

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 88

SUMMER 1993

YOUR SUMMER PROGRAMME

Please get out your diary and make a note of all of this summer's Society activities set out on the back page of this Newsletter. There is something for everyone!

*** JULY QUARTERLY MEETING**

Not to be missed is the illustrated lecture by Anthony Monk, a chartered architect from Windsor, who will be speaking on *Modern Buildings in Historic Towns* in the Reggie Goves Centre on Thursday 8 July at 8pm. Mr Monk is an experienced architectural practitioner, founder of HLM Architects and an assessor of the quality of architectural designs. He has received awards and commendations for a number of schemes including Paisley and Colchester Civic Centres, and he has lectured on behalf of the Civic Trust on urban conservation for several years.

*** COACH OUTING TO STOWE LANDSCAPE GARDENS**

This is the first coach outing we have organised for several years. Please join our party and help to make it a success. It is on Saturday 17 July starting from the town centre at 10 and returning about 5 to 5.30. Stowe is well worth a visit: the National Trust has been undertaking much restoration work on the many monuments, temples and other features in the extensive grounds in recent years. Furthermore, the house should be open on the day of our visit. See page 3 for more details. Ron Sims on 0494 440800 would be please to hear from you as soon as possible if you would like to go to Stowe.

*** COFFEE MORNING**

Another of our popular coffee mornings with bring-and-buy stalls is to be held in the Museum grounds at Castle Hill on Saturday 3 July from 10.30 until noon. Why not take this opportunity to enjoy a cup of coffee with friends and see what changes have taken place inside the museum.

Inside pages: □ Wycombe Sinfonia / Campaign for Liveable Places P2; □ Organised visits: Stowe/West Wycombe Church P3; □ Tom Burt's Hill P4; □ Half-time score: Wycombe Wanderers 'Won' – Sands Residents Nil P5; □ Activities of the Society P6; □ Pann Mill report P7; □ Notices and dates P8.



..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

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

WYCOMBE SINFONIA

Wycombe Sinfonia was formed jointly by Pam Abbott and John Dunnet in 1985 as a local orchestra of classical proportions. Almost all the players live or work in the High Wycombe area. The orchestra rehearses regularly, partly for the enjoyment of playing together and partly to prepare for concerts. After the success of the first Christmas Matinée, it was decided to present an annual Christmas Concert in the afternoon with a programme suited to a family audience. (Watch out for the next one on 5 December 1993.) The orchestra also presents concerts in the summer which include more demanding works and usually feature a professional soloist of national reputation.

Wycombe Sinfonia is privileged to have as its President the pianist Iris Loveridge. Last November, on Bonfire Night, she gave a recital in support of the orchestra in High Wycombe, when fireworks from without reinforced the spirited performance within! This year, the President's Recital will be on the potentially more peaceful date of Saturday 16 October at Wesley Methodist Church in Priory Road.

The orchestra manages a Patrons' scheme through which information on its activities can be circulated more broadly through the community. In return for their support, Patrons automatically receive reserved seats at all concerts with very attractive savings.

The annual informal Concerto Evening provides an opportunity for soloists to rehearse and perform with an orchestra, a facility not very commonly available outside universities and the larger cities. This March, six local soloists played concerto movements with the orchestra.

As its reputation spreads, the orchestra receives requests to play outside its own programme of events. Last year, a performance at the Missenden summer festival was so well received that this year additional performances have been suggested. Smaller ensembles from among the members often have commissions to play at receptions of many kinds in the area. However, these diversions are unlikely to change the orchestra's main engagements in and around High Wycombe town centre.

The next concert by Wycombe Sinfonia will be in High Wycombe Parish Church on 19 June 1993. The programme will include Beethoven's first symphony and the ever-popular Hebrides Overture by Mendelssohn. The cellist, Lionel Handy, makes a second appearance with the orchestra, this time with his sister, Thelma, playing the violin, in Brahms' double concerto.

The orchestra receives financial assistance from Wycombe District Council, and advertising sponsorship from Percy Prior and Rosehill Instruments for the production of its concert programmes.

For more information about Wycombe Sinfonia, please contact John Dunnett on 0494 527135, or, if you are interested in the Patron's scheme, Kate Curry on 0296 681137.

Editor's note: We are glad to publish this report of the activities of one of our 30+ affiliated societies. Contributions from other affiliated societies would be welcome.

