

DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY



Established in 1929

NEWSLETTER

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DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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MORE FOR YOUR MONEY

We are increasing the publication of these Newsletters from two to three annually. This is the first of the additional issues, to appear around the turn of each year.

EDITORIAL

Your editor stands accused (by one member) of expressing 'a slight political bias' in his remarks about railway privatisation. In a sense this seems a somewhat pointless accusation; is it really possible for a conscientious DDPS Editor to be politically neutral about any matter arising from central government decisions which will have repercussions on our local government and services? But we welcome a debate and are indeed grateful to the member concerned, not only for a reaction to our grapeshot, but for providing an opportunity to clear the air.

It is axiomatic, indeed self-evident, that the Society must always be non-party political in the sense that it should not align itself generally with any of the political parties in contention for the Mole Valley constituency and the local councils.

But your Editor does unequivocally reserve the right in these editorials to question Government policies when they seem likely to have adverse repercussions on our local environment and local public services. In our view it would be impossible for the Society, as a body, to be effective if it were to maintain a fully neutral non-political stance on specific issues when these affect local amenities, directly or indirectly. There are and always

will be, in a democracy, occasions when the Society as a body must raise a critical voice on proposals handed down from above. To quote only two recent examples: this happened when the Society opposed the Government's evident attempt to introduce unitary authorities and abolish county councils, and again when it opposed the Department of Transport's proposal to extend its Surrey land take for 'improving' the M25. Similarly, if your Editor genuinely believes that rail privatisation (by positing lower standards of train services, variable fare scales and a general lack of investment in infrastructure) is likely to result in diversion of more traffic onto our congested Mole Valley road system, is it unreasonable to express this view?

If there are those who disagree, and wish to explain (in precise terms please) in what ways the public transport of Mole Valley has so far and will in future be improved by privatisation, or why it is wrong for your editor to take a positive stance on this specific issue, we shall be delighted to publish your views. As has been said many times before, this Newsletter is here to give members the opportunity to express their ideas and views and thus guide the Society's actions.

Alan A Jackson

Edith Olive Mercer OBE PhD 1905-1995

Edith Mercer, resident of Dorking since 1937, died aged 90 on 28 September. She was a remarkable woman, who made a great impact on local affairs; always ready to volunteer for committee and other voluntary tasks, she contributed much to the work and success of both the Society and Local History Group over more than 30 years. Her initial professional speciality was industrial psychology and after some years with the National Institute of Industrial Psychology, Edith joined the Army's Auxiliary Territorial Service as a Technical Adviser in 1941, serving in Britain, Egypt, Palestine, Kenya and India, reaching the rank of Chief Commander and receiving the military MBE in recognition of her achievements.

From 1945 Edith worked on the Civil Service Selection Board; at the Colonial Office; the Ministry of Overseas Development; and the Department of Technical Co-operation. In the last decades of her career, as a Principal, she was concerned with arranging technical assistance towards social and community development in Third World countries, travelling widely and attending international conferences. She was awarded the OBE in 1965.

After retirement in 1970 Edith resumed for a while her work on Civil Service Selection Boards and in her retirement years enjoyed mutual interests in gardening, walking, travel, photography and local history with her sister Doris. Together they toured Surrey with an illustrated lecture on the River Mole and in 1993, with help from Beryl Higgins, published their research into Chart Park, Dorking, a book which aroused great interest among architectural historians. Edith's edited diary of her experiences in the Blitz, read to the Local History Group and subsequently deposited in the Museum, revealed her strong spirit and lively intellectual curiosity.

To the end, despite physical problems, her mind remained bright and sharp, well apparent in her conversation and her attitudes. It was a privilege to have known her. She is survived by her sister Doris, to whom we offer our sincerest sympathy.

A.A.J. (with acknowledgements to Vivien Ettlinger)

Dorking Museum Applies for Lottery Grant

The Dorking Museum is applying for £35,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to go towards the estimated cost of the projected extension and other improvements which are likely to require £50,000-60,000 in total.

