

This year the Society suffered the loss of its President. Mr. W.O. Peake was a very early member of the Society when it was formed in 1930. He became President in 1946 and remained in that office until his death in June 1957. He was a great lover of Harpenden and continually strived to preserve its amenities and to enhance its beauties. His loss will be felt, not only by the Harpenden Society but also by his many friends and the residents of Harpenden as a whole.

The death of Mr. J. Broad was also deeply felt especially as he had so recently introduced Sir Mortimer Wheeler when he lectured at the Public Hall.

The talk entitled "Digging up History" given by Sir Mortimer Wheeler in April was a great success, the Public Hall being filled to capacity with many people having to be turned away. The lecture was organised by the Society and its funds benefited by some £22. It was very much appreciated, and a suggestion has been made that Sir Mortimer be invited to pay a return visit in 1959.

During the summer months the Society in conjunction with the Harpenden Free Press, organised a series of walks over footpaths and bridle paths in the district. They took place on Sunday mornings and were very popular. The walks were approximately six miles in length and the company consisted of people of all ages. Many of those taking part were newcomers to Harpenden and much appreciated being escorted on walks which they would otherwise not have known.

On May 18th, a party of 38 members and friends visited Aynhoe House in Northamptonshire. The party visited the house during the afternoon and following tea at the Cartwright Arms, members inspected the gardens of the house.

As members will have seen in the press, the suggested improvement of the main entrance to Rothamsted Park, which was designed by Mr. Shoosmith was adopted by the Council. I am sure they were delighted to read that the Friends Provident and Century Life Office had offered to finance this work as a commemoration of their company's stay in Harpenden during and since the war.

In October a Public Meeting of members was held in the Small Public Hall when Dr. Metcalfe of Bedford gave a lecture, illustrated by his own colour films of a tour he recently made in Holland and Denmark. His films were particularly interesting, showing the countryside and town life in these countries and especially the old peoples homes, and work done for their welfare.

At this same meeting there was some time given for discussion and a great deal of comment was made on the feared demolition of the ivy covered cottages facing Church Green. The meeting very much regretted the possible loss of this quiet corner of Harpenden, and expressed their wish that if these must be replaced that residences, or offices should be built and not a row of shops as is proposed. Following this meeting, the matter was referred to the committee who discussed it at great length and finally decided that unless a very large sum was offered and accepted, for the property that very little could be done to preserve them, and failing that, they felt that the Council was, by making certain conditions, doing all that could be done, to keep the site in keeping with the area.

During the year, further consideration was given to the future of street lighting in the High Street, and the Committee asked the Council to consider the erection of lamp standards similar to 'Marlowes' Hemel Hempstead and Cambridge.

An enquiry was held in October to investigate the refusal of planning permission for the building of 18 houses on the open space near Pickford Bridge. Mr. Hine attended and supported the H.U.D.C. Objections. The outcome of the enquiry was that the refusal was upheld. Mr. Hine also attended the enquiry into the refusal to allow development of land for a building estate between Crabtree Lane and Piggots-hill Lane. This was a very large enquiry and the Chairman again supported the Council in its refusal. The result of this enquiry has not yet been made known.

The Society was asked by the Civic Trust if they wished to become members and the Committee agreed that it be enrolled. This organisation has recently been formed to assist amenity societies by giving certain financial help, supplying films and photographs for exhibition and to supply speakers to address meetings etc.

It was with regret that the Committee lost Mr. Shoosmith when he moved away from Harpenden. He was an enthusiastic member being on the Committee for a very long time and its Chairman for two years. His professional knowledge and advice was often of great help and assistance.

The membership has been fairly well maintained throughout the year, but there has been considerable loss of membership due to death and other causes. Although there have been several new members enrolled it is felt that many more could be brought into the Society by a concerted effort by members to interest their friends in its work.