



THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 99

SPRING 1996

We'd like to hear from you!

The Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 16 April at 7.45pm in the Reggie Goves Centre will give all our members the chance to speak and air their views. This year there are so many live issues in High Wycombe on which our Society should have an opinion. So let us hear your reaction to some of these issues; for example, the Central Railway proposals, Western Sector development, pedestrianisation, Handy Cross, public transport etc.. Please make an effort and come this year!

The AGM also sees the annual Executive Committee elections. We invite you to consider very seriously if you should become a Committee member. Apart from having vacancies, we do need new members to share the load and lead the Society on into the next century. If you are keen on pursuing our aims to protect and enhance our local environment in a positive way, and encourage local people to do the same, please put your name forward for nomination.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Tuesday 16 April 1996 at 7.45pm
at the Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row**

The speaker after the official business will be Dr Sturley, who will be speaking on the subject *From Acorn to Oak Tree: a History of the National Trust*.

Refreshments will be available during the evening.

The National Trust celebrated its centenary in 1995. From small beginnings it is now one of the largest landowners in the country and it has the largest membership of any organisation dedicated to the conservation of our heritage. We owe it a huge debt for its past and present work. Come and hear about its achievements.

Please see accompanying letter for your invitation and the Agenda



...caring about our town and heritage

Registered Charity No. 257897

Honorary Secretary, John Gore, 30 Wordsworth Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP11 2UR. Tel: (01494) 526671

Heritage

General John Gaspard Le Marchant 1766–1812

Commemorative Plaque Unveiled

The Duke of Wellington is quoted as saying that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. It would, perhaps, have been more accurate to have given credit instead to the training grounds of High Wycombe (The Rye perhaps!), for it was at the Antelope Inn next door to the Red Lion in the High Street (now occupied by The Baker's Oven) that the Royal Military College was first set up. To be more precise, the Senior Section started in High Wycombe in 1799 with a Junior Section based at Remnantz, Marlow, and both moved to Sandhurst in 1813 just before the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

It was as a junior officer serving in Flanders in 1793–4 that Le Marchant realised that British Army officers lacked proper training. He seems to have been something of a favourite at the court of King George III and in 1797 submitted a plan to the Duke of York for a national training establishment. This was accepted and classes started on a voluntary basis in High Wycombe in 1799. Then in 1801 Parliament granted £30,000 for setting up the Junior and Senior sections of the Royal Military College in Marlow and High Wycombe respectively. Le Marchant was made Lieutenant Governor and moved with his family to a house in Church Street, the site of which is now occupied by the shop 'Days Gone Bye' just by the entrance to the Chilterns Shopping Centre. It was here in December 1995 that Councillor J M Campbell, Vice-Chairman of Wycombe District Council, unveiled one of the Council's high-quality incised slate plaques to commemorate General Le Marchant's stay in High Wycombe from 1799 to 1812.

It seems that the presence of the young officers enhanced the social life of the town – there was, for example, a theatre in St Mary Street – but their high spirits were not appreciated by everyone!

Le Marchant held his post for nine years, during which time over 200 officers passed through his hands. He vacated the post on promotion to Major-General, to command a brigade of cavalry serving in the Peninsular War against Napoleon Bonaparte. Just before the Battle of Salamanca in 1812 he was told of the death of Mary, his wife. He distinguished himself personally in the battle, but was mortally wounded by a musket ball, and buried in a nearby olive grove.

After the plaque unveiling in December a further unveiling took place, this time in the Council Offices, of a fireplace which once belonged to General Le Marchant. The house in Church Street became the town's library in 1875 and the fireplace remained there until the house was demolished in 1932, when it was transferred to what is now the Reference Library in Queen Victoria Road. It was rescued in 1994 by Martin Andrew, the Conservation Officer, restored and installed in the old Council Offices (see following article by Denise Lindsay).

Our thanks are due to Wycombe District Council, Martin Andrew and Valerie Coleby for drawing our attention and giving us a permanent reminder of a distinguished former resident of the town.

John Gore

The Fireplace Revisited

You may recall that a few Newsletters ago, I wrote a piece in the Etcetera column lamenting the loss of the fireplace surround from the Reference Library. We were subsequently informed by Conservation Officer Martin Andrew that the fireplace was being restored and would be put on public display.

