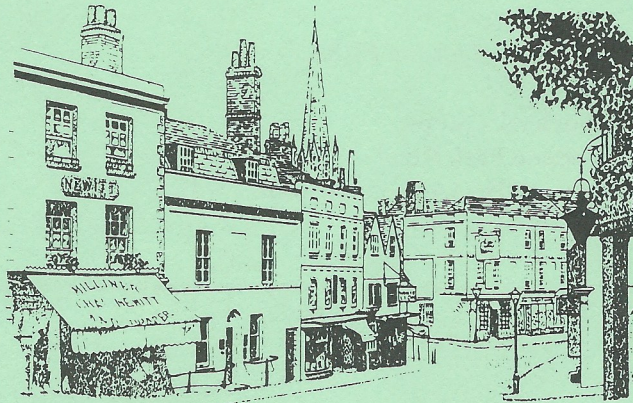


DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY



Established in 1929

NEWSLETTER

No.12 SEPTEMBER 1995

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DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL

A sojourn on the island platform at Dorking station as we awaited the arrival of a friend on a Down train was conducive to a certain melancholy. True, the distant prospect of Box Hill was soothing and quite splendid as always, but in the middle ground there was no avoiding the ugly scar of the extensive Friends' Provident Car Park framed on the one side by an unprepossessing building block, all this once curtained off by a screen of trees but now nastily exposed. Closer still, the eye fell upon the many weeds forcing their way up through cracks in the platforms, and then upon the flower and shrub beds, where long grass and weeds assumed total dominance over the dwarf conifers and other plantings. Rubbish was strewn over the tracks, where the majority mucky British public, as usual, had dropped its food and drink containers at point of last use, ignoring litter bins close by. Rail-track, one of the myriad new bodies spawned by the Government's 'Poll Tax on Wheels'*, seemingly does not care to keep the litter or weeds under control, because there is no place for such luxuries in a highly market-oriented regime. Whilst the main part of the station is still neat and clean, our mood was not broken on leaving, when we caught sight of the rust on the British Rail sign over the entrance. (To some, these manifestations of neglect and decay might appear potently symbolic of the costly politically-motivated changes the railways are undergoing at present.)

This three-part view from the station platform is perhaps a microcosm of Dorking today. Our distant prospects, our Box Hills, our Ranmores, our Leith Hills are a continuing treasure to all, and seemingly in little danger. The anxieties about them, which formed such a prominent factor in the formation of this society, are no longer dominant. Closer in, however, there are challenges.

That middle distance ugliness of the exposed car park and wall is a reminder that judicious tree planting is badly needed at several sites around Dorking. This too was a major aspect of our Society's activities in the 1930s, when we provided over 200 trees along the A25 east of the town (alas, only a small number survive). More plantings were undertaken or financed in the 1950s and later. Should we not be thinking about tree planting again, perhaps drawing up a plan of action, seeking to interest others in sponsoring it alongside us, or indeed to take on the job completely? After all, there is more than one car park spoiling a distant view and more than one insensitively-designed building offending eyes looking towards the hills. Our local council has shown a good example by plantings that hide and soften the elevations of the grim 1960s Telephone Exchange in London Road. Perhaps Surrey C.C. should think about screening Sondes Place School from Westcott Road, for it is no thing of beauty.

Coming closer in, there is much which could be done to improve our immediate surroundings, at little or no cost. Community Service Teams or young volunteers could be brought to bear on weeds and neglected areas under supervision from others with an interest and enthusiasm for gardening; more thought could be given to the siting of litter bins; individuals can and do pick up litter when walking along town and country paths or private roads (although we cannot, of course, organise litter picks on railway tracks for reasons of safety). In some parts of the country, volunteers from the local community do regularly tend station flowerbeds and other areas in the public eye that have

become subject to neglect. As a Society, we are perhaps at present not in a position actively to go out and do much in this field for the average age of the membership is far too high. Yet another reason to justify a strong campaign to recruit more members under 40!

Alan A. Jackson

* Not our phrase, but that of the only recent Conservative MP with a deep knowledge and appreciation of railways, the late Robert Adley, who would never have made it to the House of Lords. Even at the height of the Victorian Era, Dorking never had more than two companies controlling its railways; now there will be at least three operators, plus Railtrack, a Rail Regulator, Rolling Stock companies and a Franchising Director; when things go wrong, each can blame another!

Chairman's Remarks

The terms 'Preservation' and 'Protecting Our Heritage' can in certain circumstances create the impression of wishing to preserve everything from the past, irrespective of its value or relevance in today's conditions. This is, I believe, a negative image of the aims of this Society and of what we wish to achieve, and it is therefore very appropriate to report on two recent projects with which the Society is very much involved, which clearly repudiate this adverse aspect of our activities.