The lower room of the Library has been cleared and redecorated. It now provides a useful and attractive display area and accommodation for visiting groups, including schoolchildren. A wheel chair ramp is available and arrangements can be made for handicapped visitors wishing to use the Museum's Library facilities without climbing the stairs.

Christmas cards are available at the Museum shop (open Wednesday and Thursday

afternoons and 10.00 to 17.00 on Saturdays). There are also other items available for small presents, including the Local History Group's publication *Growing Up In Westcott* (£4).

An appeal has been launched for funds to enable the Museum to purchase local photographs from the David Knight collection. There are 28 albums on offer at an asking price of around £2,000. Contributions will be welcomed by Sue Toombs at 6 Clifton Terrace, Dorking RH4 2JG (Tel: 886101) **A.A.J.**

Annual General Meeting 1996

The refurbishment of Dorking Halls in 1996 makes it necessary to find an alternative venue for the Society's Annual General Meeting. It will be held at Sondes Place School in the evening of Thursday 25 April.

The Chairman writes:

Recently I have been working through what may be a significant Government publication - the *White Paper on Rural England* with the subtitle *A nation living in the Countryside*. In the foreword, the Prime Minister, John Major, says that this is the first time that such a comprehensive review has been undertaken involving the whole of Government as well as people across the length and breadth of the country.

It is not my purpose to attempt to review what is an immensely detailed analysis set out in the *White Paper*, but only to draw it to your attention and to highlight one or two aspects of the paper which seem to have considerable significance to our community in the Mole Valley.

1. The Market Town

In discussing the changes which have contributed to the decline in the importance of towns like Dorking, caused different leisure activities and the development of out-of-town superstores, it is recognised that the services and employment opportunities created by small market towns have a direct bearing on the vitality of the surrounding villages. Few of our members living in the villages in the Mole Valley would, I believe, dispute this statement.

[Digressing from the *White Paper*, it is important to note another consultation paper from the Department of Environment modifying a previous Planning Policy Guide (PPG 6). The object of this revision is to emphasise the need to regenerate city and town centres using a plan-led approach to guide future developments, including the identification of suitable sites, adopting a sequential approach to the selection of suitable locations for development and promoting development strategies and action plans for improving and managing the town centre. The Society has responded favourably to this consultation paper, indicating its support.]

2. Transport in the countryside

While recognising that private transport is now the key to maintaining the rural quality

of life, the *White Paper* does emphasise the need for innovative schemes to improve existing public transport services, such as providing support for community minibuses etc. There is an intention to encourage Parish Councils to develop new flexible transport schemes to meet their communities' requirements and the *White Paper* states that the subject will be discussed with local authorities in 1996.

3. Village Shops and Post Offices

The importance of the village shop/post office is clearly recognised in the survey. The decline in such shops over the last 30 years is stated to be from 577,000 in 1961 to 319,000 in 1992 - although in the same period there has been an increase in farm shops. The *White Paper* continues by saying that the Rural Development Commission (RDC), one of the three agencies set up by Government for managing the countryside, will pilot a new retail grant scheme to help shopkeepers invest in modern equipment, thus enhancing the services they provide and improving their viability. If the pilot scheme is successful, the RDC will consider introducing a nationwide scheme.

The recognition of the special needs of the countryside and its importance to the whole community is very much welcomed, and the Society will watch developments with great interest over the next months and years.

B.C.

Can You Help?

The Society is urgently in need of a Minutes Secretary. We seek someone with a little free time and a typewriter or word processor, to take the minutes at 11 or 12 meetings a year.

The meetings (apart from the AGM) are held at the Friends' Meeting House in South Street, Dorking, and normally take place on the second Tuesday of the month at 20.00, for about two hours.

At the present time there are no meetings in August or December.

Please contact the Hon. Secretary, Peter Hawkes (Tel: 883699) if you can help the Society in this way.