Well, the fully-restored surround is now installed in the old Council Office in Queen Victoria Road. Anyone may ask to see it, and I have done so. I went into the modern part of the Council Office, from where a staff member led me through to the old part. This put me in mind of the BBC comedy, *Goodnight Sweetheart!* (For the uninitiated, this show concerns the adventures of a young man who time-travels back and forth from the present day to wartime London, via the back wall of a shop.)

Anyway, there it was – my *Magnificent Obsession* in all its glory. There is also a small plaque telling the history of the fireplace.

Human nature decrees that the Council usually makes news only when it has done something we do not like. I think this act of saving a valuable link with Wycombe's past is something we certainly do like, and I for one am very pleased with the way this episode has turned out.

Denise Lindsay

Membership & Publicity

The Programme—have we got it right?

The Membership & Publicity Group has been meeting regularly on your behalf to put together a range of activities, such as you see on the back page of this Newsletter, for your enjoyment, education and/or interest. But have we got it right? Are these the sort of talks, visits and events that appeal to you?

We need to know what you would like us to organise. For example, we try to keep the walks short so that families can join in – but perhaps you would really like a 12-mile hike on the lower slopes of Snowdon! We try to organise outings with coach trips of not more than 2 hours – but perhaps you would really prefer a day trip to France (starting at 5.30am)!

Yes, I know I am being provocative – but come and join us and tell me I am talking nonsense!

The Group has 'shrunk' a bit recently, and we would very much welcome some new members with some new ideas. We meet in each others' homes, in the evenings, about every six weeks depending on the need.

The other part of our Group is about **Membership**, and here again we would appreciate any thoughts about how to attract new blood – younger blood – energetic people – people with a bit of time on their hands – people looking for a group of like-minded citizens interested in caring for our town and its heritage.

Please feel free to contact Annie Woodward on (01494) 527978, or any other member of the committee at the AGM on 16 April (we wear badges). We hope to hear from you!

Ann Simone

Charity Stall

Saturday 18 May is our day for the Charity Stall in High Wycombe Market at the Little Market House between 8 and 12. There is always a crowd at the beginning waiting to snap up the bargains, and volunteers have a busy time.

Before that, however, we need lots of items to sell. This is not a jumble sale; we need good quality bric-a-brac, household items, plants, crafts etc. Last year we were very fortunate that two members had just cleared out their homes, and we made £138 on the day to help our funds.

Did you receive Christmas presents, which (perish the thought) you do not know what to do with? Have you been meaning to clear out

your display cabinet of 'treasures' from long ago (can't quite remember where they came from?)

Olivia Price has kindly agreed to accept items from Saturday 11 May to Friday 17 May. Please ring her on (01494) 527042 to arrange this. Items can then be sorted and priced before the rush starts on the day.

Last minute items can, of course, be brought to the stall on 18 May – and you may pick up a bargain yourself!

Ann Simone

Local Treasures: Shire Books

Shire Publications has been in business for 33 years. Over 500 titles are currently in print, published at Shire's 17th century offices at Princes Risborough. The books are attractively presented and very well researched on a wide range of specialist and unusual subjects. Many authoritative guides have been written on antiques and collecting.

Titles range from *Antique Maps* to *Clay and Cob Buildings*, from *Fire Marks* to *Old Lawn Mowers*, and from *Scent Bottles* to *Teddy Bears and Soft Toys*.

The High Wycombe Society sells Shire Books at its public meetings and events. Having a trade discount means that a small profit is made for the Society. The fixed retail prices are very modest, many books selling at £2=25. I have the latest catalogue and wonder if members would like to order books through the Society. I would be happy to give more details if necessary on (01494) 527978. Why not support a local publisher and your own Society at the same time?

Annie Woodward

It has been suggested that we might run a series of articles entitled Local Treasures, like the above, about local companies and organisations of interest. Please let John Gore have your ideas or, better still, a draft article.

January Quarterly Meeting

The Tree Council and the Tree Warden Scheme

The Society's Quarterly Meeting on 16 January featured Marie Clay, a Forestry Technician with Buckinghamshire County Council. Marie began her talk by informing us that only 10% of the UK is forested; very little when compared with the 25% which is the average for the rest of Europe. It was also interesting to discover that in 5000BC, 80% of the country was forested, and that in 1919 coverage was at its lowest ever.

The Tree Council was founded in 1974 to further the cause of planting, conservation, the general improvement of the environment and to impart knowledge.