Many of you will remember the old Deepdene House which was demolished in the late 1960s - the site is now owned by Kuoni, the well-known international travel company. However, not many of our members, I suspect, will recall the magnificent gardens associated with Deepdene House, which in their prime were regarded as some of the finest in the south east of England. Part of the old garden extends into land which has been acquired by the Mole Valley District Council and over the past few months extensive clearance work has taken place overlooking Chart Downs Golf Club and the land adjoining the area owned by Kuoni. The Society has reached agreement with Kuoni that subject to certain conditions, we may commence clearing some of

the former gardens area with the long term aim of restoring them to their former excellence. This is a very substantial project and it will involve considerable resources, both financial and individual. A special sub-committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Richard Ingle to oversee and progress the work, and I would like to wish him and his committee every success in their task. I would also like to record formally the thanks of the Society to Kuoni for their cooperation and support in allowing us to undertake this project.

The second development of significance is the acquisition of additional premises for the use of the Museum, which has provided the opportunity for the Museum and Local History Group to be rehoused in what we all hope will be considerably improved premises. This has involved the services of an architect to draw up the design criteria for planning and other statutory approval, and it is the intention of the Chairman of the Museum Committee, Lionel Green, with the full support of the Society, to apply for funding from the Heritage Fund to help meet to substantial costs incurred in this redevelopment.

Barry Collins

Dorking & District Museum

Chairman's Report

Our architect has drawn up plans for the extension to the Museum and an application has been made to the National Lottery for a substantial sum. Whatever the decision, it will be necessary for us to raise an equally large amount. Amongst the many improvements, we hope to provide a picture gallery. We shall need a fair number of additional stewards and it would be disappointing if we lacked sufficient helpers to allow a reasonable amount of public access to the enlarged museum. Please think about whether you could help us, and speak to our secretary Graham Potter (Dorking 743821) mentioning any preference as to time - weekday afternoons or Saturdays. **L.G.**

Librarians' Report

In the last six months over 200 items have been added to the Museum's archives, the majority coming from David Knight's collection, either as a gift or by purchase. Amongst these is David's special bequest of his collection of Billheads, contained in 36 albums including an index. We have gained almost 100 Sales Particulars, bringing our collection to over 1,300. Other items worthy of note are Edith Mercer's 'Diary of a Dorking Resident and Commuter, 1940-1'; a survey of the tombstones in the Reigate Road Cemetery; and notes by Alan Woodcock for his talk to the Local History Group on Woodcock's Pharmacy.

One achievement has been the release of the first volume of the computer produced index of the items in the library. Information from all Sales Particulars has now been entered into a computer database and an index of the placenames contained in them is now in use, to be followed shortly by a personal names index and a subject index.

We have been busy with more than 150 research enquiries since the beginning of the year, mostly from visitors, but some by post. These often involve getting photocopies of

materials and copies of photographs from our large collection. Thank you to everyone who has helped with all this work.

Those of you who have visited the library lately will know that the lower room has been emptied and is in the process of being redecorated. It has been decided to use it for storage and extra work areas for the library. It could also be used as a 'classroom' for school parties, a meeting room and a reception area for visiting groups. We will, of course, need extra furniture for this project so if anyone is refurbishing their offices and has filing cabinets to spare, or anything else that may be useful, we would be very pleased to hear from them.

In the meantime the library is still open to researchers on Wednesdays and Thursdays 14.00 - 17.00, and on Saturdays 10.00 - 17.00.

M.L.T. and G.A.

Acquisitions (1 February to 31 July 1995)

Sickle*

Axehead (part) c.700 BC, and Purseholder (part) c.1500-1550 (both items found on the north side of the Nower)*

China Mug showing Dorking High Street, c.1914*

US daily newspaper, the Philadelphia Record, dated 8 May 1945, proclaiming the end of the War in Europe*

Candlestick Holder (Sconce) from Betchworth chalkpits (mid-Victorian)*

Pieces of wreckage of German Dornier (217M) Bomber, which crashed in Parsonage Lane, Westcott, on 24 February 1944 (see pp.86-89 in David Knight's book *Dorking in Wartime*)

Electric Toaster (the 'Universal'), made in USA, c.1915.*

'O-Cedar' Fly Spray, c.1930*

Civil Defence Helmet (World War II)*

Chrome Sewing Needle Case*

Table and Chest from the old Dorking Union Workhouse (1841-1936), now Dorking Hospital **B.H.**

Local History Group

The Local History Group has made 34 recommendations for additions to the schedule of listed buildings and other features in Dorking, with particular regard to late 19th and 20th century items. Amended dates have been put forward for 46 existing listed buildings.

Our new publication *Growing up in Westcott*, the reminiscences of the late David Knight, is about to go to the printers and should be on sale in October, in good time for Christmas presents.

