



THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 97

AUTUMN 1995

Fight for Holywell Mead goes on

We go to press just before a crucial District Council meeting takes place, so by the time you read this Newsletter a decision may well have been made on the future of the Holywell Mead open-air swimming pool. After the public outcry last winter about the proposal to build a fitness centre and fun pool on the swimming pool site, the Council undertook further public consultation last March, and the results were notified to the Leisure Committee in July.

The public consultation consisted of two parts: a questionnaire which had to be completed and returned, and a street survey conducted in seven centres all over the Wycombe District. The street survey produced an inconclusive result. Of 1552 street interviewees, 38% wanted to keep and renovate the existing pool (Option A), and 33% opted for the fun pool and fitness centre (Option C). For statistical reasons, these were assumed to represent equal support. On the other hand, of

the 870 questionnaires returned, a clear majority of 60% wanted to keep the existing outdoor pool and renovate it (Option A), whilst 16% opted for a fun pool and fitness centre (Option C). However, this decisive result was ignored apparently because 62.8% of the respondents lived in postal districts HP11 and HP13; that is, within a few miles of the pool (also the age profile was higher than that of the District as a
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**LOOK OUT!
THEY'RE AFTER
YOUR JEWEL...**

We reproduce the late Jim Cottrell's cartoon drawn in support of The Rye Protection Society's Hands Off The Rye campaign back in the 1960s. The Rye was once described by the old Borough of High Wycombe as 'The jewel in High Wycombe's crown'.



..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

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Fight for Holywell Mead goes on

whole). So the Committee was told to accept that the public had not given a clear answer. This is amazing logic! Surely, the opinions of people who live in High Wycombe and value The Rye and Holywell Mead and took the trouble to answer the questionnaire should carry some weight, especially as in the street survey 43% had not even heard about the proposals! It really does seem like moving the goalposts when the game isn't going your way!

After debating the issue, the Committee decided that the matter should be decided by the full Council at their meeting on 18 September. The Honorary Secretary wrote to the local press explaining the position to the public and appealing

to local people to send their views to their Ward Councillors. This led to some supportive letters to the Editors. We also distributed leaflets and hope these, too, will have encouraged more letters to Councillors. Meanwhile, a petition calling for the pool to be renovated and maintained as an open air pool with improved facilities was signed by more than 2300 people in less than a week. We can only hope that our Councillors will finally accept the point, made by their predecessors, that The Rye and Holywell Mead is 'the jewel in the crown of High Wycombe', a wonderful asset held in great regard by local people, who cannot conceive that part of it could ever be handed over for commercial profit. □

In brief

Dame Frances Dove plaque

At a ceremony held on 30 June, Councillor James Campbell, Vice-chairman of Wycombe District Council, unveiled a plaque to commemorate Dame Frances Dove, founder in 1896 and first Headmistress of Wycombe Abbey School. The plaque is installed at 24 Priory Avenue, where Dame Frances lived from 1930 until her death in 1942. The house is now a doctors' surgery. Present at the ceremony were Dame Frances' grandniece, Susannah Shucksmith, and her daughter, Sarah. Apart from her academic achievements, Dame Frances became the first woman councillor on the former High Wycombe Borough Council just before the First World War, and was almost the first woman Mayor.

It was The High Wycombe Society which nominated Dame Frances for a plaque when the Council's commemorative plaque scheme was first initiated.

Better bus services

New and improved bus services were introduced on 23 July with more minibuses, although not all areas have not done so well, it seems. This is what we need as part of the Integrated Transport Policy, which aims to ease people out of their cars on to other forms of transport – walking, cycling or public transport – for journeys to work, school and shopping to ease congestion and pollution, especially at peak periods, with major financial, environmental, health and social benefits. However, if the fares are significantly

more than parking costs, then people will stick to their cars. Another important factor is getting the shopping home. Until superstores introduce delivery services, it is so much easier for car owners to use the car just to bring home the heavy shopping. (See Elsie Fowler's apt poem elsewhere in this issue.) The authorities ought to press the superstores to offer delivery services in the interests of sustainable development.

New railings

Have you noticed the new iron railings along the river bank opposite the Wycombe Swan theatre in St Mary Street and by the police station? They certainly enhance the area. It will be seen that the design matches that of the parapet on the Queen Victoria Road bridge, which dates from the early years of the century.

M40 Junction 4 report

The Society's Transport Group has produced a report calling for a rethink of the costly and non-sustainable proposals for dealing with the Handy Cross traffic problems without taking up acres of the Chilterns AONB. The real answer is to reduce the number of vehicles on the road, and ideas are given for achieving this. The report also discusses ways of giving buses priority at the junction by means of special lanes and bridges over the motorway. Copies of the report have been sent to the County and District Councils and to the Department of Transport.