CAMPAIGNING FOR LIVEABLE PLACES

The Civic Trust, our umbrella organisation, in association with Grand Metropolitan, has launched a campaign to restore an environment of quality, social wellbeing, economic health and liveability to British towns and cities. For many years, there has been a drift of population away from the inner areas of our towns and cities, resulting in a near permanent battleground over developments on greenfield sites on the outskirts and leaving behind deprived inner areas with poor public transport and community facilities. The growth in private car ownership, once seen

as a symbol of progress, now serves to make the urban congestion and atmospheric pollution problems worse.

The campaign seeks to make urban living infinitely more attractive, to create conditions which encourage decent public transport and better housing, and re-establish community pride, thus easing pressure on the countryside.

The High Wycombe Society gladly endorses this campaign, as in some ways our own town has been adversely affected by population drift.

ORGANISED VISITS

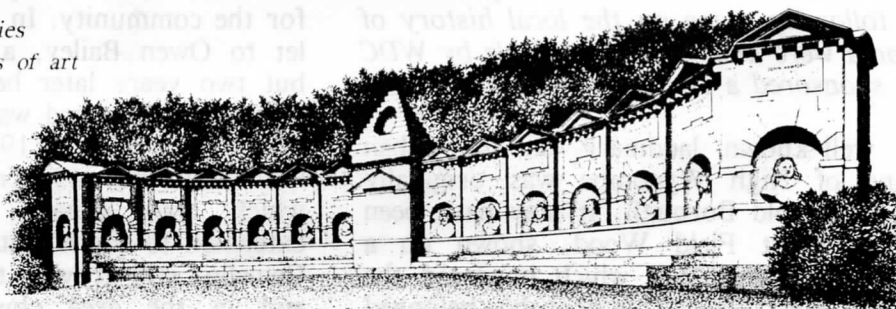
COACH TRIP TO STOWE LANDSCAPE GARDENS

This coach trip, the first organised by the Society for several years, will be run on Saturday 17 July to the Stowe Landscape Gardens, a National Trust property near Buckingham. The coach will pick us up from the stop opposite Tesco's at 10am and bring us back to the same spot between 5 and 5.30pm. To quote from the National Trust booklet:

Stowe is the most important landscape garden in Britain. Throughout the 18th century its owners, the Temple and Grenville families, employed many of the leading architects, landscape gardeners and sculptors to create an idealised classical landscape. Decorated with temples, columns and arches, the Stowe landscape evokes the world of ancient Rome, which the new Augustan age of Georgian England confidently sought to outdo. Initially formal in design, Stowe pioneered the more naturalistic landscape of grassy vistas and informal planting that 'Capability' Brown, head gardener at Stowe from 1741, popularised throughout Britain.

The sheer scale of the garden makes it Britain's largest work of art. The House has been occupied by Stowe School since 1923. As the school will be on holiday on the day of our visit, the House should be open. The State Rooms and Marble Hall may be visited, and the view of the Gardens from the South Portico should not be missed.

*The temple of British Worthies
- one of Stowe's many works of art*



The coach trip will cost £2=50 per person (no concessions). Please contact Ron Sims on 0494 440800 as soon as possible to book your place. Entry to the Gardens will cost £3=50 per person or £9 for a family ticket (payable on entry/free to National Trust members). The House is not National Trust property, so everyone will have to pay £2=00 to enter. Light refreshments and teas are available on site.

WEST WYCOMBE CHURCH

The Heritage Group is arranging a guided tour of St Lawrence's Church, West Wycombe, the church on the hill, with the golden ball. This will take place on Saturday 24 July at 1.30pm, meeting at the church. The church was remodelled by Sir Francis Dashwood, later Lord Le Despencer, in the 18th century, giving it an Italian look, with many interesting features, not least the painting of the Last Supper on the chancel ceiling.

The tour will cost £1 per head or £2 per head including the tower. Queries to Denise Lindsay on 0494 525948.



The Golden Ball at West Wycombe (Drawing from 'Places to visit in Bucks' Bucks County Library)

TOM BURT'S HILL

Steve Crosby, WDC Woodlands Manager with colleagues and a representative of the Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group have met members of the Tom Burt's Hill Action Group and other local residents to agree a plan for managing the woodland, wildflower meadow and formal grassland areas of the Tom Burt's Hill local landscape area. The relatively undisturbed meadowland is rich in wildlife, and its careful management should enhance the amenity value of the district. The Tom Burt's Hill Action Group, which is affiliated to the Society, was formed to fight Wycombe Health Authority plans to build additional staff quarters on the hill. As a result of the public protest which followed, the development is significantly less damaging to the area than that originally proposed, but nevertheless it has a brooding presence which detracts from the openness of the hill and reduces its landscape value. The following notes on the local history of the area were kindly made available by WDC who sponsored a study by Mary Webb.