The Tree Warden scheme is coordinated by local authorities. Anyone may become a warden if he or she is interested, and basic training is given. It is the warden's job to gather information about local trees, maybe carry out a survey, to note where certain trees may need protection. For example, squirrels may look cute when we see the odd one in our gardens, but they are destructive little devils and do much damage to trees.

There is a training scheme for wardens, at which they learn basic skills, to know when and where to go for advice, and to familiarise themselves with the law concerning trees; preservation orders, neighbourhood disputes etc.. A warden has no legal powers, but must act as a go-between.

Practical projects are organised, and trees are often planted by groups from schools, the WI, scouts, wildlife groups and tenants' associations. Of all new trees planted, the expected survival rate is 80-90%



We were shown some slides of trees in various settings, Marie answered questions from the floor, and a vote of thanks was offered by Barbara Rippington.

Denise Lindsay

A Journey to Egypt

This Egypt is, of course, less than ten miles from High Wycombe. Mick Woodward describes a brief but pleasant visit there by a few Society members.

On Sunday 6 October 1995 there were two walks in Burnham Beeches led by Ron Sims. Both started and finished at the Jolly Woodman at Littleworth Common, and consisted of about 2½ hours of gentle walking. The morning outing attracted about a dozen, and in sunny weather the group made a circular tour through Egypt Woods, and all enjoyed the leafy beauty of the Beeches, which in fact contains many varieties of tree in addition to beech. The route through the woods was, I suspect, rather confusing to all of us, but Ron successfully led us all back to the start where a few of us enjoyed a pub lunch.

The afternoon walk almost did not start, but then one extra member appeared at the last moment and off we went in our group of three. This time we headed south and skirted farmers' fields around Dorney Wood, and continued via Pumpkin Hill. En route, we saw the oldest tree in the Beeches (an oak!) and a charming little lake complete with ducks, of course. The walk ended through the same part of the Beeches, which made it harder to get lost – and we didn't! All in all, two enjoyable walks, thanks to our infallible guide, Ron.

Mick Woodward

Transport

How Green is the Central Railway?

The proposal by Central Railway plc to set up a freight rail service from the Midlands to the Channel Tunnel via the Chiltern Line and, in particular, High Wycombe is causing much controversy locally, even among Society members, and a spate of correspondence has appeared in the local press. So far, only draft outline proposals have been published and no formal application to the Department of Transport has been made. Briefly, the proposals include:

- electrification of the line;
- a new passenger station at West Wycombe, primarily for 'park-and-ride' (off Cookshall Lane, not on the original station site);
- restoration of four tracks through High Wycombe and other stations with a 40mph speed limit through High Wycombe station;
- lowering of the track under certain bridges and raising of some foot bridges to increase clearances;
- an extra tunnel bore through Whitehouse Hill;
- a new freight-handling terminal at Higher Denham;
- trains, between 2 and 4 per hour in each direction, could be up to half-a-mile long, travel between 70 and 80 mph and generate a noise of 65-68 decibels;
- limited hours of operation between 7am and 9pm or midnight have been mentioned.

People who live close to the line are understandably nervous about additional noise and vibration, and property values. On the other hand, a proposal which promises to shift up to one million lorry journeys per year off the roads has much to commend it. Beneficial results would include:

- significant reduction in the emission of polluting and 'greenhouse' gases (electrification would transfer the pollution problem to the power station where it would be dealt with more efficiently);
- reduction in traffic levels on trunk roads and motorways (a 25% reduction in lorries on the M40 is claimed); and
- reduction in the pressure to build new motorways across our precious countryside.

The High Wycombe Society has long advocated the adoption of sustainable transport policies, and this includes the transfer of as much freight and

passenger traffic as possible from road to rail for the benefit of the environment, so we feel we must support these preliminary proposals in principle. When the final proposals are published, we will expect to see concern for the environment and consideration for nearby residents taken fully into consideration, and an assurance that the quality of the present excellent Chiltern Railway services will not be adversely affected.

High Wycombe-Bourne End Former Railway Line

Buckinghamshire County Council and Wycombe District Council have commissioned transport consultants, Buchanan & Partners, to carry out a feasibility study on reopening this route in some form. They will be making reference to our Transport Group's report on the subject.

Christopher Wallis and Elsa Woodward have produced a costed study of work that needs to be done to reinstate the route. A suitable vehicle for a new service would appear to be the Parry People Mover, a light tram with flywheel storage of energy. This is particularly quiet, energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

Reopening this line would be a valuable contribution to local sustainable transport, with the potential of taking a considerable amount of traffic off congested roads, notably the A40 London Road.

