

DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY



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DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL

'Preservation' is a word with negative overtones but our Society has always interpreted its role as a positive one in the sense that it should seek not only to promote and encourage the conservation of the beauties and attractions of the natural and man-made environment in and around Dorking but also their enhancement where appropriate and, where they have been damaged or depleted, their restoration.

An example of the latter has been brought into prominence by the recent work done by the Mole Valley District Council on the Deepdene Terrace, an area secured for the enjoyment of the public by the actions of this Society 52 years ago, when there was a very real threat that it might be built over as a continuation of Maurice Chance's Deepdene Park housing. One aspect of this project has been a splendid restoration of the upper part of the steps that once led down from the terrace to the old mansion (demolished in 1969) and garden of Deepdene, 120 feet below. But, alas, at present these steps lead nowhere, for they end in the wilderness that within living memory was the magnificent garden of the Deepdene. *Murray's Handbook for Surrey* describes how

...a long, steep glade, carpeted with turf, and closed in by an amphitheatre of fern, opens close to the house. The lower part forms a flower-garden; and the whole scene, with its occasional cypresses and sunny patches of greensward, is Poussin-

esque and strictly classical; belonging not to the English fairies, but to the wood spirits of the old world..... The 'Dene' is the 'amphitheatre garden or solitary recess' seen and commended by Evelyn on the occasion of his visit to Mr. Chas. Howard in 1655. A more recent visitor to the Deepdene, Mr. Disraeli, wrote here the greater part of his romance of *Coningsby*.

Visiting Deepdene 200 years before this was written, John Aubrey found the sides had several narrow walks, like a theatre, one above the other, and the pit of this 'theatre' was full of rare flowers and choice plants in ornamental beds. There was at that time a central path leading to a plantation of cherry trees and the lower slopes were covered with vines, figs, apricots, quinces, plums, pears, and more cherries. There are also caves of historical interest, since they were not only used by Charles Howard but by the Southern Railway when they came to establish their headquarters here at the beginning of World War 2.

What a challenge for a leading modern landscape gardener, to recreate this garden, this once far-famed example of earlier proponents of his skills; to tame the present chaotic disorder of wild Nature with Art, as it was tamed before! And what a challenge for the present owners of this long neglected spot - to provide the means and opportunity for this to be done, and to arrange some kind of control-

led public access. Of course it could not be achieved without very considerable expense but perhaps with some help from the new Heritage Fund, it may yet become a Millennium project for Dorking, providing something that might be handed down with pride for the enjoyment of future generations, a great enhancement of the attractions of our town. Those steps could be made to lead to somewhere worth visiting. Charles Howard did it without modern mechanical aids and garden-

ing skills; is it too much to hope it could be done again, or shall it all be left as a dreary car park set below a wilderness?

Alan A. Jackson

(P.S.: For any who feel a sense of deprivation at this shorter than usual editorial, we have provided a second at the end of this issue, inspired - if that is the word - by a recent walk to the station.)

Chairman's Remarks

Although I have always been conscious of the impact of public opinion, it was only recently that I personally have witnessed the strength of such opinion on Government policy being so clearly demonstrated in local matters. As you all know, the original recommendation of the Local Government Commission concerning the future local government structure of Surrey was to establish five unitary authorities at an estimated cost of £41 million. This recommendation was supported by the great majority of District and Borough Councils, and initially the only District Council to favour the retention of the two-tier structure was Mole Valley.

Happily the Commission placed great importance upon the views of the public. In Mole Valley 92% of responses received favoured retention of the present arrangements, while the countywide response was 77% in favour of the present structure. As a result, the Commission's final recommendation to the Secretary of State for the Environment was for the present two-tier structure to remain! This is much to be welcomed and indeed this outcome is in accordance with the submission of the Society.

This instance of the power of public opinion has, in my view, a very direct implication for the Society and for the principles and objectives for which we were established. If there is a determination among us all to resist developments detrimental to the District, we must

be prepared, both individually and collectively, to express these views strongly and consistently if we are to persuade Government and large commercial interests of the strength of local opinion. In Dorking we still face the threat of unwanted superstore developments on the edge of town, and, as a district, the possible expansion of Gatwick Airport. Clearly Society members and the community in general will have to be prepared to voice their views unambiguously in the coming debates and persuade others of the rightness of our arguments, if we are to succeed.

