



High Wycombe Society

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AS SUGGESTED IN THE LAST NEWSLETTER, IT IS PLAYGROUNDS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG people which lead us off this time. Two developments are taking place, one on either side of the town, as our drawings by Lorna Cassidy show,

In the area which has come to be known euphemistically as the Western Desert, the Borough Council having already provided a place alongside Desborough Street for a much-needed children's playground found themselves unable to carry out their plans because of cuts in local public spending.

The project suggested by the Borough was an imaginative one, skilfully using the ground available for providing space for games and other activities; the nearby Green Street School would use the playground during school hours too.

Anxious that such a scheme should not founder in this particular area, the Society and members of Wycombe Action for the Community (WAC) offered to help with the project by providing some of the labour force needed.

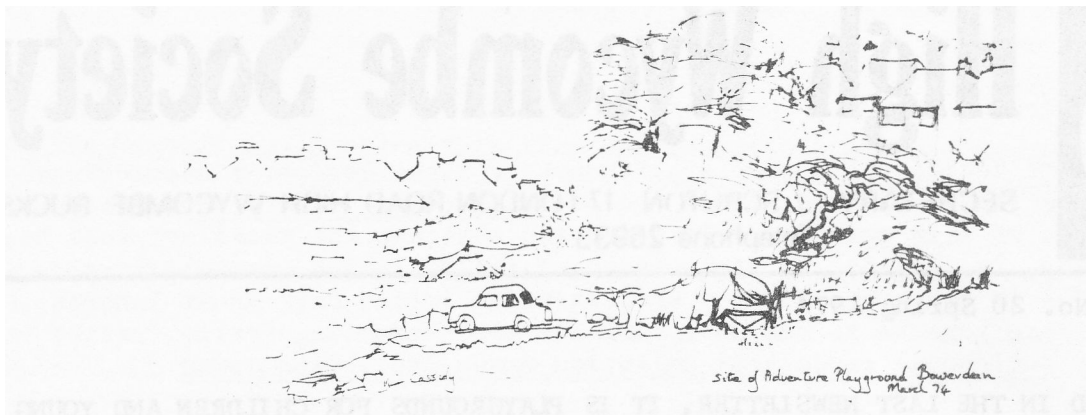


After discussions with Mr. Andrews, Borough Parks Manager, a good start was made on Sunday 24th March by a strong team of workers from WAC, the Society, and a number of other groups and individuals and a great deal of rubbish was collected into heaps for removal by the Council. The work is continuing on successive Sundays - newcomers welcome.

We feel very strongly that in addition to the clearance of rubbish the young volunteers must be given an opportunity of taking part in the actual creation of the playground,,

Meanwhile over at Bowerdean

The culmination of more than three years hard work of pressurising and fund- raising is just being reached by another of our affiliated societies - the High Wycombe Adventure Playground Association. Here a full time play leader and at least one part- time assistant will be engaged and the site, between Underwood Road and Hepplewhite Close, once cleared will be bounded by a close board fence and a concrete four-room hut erected and connected to water, drainage, electricity and a telephone. Help in paying for



all this has come from Home Office grants and the Community Relations Commission as well as the Borough Council and more direct, public subscription.

But although willing, both County and District Councils are prevented from paying salaries to the leader and assistant by the economies imposed by the Government on public spending; however the National Playing Fields Association has promised a grant to cover salaries for the first six months which should allow the playground to open and operate throughout the coming summer. There is the prospect of an Inter - national Services Volunteer for some of this period too.

All praise then to the imitative and determination of the Association for what they have achieved so far. However there is still likely to be a deficit as regards running expenses. Mrs. Bond, Secretary of the Association writes :

"if local people, firms and organisations were to give freely of their time effort and (dare we say it?) money, it would put the Adventure Playground on its feet - but would also demonstrate to the authorities that here is a popular venture that deserves their financial support." You could get in touch with her on HW 44403.

