

OBITUARY

DEREK JOHN WOODS 1925 – 1992

It is with great sadness and with a real sense of loss that we record the death on 12 October of Derek Woods. As the tributes by Roy and Evelyn Roe and Bernard Peatey below recall, Derek was a tower of strength in the days of the Rye campaign, but his continued support for all Society activities ought not to go unremarked. His great interest in local history, of which it has been said he had an 'encyclopaedic' knowledge, led him to join and remain an active member of the Heritage Group of the Society. He was also an active member of the Membership and Publicity Group until the end. In this capacity he was renowned for organising outings for Society members, particularly his horse-drawn barge trips on the Kennet and Avon Canal. Derek had an unrivalled collection of old photographs of High Wycombe in earlier times. His daughter, Mrs Evelyn Tranter, remembers going with him to Sweetland's in the High Street to buy more photographs to add to his collection. Last, but not least, Derek was one of the Society's loyal postpeople. Not only did he deliver Newsletters in his own district, but he also distributed bundles of Newsletters to postpeople in the northern part of the town. He will be greatly missed, and we sympathise with June, his widow, and the family in their loss.

A TRIBUTE: HIGH WYCOMBE'S DEBT TO A REMARKABLE MAN

Derek came to the High Wycombe Society at its inauguration and was one of the founders of the Rye Protection Society – founded to try to defend the Rye against the then Supplementary Town Map proposals which sought to implement an earlier planning authority proposal to place an inner relief road across the open space of the Rye to relieve Easton Street which was then a crawling motor-car ridden bottleneck into the town causing, at that time, much frustration.

Formidable as any such opposition view might be, a number of us felt very strongly of the merits of such a cause, and inaugurated the Rye Protection Society to appeal against this much cheaper method of acquiring the land required.

Derek with his extraordinary research ability and retentive mind became an extraordinary member in a real sense.

What his naval researches have disclosed, I do not know, but I am sure they must also have been notable.

His particular legal approach to patent research provided him with a unique training – I recall him telling me at this time of his research on the patent rights for Harvey's Bristol Cream – a byword for a top quality sherry and whose international rights he was defending at that time.

With Derek's quiet and convincing enthusiasm and a very real and deep interest, matched by Jack Scruton's, Jim Cottrell's, Jack Hoare's, Arthur Newell's and others we all set about our formidable task, firmly believing in its long-term value for *Our Town*.

The story of where it led us, up to the Parliamentary committee with our equally formidable alternative proposals for the town, is told elsewhere, but Derek was an indispensable part of that group and earned the warm respect and admiration of the whole Society as it then was.

Derek, the Society salutes your memory and your unassuming ability, and we must now with the deepest of respect allow our "Researcher Extraordinaire" to quietly pass into the History he so worthily helped to make.

Jack Scruton, to me, once likened our Rye Protection Society's campaign after the heat of the battle, to a Trafalgar episode in the life of the High Wycombe Society.

Thank you, Derek, and our fond and inadequate adieu.

Roy K B and Evelyn Roe

The Rye, High Wycombe

(from the letterhead of the Rye Protection Society)



DEREK WOODS: A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION

As we sat in church for Derek's funeral service, a picture came into my mind.

It was Derek, listening to the tributes, his head tilted a little in mild disbelief, a twinkle in his eyes, and a modest smile on his face. Modest - yes, that is the word.

Derek did a great deal for the town, but never made a fuss about it. Of course, he was enthusiastic about the causes he took up, and pleased when he made some discovery, such as a document that backed up his case (especially in the early days of the Road across the Rye campaign) or an old photograph that threw some new light on old Wycombe. Monday mornings on the train to London were often enlivened by his accounts of his latest 'finds'. He was always willing to share. He knew my interests, and

was happy if he found some photograph or map which he could pass on.

Some things angered him: humbug and obstructive bureaucracy, for example, or an inaccurate statement in a book about the town, or an ill-informed caption to a picture. He knew so much that he could not stand seeing other people getting things wrong: yet sadly, he never published a book of his own.

Derek led many of us to a deeper knowledge of our town and its history. He helped to make part of that history and he has secured his place in its pages. We owe him a great deal and we shall miss him very badly.

Bernard Peatey