Summer Outing

The Membership & Publicity Group thought you might fancy a weekday outing for a change. The proposed destination is The Leonardslee Gardens, Lower Beeding, near Horsham, and the date Friday 10 May 1996.

These beautiful landscaped gardens are especially attractive in May, when the azaleas and rhododendrons are at their best. There are also wallabies and deer to be seen.

Please phone Ron Sims on (01494) 440800 if you are interested and would like more details about price and booking.

Another outing, this time to Waddesdon Manor, newly refurbished, is planned for a Saturday in September. Watch out for details in the Summer Newsletter.

1996 Wycombe Transportation Symposium

Christopher Wallis reports on the Symposium which took place on 15 February at the King's Centre, Desborough Road. He concludes with some challenging comments of his own, which do not necessarily totally represent those of the Executive Committee.

Approximately 200 people attended the Symposium, which was organised jointly by Bucks County Council (BCC) and Wycombe District Council (WDC). Those present included some 65 councillors and council officials, together with representatives of trade and industry, education, community groups and transport interests. There were 14 speakers in all. For the purpose of discussion, the audience was divided into 20 groups.

The morning session was chaired by Cllr W Chapple (Chairman BCC Planning & Transport Committee). Mr Swanwick (Director of Planning, Transport & Development WDC) set the context, then Dr Michèle Dix of Halcrow Fox Consultants reviewed her firm's 1992 Wycombe Transport Study and its recommendations. Mr J Currell (BCC) explained how, with the aid of 'package' finances, these recommendations for the chosen positive public transport strategy would be implemented, involving bus lanes, cycle routes, controlled parking etc. He also emphasised the importance of moving the Handy Cross Junction towards Marlow, thereby releasing the redundant part of the M40 for a new arrangement of roads around High Wycombe, and mentioned plans for 'park-and-ride' on all main roads into the town. The target date was 2001, but as only £5M would be available, developers would be required to contribute 'planning gain' with their applications.

Mr J Unsworth (Project Manager WDC) enlarged upon details, mentioning the proposed new bus station, with bus links to the railway station where some improvements to the Amersham Hill entrance are planned.

Mr F Stroud (Chairman, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce) concluded the morning's speeches. He too insisted that to maintain a buoyant economy, cars must be accommodated in the town centre and not rejected, and the Handy Cross junction must be moved and the M40 widened. He suggested that as traffic is the product of business, then business and commerce should be resited in green fields outside the town. Working hours could be staggered with employees having free tickets for public transport. There would be no reduction in the use of the car without a real investment in public transport.

Each group then concentrated on a set of guiding topics, after which the audience was able to put questions to the panel of speakers, ably chaired by Mr Chapple.

The afternoon speakers were introduced by Cllr Mrs F Alexander. First was Dr E Woodward, leader of the High Wycombe Society's Transport Group, who described some radical methods of transport in other towns and cities, mainly abroad. Then she described her 'post-code' scheme for linking passengers with fleets of small buses. She also referred to the Society's feasibility study into reopening the Bourne End-High Wycombe line and its follow-up (reported elsewhere in this Newsletter). She emphasised the importance of integrating buses, (trams), trains, bikes and feet, and leaving the car at home.

Mr R Andrews (Wycombe Cycling Campaign) reminded us of the excellence of bikes as a way of moving about and the hazards of so doing. He showed how some of these dangers can be avoided. He emphasised the need for safe bike parking, in public and at work places.

Mr I Manning (BCC) explained how improved bus route infrastructure could attract more passengers. Unnecessary car journeys must be made socially unacceptable. Out-of-town shopping centres with plenty of car parking are unacceptable in sustainable transport terms.

Mr K Moffatt, Managing Director of Oxford Bus Co, which now runs Wycombe Bus, suggested that they are now introducing innovations such as magnetic ticket cards, frequency of buses and so on to improve service. He envisaged a partnership with the councils to implement the plans.

Mr N Eggleton, of The Shires Bus Co which runs Chiltern Rover, gave an optimistic resumé of the stalwart work being carried out by these rural buses, mainly between towns.

Mr A Turner, Chiltern Railways Sales & Marketing Director, shortly to become a director of M40 Trains Ltd, said that passenger numbers had increased by 60% over the last four years. He hoped for many more improvements, some in conjunction with the local community.

