

THE HARPENDEN SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1953

The membership of the Society now stands at 236 and the Committee met seven times during the year, all meetings being very well attended.

At the Committee meetings a large variety of subjects concerning the amenities and well being of Harpenden were discussed and action taken. One of the first matters arising was the danger of traffic approaching Church Green from Rothamsted Avenue, and upon this being brought to the notice of the Harpenden Urban District Council the word "SLOW" has been painted on the roadway. Upon further representations being made to the Railway Executive a new fence has at last been erected in the Station Approach to replace the broken down wooden fence which has been so unsightly for such a long time.

In the latter part of the summer the Committee was very concerned when advertisement boards appeared on buildings facing the War Memorial at Church Green, but following communications with the responsible persons, and the matter being taken up by the Harpenden Urban District Council, these were promptly removed.

Following discussions at the Annual General Meeting a sub-committee was formed to make suggestions for the improvement of the entrance to Rothamsted Park and a plan was subsequently drawn up by Mr. Shoosmith which it is hoped to submit to the Harpenden Urban District Council in the near future.

Copies were obtained of the "Country Code" together with a poster and the Committee decided that 15 copies be obtained so that they may be distributed to schools in the district during the Spring. This being to draw the attention of pupils to the care needed to preserve the beauties of the Countryside.

On May 16th. a party of about 30 members of the Society went to Castle Ashby in Northamptonshire. The weather on this occasion was extremely good. The party left Harpenden after lunch, the outward journey being via Bedford. On arrival at Castle Ashby at about 3 p.m. a visit was paid to the grounds and the house, the home of the Marquis of Northampton, a fine Elizabethan mansion with additions by Inigo Jones and which contains a collection of beautiful pictures and furniture. After tea the coach returned through Newport Pagnall and Woburn.

Towards the end of 1952 at the request of the President the Hertfordshire Development Plan, in so far as it concerned Harpenden and District, was investigated by the Committee. Upon studying the Plan it was thought that some alterations may be made to the advantage of the people of Harpenden and to those of Batford in particular. A sub-committee was formed to make recommendations and suggestions. After several meetings a report was put before the Committee and in view of the importance of the subject it was decided to hold a meeting of members open to the public to discuss the matter fully and to get the feeling of a cross section of Harpenden residents. At this meeting which was held on February 9th, 1953 certain objections to the Plan were raised and after very lengthy discussions it was decided to forward four resolutions to the Ministry of ~~Home and Country Planning~~ Housing & Local Government and these are laid out below.

1. That the Lea Valley between Pickford Bridge and the foot of Piggottshill Lane should be maintained as an open space becoming an essential amenity to the Batford Area and should not be intersected by the proposed new bridge over the River Lea at the bend in Station Road. In addition to detracting very much from the recreational value of the whole space, the proposed intersection would present the possibility of a later re-appropriation of either half of the area for other uses. Moreover, the siting of the bridge at the point suggested in the Plan would be likely to attract traffic on the Station Road, and to the bottleneck at its junction with the main Luton-St. Albans road where congestion is already serious.
2. That the bridge should be sited to carry a short new road running north-east from the junction of Piggottshill and Marquis Lane to join the Lower Luton Road at right angles, thereby steering southward traffic towards Piggottshill Lane as intended in the County Plan and that a saving be effected by Marquis Lane not being developed into a main road.
3. That no further building development, other than the proposed new Church should be permitted south of Pickford Bridge between Lower Luton Road on the East and Station Road and Marquis Lane on the west.
4. That the owners of shops and other buildings now located to the south of Pickford Bridge in the area bounded by Lower Luton Road on the east and Station Road and Marquis Lane on the west, should be offered alternative accommodation when circumstances permit. When this has been taken up the existing buildings should be removed, also that there should be no further building development at Batford Mill.

These resolutions were sent to the Ministry before the end of February and copies forwarded to the County Development Officer.

Notification of an enquiry into objections was duly received and the Committee appointed Colonel Scutt as representative at the hearing.

The Society's objections were supported by the National Council of Women and the Townswomen's Guild, and the N.C.W. representative spoke at the enquiry which was held at Watford in December.

Reports of the enquiry were published in the Press, but the findings will not be published for several months.

The Society renewed its affiliation fees to the "Hertfordshire Society" the "Council for the Preservation of Rural England" and the "Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Society". It is also a member of the National Trust.

I attended the Annual General Meeting of the Hertfordshire Society held at Welwyn Garden City in July, 1953 where matters concerning the preservation of amenities and the future development of the County were discussed.

On behalf of the Committee I would like to say how helpful it is when members of the Society put forward any suggestions for improving the amenities of Harpenden or of anything detrimental to the beauty of the district which they have noticed so that the Committee can discuss it and take the matter up with the appropriate authorities.