This well-known landmark on the urban skyline of High Wycombe was originally outside the old Borough. It may have been part of West Field Wood, shown on a survey made in 1763, which bordered the medieval West Field. This probably belonged to Loakes Manor, which became Wycombe Abbey at the time of the Shelburnes' occupation. The Tithe Map of Chepping Wycombe made in 1850 shows the present-day woodland strip as a fir plantation topping pasture fields called Loakes Hill and Tom Burt's Hill. The then Lord Carrington owned the plantation, but Tom Burt's Hill was occupied by Mrs Harriet Crewe, who lived at Loakes House, which was, and still is, situated just to the west of the modern hospital complex. Loakes Hill and the neighbouring Turnpike Field belonged to Daws Hill Farm, which by the early 20th century had been improved to become the home of the Carringtons after Wycombe Abbey was sold to the Girls' Education Company in 1896. The sale prospectus shows the plantation as being the boundary of the estate at that point.

Turnpike Field was named thus in about 1768 when the road to Marlow, now the A404, was improved as part of the Hatfield to Reading Turnpike Trust, reputedly

formed to provide an easy journey for Lord Salisbury from Hatfield to Bath to take the waters there. An even more interesting story lies behind the name of Tom Burt's Hill. In 1724, according to Henry Kingston, who in 1848 wrote a 'History of Wycombe', a labourer called Thomas Burt was grubbing (clearing out tree stumps) in Carey's Grove, perhaps part of the old woodland mentioned above, when he found a large sum of money. He used the money to improve his lot in life and set himself up as a maltster in the High Street. However, this did not solve all his problems and he finally ended his life in 1750 by hanging himself in a barn on Castle hill.

Tom Burt's Hill came into the ownership of the Borough Council in the 1930s after the then mayor, Councillor Brocklehurst, expressed to Lord Carrington his hope that the land should be acquired as an open space for the community. In 1936 the pasture was let to Owen Bailey, a builder and farmer, but two years later he was forced to stop farming as his herd was not accredited. The Council borrowed £1970 from the County Council to buy 19 acres of land, some of which was already earmarked for an extension to the hospital.

Cowslips still grow in the old pasture today, and in the area close to the woodland several species associated with the old woodland, such as sanicle and goldilocks buttercup, can be found.

IN BRIEF

STREET TREE STRATEGY

"Trees keep appearing along our road, but noone ever sees them being put in!"

That seems to be how Wycombe's Street Tree Strategy is being implemented, a little at a time. The aim of the Strategy is to line Wycombe's main thoroughfares with trees. Good progress has already been made in Cressex Road and Desborough Avenue.

This is an admirable policy, which improves the environment by softening the hard edges of the urban landscape as well as helping to absorb some of that excess carbon dioxide produced by our burning of fossil fuels.

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

HALF-TIME SCORE:

WYCOMBE WANDERERS "WON" - SANDS RESIDENTS NIL

Wycombe Wanderers have certainly had a most successful season, winning the 'double': top of the Vauxhall Conference bringing with it promotion to Division Three of the Football League, and also winning the FA Trophy. All this without a training pitch, we might add! However, WWFC's success has filled Sands' residents with foreboding. Here, Dr Stephen Billingham, Chairman of the Sands Residents' Association, which has recently become affiliated to our Society, tells of his members' concerns.

There can be no doubt about it: without the Football Club there would be no Sands Residents Association (SRA) ! The football club touches every resident of Sands in one way or another. It may be the crowds, the traffic, the bad parking, lights from the ground or the bad language from the crowd in Adams Park. Whichever way you look at it, the ground is in the wrong place. It lies at the end of a cul-de-sac on Green Belt land and in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The roads into Sands cannot cope with the traffic, and the nature of the valley means that cars leaving the ground with cold engines belch exhaust fumes into the air which stay in our homes for hours.

The success of Wycombe Wanderers in recent years has only compounded the problem. Just when the club seems to be doing something good for the name of the town, local residents want to criticise the expansion of the club. We do look like a bunch of killjoys!

'Whichever way you look at it, the ground is in the wrong place.'

However, this does not mean that our concerns are unjustified. The history of the football ground at Sands has been one of development one step at a time. The latest is that the club has gained approval from Wycombe District Council to build a training pitch, despite this being against the Council's and the Government's own Green Belt policy. What will they want next? Anyone who read the papers that accompanied the training pitch proposals and then looked at the Council officers' recommendation would think that the ground was in some 'Wonderland' rather than Sands!