We shall be participating again in the annual Surrey History Symposium at Chertsey on 21 October. The theme this year is *The Houses We Live In*. Each member of the committee has contributed a note and illustration of his or her own house for the display stand. Your editor will be musing on Surrey houses in the 1930s with the aid of some of his tatty slides.

An enjoyable outing to the only working watermill in Surrey, at Cobham, on the very hot evening of 1 August, saw most of the party returning home with a bag of Surrey-watermilled flour, which despite an EU caution, is said to make good scones.

Meetings continue on the first Thursday of each month at 19.30 at the Friends' Meeting House, South Street. membership enquiries please to Sandy Hine, telephone 889807.

A.A.J.

Christian Centre Education Resource Library

Diana Hargreaves, vice-chairman of the Dorking Christian Centre Education Committee, draws our attention to the Education Resource Library at the Christian Centre (located in St. Martin's Churchyard behind the High Street). This library has books, education packs, videos and slide tapes which can be borrowed by anyone in the Dorking area and is open between 16.00 and 17.30 weekdays and between 10.00 and 12.00 Saturdays. She recommends it to anyone who would like

to learn more of the history and activities of the United Nations, Christian Aid and the National Trust (respectively 50, 50 and 100 years old this year) or anyone wishing to research 'ways of preserving our town, our land, our earth'.

Mr. Richard Ingle

A welcome to Richard Ingle, former Director of Planning, Reigate and Banstead Council, who has been co-opted onto the Council of the Society and has joined the Planning Team.

Youth Officer

We are also very pleased that Judith Mindan of Sondes Place School has agreed to become the Society's Youth Officer. Judith has been co-opted onto the Council. It is hoped that her appointment will increase the proportion of our membership in the younger age groups.

Subscriptions

Members are reminded that minimum subscriptions are now:

Ordinary	£3.00
Senior Citizens	£1.00
Family	£5.00
Student	£1.00
Corporate	£20.00

Please alter your Standing Order if you have not already done so. Membership queries should be made to Mrs. L. Bailey, Danesmount, Tower Hill, RH4 2AT (Tel: 884969)

Deepdene Gardens and Terrace

Messrs Kuoni Travel have stated that they have no objection to the Society carrying out an investigation into possible restoration of the gardens of the former Deepdene mansion, with limited public access if restoration is achieved. This will be subject to suitable safeguards as to security. Kuoni are not however prepared to give any financial assistance to such a project. As noted on page 2 by the Chairman, the Society is now

taking the initiative. Finance will be a problem and special appeals will need to be launched both for the restoration work and for subsequent maintenance. Let us hope this will be attended with success; it is difficult to imagine a better millenium project for Dorking.

The tulip tree in the grounds, described by J. P. Neale in 1826 as 'one of the largest in the kingdom', has now been pronounced dead and will be felled.

A visit to the recently completed clearance and restoration work on Deepdene Terrace is highly recommended. The result is most pleasing and the Mole Valley District Council are to be congratulated. A new circular metal seat has been placed at the summit and the once overgrown and damaged memorial seat dedicated to J. Gordon Elsworthy (Society Chairman 1854-1968) has been most handsomely replaced nearby. Leave your car at home or in the Dorking Halls car park and approach on foot via Deepdene Avenue or Deepdene Drive and Deepdene Wood.

A.A.J.

Aircraft Noise Nuisance

First the good news. The Appeal in connection with the application to extend Redhill aerodrome has been refused.

It has been noticeable again this summer that aircraft leaving Gatwick, particularly those *westbound*, are still flying quite low over Dorking, which is 4 kilometres north of the 'green' 'Noise Preferential' route they should be following. The noise made is sufficient to drown conversation when windows and doors are open in fine weather and they can also cause radio and television interference. Although the penalties imposed for these infringements are apparently having little effect, details of such events (particularly the exact time) should continue to be reported to 0800-393 070 (a free call).

A new feature, first noticed last year, is that aircraft in holding pattern for landing at Heathrow are now flying as far south as Dorking. Although these are usually quite

high, the circular turns made last several minutes, and the noise is intrusive, adding to the general level. Helicopters, perhaps the worst nuisance of all, continue to increase; against these there is no redress of any kind. But please do not get angry about circling police helicopters; they are working for you!

A.A.J.

M25 Widening

The scheme for feeder roads for the M25 has been abandoned; widenings will be restricted to existing boundaries. Soil is being deposited at Ashted for widening there.

A Car Problem

As the numbers grow relentlessly, living with the motor car becomes an increasing problem, not least in Dorking. Footpath 162 (Hampstead Lane) continues to attract rat-runners trying to avoid congestion at the Westcott Road roundabout. A gate has been erected and the residents have keys, but the gate is often not locked after it has been opened by a legitimate user (laziness?). The Society has recommended a solution which may improve matters.