Those parking proposals....

Councillor Frances Alexander, Chair of the Transportation Panel, Wycombe District Council, writes to comment on the items on the parking proposals for High Wycombe in our Summer Newsletter.

Thank you for covering the Parking Proposals for High Wycombe town in the last Newsletter.

Buchanan's, the parking consultants, were most anxious that the first consultation should be seen as an opportunity to alter offending parts of the strategy and to tailor it to the needs of the town. Indeed, the second proposals had done much to take on board the results of the consultation, but Wycombe District Council were not prepared to pass them at a nod, and further revision is being sought. The Transportation Panel members want residents to feel happy that their environment will be improved by these proposals, and we hope that whatever group organises the scheme will be chosen for its ability to make the charge for parking on the highway as cheap as possible.

There is concern that these proposals are premature, but it is a 'chicken-and-egg' situation. Wycombe District Council, together with Bucks County Council, after considerable consultation with the public, chose the Positive Public Transportation Strategy as a means of coping with High Wycombe's traffic problems.

In order for the local bus companies to invest in providing extra buses, they have to be sure that the Councils are serious in their intent to support them by making the conditions right. Already there are plans for bus lanes along the London Road, then along West Wycombe Road, and then elsewhere. All this requires money which the Councils do not have, requiring

Government funding support. This was applied for last year, but refused – part of the reason being that our plans for a cycleway were not far enough forward, and cycleways are essential now if we hope to obtain monies for a town transportation scheme. We sincerely hope that our current application will be looked at favourably.

The stages of the Transportation Strategy, which your Transport Group will know, are as follows:

- 1 To introduce town-centre parking controls.
- 2 To pedestrianise the High Street
- 3 To implement bus priority measures and junction improvements and to enhance bus services
- 4 To implement the bus package with operators
- 5 Possible construction of park-and-ride sites after investigation and consultation
- 6 Consider increasing town-centre parking charges

Many of these measures are in early stages, and we are well aware that attractive alternatives to the car are important. I assure you that we wish to work with such groups as the High Wycombe Society to ensure that we get a town where we are all happy to live because the car has not taken over entirely. Your help in the education element of the strategy is essential.

Frances Alexander

Town centre pedestrianisation

The public have been invited to comment on the County and District Councils' latest proposals for the further pedestrianisation of High Wycombe town centre and for accompanying environmental enhancement. The idea in brief is that the High Street and Church Street between Corporation Street and Castle Street will be closed to traffic (except by permit/emergencies) from 10–6 Mondays to Fridays and from 9–6 on Saturdays. Buses will be routed up and down Corporation Street to Castle Street and beyond to avoid the western end of the High Street at all times. Outside pedestrianisation hours one-way westward-bound-only traffic will be permitted along a suitably narrowed carriageway through

the High Street, Church Street and Queen Square. During these hours loading and unloading and a certain amount of parking will be allowed in the High Street. The taxi rank will be moved to the eastern end of the High Street. The advantages claimed are:

- a more pleasant shopping environment with reduced traffic and fumes;
- more space for pedestrians with easier access to market stalls and shops; and
- enhancement of the conservation area and historic buildings such as the Guildhall and Little Market House.

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Town centre pedestrianisation

As probably the first organisation to suggest a pedestrianisation scheme in the early 1970s, the High Wycombe Society offers warm support for the proposals. Since the current project was first raised in 1991, the heightened concerns about vehicle pollution have provided further powerful arguments in its favour, and not just because of this hot summer's increased ozone levels. The proposed layout seems to make good use of the available space; the single lane one-way traffic flow without buses should mean that the environment will be substantially improved both during and outside pedestrianised hours. At the same time, it appears that there will be convenient arrangements for most users, while

avoiding the pitfall of an undesirable deserted area outside normal business hours. We understand some shopkeepers fear loss of trade, but experience in other towns has been that this is not a problem once pedestrianisation is well established.

We are glad it has proved possible to bring public transport conveniently close to the traffic-free area without the buses running through it. However, one omission in the proposals is a reference to cycling. Government policy now encourages cycling as a means of transport, so provision should be made for secure and convenient cycle parking facilities within the town centre. □

Au revoir, Olive!