Deepdene Gardens

We continue to work towards restoration of the gardens which were originally laid out in the Deepdene, the natural hollow between the site of the Deepdene mansion (now occupied by the main Kuoni Travel building) and Deepdene Terrace. A Restoration Committee under the chairmanship of Richard Ingle is in business, with Mary Day (Tel: 712957) as Secretary. The aim is to reproduce the landscaping and gardens as they appeared around 1840. Invitations have been issued for a Consultants' Report and the total cost of this imaginative project may reach over £15,000.

Flying the Flag

In the glorious summer of this year the Society mounted a stand and display at the village fêtes at Holmwood, Wotton, Capel, Ockley and Mickleham. More recently we were at the Friends' Meeting House, participating in a very successful gathering of all the organisations using the building.

We also manned a barrow in St. Martin's Walk for the Dorking Gala Evening on 14 December.

The Punchbowl Inn

After correspondence between the Society's President and the Chairman of Forte plc, the Society's Executive Committee reluctantly concluded that there is no mileage in further pursuing the suggestion that the old name for the present 'Little Chef' should be included in the signage.

Forte is, however, at present resisting a take-over bid by Granada. If Granada succeeds and a new policy emerges, perhaps we can try again!

Another Fictional Name

Readers will recall the controversy over the naming of the development on the bus garage site. This was at first to be called *The Malt-*

ings but the owners were persuaded to change to something with valid local associations - *Townfield Court*. The new housing estate south of Ridgeway Road has been labelled *High Acres Grange* by the developers; this has no local basis whatsoever, but here the solution is more difficult as the local council has long since adopted the obvious local name, *Rough Rew*, for their own housing development near the site. Let us know if you have any bright ideas! **A.A.J.**

Is Your Subscription Paid Up?

Members are reminded that minimum subscriptions are now:

Ordinary	£3.00
Senior Citizens	£1.00
Family	£5.00
Student	£1.00
Corporate	£10/£20

Membership queries should be made to Mrs. L. Bailey, Danesmount, Tower Hill, Dorking RH4 2AT (Tel: 884969)

Yes, It Can be Bought in Dorking!

A member wrote to the Editor after the last Newsletter asking if anything could be done to rectify the gap left by the closing of the Linen Shop in the High Street, complaining of the limited range of shops, which it seemed to her was driving custom out of the town 'not only for the missing items but others that are bought at the same time'. This appeared to us as perhaps something more appropriate for the Chamber of Commerce to consider rather than the Society but, game for a challenge, we did commission our professional shopper to undertake a small survey to see whether items stocked by the sadly deceased Linen Shop were available elsewhere. The result was pleasantly surprising.

Sheets, cushions and pillows are available at FADS and Woolworth; *pillow slips* at Woolworth; *duvet covers, curtains and valances* at FADS; *tablecloths* at Peter Knight; *tea cloths* (28 designs) at Peter

Knight, Robert Dyas, Woolworth, Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for the Disabled Charity Shop (1 design) and Dorking Museum (1 design, choice of colours); *oven gloves* at Peter Knight, Dyas and Woolworth; *aprons* at Peter Knight, Dyas, Queen Elizabeth's and Woolworth; *face cloths* at Peter Knight, Boots and Superdrug; *towels* at Peter Knight and Woolworth; *tea cosies* at Dyas and Queen Elizabeth's; *pegbags* at Dyas, Queen Elizabeth's and Woolworth.

Alas no *blankets*! But Marks & Spencer will order any item the company stocks in any of its stores, and they offer a comprehensive range of blankets, bed linen and table linen. There is also a regular stall in the Friday Market which can supply many of these items.

A.A.J.

Public Transport Topics

For the substantial minority of members who rely on public transport, and even for the majority who use it only occasionally, the progress towards rail privatisation remains a sensitive and live issue. We shall try to keep this piece factual!