THE EAHY EXHIBITION - SOME CREDITS

Thanks to the efforts of many people we managed once again to stage a festival Exhibition, this time in the newly re-decorated Oak Room at the Town Hall. Great credit is due to Tony Clowes and Roger Henderson for planning and carrying out the major part of the work. The theme of town centre improvements was put over with great clarity and many viable suggestions for solutions of the more important defects were displayed. Alan Hutchinson took the fine photographs, and Jim Cottrell and Lorna Cassidy produced attractive drawings. Krystina Barrow did much of the attractive lettering. Many others helped with transport, humming, and assembling of screens, and in manning the exhibition throughout the ten days it was open. The Society is grateful to all of them.

We are grateful also, to the many visitors to the exhibition who responded to invitations by our invigilators and took the trouble to put their comments of the exhibition etc on to paper. Some fifty reports were collected in all, covering a • wide range of opinion.

(One said the town should be 'completely cleared of traffic especially on market days', while another advocated widening the High Street (!) 'so as when its market day the traffic can pass through without hold-ups'). Very few were flippant, some highly pertinent and others unconsciously amusing, but all were of great interest to the Society in informing us of what visitors to our exhibition are like.

Some extracts are given below, and others we have dispersed throughout the Newsletter. It shouldn't be necessary to point out - though perhaps we'd better all the same - that they do not all represent the views of your Edit or (I shouldn't think) those of the Society or the Secretary either.

On the Exhibition

'admirable '
 'could have been better'
 'hope it draws attention
 of members of council to
 what needs to be done'
 'thank you .. it aroused in
 me a great interest in the
 future of High Wycombe'
 'whistling into the void'
 'Easton Street spelt incorrectly'
 'excellent'
 'could have been a little larger'

On the Town as it now is

'too much traffic'
 'too much rubbish outside the
 Church
 'not enough facilities for 14-17s'
 'Water Authorities drain too much
 water from the Wye'
 'many areas of danger for
 pedestrians ... at Frogmoor and
 Marks & Spencer's crossroads'
 'does not cater for young people'

On what the Town needs'

more pavements, less car parks'
 'new cinema instead of Bassetsbury
 Manor
 'turning Wycombe into a
 pedestrian precinct would be a
 good idea'
 'a ring road'
 'more trees and bushes'
 'heavier fines for dropping
 litter' 'more trees'
 'paved roads around Octagon i.e.
 White Hart Street'
 'more litter bins'
 'more amenities for the youth of
 the town'

On trees

'light-reducing in front of shops
 ... costly in terms of extra
 lighting required in premises'
 'leaves clog drains ... are
 problem to old and infirm ...
 expensive to collect ... traffic
 hazard'

On the River Wye 'dredge'

'dam' (with accompanying sketch)
 'bring back boats'

HISTORIC BUILDINGS GROUP Jack Scruton writes:

The Historic Buildings Group is now 5 years old and still going strong.
 In fact with the recent increase in the number of buildings on the Statutory
 List our work will tend to increase.

Since the last Newsletter we have continued our work for the protection
 of Historic buildings especially the following:

Loudwater - Cottages along A.40 near the Station Road junction

We have again asked the County to arrange for the listing of this attractive group.
 In view of their Medieval origins we consider their listing should be automatic.

Loudwater - Snakeley Mill House

This fine early 19th Century Mill House which has been listed recently is again threatened by the Development Company who own the Mill site. They wish to demolish the Mill House as a prelude to covering the whole site with very gruesome warehousing. This is their second attempt, their first having been resisted by the County, (see newsletter 18) We have opposed the application very strongly and in this we support the County and the Loudwater Residents' Association.

Hazlemere - Grange Farm

This very ancient farm which was listed recently is in grave danger unless something is done soon to carry out repairs. It is unoccupied and has been sadly neglected. We have made urgent representations to the Clerk to the Rural District Council to take action with the owners.

Toll House, London Road

Most members will have read with dismay the press reports of the accident to this listed building which occurred in the early hours of Saturday, 2nd March. A car crashed into the front of the building, badly damaging it. The front of the structure has been demolished as far back as the chimney-stack.