We are sorry to have to report that Olive Scruton has left High Wycombe to live at Hythe in Kent. She will be greatly missed for all her ideas, enthusiasm and hard work on behalf of the Society. Olive had supported Jack for many years, but, following his death in 1991, she became more involved, taking on, as it were, Jack's mantle. She joined the Executive Committee and became a very active member of the Membership & Publicity Group. As a founder member of the Friends of The Rye Group, Olive used her tremendous energy to spearhead the 'Save The Rye' campaign last winter which successfully aroused public awareness of the threat to Holywell Mead.

A farewell party was held for Olive in the grounds of Pann Mill in July. She hopes to return to High Wycombe from time to time for Quarterly Meetings. Olive would be pleased to hear from friends: her phone number at Hythe is (01303) 269996.

Ian was spotted by Jack Scruton whilst attending a High Wycombe Society meeting as a representative of the now defunct Downley Community Association. I was myself 'scrutonised' shortly afterwards when attending for the same Association. Thus two new Society members were ensnared by the Great Jack.

Without a doubt, we have good reason to be grateful for Ian's and Diana's contributions to our 'Planning Wars' campaigns, footpath surveys and social events. We hope to keep in touch with the "Shropshire " Stones.

Roger Lawson

"The Rollin' Stones"

In early May, Diana and Ian Stone, together with their daughter, Tracey, departed High Wycombe for new pastures in Shropshire. Our best wishes accompanied them for their very different lifestyle on the Welsh Borders. Regrettably for the Society, we lost the engineering and construction skills of Ian for the Pann Mill machinery restoration, and the culinary skills of Diana, who had been a stalwart provider of Pann Mill teas over the years.

It must have been in the early 1970s when

Shopping

Come, all you Supermarkets,
Listen to our plea.
We're the car-less shoppers,
That means lots of folks like me.

We wonder if you give a thought
Or if you even care,
What it's like to board a bus
With loaded bags, then find
your fare.

We help to keep you trading,
So take our plea to heart,
Deliver heavy shopping,
Come on and make a start.

Elsie B Fowler

Housing in Wycombe District

Many people have understandably been confused by the various figures for the quantities of dwellings expected to be built in Wycombe District, and High Wycombe in particular, over the next fifteen or so years. This article will try to show how the latest figures have been obtained.

Long-term planning originates with Government-inspired Regional Planning Guidance for South-East England. The Government takes the view that in the medium to longer term (say, over the next twenty years) a shift in development activity broadly from the west to the east of London, to what is known as the Thames Gateway, will be necessary. This is in recognition of the growing problems of congestion, overheating and pressure on constrained land to the west of London, including Bucks, coupled with major opportunities for development linked to environmental enhancement to the east.

Buckinghamshire County Council took note of this Government advice in the deposit draft County Structure Plan published in April 1994. A reduced level of growth for the County over the period 2001-2011 was considered appropriate, providing only for enough dwellings to accommodate natural growth. In deciding just where in the County new housing should be located, the County Council took as criteria:

- O the need for close correlation between jobs, community services, shops and schools;
- O reduction of the need for car journeys and of distances driven, or the facility to use more energy-efficient transport modes;
- O protection of the Green Belt and Chilterns AONB, and the avoidance of settlement coalescence;
- O avoidance of noise and pollution; and
- O adequacy of water and sewerage services.

These criteria led them to conclude that at least 70% of all housing should be constructed in the existing built-up areas of Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and High Wycombe. The plan priority is to recycle and reuse existing resources; that is, to make use of derelict, vacant or unused urban land before developing green-field sites.

This draft Structure Plan was the subject of an Examination-in-Public(EIP) held in November 1994. Various opinions about migration, employment needs and population growth were aired, and developers claimed that up to about twice as many houses would be needed in Wycombe District as the Plan recommended. The EIP panel compromised, and proposed that the total for Buckinghamshire should rise from 61700 to 66500 (Wycombe 7700) over the period 1991-2011. Bucks County Council did not agree (they would not accept that there should be any net in-migration), but they did accept an increase to 64000 (Wycombe 6900). However, following the local government elections last May, the new Wycombe District Council voted to raise its total for 1991-2011 from 6900 to 7200 on the grounds that the allocation was too low to address locally-generated housing need. There at the time of writing the position rests. The Table sets out the stages mentioned.

Our main fear is that land in the Areas of Special Restraint(ASRs), such as Comm Valley, will be needed to meet the targets after 2001. One consolation is that there is no intention at this stage to seek to build in the Chilterns AONB.