(continued overleaf)

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Ms Elton, Public Relations Manager of Central Railway plc, outlined her firm's proposals for a freight service from the Midlands to the Channel Tunnel via the Chiltern Line (described elsewhere in this Newsletter). Designed to the Berne Load gauge, it would be able to carry up to 100 lorries on half-mile long trains, thereby giving considerable relief to the overcrowding. She claimed there would be minimal disruption to local passenger trains, and the new company would also be running some of these to and from the Midlands.

The session was concluded with a selection of questions from the (by now) flagging audience to the whole panel, deftly chaired by Cllr Mrs Alexander.

Space decrees that the foregoing can only be a brief record for those who couldn't attend the symposium. However, it would be a slight to the intellect of the members of the Society not to conclude with a brief personal appraisal of the 'feeling of the meeting'.

The leading parts were played by the council officers, but although their performance was both proficient and knowledgeable, I felt that it was reluctant. The information they gave was what they thought we *ought* to know, and the most interesting part was what they didn't tell us.

The three Bus Men gave us a glimpse of how buses could be (that is, as 40 - 50 years ago) if they were physically able to get them moving freely. They are waiting for 'something to happen'. Meantime, they are concentrating on changing the bus colours and encouraging their drivers to smile and whistle under all difficulties!

The Railway Man free-wheeled in on the success of British Rail turning the Chiltern Line (Marylebone to Birmingham) into a first-class railway. But he's not interested in carrying bicycles, or presumably any luggage bigger than an air-bag. He didn't mention integrating with other modes of transport.

The Central Railway belittled our intelligence by not sending their civil engineer, who could properly have answered the numerous technical questions that are worrying local residents so much.

The Bicycle Man gave us clear facts, which awoke the young (armchair) cyclist dormant in all of us to enthuse about the good things to come, and to sympathise about justified grumbles of the present.

The High Wycombe Society Transport Lady gave us some of her excellent logic about where we are going - 'onto the rails' - and how we could improve our moving about without too

much pain now and in the future. She was the only person to mention the Society's feasibility study for the Bourne End to High Wycombe railway track, and the resultant study being made by the consultants, Buchanan and Partners.

In conclusion, I was extremely worried that all the councillors and officers clearly stated that they are determined to move Handy Cross interchange and build two miles of new motorway. They insist that 'separating' motorway and local traffic will solve all the congestion in the south of the town. They are either planning with blinkers on, or using this *enormous* project as a placebo to justify their positions until they can safely retire.

If they study the traffic survey and prediction figures in the Halcrow Fox/DoT report on the proposals for Handy Cross, they will see that the numbers add up to *more* vehicles entering and leaving High Wycombe after the proposed move. This, of course, does not include the well-known traffic growth which occurs after any new road 'improvement'.

The councillors will happily embrace the resulting 'disused' length of motorway as part of the proposed ring road, which they didn't mention! The land between the new and old pieces of motorway could well be stuffed with the Motorway Service Area which we think we have got rid of to Wheatley, out-of-town shopping, business premises and hundreds of houses, all of which will reduce the traffic into High Wycombe!

But that is not all: the so-called Marlow Bypass is to be the future link between the M4 and the M40. This has been leaked from the DoT, so watch out for its 'upgrading' to a six-lane motorway!

My prognostication is that this link is planned to extend north to the Felixstowe-Fishguard motorway alias the Aylesbury east-west bypass. Probably it will traverse Booker, cross Sands to West Wycombe, and follow the A4010 via Saunderton to the Risborough bypass. Then the way to Aylesbury is clear. All this will make the Central Railway scare look like a Hornby Train Set!

Only a few years ago, a meeting like this would have been unthought of, even impossible, but now our thanks go to both councils for inviting us to such a convenient and comfortable venue, organising the symposium so excellently, and providing delicious refreshments and good company.

Christopher Wallis

Planning

Superstore Decision

The Secretary of State for the Environment has now decided to grant planning permission to Safeway for their proposal to build a superstore with 530 parking places on the Temple End/ Bellfield Road site, and to refuse permission to Sainsbury's for their proposed store at the former Wycombe Marsh Paper Mill. The Secretary of State agreed with the Inspector who presided at the public inquiry in November 1994 that the town could accept one more superstore and that Safeway's was preferable as current Government planning guidance favours sites in or on the edge of town centres. It is argued that these permit visitors to the town centre to combine their shopping with other activities and so add to town-centre vitality and to some extent reduce car journeys.

