

*The  
Dorking  
and  
District  
Preservation  
Society  
Newsletter*

*SEPTEMBER 1990  
NO. 2*

DORKING AND DISTRICT  
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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**President:** Mr Gordon Lee-Steere DL

**Chairman:** Mr C.B.Carr MA

**Editor:** Mr Alan A. Jackson FRSA  
St Michael's Steps,  
Deepdene Park Road,  
Dorking RH5 4AN ( (0306) 883324)

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EDITORIAL

SILENCE is a great benison, increasingly difficult to secure, even in this semi-rural area, the two chief intruders being road traffic and aircraft noise, both growing worse as time passes and both accompanied by menacing atmospheric pollution. The process of increase is subtle and there are those fortunate beings who say they do not notice background noise, but the accompanying stress affects everyone. It is an interesting exercise to sit quietly in the garden for ten minutes or so at almost any time of the day and seek to measure the longest pocket of near-absolute silence that occurs.

Even at night, the effect of an accelerator under a youthful foot can be enough to destroy the veil of silence that deep sleep demands, and sadly all too many of these accelerators stimulated by empty roads are linked to engines whose silencers have been tampered with or have decayed with age. And the whole of the Vales of Dorking or Mickleham is rent open for a few minutes just by one individual's thoughtlessness.

Road noise - which unlike rail, is continuous for 17 hours of the 24, and frequently punctuated by the shriek of ambulance, fire appliance or police car, or by restless, brainless motorcyclist, is something that all within three miles either side of the A24/A25 ( i.e. almost all of us) have to learn to live with, especially in warm weather. No wonder personal stereos are so popular! Here there is a remedy at hand --- somehow, despite the road lobby. we must get more freight on to rail and make rail journeys more attractive to passengers. The Channel Tunnel may help, at least to restrict road traffic growth, even in our area, if rail investment is made available. The underuse of the railway between Dorking and Horsham seen against the day-long pollution trail of the A24 is nothing short of madness, arising from blind adherence to "market forces" and the total lack of a national transport policy paying regard to the environment.

But of all the environmental noise polluters, none is more intrusive and frustratingly invincible than that of aircraft. Whining, roaring jets, with accompanying black vapour trails, trundle round and around awaiting their turn to use Gatwick's runway. Each year the queue gets larger and is stacked further and further out from Gatwick so that now, in Dorking, there are times when we can almost see the faces in the windows of these low-flying, slow-moving monsters.

Another variety of the menace is the micro-light, ancient biplane and other "pleasure" aircraft that seem attracted to Box Hill like moths to a candle, flying monotonously round and round until their fuel runs almost out. Finally helicopters, civil and military, seem to find the Vale of Dorking an easy option; one of these is bad enough but two or more create a row which can last two minutes or longer.

Yet, despite all this, we are relatively better-off than many neighbouring areas. This is not to say we should relax our guard or fail to support our neighbours' efforts when we can. Another Gatwick-Heathrow helicopter (intolerable noise twice an hour) remains a threat.

Complaints are futile. Back in the early 1920's "in the interest of not hampering the development of civil aviation" legislation was introduced to ensure no action for damages could be brought in respect of aircraft nuisance and this still stands today, giving a virtual blanket protection against civil remedy in the courts. Secure beneath this, civil servants and politicians adopt a policy of "divide and rule". Complaints about light aircraft and helicopters must be directed at the managers of Redhill, Biggin Hill, Fair Oaks (Cobham), or other aerodromes of take-off. There lies the joker - how do you find out whence the offender comes? Complaints about large passenger aircraft using Gatwick and Heathrow are accepted by the Department of Transport, but you must first prove the virtually impossible - that Rules of the Air and Air Traffic Control Regulations 1976 have been breached. Should you write, you are likely to be given a spoonful of the soothing balm - aircraft are getting quieter! Don't believe it, they are only silent or nearly silent when shown on TV. And they grow in number daily.