John Gore

TABLE: PROPOSED NET ADDITIONAL DWELLINGS 1991-2011 WYCOMBE DISTRICT

	1991-2001	2001-06	2006-11	1991-2011
Deposit Draft Structure Plan(4/94)	3500	1700	1500	6700
Developers' proposals (11/94)				13000 max
EIP Panel report (3/95)	3500	2200	2000	7700
Bucks County Council (6/95)	3500	1700	1700	6900
Wycombe District Council (7/95)	3500	1700	2000	7200

The term 'net additional dwellings' refers to all additions to the dwelling stock (ie completed dwellings) as at 31 March 1991, from all sources, including those resulting from new construction, conversions and changes of use, less demolitions and other permanent losses to the dwelling stock. 'Affordable' accommodation is included in the totals.

Wycombe Arts Festival

Hidden Buckinghamshire

On the 18th May we were extremely fortunate to have Miss Jean Archer to speak to us on the delights of 'Hidden Buckinghamshire' as our Society's contribution to the Wycombe Arts Festival. She introduced us to people and places that we had no idea existed. We travelled, with the aid of her excellent slides, from Addington, up in the north of the county where Sir Laurence Olivier's father was Rector from 1924-1930, down to Amersham to learn about the Lollards and the Martyrs' Memorial situated in the corner of a field there. The Lollards were followers of John Wycliffe who strode the countryside in the 1500s preaching religious reformation. By 1521 the town was reported to be a hotbed of heresy, and the bishop ordered an inquisition. The result of this led to some of the townspeople of Amersham being burned at the stake a short distance from where their memorial now stands.

We met an anonymous knight in Ashendon Church - maybe he was a Templar Knight or a local landowner. Later on in our travels we met with another knight with a most unusual view. Outside the church at Chilton standing up on the east wall of the nave is the effigy of a knight. He poses an even greater puzzle, because apart from his identity or lack of it - how did he

come to be up on the roof? He is thought to date from about 1280 and may have been placed in his lofty position when the nave was heightened in the 16th century. Another possible solution is that his tomb was removed from inside the church to make way for the mortuary chapel of Sir John Croke, his wife Elizabeth and their eleven children.

Gibraltar is one of the smallest hamlets in Bucks, and one that was severely affected by the cholera outbreak of 1849. This was a particularly virulent form of Asiatic cholera that killed within a few hours of the onset of the illness. Families fled to the countryside and lived in tents to escape contagion. One family that survived said their good fortune was due to a string of onions hanging in the kitchen. When they returned, the onions were rotten, and they swore the disease had entered the onions and not them!

These are only a few of the places we visited and the stories we heard, courtesy of Miss Archer, and we extend our thanks to her for making the High Wycombe Society's contribution to the 1995 Arts Festival such an interesting and enjoyable one.

Janet Tully

Coffee Morning

With plenty of helpers on Saturday 8th July, preparations for the Coffee Morning were well in hand. Chairs and tables were carried outside, cups and saucers set out, and a delightful assortment of cakes arranged on plates. Soon, the aroma of coffee floated through the Friends' Meeting House as the first guests arrived. Olive was there to welcome them, and among the early arrivals were two men in shorts. No prizes for identifying one, but the other was wearing a navy baseball cap that matched his baggy shorts. Had he arrived from the USA? No, a second look revealed him to be Roger, our Chairman, just arrived from Downley.

Bargains from the Bring-and-Buy stall were soon snapped up and guests took advantage of the lovely Summer weather to enjoy coffee and cake on the front lawn. A very social occasion, and over £100 was raised for the funds.

Elsie Fowler

Annie Woodward of the Membership & Publicity Group, which organised the event: adds:

Grateful thanks are due to all who worked so tirelessly in the kitchen throughout the morning and to those who made cakes and donated items for sale. It is a measure of the generosity of our members that not one single penny was claimed in expenses.

Thanks are also due to the staff of the Friends' Meeting House, especially to the warden, Julia Wassell, for preparing the rooms and gardens so well. A grand total of £130=07 was taken from entrance charges, sales of cakes, Bring-and-Buy and publications.

Finally, thank you to all who came to enjoy the coffee and company. We hope to have a repeat next summer.

.... and so to Devizes

Drivers at Devizes are quite unusual! We were pleasantly surprised to find that cars actually stopped to let us cross the road without zebra crossings. Just over forty of us travelled by coach from High Wycombe on Saturday 24 June to be met by four members of the Trust for Devizes, the local amenity society, who each took a small group on a guided tour of the town.

Monday Market Street, The Brittox, Snuff Street, Wine Street – just a few names to conjure with. Apparently Devizes is one of the few remaining towns which has retained its medieval street pattern; the main streets radiate from the old Castle, and the whole system forms a semi-circle around the Castle. The second main feature is the large number of historic buildings concentrated within such a small area.