In the Annual Report of the Society I have suggested that Society members have an important role to play in recruiting more members of the public living in Dorking and the district into the Society. I make no apology for repeating the proposition, since it is of such vital consequence to the Society and indeed the objectives for which the Society was established. Although we are recognised and respected as a local organisation, the larger our membership, the greater our ability to influence decisions affecting Dorking and its locality. If every member made a resolution to recruit two additional members, our membership would increase by 200%, to well over three thousand three hundred! That would really be an influential group. Will you accept the challenge?

Barry Collins

Dorking & District Museum

Chairman's Report

This report is mainly about stewards and other helpers. Over the past few months we have had to say farewell and thank you to many good and faithful servants.

A new lease with the District Council, in respect of Museum premises, has been agreed and signed. This presents splendid opportunities for everyone. A sub-committee is now examining ideas for a new layout and, whatever is decided, we shall require additional stewards to provide proper care for exhibits, security and imparting information. For those in employment there will be a warm welcome for a Saturday duty once a month, and the welcome will be no less for help on a Wednesday or Thursday afternoon. Some regular stewards have volunteered to undertake two turns per month, instead of a single duty. Many hands will make the work lighter. Please discuss your offer with Graham Potter (tel: 743 821). If you would like to increase your skills as a 'handy-man', please join the working party which meets at the Museum on Wednesday evenings.

All requests are subject to the Equal Opportunities legislation.

Lionel Green

Library

As usual the Museum Library has been a busy place over the last six months. Apart from the regular workers, there has been a steady stream of researchers, both local and from further afield. The main topics have been family and house history, but interest has also been shown in several businesses in the town, in the effects of the coming of the railway, in William Mullins, in the history of the Dorking Golf Club (Chart Park) and many other subjects.

Our most distant researcher is Malcolm Philps, who lives in South Australia. He has used material supplied by the library to help piece together the history of the Philps family, one of whom migrated to Australia

from Dorking in 1853. A copy of the section of his work connected with Dorking is now filed in our archives at H 269.

Books, maps, photographs, estate and house sales particulars, records and historical notes are constantly being added to the collection, and visitors are most welcome to use the library facilities in West Street on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons (10.00 - 17.00)

Mary L. Turner

Acquisitions since 1 August 1994

- Pump from the Well at The Dene, Abinger Common (1895)
- Framed colour print, 'A Cricket Match on Cotmandene' (c.1780)
- Children's Model 'General Stores Shop', Edwardian Period*
- Collar and Cuff Set (1948)
- 'Spik' Home Dry-cleaning Machine (c.1920s)*
- Three unframed colour prints (World War 2), 'Battle of Britain', 'Sinking of the Bismarck' and 'Little Ships of Dunkirk'.
- Three Gas Masks (World War 2) - Baby's, Civilian's and Service.
- Baby's Gas Mask (World War 2)*
- Railwayman's Gas Mask (World War 2)
- Three framed colour prints by Geo. H. Downing - 'North Street, Dorking', 'A Court Yard, Dorking' and 'A Corner of Old Dorking'
- Bagatelle Game 'French Football' (World War 1)*
- 'Gloria' Marble Mosaic (c.1930)*
- 'Plus' Adding Machine (c.1930)*
- Stereoscopic Viewer and Photographs *
- Dorking Building Society (Est.1879) Sign*
- Two small framed colour prints - 'Betchworth Castle' and 'The Rookery, Westcott'
- The Dorking Drama Festival Senior Cup, 1957-64

* = on display

Brian Hodges

Local History Group

We have lost one of the most knowledgeable of our members in David Knight, of Westcott, who died on 17 September 1994. David's enthusiasm for local history knew no bounds and he was especially well-informed on the past of his native Westcott. He was well-known for his slide shows 'Dorking Past and Present', which he presented in conjunction with Pip and John Mee, and an album of 'Then and Now' views under this title, compiled by the trio, was published by Kohler and Coombes in 1980. David's 'Dorking in Wartime', a diary of World War 2 events, compiled mainly from the files of the 'Dorking Advertiser', followed in 1989. Tragically his wife Joy died soon after, on 9 January 1995. We all extend our deepest sympathy to their son Kevin in this doubly sad time.

The Group hopes to publish David's memories of his life in Westcott later this year.

We provided one of the four speakers and a manned display at the very successful 1994 Surrey Local History Council Symposium at Chertsey, when the theme was the importance of the picture postcard (100 years old in 1994) in illuminating local history.