Something else then to ask those fresh-faced smiling candidates for your Votes when the next General Election comes: What are YOU going to do about aircraft noise? Or do you accept the threadbare official line of least resistance?

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 ALL COPY PLEASE FOR NEXT ISSUE TO ME AT ABOVE ADDRESS BY 1st FEBRUARY 1991 PLEASE  
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#### JUNIPER HALL FIELD CENTRE

Most readers will have heard of Juniper Hall but few will have more than a hazy idea of what goes on there. Situated in Mickleham, at the foot of Box Hill, it is one of the nine Field Centres operated in various parts of the country by the Field Studies Council to run courses for all age groups with the general aim of "environmental understanding for all". Many courses are specially arranged for schools from primary and junior on to GCSE and A level candidates. Many others are aimed at adults, and cover a wide range of interests, including all aspects of natural history, painting and photography, local history and so on. Still to come this year are courses on bats, badgers, fungi, botanical drawing, Surrey churches and the countryside in autumn. Whatever your interest in our environment, there is almost certainly a course for you, week-end or a whole week, live-in or non-resident. Write for a prospectus to John Bebbington, Warden and Director of Studies, Juniper Hall Field Centre, Mickleham, Dorking, RH5 6DA or ring Dorking 883849.

If you already know of the Centre and its work please consider joining the Friends of Juniper Hall. This association has been formed with the particular aim of raising funds for the restoration of the 18th century Coach House to provide more space for the increasing number of students of all ages and special facilities for disabled students. The Friends are appealing for £100,000 for this purpose and believe this cause has a threefold topical interest: the furtherance of environmental studies; the restoration of an historic building; and the provision of facilities for the disabled. David Ellis, Chairman of the Friends, at the address given above will gladly supply additional information.

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#### BEST DEVELOPMENT AWARD

The trophy has been obtained and suitably engraved. There have been thirteen nominations of great variety. Judging will not be easy.

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#### DEEPENE GARDENS AND TERRACE

The original proposal to restore the Gardens and Terrace has now been withdrawn by Kuoni owing to the cost involved in meeting the high standards required. However discussions on this important matter are continuing.

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#### MOLE VALLEY FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

This important event will take place at Dorking Halls from 16th to 20th October 1990 (doors open 11am - 8.30pm Tuesday to Friday, 9am - 3pm Saturday). The Society is taking a major part, displaying all aspects of its activities and will be occupying the stage and the front of the stage. A new video on the Dorking district will be ready to be shown in the foyer. This cannot be done over so many hours without a good flow of volunteers to sit at the various tables, so please offer your time to David Harding, 87 Ashcombe Road (884333). You are also asked to display in a prominent position, on your front garden gate or otherwise, the poster sent with this newsletter.

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#### MUSEUM NEWS

As we have lost several stewards due to illness and death there is an urgent need for more volunteers, particularly on Saturdays. The "sacrifice" involved is a mere two and a half hours a month in congenial company, engendering interest in Dorking amongst visitors from all over the world, so please consider whether you can help and contact Lionel Green at Arundel House, Willow Green, North Holmwood (883038) NOW!

The Autumn meeting for friends of the Museum will be held on Tuesday 25th September 1990 at the Friends' Meeting House, Butter Hill at 7.30pm, when the magic lantern will be put through its paces. All are welcome (especially potential stewards!) to what should prove an exciting evening.

If you are looking for a suitable present, Christmas or otherwise, please consider *Around Dorking in Old Photographs*, available at the Museum on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons and all day Saturdays for £6.95. This book is the result of a lot of hard work by Museum and Local History Group members and the Museum and Local History Group share the royalties of this popular publication - over £700 to date.