The restoration of the Toll House was to have been one of the Society's main projects for European Architectural Heritage Year. The building provides an interesting link with the stage-coach era, and it occupies an important position on the eastern approach to the town. Our appeal for funds last year aroused considerable interest among local people and the sum of £525 was raised. Only a few days before the accident our Secretary had received from Bucks County Council a letter approving a grant of an equal sum towards the work, and an application for assistance was also being made to the Borough. We had had a realistic estimate for restoration of the Toll House (as it was before the accident) from Mr. Douglas Hodson, who has just completed the very sympathetic restoration of 19/20 Easton Street. Work on the Toll House was due to start at the beginning of April.

This accident is a great set-back to our plans. The Society will have to get expert opinion on the possibility of restoration and will be having discussions with the Cricket Club, the owners of the building, as to the insurance position.

EXHIBITION QUOTE 'THE OCTAGON...IT COULD DO WITH SOME FORM OF CAMOUFLAGE

TREES GROUP Barbara Rippington writes:

A most enjoyable evening occurred on Friday March 8 when Susan Cowdy, Secretary of Bucks Berks & Oxon Naturalists Trust showed slides and talked on the woods and woodland life of Bucks.

As a follow-up to Mr. Killingley's talk on badgers at the last quarterly meeting, we shall undertake a walk this summer of the area he talked about. Arrangements for this and other walks planned for each month during the coming season are as follows:

APRIL Sat 27 Hampden Woods - with Mr. Watts, Forester
 meet Hampden Estate Office, Gt. Hampden at 10.30 am

MAY Sun 12 By car - visit Saville Gardens, near Windsor Great
 Park meet at entrance to the gardens, bringing
 picnic lunch

JUNE Sat 29 Hughenden Woods and locality (Killingley country)
 meet Harrison's Car Park, at 2.30 pm

JULY Sun 14 To Medmenham and back.

AUG Sat 31 meet Turnpike Way at 2.00 pm, bringing picnic tea By
 car - Wendover Woods

SEPT Sun 28 meet Fryers Lane at 2.00 pm with picnic tea

 By car - Bix Bottom Nature Reserve meet Turnpike Way
 at 2.00 pm

QUOTE: ' I THINK THE HIGH STREET WOULD BE GREATLY IMPROVED BY THE PLANTING OF TREES' (Chromed-copper beeches? EPNS birches? - Ed)

PLANNING GROUP

Although we still await the result of the H7 appeal (at which the Society was represented by Hugh Osborn, Group Chairman), the major event this quarter was the most satisfactory announcement of the Secretary of State's decisions on the H6 appeal heard earlier. These were, respectively:

AGREEING with the recommendation of his inspector that development should <u>not</u> be permitted at the present time on Site 'B' (seven acres at Brands Hill/Green Hill)	developer's appeal should be allowed on Site 'A' (the three acres at Green Farm), and
OVER-RIDING his Inspector's recommendation that the	<u>dismissing</u> the case for development at the present time here too.

In the case of Site A it is significant that in outlining the reasons for his decision the Secretary of State refers specifically to the forthcoming Transportation Study report which is expected later this year, thus confirming the importance which is being attached to this document.

Rosemary Shooter (Planning Group Secretary) writes:

Meanwhile, we continue trying to get more public participating in the future plans for Wycombe, particularly at this time for H.2 and the Gomm Valley. We feel that it is essential for those of us, who live in and love the town, to discuss and to have some say in the way it grows. It is not real democracy • to be presented with major plans arrived at without the chance of public discussion of alternative possibilities.

Recent developments suggest that this group can form a good relationship with the new District Council and this will allow all members of the Society to act in a positive way to help improve life in the town.

QUOTE: 'WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DOVE?'

MORE AFFILIATED SOCIETY NEWS

We are glad to give space to announce the following sent us by R.J. Lawson, Chairman of a Joint Steering Committee who writes:-

The Downley Community Association, Bellfield Residents Association and Plomer Hill Tenants' Association have formed a joint steering Committee to investigate the possibility of having a Community Centre constructed on a site, adjacent to the Brindley Avenue Shopping parade and the Tinkers Wood Country Primary School.