The Society, it may be recalled, opposed both applications. We considered that both of these valuable sites should be put to better, more sustainable use. As regards the Safeway plan, we consider that an extra 530 car parking spaces will perpetuate the practice of car-dependent shopping, and undermine the Council's Positive Public Transport Strategy, particularly if parking is free. It will encourage more cars to come to the town centre over our already congested roads. We think there should be a smaller car park, with the land being put to more profitable use. To discourage car-dependent shopping, and to benefit non-car owners and those arriving by bus, foot or bicycle, who find it difficult to take heavy shopping home, superstores should introduce delivery services. Such services should also be available to people who prefer to phone, fax or e-mail their orders. The idea of delivery services seems to be taking off in some parts of the country, according to recent reports in the national press.

It should be taken up by all large stores as a major contribution towards sustainability.

Residents of Temple End will be pleased with result of the public inquiry as a planned new relief road should take traffic away from their doorsteps.

An unfortunate side effect of Safeway's success is that Parker-Knoll seems likely to move furniture production away from High Wycombe, thus reducing almost to vanishing point what was once the town's staple industry.

The future of the site at Wycombe Marsh is once more in the melting pot. Ideally it should be retained as an employment area, or, if this is not feasible, for housing with an element of employment. Every opportunity should be taken to build residential accommodation within the urban area to avoid the need to use green-field sites. Another sustainability criterion is that workplaces should be situated relatively close to peoples' homes to minimise the need to travel.

John Gore

Motorway Service Area Decision

The Secretary of State for the Environment has also decided where a new Motorway Service Area (MSA) on the southern end of the M40 is to be located. The preferred site is at Wheatley, near the M40 junction with the A418. The decision follows a long public inquiry starting in November 1994 which considered half-a-dozen or so sites in Bucks and Oxon. Although it is regrettable that a site in the Oxford Green Belt was chosen, we are naturally pleased that Mobil Oil's appeal against refusal of planning permission to build an MSA at Booker has been refused. We congratulate the Booker Common & Woods Protection Society, as well as Wycombe District Council, on the result in view of their well-researched and well-argued efforts to defend the local environment.

The Inspector's main reason for excluding Booker from his final choice was the proposed MSA's position within the Green Belt and Chilterns AONB, where it would have tended to fill the remaining countryside between Booker and Lane End. Surprisingly he and his aviation assessor decided that aviation risks arising from the site's proximity to Wycombe Air Park was not an overriding consideration.

We confidently expect that this decision will lift the threat to our surrounding countryside of huge and unsightly MSAs for the foreseeable future.

John Gore

I was on The Rye when

In our last issue, we invited readers to contribute to what should be an interesting (and could be an extensive) series. Here we have the first contribution from Mrs F D Porteous: please keep the stories coming!

I came to High Wycombe in 1936, aged 21 years. My boyfriend had found work here, and I followed him. I was employed as a nurse at 'Ilona', a private maternity hospital on Amersham Hill.

We married in 1937 and found a little cottage in Gordon Road. My son was born in 1938. Most of the following summers were spent on The Rye. The children had a paddling pool and swings, while we parents knitted and gossiped. We never had occasion to go on The Rye in winter.

I am now 80 years of age, and my friend and I try to walk around The Rye a few times each week to keep fit. Once we were reminiscing, and both of us remembered a large hole in the middle of The Rye and a pool at the bottom covered in watercress.

Now to my interesting experience. "I was on The Rye" when I noticed a large clump high up in a leafless tree on the edge of Bassetsbury Manor. I was gobsmacked! I had never seen mistletoe growing before. I knew it was a parasite, but I thought it came from abroad exclusively!

There were five trees all growing mistletoe, and I realised they were all crabapples. You are probably thinking 'What's so extraordinary about that?' Well, I mixed with crowds of people over Christmas and it made my day when I discovered only a few had seen it growing. I demanded to be taken for a ride for a kiss under the live mistletoe, but, no luck, they had all been drinking and wouldn't drive!

F D Porteous

Mistletoe Search

It is something of a coincidence that just as Mrs Porteous reported on her Rye mistletoe experience, Dr Alan Showler, writing in Wycombe Countryside News Winter 1996 edition, told of a two-year national survey of mistletoe which is in progress. Dr Showler has been taking part in this, and asked his readers for information on where it is growing. He has concentrated on a 10km grid square, roughly centred on High Wycombe, divided into 25 portions. When he wrote, he had no records for

Piddington, Great and Little Kingshill, Lacey Green and Walters Ash, Lane End and Wheeler End, Saunderton Lee, Bledlow Ridge and the bit of High Wycombe between Cressex and West Wycombe Road. If you are able and willing to help in this survey, please phone him on (01494) 562082.

