WHAT FUTURE FOR THE FORMER HEALTH CENTRE?

There was a great flurry among Society members in December when Wycombe District Council published a notice stating its intention to "appropriate" part of The Rye. The part in question was the former Health Centre, the adjacent car park and the access road, which, as the notice stated, are legally part of The Rye open space. The Health Centre closed in 1990 when Wycombe Health Authority moved its operation elsewhere, and the Council has been looking for an alternative use for the building. Use as a creche and nursery for babies and young children is favoured. The Society would support such a public-amenity use, but we have questioned the need for "appropriation", which leads one to think that the land could be sold for non-community purposes at some time in the future.

The Health Centre site was part of a piece of land conveyed to the old High Wycombe Borough Council in 1925 as a public recreation ground. Then, in 1937, the Borough Council decided to build the Health Centre with Government approval,

but it seems that at that time they omitted to formally appropriate the land for the purpose. WDC says that it is now legally necessary to formalise the appropriation. The Council has assured us that there is no proposal for building on any part of The

Part of The Rye to be "appropriated"

Rye and there will be no loss of access to The Rye by members of the public. We feel sure that the present Council fully intends to keep the Health Centre site for public amenity use, but as a safeguard against possible retrogressive action, we have suggested that covenants should be drawn up to ensure continued community use.

A proposal has been made for forming a 'Friends of The Rye' group within the Society. If you are interested please contact Evelyn or Roy Roe 0494 532575



The Rye and the Dyke

Drawing by the late Jim Cottrell

from Newsletter No 26 Autumn 1975

FLASHBACK

RYE BATTLE ANNIVERSARY

A significant event in High Wycombe's history passed without notice last December. It was 350 years ago on 6 December 1642 that the Battle of the Rye took place. To quote from the Society's booklet about the Rye, now out of print:

"Cromwell found a strong following in Wycombe when the Civil War broke out, and the town became one of the headquarters of the Parliamentary army, and a place of rendezvous for the County militia. In 1642 an attempt to surprise the town by Lord Wentworth's Royalist troops led to a sharp skirmish on the

Rye. Captain Hayes, with 4000 pikemen, defended the town. After several hours of fighting, Lord Wentworth retired wounded, having lost 900 of his men; the loss to the Roundheads was about 300."

Thankfully, in this country, in contrast to some other parts of the world, we have learned to settle our political differences more peacefully than our forefathers did in the 17th century. However, the Rye still needs its vigilant defenders!

JANUARY QUARTERLY MEETING

THE WOODLAND TRUST

Woodland Trust member Jim Panton came all the way from Somerset to speak at the Society's January meeting – that's dedication for you!

Jim is a volunteer speaker for the Trust, which began in 1972 with the purchase of the Avon Valley Woods. The aims of the Trust are to conserve, restore and re-establish trees and wildlife, although the Trust is certainly not against the use of timber. Demand for timber, however, has fallen dramatically in the past forty years, with, for example, many chairs being made from metal, and virtually no demand for firewood. Shockingly, almost half of Britain's ancient woodland has disappeared in the last fifty years, so the nation owes a great debt to the Woodland Trust, as it has rescued and reinstated many thousands of acres for us to enjoy.

Jim explained that woodlands must be properly managed, with pathways maintained, and trees in a potentially dangerous condition dealt with. Much of this work is carried out by professional contractors, thus the Trust creates work, though there are many volunteers.

The Trust has plans for the future, which involve the planting of small forests around each major town. Cambridgeshire, for example, is very short of woodland, and it is hoped to create small areas there.

Jim illustrated his talk with several slides, and answered questions from the floor. A vote of thanks was given by Barbara Rippington.

The Woodland Trust may be contacted at Autumn Park, Grantham, Lincs., NG31 6LL.

Denise Lindsay

TRANSPORT

HIGH STREET PEDESTRIANISATION

The Saturday pedestrianisation experiment in the High Street started in January. We hope it will prove to be a success so that it can be continued and extended. It seems that a few motorists are not respecting the pedestrian area. Perhaps the signs are not clear enough; perhaps confining pedestrianisation to one day per week is confusing to motorists who drive in the High Street on other days. Enforcement needs to be tightened or there could be accidents.

The new no-right-turn instruction at the lower

High Street end of Corporation Street, which is an essential part of pedestrianisation, is not popular, especially with taxi drivers. Our Transport Group has put forward the suggestion that Queen Victoria Road should be made two-way. Primarily, this is to equalise the amount of traffic arriving at the mini-roundabouts at the bottom of Marlow Hill and thereby reduce holdups, but this measure would also enable taxi drivers to reach Abbey Way relief road and leave the town centre more quickly.