If you are thereabouts, using the two legs God gave you, and you are brave enough, make sure you are in the way, thus slowing down any non-residents' cars you may encounter. Similar discouragement might be tried on the road past the almshouses on Cotmandene, also used by rat-runners since the Council unhelpfully surfaced what had always been a rough track a year or two ago.

Public Transport Topics

The curious plan to reduce drastically the number of stations (including Dorking?) issuing tickets, seat reservations and London Underground transfers to anywhere on the rail system was, as members will know, dropped after a wave of public protest. I promised to give you Mr. Baker's reply but this was overtaken by events. He did, however, send me a lengthy letter written to him by the Minister for Railways and Roads, which was intended to reassure me that ticket facilities

under the new regime would be at least as comprehensive as those that exist today. He had obviously got the message.

I wrote again to Mr. Baker regarding the proposed 'Passenger Service Requirements' to be laid down by the Franchising Director. These enshrine minimum standards of railway services to be provided by operating companies and it is important to establish exactly what is proposed because if a private operator wishes to cut costs, resort can be made to the minimum requirement, *against which there will be no appeal*. I therefore sought an assurance from our MP that he would support certain key features for rail services in his constituency: (1) the need to coordinate train services provided by the two operators between Victoria and Waterloo trains to Epsom as has long been the case under BR and (2) the need to maintain services (with reasonable coastal connections) between Dorking and Horsham, as exist at present. In addition I suggested he might support the need to reduce the still rather slow through journey times between Dorking and London and the need to maintain and improve last train times from London to Dorking at night.

Mr. Baker kindly put these requests to the Director of Rail Passenger Franchising in March. 4½ months have now gone by and I have heard nothing more of Roger Salmon's minimum requirements for our area. I hope to have more news on these matters in the next edition of the Newsletter. A.A.J.

PS: Mr. Salmon's reply has just been received; too late for analysis this time.

Proposed Supermarket in Vincent Lane

The Society has put in similar objections to those unsuccessfully used against the Wickes store, i.e. that a large store here would have a detrimental effect on the retail centre of the

town and the loss of industrial land would create extra pressure on the Green Belt. Traffic implications are still not finalised.

A joint campaign will be mounted with the Chamber of Commerce in the autumn.

A Plea from Our Calligrapher

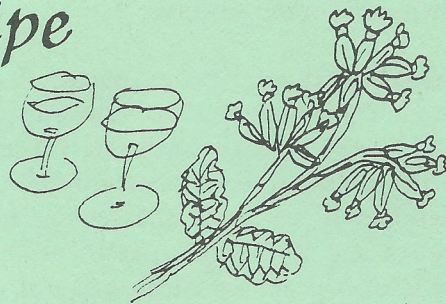
Mr. Eric Ferguson, 22 Deepdene Avenue, Dorking RH4 1SR, has prepared a number of his delightful back covers for future issues of this Newsletter but he is anxious to find more material, poetry and short pieces of prose associated with our area. In particular he would appreciate help in finding literary references to the River Mole.

Anyone Out There?

We would like to publish members' views on anything they read here or indeed on any other subjects of concern to the Society. We seek a greater expression of opinion and a wider knowledge of issues that members consider the Society might tackle. Are you worried by aircraft noise, traffic, ugly buildings, unsuitable development projects, deterioration of the environment, declining standards and lack of investment in public transport, town centre decay, industrial activities, overdoing the retro-chic and heritage culture? What sort of Dorking would you want to see in 25 years' time? Do you welcome Neovernacular styles, or would you prefer Post-modern buildings? To keep the number of cars in the centre down, should the Dorking Halls Car Park be free at all times and charges at the rest raised to compensate? How can we increase attendance at the Museum, where stewards often outnumber visitors, especially in the winter? Should West and Dene Streets be pedestrianised? Don't just grumble; suggest constructive solutions and possible initiatives and we will give them publicity and due consideration.

A.A.J.

John Evelyn's recipe for Cowslip Wine



“To every gallon of water put two pounds of sugar. Boil an hour and set to cool; then spread a good brown toast on both sides with yeast, but before you make use of it beat some syrup of citron with it, an ounce and a half of citron to each gallon of liquor, then put in the toast when hot to assist its fomentation (which will cease in two days), during which time cast in the Cowslip flowers, a little bruis'd, but not much stamp'd, to the quantity of halfe bushel to 2 gallons (or rather 3 pecks) and 4 lemons blech'd with the rind and all. Lastly one pottle of white or rhenish wine and then after two days tun it up in a sweet cask”

John Evelyn also recommended the use of Cowslip Wine in Salads.

FROM THE GARDENER'S CHAPBOOK
EDITED BY E. H. M. COX