Our tour started in the large open Market Place at the Market Cross, where opposite stands The Bear Inn, nearly 400 years old. The artist, Sir Thomas Lawrence, lived there as a boy. On past the Corn Exchange, seeing lots of beautiful eighteenth-century houses en route to the Old Assizes Court. This latter fell into disrepair, but the front was restored, and now permission is awaited to convert the building into flats, without spoiling the interior. As the name suggests, Snuff Street was once the home of snuff production, alongside tobacco manufacture. Remains of a textile factory could also be seen on the site. We were delighted to discover many small dwellings now built within the old factory confines – lovely little terraced houses and flats, and all adorned with black wrought-iron ornamentation.

Probably the most memorable building we saw was The Great Porch House, built mid-fifteenth century as a timber-framed hall. We were only able to gaze at photographs of the inside, but it is a rare example of such a building to survive in any town. Time was all too short, and we could only walk along Morris Lane, a quiet backwater of terraced houses with pretty front gardens, then catch a glimpse of the remains of the Castle – now Victorian pastiche – as we went through the churchyard of St John's Church. This is a fine late-Norman Church, worthy of a visit all on its own. Thus we came to St John's Alley, where still stand fine overhanging timber-framed houses, with one original door, probably Elizabethan. These buildings have been restored recently, and we were amazed to find they housed beautiful ladies' hats for hire – Ascot style. This was irresistible, and we had to step inside! The cobbled alley originally went through

to Wine Street, but is now blocked off to prevent a thoroughfare.

There was much more to see, but by now there was only time for a quick snack (and a rushed visit with our guide to purchase a lardy cake AND a bottle of draught whisky), before we bundled back into the coach to drive 1½ miles to Caen Hill, the flight of locks on the Kennet & Avon Canal. This was most impressive, sixteen locks in close proximity going downhill towards Bath. Unfortunately they are unusable as there is not enough water, but it is hoped that, with the aid of a new pumping scheme, eventually they will be navigable for leisure boats.



As a town to visit, Devizes appears to have everything in its favour. They have managed to cope with heavy traffic without destroying the town to do so, and are also keeping dwellings in the town centre. It is not a very good comparison, but inevitably one thinks of the terrible mess made of High Wycombe in the 1960s in the efforts to control traffic, together with the destruction of the town centre that accompanied it. Devizes is full of vistas. As you walk round you are confronted with fascinating views of street scenes which change constantly. There is even a working brewery, Wadsworths, and, as our guide recalled, an extensive selection of old public houses.

All in all, a lovely town to which we must go back again – soon.

Roger and Christine Cooding

OCTOBER QUARTERLY MEETING

Wednesday 18 October 1995 at 8pm
at The Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

Your Environment -

An Environmental Strategy for Wycombe District

by

Ian Westgate, Wycombe District Council's Head of Environmental Services

Come and find out about the Council's new environmental strategy, which is an important acknowledgement of the Council's role in the sustainable development process. It emphasises the Council's statutory and moral responsibilities towards its local environment and brings together their commitment to the long term future.

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Miss F J Presland, Hicks Farm Rise
Mrs M M Wells, Windrush Drive

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

Don't throw it away

The Society's Charity Stall in High Wycombe Market on 3 June was a great success - we raised £138=35. Many thanks to all who provided items for sale, brought them to the stall very early, and acted as salespeople.

The next Charity Stall is not until next June, but it is not too early to start putting things by. So please save anything which you think might be saleable. Thank you.

Ann Simone
Membership & Publicity Group

Wycombe Show 1995

A big thank you to everyone who helped prepare and staff our stand in the Conservation Marquee; to the Heritage Group for their excellent display and Heritage Quiz, and to the Membership & Publicity Group for organising the staffing. What a shame that the first rain for weeks kept the attendance down at the Show! We hope to bring you a full report on the stand and the Show in our next issue.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

** new entry

**Sunday 8 October 1995
Morning walk 10.30am
Afternoon walk 2pm

'Figure of eight' walk starting at the "Jolly Woodman" at Littleworth Common, near Burnham Beeches. Contact Ron Sims (01494) 440800. Note. The "Jolly Woodman" welcomes ramblers with picnic lunches who eat outside. Lunches are available inside to anyone who prefers.

Wednesday 18 October 1995 8pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

Wycombe District Council Environmental Strategy
Ian Westgate, Head of Environmental Services

Tuesday 16 January 1996 8pm
Reggie Goves Centre

Work of the Tree Council Speaker to be announced

16 April 1996

AGM