PLANNING

WYCOMBE MARSH PAPER MILLS

Everyone regrets the threatened demise of yet another large High Wycombe employer, Wycombe Marsh Paper Mills, and mixed feelings have been reported about the possibility of the site being used for a Sainsbury's supermarket. As yet, no firm proposals have been made. The mill has been used for industry for hundreds of years, and it is scheduled on the Local Plan as an employment area. This is the best use for it: people need jobs and the country needs a manufacturing base. A supermarket is probably the last type of development the town needs. A new supermarket on this site would spell disaster for nearby small shopkeepers, and the traffic problems would be horrendous in what is already a traffic black spot. Widening of the London Road to cope with traffic would be an environmental disaster. We hope the District Council will

manage to deter Sainsbury's from locating there. We think a better use for the site, if no industrial use is forthcoming, would be for housing and leisure, with improvements to the river to the fore. Housing in the already built-up area would reduce pressure on the Green Belt and minimise the number of car journeys to work, school and the shops.

Our Transport Group is looking into ways of reducing car usage, including cutting the number of journeys people make to the supermarket, by making delivery of shopping to the home by the retailer a more attractive proposition. Faxing or phoning the order from home, and letting the firm deliver, is a much more environmentally sound way of organising essential shopping, and it is already being done in some countries. Watch this space!

NEW FOOTBALL CLUB TRAINING PITCH APPROVED

Sands residents were dismayed when Wycombe District Council Planning and Development Committee approved Wycombe Wanderers' Football Club's latest application to build a synthetic training pitch and an extra 224 car parking spaces at their Adams Park ground. The only difference between this and the previous application, which had been rejected, was that the height of the pitch above the valley bottom and the height of the floodlights had been reduced by a few metres.

**.. a dangerous precedent...
must not be used for further
Green Belt development**

Our Transport Group also objected on traffic grounds, and in this they were in agreement with the local police. Providing extra parking will only encourage more supporters to drive to the ground and cause more congestion and disturbance to local residents. This is also against the spirit of Government advice on land-use planning (PPG12). Out-of-town developments which create more car journeys are to be frowned upon.

We joined other local societies in asking the Department of the Environment to hold a public inquiry into the application, but they declined and left the decision to the District Council. This is surprising in view of the departures from the conditions set by the Inspector in 1988 when the football club won the appeal to allow them to build the Adams Park stadium in the first place. This approval sets a dangerous precedent, which must not be used to justify further similar developments in the Green Belt.

The Society objected to the application on the grounds that it was an inappropriate development in the Green Belt and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In this we were following Government planning advice on sport and recreation in the Green Belt (PPG17 para 50), which WDC chose to ignore.

FORTHCOMING PUBLIC INQUIRIES

Apart from the public inquiry into the future of the old Lady Verney High School site in Benjamin Road scheduled for 11 May 1993, which we have already announced, there are also to be public inquiries into the new District Local Plan, starting on 15 June, and into the applicat-

ion by Bucks County Council and S Grundon (Waste) Ltd to extend the waste disposal complex at High Heavens Wood, Booker. This last inquiry is due to start on 24 August 1993. Members' support at these inquiries would be appreciated.

High Wycombe Society



25 years



The Society is celebrating its 25th Anniversary on Saturday June 12th 1993.

Members, old and new, will be gathering at the Wycombe Local History and Chair Museum for an unforgettable evening.

We, the High Wycombe Society members, will be preparing the food and providing the entertainments!

A member of the Publicity Group will contact you, to ask how you could help in the preparations. They have been working hard to plan an exciting evening, and are looking forward to welcoming you and your friends.

Tickets, price £10.00 will be available at the Annual General Meeting on April 14th, or from Ron Sims, Wordsworth Road, High Wycombe HP11 2UT Telephone 440800

WATER WATCH

RIVER WYE RECOVERS

A welcome sight to brighten up this wet weather – ducks swimming instead of paddling, and a solitary heron, fishing, knee-deep in the Wye beside the Rye.

1992 was the year of great concern over the 'low flow' of the Wye and the 'no flow' Hughenden Stream. Three dry winters and two scorching summers led in 1992 to water shortage in the area and plans to encourage reduced water demand and for increasing supply long term by pipeline from the wet North West.

...ducks swimming instead of paddling...