We as residents are concerned that the club has a 'game plan' that involves major expansion of the Sands site. The Directors of the club at a

meeting with our Committee did nothing to quell our concerns. The fact that the club is now seeking an amendment to the Local Plan that would take the ground out of the Green Belt only goes to heighten our fears.

'Parking must be spread around the District...'

Having the ground in the Green Belt has its advantages. It must remain difficult for the club to build any further facilities in Sands. There will be pressure in the future to add another access road into the site. This must be resisted as it will open up a far wider area of Green Belt and AONB land for development.

More roads are not the answer to the parking problem. Parking must be taken seriously by the club and the council. Parking must be spread around the District and fans bussed into the ground. A multi-storey car park near the ground would only serve to worsen the traffic.

If Wycombe Wanderers are serious about promotion to the Football League*, then the club and the authorities must start thinking now about a new site for the club. This might sound like heresy, but we must be farsighted or else, when the crunch comes, there will be another planning disaster.

Stephen Billingham

** Editor's note: This article was written before WWFC actually gained promotion to Division 3.*

FRIENDS OF THE RYE

As we go to press, the first meeting of the proposed 'Friends of The Rye' group is due to take place. If you are interested, please contact Evelyn Roe on 0494 532575.

AGM REPORT

ACTIVITIES OF THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman Roger Lawson 0494 528047
Vice-chairman Evelyn Roe 0494 532575
Honorary Secretary John Gore 0494 526671
Honorary Treasurer Nick Giles
Philip Crouch 0494 523852
Ian Guy 0494 716997
Peter Hazzard 0494 447949
Myra King 0494 523968
Olive Scruton 0494 525933
Minutes Secretary Ron Sims 0494 440800
Ian Stone 0494 533605
Annie Woodward 0494 527978

PANN MILL RESTORATION GROUP

Mill restoration and operation
Garden maintenance
Contact Myra King 0494 523968
Ian Stone 0494 533605

HERITAGE GROUP

Local history; Archaeology
Listed buildings; Conservation areas
Contact Denise Lindsay 0494 525948
Pauline Cawain 0494 529224

TRANSPORT GROUP

Traffic problems
Public transport systems
Delivery systems
Contact Elsa Woodward 0494 443590

PLANNING GROUP

Planning applications
Local Plan/Structure Plan
Planning Secretary Vacancy
Contact John Gore 0494 526671

MEMBERSHIP & PUBLICITY GROUP

Programme; Publicity
Membership; Visits
Newsletter
Programme Secretary Barbara Rippington 0494 526616
Membership Secretary Annie Woodward 0494 527978
Newsletter Editor Vacancy

Note: At the AGM on 14 April 1993, the Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer gave their reports for 1992/93 (copies available from Hon Sec if SAE is supplied) and officers and members of the Executive Committee were elected (see above). Then representatives of the various groups of the Society explained their activities as summarised above. All members are invited to make contact with any group they are interested in.

AGM REPORT

SITUATIONS VACANT AT PANN MILL!

Ian Stone summarises the report, which he gave at the AGM, on the activities of the Pann Mill restoration group. Ian can be contacted on 0494 533605.

History

Milling stopped at Pann Mill in 1967 after the site had been acquired to make way for the road which the High Wycombe Borough Council wanted to put across the Rye. The building was demolished in 1971, leaving the water-wheel, part of a wall and some heavy machinery.

The fate of the road is well known, but the damage to the mill was irreversible.

In 1984, Marks and Spencer, as part of their centenary celebrations, financed the present small building to protect the remaining machinery and provide a small area for exhibits.

The wheel was restored about four years ago, and is run on open days. Last year was an exception, when it managed only about one revolution in September due to the water shortage. For millers on the Wye, 1991/92 was a disaster year!

Progress

Some progress has been made during the past year: we now have plenty of water, although we can't claim credit for this!

The remaining Pann Mill machinery has been cleaned and painted. Inside the building we have assembled the Hurst Frame, which is the hub of the mill where grain is converted into flour. Basically, it supports the two sets of stones and houses the driving machinery. Getting the stones onto the top of the frame in the limited space available is another problem!