A.A.J.

The Friends of St. Martin's Church, Dorking

The Friends of St. Martin's are a registered charitable trust, whose purpose is to raise funds to help maintain the fabric of this fine Victorian church, the shared home of Anglican and Methodist congregations. On the site of a medieval church, it was designed by a successful local architect, Henry Woodyer (1816-96), and built in stages between 1866 and 1877. The tower and spire, which form such a splendid and well-known landmark, were the last parts to be completed. The

interior is also very handsome and contains some important furnishings, including a fine organ and two major sets of stained glass, one of the 1860s in the chancel by William Wailes of Newcastle, and one of the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s in the nave and aisles by James Powell & Sons of Whitefriars. The Powell firm also made a distinctive form of mural decoration known as *opus sectile*. In St. Martin's the great work in this medium is the magnificent scene of the Crucifixion over the chancel arch.

Since the end of the nineteenth century there have been a few further additions, and the church has always been kept in good order, but it is now of an age when expensive repair work is frequently necessary. In 1993, for example, the congregations were faced with a bill for over £30,000 for the comparatively minor work of restoring the roof of the Lady Chapel and, of course, they have many financial responsibilities apart from the building. The Friends contribute only to important schemes and since their foundation in 1981 have provided approximately £26,250 for such restoration, a small but important proportion of the total costs. This money has been raised through the generosity of local people by donations and fund-raising events, but there is always a need to find new members to continue these tasks.

The Friends believe that the presence of a well-maintained church in the centre of the town is significant for all who live and work in and around Dorking, whether or not they use the church for worship. I am certain that the concerns of many members of the Dorking & District Preservation Society coincide with those of the Friends, and through the courtesy of these columns, I appeal to you to join us. We would greatly value your support in our work and invite you to take out membership. The minimum amount of the annual subscription is only £3. I will be pleased to send you an application form if you phone me on 0306-889 941, or write to me at Pixham Mill, Pixham Lane, Dorking RH4 1PQ.

Alexandra Wedgwood,
Chairman of the Trustees

The Planning Team

Over the past nine months we have been seeking to build on the work of the previous planning team, led for 13 years by Owen Russ. Bill Merry, a member throughout that period, gave us continuity and Bill Lancaster and Beryl Higgins bring their expertise. We meet weekly and are joined by Richard Ingle, a Society member and formerly Director of Planning, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, who is Chairman of the Mole Valley Surrey Society branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

We aim to be positive in what we say and we have put in over 80 reasoned comments on planning applications and appeals affecting property in our area. We have also appeared at all relevant appeal hearings. Usually we find ourselves supporting the line taken by the officers of the Mole Valley District Council Planning Department. Where we differ it is usually a question of emphasis rather than principle. We believe we have been of assistance to those making the decisions, i.e. the Councillors. Our aim is to express the views of the Society and we consult parish councils and other amenity societies in our area. We may not always agree but we co-operate when we can.

In the next newsletter I shall say something about urban planning matters. So far as our splendid countryside is concerned, the guiding policy must always be the Green Belt and the Natural Beauty and Landscape Value policies that cover so much of our area. With recession biting, development pressures have been reduced over the last couple of years, but they are always there and it is so important to have a sound policy framework. With this in mind, we have made comments on the emerging County Plan. Even more important locally is the new Mole Valley District Draft Plan. We have welcomed this as a clear and constructive document which not only replaces but considerably improves the three out of date plans at present covering the Mole Valley District area. In commenting on this draft plan, we have put forward no fewer than 43 suggestions (some quite trivial but others of major significance). The revised draft will

go on deposit later this year, and we look forward to helping the Planning Department to improve it even further.