This site has been offered by the High Wycombe Borough Council for this specific purpose at no charge. The question of financing the construction of a Centre to cater for local community needs in the Dowley Plomer Hill and Bellfield Areas, is not being pursued, with special regard to the availability of local or national government funds to complete the project.

There is an apparent and growing need for a Community Centre, to provide a focal point for the activities or local organisations and residents of a very large area, and the provision of a permanent building suitable for use by social services serving the same area of benefit.

QUOTE: 'WHAT ABOUT COLTMAN'S SHOP?'

QUOTE: 'WHAT ABOUT THE FOUNTAIN?'

EASTON STREET - the restoration of Nos 19/20

The first part of Doug. Hodson's absorbing and amusing account of how he set about restoring this nearly condemned building was well received in the last Newsletter With the property now officially dated at around 400 years old, we left him and his helpers in an atmosphere of brick dust and excitement, you may remember, following the discovery of a complete Inglenook fireplace walled-in behind a more recent one. His o story continues

Gradually we uncovered and restored more such gems - a lovely Elizabethan spiral staircase, wattle and daub (with the bark still shining on the hazel sticks and the grass still green in the daub), beautiful hand-made brick walls, a 17th Century wood panelled room - partly mutilated when inspections were carried out on the building by Ministry workmen - and an attractive Regency fireplace.

We shovelled out what seemed like tons of rubbish - in fact twenty six-cubic yard skips of waste were taken from the buildings'. Shoots were made to dispose of it from the first floor windows, having shovelled the rubbish through the open beamed ceilings from the floors and lofts above. For the building I should have imagined it was sheer delight to rid itself of all that unnecessary weight and my thoughts at that time were of a rather heavy lady releasing her corset and having a good scratch.

We certainly had our problems, one of which was to remove a main support beam attacked by dry rot that was holding up the front of No. 20. We calculated the weight factor of the front and decided to jack the building up. We cut through the ground floor and built supports for five jacks in the cellar. We then cut holes in the brickwork over the damaged beam and placed heavy timbers through. These were picked up on the other side by five jacks standing on the pavement. The building was lifted, the offending beam removed and was replaced with two rolled steel joists. The base was bricked up and two new windows were made and set in to match the existing.

We then found that the valleys of the roof were still leaking and these had to be taken out and replaced, and covered with new lead, after having already done the roof once before!

Bricks for the front cornice and parapets had to be hand-made by us to match the existing which were no longer available. I spent all of one afternoon trampling over a deserted brick kiln field continually getting stung by nettles, trying to find an old wall of 2" thick red bricks which somebody said existed. I eventually found it, having long fallen down, and selected fifty of these bricks to set a new arch over one of the windows on the front of No. 20. These have toned in and now match quite well.

We are quite proud of an internal partition wall we built in a corridor which consists of all the old materials from the building, bricks and oak timbers, not to mention one particular timber that was discovered buried in the ground beneath the foundations of No. 20. This was cleaned up and now has pride of place as a corner post in our wall

But we have had our problems and we have also had our laughs too. Clive, one of the workmen who actually slept on the premises in the beginning swore the place was haunted, having seen misty lights appearing at night. We eased his mind telling him that they were to do with street light reflections. But Keith who came later and never Clive always said he felt a strange feeling when he stood in a certain part of the building. When I asked him where, it was strange to hear it was the same place where Clive saw his misty lights.

Then there was Charlie, the carpenter, who had the unfortunate experience of three times being scared out of his life, twice by a huge rat "as big as a cat" that pounced out on him as he was shovelling rubbish, and ran for its life up Easton Street. The third time was by a bat that he found hanging in an old fireplace he was working on.

I could write a book on the full details of the restoration - of the anxieties, and the tremendous amount of pleasure and self satisfaction it has given me and the people involved. But now it is nearly all over and as we near the end and the compliments and acknowledgements are being shown, I think back to the beginning and thank the people who had the foresight and tenacity to defend and save two "derelict slums" from the jaws of execution and visualised what could be done if somebody was prepared to do it.