Help

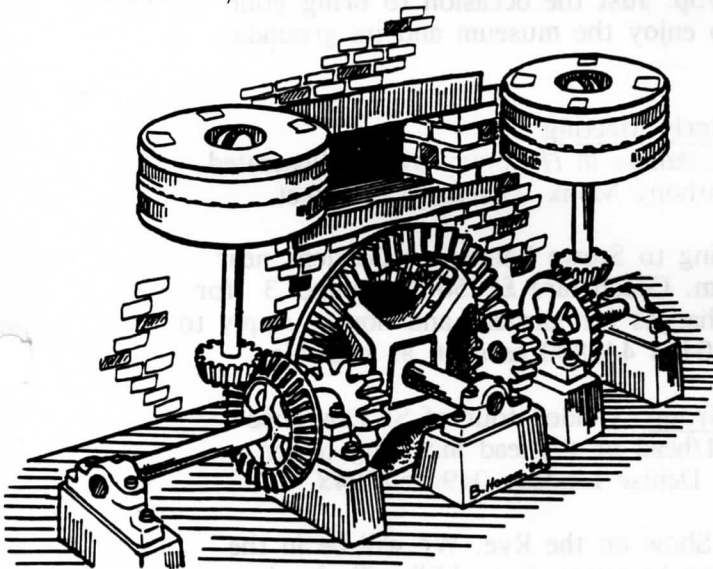
Can you help us to solve some of our problems? The Hurst Frame and the associated bits came from elsewhere, and the trouble is a lot more bits are missing! We need someone with the time and access to machinery to make replica parts.

'...would anyone like to adopt a piece of mill equipment?'

To run the mill, we have to raise the level of the water in the river. This is done at present by bunting up two holes with very heavy 'stop logs'. Four people are needed to handle these, and then it is not exactly a safe operation. We really need proper sluice gates.

Finally, would anyone like to adopt a piece of mill equipment or machinery and refurbish it? We have enough items to suit all tastes!

Ian Stone



Drawing by Brian Honess

The Restoration Team

The current team is led by Myra King, and the members are: Margaret Simmons (our award winning gardener), Peter Hazzard, Owen Rush and myself.

Last year we lost an invaluable member of the team, Vic Day, who died after a short illness. Vic had previously worked on the Lacey Green Windmill project and had considerable experience in mill restoration.

GARDENER EXTRAORDINAIRE!

Congratulations to Margaret Simmons for winning one of this year's Wycombe District Council Environment Awards. She fully deserved this for her magnificent work in tending the Pann Mill garden. You may remember it before she started getting it under control: covered in nettles and rubbish. Now it provides an attractive feature with something of interest to be seen at all times of the year.

NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Dr & Mrs D Mullen of London Road

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Have you paid your 1992/93 subscription yet? The year runs from 1 March 1993 to 28 February 1994. If you are not sure, please get in touch with our Membership Secretary Annie Woodward on HW 527978. Rates are as follows: Individual: £4=50; Family: £6=00; Retirement pensioner: £2=00; Subscriptions should be sent to Annie at 20 Coningsby Road, High Wycombe HP13 5NX.

WYCOMBE ARTS FESTIVAL

The Society's contribution to this year's Arts Festival was a lecture under the general heading 'Transport into the Future' given on 19 May in the Reggie Goves Centre by Adrian Davis, national urban transport representative of Friends of the Earth. He based his illustrated talk on the recent Friends' report 'Less Traffic, Better Towns', warning of the environmental disaster that could occur if the forecast increase in traffic materialises. Other European countries are ahead of us in restraining car usage with first-class public transport systems, thus improving their cities' 'liveability'.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 19 June & Saturday
26 June 10.30am - 1pm
White Hart Street/Pauls Row

Green Transport Week
For information, contact Elsa Woodward
0494 443590

Saturday 3 July 1993
10.30am - 12noon
Wycombe Local History &
Chair Museum, Priory Avenue

Coffee Morning with bring-and-buy stall
Entrance 75p. Just the occasion to bring your
friends to enjoy the museum and its grounds.

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

July Quarterly Meeting
Modern Buildings in Historic Towns Illustrated
talk by Anthony Monk, chartered architect

Saturday 17 July 1993
Coach pick-up opposite Tesco
at 10am; return 5-5.30pm

Coach outing to Stowe Landscape Gardens near
Buckingham. Coach fare £2=50 See page 3 for
entrance charges for gardens and house. Apply to
Ron Sims 0494 440800 as soon as possible.

Saturday 24 July 1993 1.30pm
West Wycombe Church
Meet at the church on the hill.

Heritage Group Guided tour of St Lawrence
Church. £1/head or £2/head including tower
Queries to Denise Lindsay 0494 525948

Saturday/Sunday 4/5 September
See local press for opening hours.

Wycombe Show on the Rye. We will be in the
Conservation Marquee. Pann Mill will also be
open to visitors on the Sunday 11am - 5pm.

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

Charity Market Stall

Thursday 14 October 1993 8pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Quarterly Meeting

Thursday 20 January 1994 8pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Quarterly Meeting

Saturday 4 June 1994
8am - 12noon Lt Market House

Charity Market Stall