Come September, the rain started, and it continued until well past Christmas, so much so that unfamiliar ponds appeared on the Rye and lasted for weeks; a welcome novelty for the regular ducks and gulls, and, of course, for children and dogs. It was therefore ironical that on Wycombe Show Sunday in early September the Pann Mill waterwheel failed to turn through lack of water, whilst a week later and every day since, water has been there in abundance!

RIVER WYE STUDY

Wycombe District Council's River Wye Study was published in 1992, and recommendations are beginning to be actioned; for example, a copse, which includes alders, shrub willows and the wayfaring tree, has been planted at Bowden Lane to attract wild life.

The planting took place in National Tree Week in December, a result of cooperation between WDC, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BCTV), and the land owner, Thames Water. More improvements can be expected in this potentially attractive area near the Backstream (Wycombe Marsh Brook) with its natural, bubbling springs.

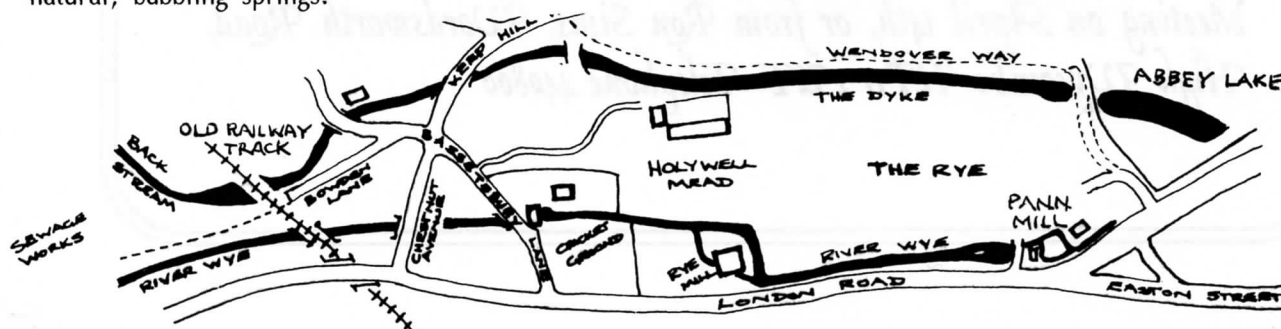
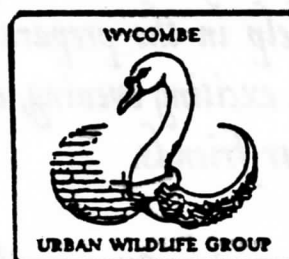


SWANS

The dreary winter has been lightened by daily appearances on the Dyke of a pair of swans; the cob, ringed DTC, and his mate. Over the fence is the Abbey Lake pair, the cob named Firelighter and his mate, Ru. Firelighter was so named after being rescued covered in oil. Swan Lifeline introduced them to the lakeside site several years back.

The Lancaster Art Centre at Wycombe Abbey School proved to be a delightful setting for a talk in December by Tim Heron on the work of the charity. Tim (0753 575894) is Swan Lifeline's Chairman and Rescue Coordinator. The meeting was arranged by Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group, Chairman Pat Morris (0494 529484). Swan Lifeline is committed to high standards of rescue and treatment with the aim of releasing swans back to their natural habitat. Thanks to Eton College, a Swan Treatment Centre is being established at Cuckoo Weir, Eton.

Peter Hazzard



AGENDA FOR THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY TO BE HELD ON THURSDAY 14 APRIL 1993 AT 7.45PM AT THE REGGIE GOVES CENTRE, PAULS ROW, HIGH WYCOMBE

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16 April 1992
- 3 Matters arising
- 4 Honorary Secretary's Report
- 5 Honorary Treasurer's Report
- 6 1993/94 Subscriptions
- 7 Election of President and Vice-Presidents
- 8 Election of Executive Committee: (a) Chairman (b) Vice-Chairman (c) Honorary Secretary (d) Honorary Treasurer (e) Members of Committee
- 9 Election of Auditors
- 10 Any other business

After a break for refreshments, there will be a series of presentations by the various active groups of the Society; Heritage, Pann Mill, Planning, Transport, and Membership & Publicity. This is in response to a request from members seeking information about the groups' activities. There will ample opportunity to ask questions.

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

NOMINATIONS FOR 1993 AGM

I hereby 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: _____

HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY SUBSCRIPTION FORM

To: Mrs A Woodward, Membership Secretary, High Wycombe Society
20 Coningsby Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 5NX

Please find enclosed my/our subscription/for renewal/for new membership/please note change of address. (Please delete as necessary.)