So what are the main problems we face in looking at applications in the countryside? Here are some, in no particular order of importance:

- a) When is it right to allow a 'small dwelling' to be enlarged or to be replaced by a 'larger' dwelling? What is a reasonable size for a small dwelling nowadays?
- b) Is it right in any particular case to allow a redundant barn to be converted into a house, where normally Green Belt policy would be against this? If a barn really is redundant, should other uses compatible with the rural economy be sought for it before allowing it to be used as a house?
- c) Just what alternative uses to agriculture are reasonable and therefore allowable in the countryside? What about the proliferation of garden centres, and while recreation is to be encouraged, where do you reach saturation point on golf courses? Are golf driving ranges with their buildings, traffic, lights etc. an acceptable use? And what about war games?
- d) When does a garage shop become a mini-supermarket and to what extent is it right to look at commercial considerations in deciding this, for instance the effect on the village shop? When is it reasonable to allow a village shop to be converted into a house?
- e) When a 'non-conforming' use has been established and the planning authority cannot stop it, what is in any particular situation a reasonable 'trade-off' to get rid of the particular use?
- f) Low cost housing in villages is an admirable and necessary policy, but when is it justified to allow housing outside the village 'envelope' in the Green Belt, where housing would not otherwise be allowed?

As you may imagine there is an infinite variety of such questions and each case must be looked at on its particular merits. Your planning team enjoys its job but does not find it easy to reach the right decisions. Often our discussions are protracted. Because of time constraints we act under delegated powers and report to each Executive and Council meeting. We are grateful to the Council for its support. We always welcome comments from Council members and indeed from any member of the Society.

Brian Carr

Best Development Competition

The 1994 winners were **Townfield Court** (a new apartment complex by St. George Developments on the site of the Horsham Road bus garage) and **The Forge** (Forest Green). In future, beginning this year, it is hoped to show slides of entries at the Society's Autumn Meeting.

Punchbowl Inn Sign

This long running saga drifts on. Plans for a proposed sign have now been sent to the Little Chef organisation.

The Dorking Town Forum

In November 1994 Mole Valley District Council decided to set up a new consultative body in Dorking to consider proposals for the implementation of town centre strategies contained in the Mole Valley Local Plan, other initiatives for the management and physical improvement of the town, priorities for town centre investment and a number of other related concerns. The Forum comprises representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Society was invited to nominate two members, and these are the Chairman and the chairman of the Planning Committee. At the initial meeting on 8 December 1994, a chairman and

vice-chairman were elected and certain matters of administration were agreed. A number of subjects were tabled for future discussion and it is considered that the Forum has got off to a good start.

B.C.

Your Views Wanted

If you have strong views on anything you read here, or indeed on anything else within the Society's remit, or if you are upset by the opinionated rantings of your unpaid editor (all clearly labelled as his, and with which the Society does not necessarily agree, but has tolerated for five years because it saves them the hassle of finding another), why not write to us? We have published some readers' letters in the past, but would be very pleased to include many more.

A.A.J.

Spring Walk 1995

This year's Spring Walk on *14 May* will again be led by Harry Gort. All Society members are cordially invited to join this not too strenuous and always very enjoyable ramble. A pleasant social occasion, it provides an opportunity for getting to know fellow members and raising matters of interest with Society officers.

Meet at Juniper Hall, London Road (B2209), Mickleham at 14.00. Car parking is available, or reach via Boxhill and Westhumble station (10 min walk), Dorking depart 13.01, or bus 465 will bring you from Dorking, Holmwood or Capel, arriving around 13.40. Tea will be available at Juniper Hall at the end of the walk.

Gatwick Airport and the Environment

The Government has agreed to more than doubling the number of night flights at Gatwick, to reach 16,450 annually in 1997-98, over twice as many as Heathrow and nearly 40% more than Stansted.

All complaints about aircraft noise related to airline flights using Gatwick are now dealt with by British Airports Authority (BAA) at Gatwick. Jetliner noise in the immediate area of Dorking from low flying aircraft departures is almost always related to poor track keeping by the pilots concerned, since they should be flying 4km south of the town if westbound and 7km south if eastbound on what the Department of Transport perversely calls 'Noise Preferential Routes'. Fines are now being imposed by BAA for poor track keeping, but informed opinion suggests these are pitched far too low to be effective. Monitors have also been installed to check on track keeping. If you are disturbed at the level of noise of a Gatwick departure, immediately note the exact time of the occurrence and then make a FREE phone call to 0800 393 070 to register your complaint.

Those concerned about the environmental problems created by Gatwick Airport may wish to know that the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign, Stanhill, Charlwood, RH6 0EP (tel: 01293 863369) publishes regular newsletters on the subject. These may be received for £2 a year, payable to GACC at 85 Balcombe Road, Horley RH6 9AB.

As we write, it has been announced there will be no second runway north of Charlwood, but a 'feeder/reliever' runway may be built alongside the existing one. This will be resisted by GACC, for obvious reasons.

