



THE    PETWORTH    SOCIETY

BULLETIN NO. 1

MAY 1974

It is hoped to issue to members once a quarter, a Bulletin giving as much information as possible of the activities of the Society and of the various groups working within it. We thought that this issue should be used to bring you up-to-date since our Inaugural Meeting and ask you to state how you think you would best be able to help the Society in an active manner.

You will have read of the result of the election for the Executive Committee. At its first meeting on 4th April the Committee first elected the Officers:-

- Chairman            - Colonel Alan Maude.
- Vice Chairman    - Sir Leslie Fry.
- Hon. Secretary   - Mr. Arthur Hill.
- Hon. Treasurer   - Mr. Horace Probin.

The second business of the Executive Committee was to appoint organisers of Groups of Members to deal with special aspects of the Society's work:-

Conservation (Planning and Architecture)

Mr. John W. Davidson, A.R.I.B.A.,  
North House, North Street, Petworth.

Local History and Records

Mr. Peter A. Jerrome,  
Pound Street, Petworth.

Countryside, Amenities and Horticulture

Mr. Patrick M. Synge,  
Byworth Edge, Petworth.

Below are reports and plans of these group leaders and the members of the Executive Committee hope that each and every member of our Society will express a desire to join the group which most interests them by sending a note to the Secretary, who will then be able to make a list for each leader.

GROUP REPORTS

Conservation (Planning and Architecture)

The Conservation Group has started on the task of building up a photographic record of the buildings and sites in Petworth which could be of interest to the Society in the future. It is proposed to extend the coverage so that a useful record will be available for future reference.

The County Planning Officer has been informed of the establishment of the Society and a request has been made that the Society be informed of any development under consideration in which external appearance of listed buildings or buildings of architectural merit might be affected.

The Engineer and Surveyor of the Chichester District Council has also been contacted and a request has been made for up-to-date Town Maps for the use of the Society. At the same time, discussions are taking place with the new Authority in regard to landscaping proposals for the new estates both under construction and proposed.

In addition to the above, the Group met with the Countryside Group on April 19th with a view to looking at possible planting/landscaping areas in north Petworth. News about the proposed demolition of The Hermitage, however, arriving before the party set out, changed the plans for the visit and The Hermitage was surveyed at the outset. The attention of the Parish and District Councils has been called to the damage that could be done to Petworth, especially to the view of it from the Shimmings Valley, by unsuitable development of this central site. We have urged that approval for demolition of the listed buildings should not be given until more is known about future plans for the site.

Photographs will be placed on view in the Library.

JOHN DAVIDSON.

Countryside, Amenities and Horticultural

The main object of this group will be consideration of sites for planting and choice of suitable trees and other shrubs, in collaboration with the Public Authorities and anyone else interested. In particular we will look at the approaches to the town and at the new Rothermead Estate, which is being built to the west of Station Road. We have already visited this and consider that great improvement can be made there to the visual appearance of the estate. We are now awaiting a copy of the plans of the Council before preparing any definite recommendations.

In general our policy will be to encourage planting of ornamental trees in the town, and in the country to restrict any planting to our native species. We feel that in towns upright fastigate trees have a great role and break up the horizontal lines of the buildings as well as being economical of space. We hope also to build up a small group of active workers who will be willing to undertake planting and also to keep a constant watch on the trees planted, especially in their first season. All trees will need tree guards which adds appreciably to the cost, but in general, prevention of vandalism can come only through education and by inducing a communal feeling in our work.

Another part of our work will consist in the clearing up of areas which have been misused through dumping of litter. We have already visited one copse close to the

town, which is important to its visual amenities but has been used as a dumping ground for old bedsteads and all manner of litter. This could be cleared up by voluntary workers in a few afternoons.

Particular attention will be given to the Shimmings area and the walks around Petworth, and to the keeping open and in good condition of the various footpaths. Tree preservation orders are also important in keeping the appearance of the town and we have asked for a list of those already issued by the Council and will then consider whether more should be applied for.

Members of the group have also inspected the house and former garden of "The Hermitage", for which a demolition order has been requested. We recommend that the line of yews above the Public Footpath 'Round the Hills' should be preserved and that the two garden buildings at either end of the walk below them would be worthy of repair and preservation. If it should be possible in any way to make this walk into a public amenity with seats and approaches through the drive of the house and from the footpath below it would certainly be an advantage to the town and the view over the Shimmings Valley is superb. Already two of the trees have been cut down.

All those who are interested and who are willing to take part either in our deliberations, or in the active work of planting or litter disposal, are invited

to get in touch with the undersigned or Mr. Hill. We will also welcome suggestions for trees which should be preserved, areas where planting could improve amenities and areas where clearance of rubbish or undergrowth is needed.

PATRICK M. SYNGE.

### Local History and Records

Mr. Jerrome thinks a preliminary meeting of those interested would be best. He would hope to bring along some of the materials he already has and then discuss concrete projects for further study. He says that the problem for the group will not be to find projects, but to whittle down their number to manageable proportions.

Mr. Jerrome and Colonel Maude will keep their own ideas for the meeting, as they would particularly wish to receive suggestions from members.

The recent exhibition of "Petworth: Past, Present and Future", arranged by this group at the Public Library from March 8th to April 8th, gave some indication of the field that needs to be explored and recorded. There is plenty of scope for amateur photographers, tape recordists and artists, as well as for researchers, writers and typists.

May we say again that we hope this bulletin has been of great interest to our members, that it will inspire them to join actively in our activities and, of course, persuade non-members who read it to join our Society.

ARTHUR W. HILL.

Whitelocks  
Sheepdown Close  
PETWORTH

### QUESTIONS IN SEARCH OF AN ANSWER

If any Member knows or can discover the answer to any of the following queries the Local History Group would be glad to be informed:-

1. Why was the 17th Century farmhouse in Grove Lane, now known as "Soanes", once called "Wicked Hammans"? (The Hamman or Hammond family was at one time well known in Petworth.)
2. What authority or evidence is there for the tradition that a religious fraternity once existed on the site of Stringer's Hall and The Hermitage? (Dr. Brydone wrote in the W.I. Scrapbook (1949):- "In an old Will there is a bequest 'To the Fathers of Petworth', about 1500." Whose Will?)

3. Where was the Providence Chapel, Petworth, in which Mr. James Hallett, of Alfriston, used to preach between 1848 and 1867?  
(We have a bound volume of his rather lengthy sermons, and photographs of him and his wife.)
4. What is the earliest record of the Virgin Mary Spring, near Byworth, as a place of pilgrimage or its healing power for the eyes?
5. Does any confirmation exist for the tradition of a Saxon battle near Byworth, or of the burial in Kingspit Lane?
6. What was the stone building at the South-east corner of the Churchyard opposite Rectory Gate?  
The site is shown on the 1839 Map as "No. 138, House and Yard, Parish of Petworth." A drawing of it made in 1837 is on view in the Library. In this, the only known picture, it looks more like a tithe barn or a lock-up than a dwelling house or shop.
7. Is there any picture or plan of the Rectory as it was before 1800?