To all members of the Wycombe Society and all Conservationists in general I say thank you on behalf of 19 and 20 Easton Street.

QUOTE: 'DRINKING FOUNTAINS (are wanted) ... NOT ALL OF US WISH TO DRINK AT PUBLIC HOUSES IN THE DAY-TIME'

SAFFRON PLATT - full of Eastern Promise?

The Society has always been very deeply concerned about the future of the Saffron Platt area and recently we have again taken up the matter with the Borough Council. In 1969 we proposed what we considered to be an imaginative scheme for the re turn of Railway Place to housing and for the retention of the houses in Saffron and Station Roads with the Quaker Burial Ground as an attractive open space. We suggested that the whole area could be made most attractive for housing a mixture of old and young. Since that time we have witnessed the demolition of the houses in Saffron Road to be followed soon by those in Station Road. Although the Ministry Inspector disagreed with our suggestion that these houses should be retained he did at least agree that the site was ideal for housing. We have now renewed our plea for the provision of low cost housing in this vital area. The scene at the moment is one of desolation, and belief that there was a strong possibility that the new

District Council would seize this fine opportunity to provide the kind of housing needed so badly in High Wycombe, has been dashed now by the disclosure of plans to turn the area into a temporary car park.

The grim prospect of an Eastern Desert takes a step nearer reality we fear.

QUOTE: 'ALL YOUR PROPOSALS WILL OF COURSE BE OPPOSED BY MANY SHORTSIGHTED PEOPLE NOT REALISING THE LONG TERM EFFECT'
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CANAL TRIP SUCCESS STORY

Derek Woods is glad to report that the first trip scheduled for 18th May (see last Newsletter) is now fully booked.

No. 2 trip has been arranged for July 6th - again on the Avon/Kennet Canal, but this time by powered barge from Newbury as far as Hungerford Wharf. Earlier trips have reached Kentbury, but this one will cover the stretch between Kentbury and Hungerford which was opened for new, as recently as September 1973.

The inclusive cost for coach and barge will be £1.40. The coach will leave Steward & Arnold's Factory, Newlands at 9.30 am and will return to High Wycombe by 7 pm approx.

Those members interested should contact Derek Woods direct at 19, Adelaide Road, High Wycombe, (Telephone H W. 20284)

QUOTE: ' I HOPE IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE WE SEE SOME REAL ACTION'
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HELD OVER (!)

Unreported in the local press was the opening recently of a major local authority undertaking involving nearly £2m and on which domestic and industrial life^~ in Wycombe virtually depends - the new Sewage Works extensions. The Society was represented by J. Scruton (Secretary) and Clifford Farrant (Editor and Water Group member). A fascinating report on this, held over for lack of space this time, will appear in next issue. Don't miss it - it's breathtaking!

QUOTE: 'PULL DOWN THE TWILIGHT CLUB'

LAST . . .

Members who will have attended the AGM by the time they read this will have heard already what was doubtless a heartfelt appeal by the Secretary for more active help and participation by members in running of the Society and administering its business. Much progress has been made in the past twelve months as the Secretary's report clearly indicates, and efforts to increase the size of our membership have not gone entirely unrewarded either.

. . .BUT NOT LEAST

However, experience during this period has also shown how much more needs to be done - and cannot be done without the filling of a number of posts, now vacant, but which are vital to the future success of the Society in this town.

These are:

a Programme Secretary to initiate 'themes' for the Society's quarterly meetings, and arrange speakers, book halls etc. a Traffic Group Secretary to hold together membership of this most valuable group and continue the excellent work begun by it already. Secretaries to take charge of the following 'proto-groups' - as yet unformed - in which members and affiliated societies have shown interest, but which are awaiting someone to run up a flag and start shouting 'rally, rally' to a first meeting: Anti-noise group/Anti-pollution Group /Recycling Group

Come on membership; your Society (and your Secretary) needs you!

QUOTE: 'COLOURED PHOTOS WOULD HAVE BEEN APPRECIATED'
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