A.A.J.

Footpath Signs

Following representations made through our Footpaths Officer about the poor state of existing signs, the Surrey County Council has erected new 'Public Footpath' finger-posts at Deepdene Drive/Deepdene Avenue, at the Deepdene Park Road-Deepdene Drive footpath, and at the footpath between Ladyegate Road and Deepdene Park Road. They are quite pleasing in appearance but, owing to financial stringency, the 'routed

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rustic' hardwood signs contain no information as to where footpaths lead.

A.A.J.

Public Transport Topics

We must be careful not to upset political sensibilities, but on a matter of fact, which you may have missed if you didn't read the small print in your daily newspaper carefully, Dorking railway station would no longer issue tickets to any railway station in Great Britain or Northern Ireland, or supply train information other than for the services of the 'Network South Central' franchisee, should one of the 'options' put forward by the 'Rail Regulator' for the privatised railway scheme be accepted. Choice of this option might be attractive under that regime, since it would be a step towards leaving Dorking station unmanned. Our MP, Kenneth Baker, has been asked about this and, to ensure a proper balance, we shall of course give you his reply in the next issue of this Newsletter. A.A.J.

Neglected Verges; or, a second editorial

Litter remains a problem on the verges of the A24 and A25 roads on the outskirts of Dorking, notably along Deepdene Avenue and London Road and particularly after weekends. Some, but by no means all is thrown out of cars, with drink cans and plastic bottles constituting a major element. The eastern verges of Deepdene Avenue between the roundabout and the railway bridge are now in a disgraceful, rutted and almost grassless state, exacerbated by the recent trenching for cable television. Higher kerbs might prevent the driving of vehicles onto the soft verges (and footway!), a practice which seems particularly prevalent on this part of the road. Should not the appearance of the Dorking sections of the A24 and A25 be regarded by those responsible as a matter of pride, since they form the major road approach to the town from north and south? Or is civic pride now a rather old-fashioned attitude?

A.A.J.

NEWSLETTER No:11

Ranmore in Spring . . .

On this little lovely place
Spring has turned a radiant face,
And in the singing April days
Comes dancing down our leafy ways.

Over the flower-enchanted Spains
On shimmering valleys and patchwork plains
She spreads a carpet of wonderful things -
Colours, and scents, and petals, and wings.

In gown of buttercups pearled with dew
She pauses awhile at Primrose Row,
Scattering blue-bells and daisy-chains
Down milk-maid paths and violet lanes.

Thro' Burnett's Leaf and Pilgrims' Way
And forgotten places of yesterday
She dances on, and gaily tosses
Blossoms, buds, and dewy mosses.

Down Lillies' Copse and the Roundabout
She charms the Ranmore orchids out,
Her bright-eyes peep from every dell,
Milkwort, forget-me-not, gay speedwell.

Then over the woods to Garlic Street
Fast Lonesome go her daisied feet,
Flouncing in every hidden place
Her petticoats of stitchwort lace.

At Tanners' Hatch she shakes her frills
And leaves a trail of daffodils,
Then up the hill to Golden Ring
And Stony Rock where sky-larks sing.

From the Hanays to Old Dene she goes
Shedding clover ribbons and tormentil bows,
Then to Dog Kennel Green and Cherry Tree fair
And back by the Foxfield - her baskets bare.

Could she but stay awhile 'twould be
Where Denbies' tree stands regally,
And where the view - when looking east -
Gives to the eye so rich a feast.

In April she teaches birds her song:
In May they are singing all day long,
Chaffinch and linnet, robin and wren,
And, hush! a nightingale now and then!

In the evening time when daisies close,
She draws her curtain of amber and rose,
Staring her stars like lamps in the west,
While the silver moon lulls all to rest.

In the twilight valley Westcott seems,
Like Wotton Hatch, a place of dreams,
So quiet the little hamlets lie
Under Leith Hill and a velvet sky.

There's an air of by-gone lavender days
Round Chapel Croft and its ancient ways,
The ruined church still holds the spell
Of chanting monks and a Vespers Bell.

* * *

Here we live by God's good grace
In this bird-enchanted place,
Grant that we may do our part,
And keep its beauty in our heart.

Pointing high - and ever higher,
Lifting our thoughts stands Ranmore spire
Morning dawns or sunset gleams,
The church stands guardian of our dreams.

J.S.D