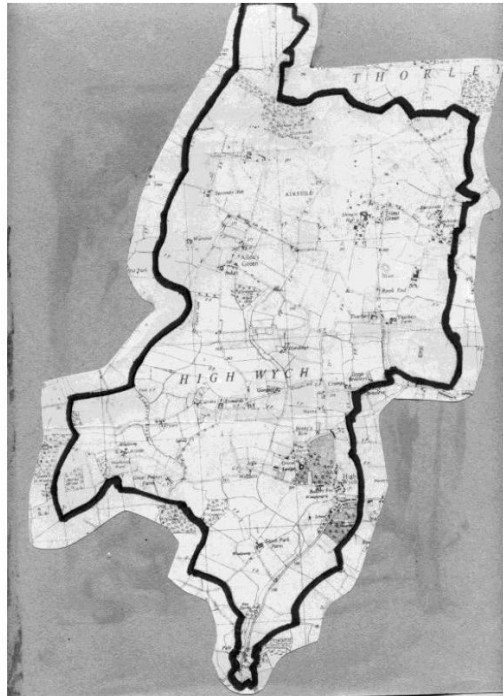
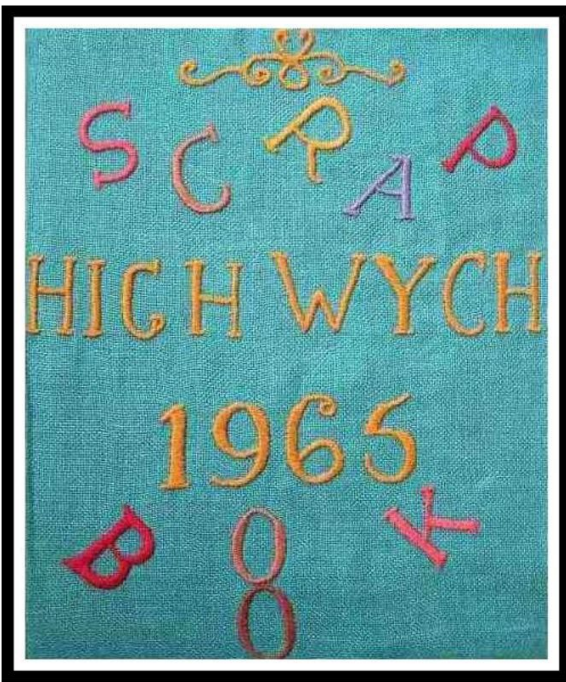


# High Wych History: The 1965 WI scrapbook

Theo van de Bilt

In 2011 an excellent book was published to mark the 150th anniversary of our school, written by Mandy West (head teacher at the time, now retired) and Lorraine Winser. I want to thank those two for their efforts and their encouragement of my own efforts as an amateur local historian. The things that really got me started, though, was when, in early 2012, I was allowed to look at a scrapbook from 1965. It was kept by members of the Women's Institute (WI), an organisation that doesn't exist anymore in High Wych. They were celebrating their golden jubilee at that point. Our village, which was then also celebrating its golden jubilee. The scrapbook provides a fascinating view on how we lived at that time.



In 1965, the population of our parish stood at 629, and there were 253 rated properties. There were two pubs, now there is only one. There were two shops; by 2012 we had only one. The two largest houses, then, as now, were the Manor of Groves, now a hotel and the Grange, originally the vicarage, which, in 1965, was the home of the Wentworth Stanley family and is still a private residence. Helmer & Dyer, the builders, Dixon's Garage and Andrew's Heating provided local employment. There was no street lighting. A proposal to install 15 lights was put forward, but not decided upon, as only four members of the Parish Council attended the relevant meeting.

The scrapbook tells of meetings of the WI of course, of the Young Wives Group and of other organisations. One such was the 'Silver Lining Club', the flourishing over 60s organisation, which has since folded, and which organised monthly meetings, outings and holidays for its members. There are pictures and reports of weddings and births, of fayres organised by the school and the scouts and of the harvest supper. On the 'dark side', burglaries at the Manor of Groves and at Crumps Farm are mentioned.

Most impressively, in 1965 High Wych did once again win the best kept village of Hertfordshire competition. Our village scored 100 points, the highest possible number of marks.

Over the next two pages you can see some more pictures from the scrapbook. Below, on the left, you see Arnold the painter taking a break from decorating; in the middle there is Gladys Wood in her guides uniform, while on the right you see Mrs. Bird, the school cleaner, with Mr. Beale the caretaker



*Above, on the left, you see High Wych children at play; in the middle High Wych Children at work; on the right the Silver Lining Club on its way to Bognor.*

Leafing through the scrapbook makes one feel more than a little bit nostalgic, sad even at the seeming loss of community spirit and togetherness. Although, of course, there still are those that try their best for our village, it does sometimes feel as if we are but another commuter village for people who work elsewhere and whose social life has little to do with our immediate neighbours. In 2012, though, we still had our church, our school, our one shop, our one pub and our memorial hall, not to mention organisations such as the Garden Club and the WI.



*Above, on the left High Wych Cubs with Akela; on the right donkey rides at the May School Fayre.*

Thanks to the Parish Council for letting us borrow the scrapbook, the contents of which have now been completely scanned in. The book itself was left at the school.

The above is but a slightly amended version of the very first High Wych history article produced in the summer of 2012 for our parish magazine, which was at that point put together by Jan Dixon. Since then, some 12 years ago, things have changed again. We do not have a WI anymore in High Wych, neither do we have a shop. We do, however, now have a coffeeshop. Good luck to the people there and to all my fellow villagers.