Although the services between Dorking and London as laid down in the Passenger Service Requirements (PSR) have been improved as a result of protests from individuals and the County Council, these remain below the 1994 level. As Kenneth Baker wilyly noted in a letter to your Editor on the subject, '...I appreciate you may not be completely satisfied.' We are grateful to Mr. Baker for passing on our protests about the decisions affecting local rail facilities.

The final PSRs giving minimum standards allowed to the operating companies in our area fall short in the following respects: (1) all off-peak services to and from London are over the longer, slower and more congested route to Victoria via Sutton and Mitcham Junction; (2) despite (1) there will be no guarantee of reasonable connections with Wimbledon and Waterloo services at Epsom, a facility that has existed since the 1920s; (3) there is no requirement to maintain the

present semi-fast off-peak Waterloo-Dorking-Horsham service, which is regarded as 'experimental'; (4) last trains at night from both London and Dorking are set up to 45 minutes earlier, and some first trains from both points up to 42 minutes later; (5) there is no guarantee of reasonable connections at Redhill into and out of Dorking trains. All these facilities are placed at risk by rail privatisation, along with the present standardised through cheap fare structure 'by any reasonable route'.

When rail privatisation was before Parliament, Government representatives stated that franchising would be based (not 'broadly based' as is now claimed) on the existing 1994 timetable. The Franchising Director was required to ensure that the private sector provided the existing pattern of services. In fairness we must add that the PSRs mentioned above are expected to be exceeded by the private operating companies, but they will be free at any time to revert to these minimum standards if financial pressures require, and there can be no protest against such reversion.

Although no operating unit has yet been sold, the game is already being played to the new rules. A member (not the Editor) returning from London late at night recently found his train from Waterloo (South West Trains) held outside Epsom, while the Victoria-Dorking connection (Network South Central) which had been waiting at the Epsom platform was allowed to leave. The station staff at Epsom had telephoned the Wimbledon signal centre asking for the Dorking train to be held, to enable the Waterloo train to make the connection. This was refused and, as a result, some thirty or so passengers from Waterloo for Ashted, Leatherhead and Dorking were obliged to cool their heels at Epsom for half an hour very late at night. On complaining to Railtrack, the third party in play, our member was brusquely informed: 'Different train companies do not generally operate a connections policy for passengers using other companies' trains.'

A.A.J.

Newsletter Distributors

I wish to express sincere thanks to those members of the Society who generously give their time in distributing our Newsletter. Over 800 Newsletters have to go out with each issue, some 600 of which are delivered by volunteers.

In the town, those kind people are: Mrs. Lynda Bailey (Membership Secretary), Miss S. Bowers, Mr. A. J. Coombes, Mrs. V. Ettlinger, Miss J. M. Foster, Mr. H. Gort, Mr. A. S. Hay, Miss M. G. Hayman, Mr. G. Hunter, Mr. A. A. Jackson, Mr. C. W. C. Jones, Mr. C. C. Kohler, Mr. D. J. Loram, Mr. E. J. Mansfield, Mr. S. V. Peace, Mr. F. R. Rush, Mr. B. A. Smith, Mr. D. Somerville, Mrs. B. Turner and Mrs. J. M. Wadey.

And from outside Dorking: Abinger - Mr. T. O'Kelly; Beare Green - Mr. R. Fernall;

Brockham - Miss M. M. Benselin, Mr. C. Weight; North Holmwood - Mr. L. E. Green; Westcott - Mr. D. J. Horner, Mrs. A. Monie, Mr. W. D. Park, Mrs. A. Sawyers, Mrs. A. R. W. Wetherell; Westhumble - Mrs. J. Maddocks.

In some cases members of their family assist, who are also to be thanked. Recent volunteers are Mrs. J. A. Graham (Ridgeway Road) and Mr. E. G. Jenkins (Flint Hill). If there are any other members who would be willing to deliver in or near their own road, or out in their village, they would be most warmly welcomed. My 'phone number is 883381.