Recent acquisitions include: a high legged cobbler's last\*; a c 1920 toy steamboat\*; plastic assembly model aircraft kits made in Dorking Foundry\*; photo of Dorking North Station by Sir George Pollock\*; children's school slates (from Powell Corderoy School)\*; wooden clothes airer\*; front door lock, Rothes Road c 1912; small celluloid dolls and child's walking stick\*; water colour painting of Rough Rew before demolition in 1989 (Agnes Ruff 1987)\*; framed oil painting of St Martin's Church (Christine Neale)\*; Civil Defence hand torch\*; coins, thimbles and other relics discovered during restoration of West Street shops opposite Museum entrance yard\*; fork from the Old Fort Tea gardens, Box Hill\*; framed photographs of Ashcombe School pupils and staff, 1932, 1938, all named: hat band, Dorking High School for Girls. [\* = on display].

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#### OLIVIER PLAQUE

This was installed on the frontage of the house in Wathen Road in a pleasant ceremony, held in bright sunny weather on 22 May. Attended by your President and Chairman and in the presence of a select group of Dorking notables, including the Chairman of the MVDC and representatives of the Museum and Local History Group. the Hon. Tarquin Olivier, the actor's elder son, unveiled the fine plaque with an amusing and beautifully-delivered speech. Afterwards, the present occupant kindly allowed access to the room in which Lord Olivier was born, a room which, we noticed, affords a fine view of St Martin's Church.

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#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

As an old-established member of the Society I wish to congratulate you on the Newsletter. I am impressed by your article on litter, which covers every aspect of this depressing problem which so disfigures our pleasant town. Due to car parking Wathen Road is very untidy and visitors to Sir Laurence Olivier's birthplace must be appalled at our lack of civic pride.

I do pick up litter as you suggest and find it is possible to keep a nearby footpath reasonably clean with very little effort. You rightly point out that the public attitude is important. At present litter seems to be tolerated as a deplorable but unavoidable evil and picking it up somewhat eccentric.

If your article can persuade members of our Society to be seen taking a part in keeping our town more attractive it will encourage a more positive attitude to a problem which is surely very much the concern of the Society. H. CARTER, Deepdene Avenue Road.

Sir,

Your excellent treatise on litter is food for thought and action. Living on the A25, I have for years collected litter from it daily on my way to the local post office. The law prohibiting litter is seldom observed.

If we had an anti-litter day say on the first Sunday of each month when voluntary collection of litter throughout the country became a national custom it would soon produce results and hopefully make folk more litter conscious. Such a routine might even gain official recognition. F.J.EMUSS, Cdr RN Retd, Weybrook, Gomshall.

Sir,

There is an appalling problem and we must not just discuss it. Certainly we must set an example, but I have cleared an area of litter only to see it return to the same area. The Society could press for a campaign in schools and perhaps take part in that personally. We should ask the council officials and councillors to get into the schools if they are serious about this problem. We should all write letters to the council and to our MP complaining about the ineffectiveness of small bins. There are new ones at bus stops but they have no lids and are far too small. There should either be two where there is now one, or better still there should be large bins of the type that hold full size black plastic sacks and which have a lid which falls back into place. At present litter bins overflow. They are not emptied often enough. Your suggestions are good. I hope mine may be of use also.  
MISS J.M.POUNDS, Tollgate Road.

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#### LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Thanks to the sterling work of our committee under the chairmanship of Vivien Ettlinger, the Group was in good heart when I took up the reins in April. Sue Tombs had lined up an interesting programme for the first half of the year and we hope to cater for a wide variety of interests in the months to come. Future speakers include Dr Edwin Course on the Reading, Guildford & Reigate Railway and Nicholas Reed on The Local Paintings of Lucien Pissarro. Brian Overell has agreed to become our next Convener and we have welcomed John Coombes, John Day and Margaret Benselin on to our Committee. Membership of the Group is available to any Society member on payment of a small additional annual subscription. We hold meetings on the first Tuesday of each month (normally in the Friends' Meeting House, Butter Hill) where formal proceedings are followed by coffee and biscuits. Cliff Weight, our Membership Secretary, (tel: BETCHWORTH 2956) will be pleased to provide an application form.

MARY DAY

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Hon. Secretary: Peter Hawkes, 15 Yew Tree Road, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1ND.