Name: (Mr/Mrs/Miss) _____ Initials: _____ (Block letters, please)

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Tel: _____

I/we enclose payment of £ _____ for individual/family/retirement pensioner/organisation
membership for 1992-93/1993-94 or life membership
(please delete as required)

For subscription rates etc, please see overleaf

LOCAL BOOKS

HIGH WYCOMBE IN OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

collected by **Ronald Goodearl**

160pp £7=99 Alan Sutton Publishing

High Wycombe has been fortunate in having had a succession of photographers to record its unfolding history and architectural development over the past 100 years: Joseph Stone, J P Sturley, Edward Sweetland, and probably the best known of all for his series in the Bucks Free Press – Ronald Goodearl. Ronald has assembled this new collection of his own and his predecessors' black-and-white prints: some familiar, many not seen before, all very nostalgic and well worth looking at, bringing regrets that our planners in the 1950s and 1960s had so little respect for our heritage.

CHILTERN IMAGES

Susan Read and David Empringham

184pp £16=99 Alan Sutton Publishing

A book for those who love the Chilterns. The 'images' of the title include old sepia and new colour photographs, reproductions of old prints, and prose. The prose comprises extracts from the writings of many authors who, over the centuries, lived, worked or travelled in the Chilterns and in that part of the Thames Valley which skirts its southern boundary. High Wycombe and district are well represented.

William Camden, writing in 'Britannia' in 1586, referred to High Wickham as: *"This town, for largeness and beauty, compares with the best in the country, and is justly preferred to most of the rest."* Good for him!

Daniel Defoe, of 'Robinson Crusoe' fame, wrote of the town having many corn and paper mills, and 'one of the greatest corn markets on this side of England'. Later authors refer to other Wycombe industries and fine buildings. Altogether this is a fine book for dipping into for interesting tidbits and anecdotes adding colour to our local history.

John Gore

MUSEUM UPDATE

Frequent visits to the Wycombe Local History & Chair Museum will be necessary to keep up with the changes that are planned for 1993. The majority of the displays are being updated, and half the upstairs space is being devoted to special exhibitions. Some time this year it is planned to open a coffee shop with a display on the history of Castle Hill House. On 18/19 March there will be a Craft Fair with over 40 stalls in the grounds of Castle Hill, and there will be demonstrations of lacemaking and the pole lathe.

From Wycombe Local History & Chair Museum Newsletter Winter 1992/93

MINIMUM ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES, as from April 1992

Individual: £4=50; **Family:** £6=00; **Retirement pensioner:** £2=00; **Individual Life:** £35=00

Affiliated Societies: £5=00 for first 50 members or part thereof; £2=00 for each subsequent 50, up to a maximum of £15=00 per annum.

Subscriptions are due on 1 March of each year (except for life members, of course). However, new members who joined the Society after August 1992 need not renew their subscriptions until 1 March 1994.

It would be helpful if you would pay by banker's order and/or by covenanting your subscription. If so, please tick the appropriate box(es), and forms will be sent to you. Thank you.
Banker's order ☐ Covenanting subscription ☐

SOCIETY SUBSCRIPTION FORM OVERLEAF

1993: HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY'S 25TH BIRTHDAY YEAR

OBITUARY

VIC DAY

I am sad to write of the recent death of Vic Day, after a short illness.

My acquaintance with Vic goes back to an Autumn evening in 1975 when he and his wife June turned up at Lacey Green Windmill to show their Australian relations the "local curiosity". He promised to return to help, and he did, for the next seventeen years. He made a tremendous commitment to that project, and was active in all the stages of restoration, from re-building the walls, raising the cap, making and fixing the sails, to the grand first grinding of flour. But behind all the glamorous 'heave-ho' parts, there were dozens of intricate little details completed by Vic with his initiative, skill and enthusiasm. He was always up the sails when the canvases were set on.

Later, when the High Wycombe Society really got started on the Pann Mill restoration, Vic was there helping and advising Brian, Myra and Ian on setting up the machinery.

Vic was very public spirited and conscientious; his home parish of Hazlemere benefited from jobs like repairing seats, clearing footpaths. as well as being 'postman' for the Chiltern Society and High Wycombe Society newsletters.

Among his many talents, Vic was a successful vintner, winning lots of prizes for his wine; many a mill committee meeting was lightened with a glass of Day's "best vintage sparkling"!

Earlier in his more dashing days, he was a motorbike enthusiast and trials rider, though he

never mentioned whether June was on the pillion or not!