The saving to the Society through delivery by hand in 1995 was around £300, at second class postage rates. That is approximately one-eighth of the total of annual subscriptions.

Michael Beggs

Dorking

WITH APOLOGIES TO MR. RUDYARD KIPLING

If you're off to High Street, Dorking, in the morning,
You mustn't take my stories for a guide.
There's little left indeed, of the town of which you read,
And all the folks I write about have died.
Now some will only sniff, if you mention Neville Stiff,¹
Nor remember what his learning and his skill did,
And the cabmen at the station, do not know my rich relation,²
Nor the church in Westcott village that he builded.
They are gone, gone, gone with lost Atlantis.
(Never say I didn't give you warning.)
In eighteen-seventy-three, they were there for all to see,
But you won't see them about the town this morning.
If you're off to High Street, Dorking, in the morning,
You mustn't go by everything I've said.
Israel Walker's London Stages, have been laid aside for ages,
But the electric line will take you there instead.
Joey Mason,³ it is true, can't be seen at twenty-two,
South side, High Street - no matter when you call.
And I fear you'll search in vain, for a King's Head⁴ down the lane,
Where Tarling⁵ played his fiddle at the Ball.
They are gone, gone, gone with Thebes the Golden.
(Never say I didn't give you warning.)
In eighteen-seventy-four, 'twas a favourite drinking floor,
But it's not in Dorking town this morning.

1. Neville G.J. Stiff, Curate of St. Martin's, 1911-1919, author of 'The Church in Dorking & District.'
2. Mr. Worstfold - financed the building of St. John's Chapel, Westcott.
3. Israel Walker [great-grandfather of J.E.N. Walker]. His photo is in the

'Bull's Head'. He owned and drove the Dorking to London Coach.
4. Joey Mason - family grocer. His shop was where Robert Dyas is now. Joey was an expert in horseflesh.
5. The King's Head - now part of Arthur's the builders in North St.

[1991: what was Arthur's Yard is now the King's Head Court].
6. Tarling - a very musical family which often played in public and private.
7. The 'Ram' - demolished in the '60s, stood on the corner of Dene St./

PARODY OF HIS POEM 'PHILADELPHIA' BY J. E. N. WALKER 1977

If you're off to High Street, Dorking, in the morning,
And want to book a room at some hotel,
You needn't look for fun, at the 'Ram Inn' or the 'Sun',⁸
Though the Beadle⁹ of the parish liked them well.
It's no use trying to phone, asking after Wally Stone,¹⁰
Or where the Reverend James Joyce¹¹ has removed - no!
You must treat as out-of-date, the story I relate,
Of the parish church of Dorking that he loved so.
He is gone, gone, gone with Martin Luther.
(Never say I didn't give you warning.)
In eighteen-seventy-five, he was (rest his soul!) alive,
But he's not in Dorking town this morning.
If you're off to Dorking, High Street, this morning,
And wish to prove the truth of what I say,
I pledge my word you'll find, the pleasant hills behind
Unaltered since Tom Cubitt¹² rode that way.
Still the pine-woods scent the noon, still the skylark sings his tune:
Still autumn sets the Box-Hill bluff a-blazing:
Still the bluebells fill the dell, with their soul-subduing smell,
And still the stars above make night amazing.
They are there, there, there with the Earth immortal.
(Townfolk, I give you friendly warning.)
The things that truly last, when men and times have passed,
They are all about our lovely town this morning.

High Street where 'Contessa' is now.
8. The 'Sun' stood on the north side of the High Street, just west of the Market.
9. The Beadle: Mr Bolt was the last to hold that office in Dorking.
10. Walter Stone of Stone & Turner,

late Saubergue, now Dyas.
11. Revd. J. B. Joyce, Curate of St. Martin's, 1875-76.
12. Thomas Cubitt [1786-1855]. Famous London builder. Father of the first Lord Ashcombe. Owned 'Denbies'.