Planning (continued)

Housing

The final crop of amendments to the Buckinghamshire County Structure Plan 1991-2011 is now being considered, and Wycombe District's housing allocation of 7200 dwellings over this period has been confirmed. This includes a strategic growth allocation of 1500-1700 dwellings on green-field sites around High Wycombe in the next decade. The Society and its affiliated residents' associations, whilst appreciating people's housing needs, must be on the alert to defend attractive countryside and open space. Widmer End Residents' Association is already concerned about a possible threat to the Grange Farm area, once known as the dreaded H7, currently an Area of Special Restraint.

Wycombe District Council are conscious of the desirability of recycling urban land (now known as 'brown field' sites, it seems), and we hope this will satisfy demand for many years to come.

Wendover Way Cycleway

Bucks County Council have started work preparing for a cycleway to share the Wendover Way footpath. This is in spite of the strong opposition expressed during the public consultation period in 1994. Some of the rural nature of the path has already been lost and it is doubtful if the path is wide enough for the safe passage of cyclists and pedestrians simultaneously. We support provision of facilities for cyclists, but think this particular route should be the sole preserve of walkers. There should be a public inquiry before any further work is done to compromise our open spaces.

ANTAS

The Association of North Thames Amenity Societies (ANTAS), of which the High Wycombe Society is a founder member, has honoured us by asking us to host their next meeting. This will be on Saturday 13 April.

Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Mr D G Jones, Shelley Road
Ms A-M O'Grady, Herbert Road

We look forward to meeting our new members at our next event. Please introduce yourself!

Obituary

It is with much regret that we record the death of the following member of the Society, and we would like to express our condolences to his family and friends:

Mr Walter Kraft

Executive Committee

Mr David Turner has kindly consented to become a member of the Executive Committee, and has been formally co-opted. His telephone number is (01494) 521967.

River Hotline

The National Rivers Authority has established a 24-hour free emergency telephone line. You may report all environmental incidents, such as pollution, rubbish dumping, poaching and flooding, or any signs of damage or danger to our rivers, lakes and coastal waters. The NRA hopes their quick response will prevent a minor incident from developing into a serious problem. The Hotline number is: 0800 80 70 60.

(From Civic Trust Briefing 10: October 1995)

Member's Book

Graham Neal, one of our members and a former Vice-Chairman, tells us that he has written a children's book 'Pugglesum, Snozzlebucket and Friends', which is now on sale at £4=99.

Copy Dates

Please send items for publication in the Newsletter to the Hon Sec no later than the following dates:

Summer 1996 (No 100)....Saturday 18 May
Autumn 1996 (No 101)...Saturday 17 August
Winter 1996/7 (No 102)Saturday 16 November

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 16 April 1996 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

AGM, followed by *From Acorn to Oak Tree: a History of the National Trust* by Dr Sturley

Sunday 21 April 1996 2pm
Meet at the car park near the church.

Chilterns Walk about 5-6 miles from Bradenham.
Organised by Ron Sims (01494) 440800.

Friday 10 May Contact Ron Sims
on (01494)440800. See page 5.

Coach Outing to Leonardslee Gardens, Lower Beeding, nr Horsham. See azaleas &c at their best!

Saturday 18 May 1996 8am-noon
Little Market House

Charity Market Stall (see article on page 3 for information on where to take your items.)

Thursday 17 May-Sunday 26 May
Sunday 26 May 1996 11am-5pm

BT Environment Week
Pann Mill Open Day. Refreshments available.

Thursday 30 May 1996 8pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

Wycombe Arts Festival High Wycombe Society
Lecture: *Echoes of Old Village Life* by Stuart King

Saturday 6 July 1996 10am-12noon
Friends Meeting House, London Road

Coffee Morning with Bring-and-Buy stall.
Entrance including coffee and cake 75p.

Saturday/Sunday 7/8 September 1996

Wycombe Show 1996 See us in the Conservation Marquee (both days) and at Pann Mill (Sunday).

Wednesday 9 October 1996 7.45pm
Reggie Goves Centre, Pauls Row

Transport Now by David Williams, Senior Planner
Civic Trust