Vic was Wycombe born and bred. He used to describe life as it was, in the old 'proper' Wycombe, and the family holidays on Temple Island at Marlow. Since those days, he and June have had wonderful holidays all over the British Isles.

As far as I know, he always worked for the Electricity Board in Wycombe, and the town must be well embellished with his work, both professional and voluntary. Those who worked with him during the week, and volunteered with him at weekends, will not forget this agile, wiry, hard-working, unflappable little man of such incredibly easy temperament.

Vic often joked about his exceptional survival as a wireless operator in the RAF throughout the Second World War; most of them didn't! But we are grateful for having enjoyed Vic's company for so long. Our heartfelt sympathy goes to June and to his daughter, Alison.

Christopher Wallis

We are grateful to Chris Wallis for paying this tribute to Vic Day. We must also record Vic and June's loyal support of other Society activities in addition to Pann Mill restoration. He rarely missed a Quarterly Meeting, and was an active and long-standing member of the Heritage Group as well. Editor.

HONOUR FOR DIRECTOR OF CIVIC TRUST

Martin Bradshaw, Director of the Civic Trust, our "umbrella" organisation, has been elected President of the Royal Town Planning Institute for 1993. The Institute is the professional organisation for 17,000 town planners. Martin wants to use his year to foster the idea that "All planners are in the business of making places better." A particular concern of his is the relationship between land use and transport planning. "We have reached the situation where the scale of congestion and the inability to get decent public transport has become so intractable that hard decisions will have to be taken," he says. He believes that land use changes must be planned in a way that ensures new developments

can access the public transport system. He believes the stress needs to be put on reviving the bigger towns and making them more attractive places for people to live in: "We have to stop the drift to the haven of the countryside." This would not only relieve development pressures on the countryside, but would also help to sustain public transport networks in towns and cities. He also wants planners to work to alleviate the major environmental problem which pollution (from vehicle emissions) causes.

The presidency is not only a great personal achievement for Martin, but also an honour for the Civic Trust. (*Condensed from 'Urban Focus' the Journal of the Civic Trust, Winter 1992/93.*)

NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr R V J Barraclough, Plomer Hill, Downley
Mr M Griffin, Bassetsbury Lane
Miss J Massey, The Pastures, Downley
Mr & Mrs C Rodgers, Bowden Lane

We look forward to meeting our new members at the next Quarterly Meeting.

OBITUARY

We very much regret to record the deaths of the following members, and we extend our sympathy to their families and friends.

Mr V S Day, Mary's Mead, Hazlemere
(see also page 9)
Mrs Ives, Primrose Hill, Widmer End
Mr J Wiffen, St John's Road, Penn

FRIENDS OF THE CIVIC TRUST

The Civic Trust, with which our Society is registered, is considering introducing a new *Friends of the Civic Trust* scheme to strengthen its influence. Formed in 1957 by Lord Duncan-Sandys, it supports conservation projects and encourages high standards of architecture throughout the UK, as well as providing support for almost 1000 local societies like our own. If all of the 250,000 members of these local societies joined the Trust as a 'Friend', it would become a formidable force for good. We hope to bring you more news in our next issue.

COMMUNITY ART

In our last issue, we asked if there were any suggestions for a statue in the town centre. The one and only response was in favour of Hannah Ball, the statue to be placed in Frogmoor. Any more suggestions?

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 14 April 1993 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row
(Please note earlier time.)

Annual General Meeting with presentations by various groups of the Society

Saturday 15 May - Saturday 13 June

Wycombe Arts Festival

Wednesday 19 May 8pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

Transport into the Future

Saturday 22 May -
Monday 31 May 1993
Sunday 30 May 1993 1.00-5.00pm
Pann Mill, The Rye

BT Environment Week

Pann Mill Open Day
Craft Stalls. Refreshments available.

All Saints Parish Church 2.15pm

Town Trail around the Town Centre Conservation Area, finishing at Pann Mill at 4pm approx for refreshments

Pann Mill 2.15pm

Water Trail around The Rye finishing at Pann Mill at 4pm approx for refreshments.

Saturday 12 June 1993 7-10pm
Wycombe Local History & Chair
Museum, Castle Hill

Society's 25th Anniversary Celebration
See page for details. Make sure you get your ticket in good time!

Thursday 8 July 1993 8pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

Architecture Anthony Monk

Saturday 18 September 1993
8am - 12noon Lt Market House

Charity Market Stall

Thursday 14 October 1993 8pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Quarterly Meeting