

*The  
Dorking  
and  
District  
Preservation  
Society  
Newsletter*

*5*

MARCH 1992

DORKING AND DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL

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More major road building is threatened in our area. The potential damage to our precious, already wounded, environment demands our most careful consideration; if we feel uneasy, or actively wish to resist what may be imposed from above, it is our democratic privilege (and duty) to make our feelings known - apathy simply allows the official proposals to proceed. They may anyway, but at least we can try. Transport seems likely to be an important issue in the imminent General Election and it is therefore of interest to record where the parties stand as regards road building in the Mole Valley area. Since the present Conservative administration has declared its intention of widening the M25, its successors will no doubt pursue this if the Tories secure a workable majority. Both Labour and Liberal Democrats have clearly stated that they are firmly opposed to M25 widening and favour using the allocated resources for railway investment. Your Society has so far not expressed any official view on the M25 scheme, and indeed it may be outside its remit, although it would seem to have serious implications for our area, not least on the A24.

The A24 is very much our concern and its future is currently under discussion. As a result of a spate of accidents, mostly if not entirely caused by reckless and unsafe driving of cars and motorcycles at very high speeds, the Surrey County Council has brought forward proposals, not yet approved, which are designed to make the A24 immediately south of Leatherhead "more attractive" to road users, many of whom will be moving to and from the M25 junctions at Leatherhead. Four options have been put before us in a glossy brochure, the most costly (present estimate £15 million of taxpayers' money) involving an embankment through the riparian meadows south of Givons Grove, followed by a tunnel, parallel to and the same length as the Norbury Park railway tunnel, and a bridge over the Mole before it rejoins the existing alignment. The Society's views on this proposal have been expressed, as set out later in this issue.

Let us consider the background. The giveaway, ominous phrase in the County Council brochure is the intention to make the A24 "an attractive route for long distance traffic". Only the two most costly options are shown as achieving this and we can be sure then that these schemes and almost certainly the most expensive, the Tunnel Scheme, will be the ones favoured by the powerful road lobby and the motoring public not directly affected. Conveniently, this also suits best those who live on top of the offending section at Mickleham and not surprisingly they are cheering for it.

But what is likely to happen further south if the Tunnel (or the Priory) Scheme becomes a reality at the same time as, or soon after, the M25 widening? Bear in mind if you will, that an extension of the dual carriageway south of Dorking (Capel to Warnham) is also being simultaneously planned by the SCC Highways officials, and that improvement of the Leatherhead By Pass is also mooted, and you will realise that Dorking becomes the piggy-in-the-middle. Attracting and catering for long distance traffic, much of it from an enhanced and even busier M25, the improved A24, once these schemes are completed will very soon be under such a swamp of additional traffic that there will be pressure from users and the road lobby for immediate dualling through Deepdene Park (a measure that has only been postponed pending a traffic increase). With a dual carriageway from Leatherhead to Horsham, a costly tunnel at Mickleham and increased traffic being generated daily, the next step will be improved junctions and approaches, possibly a flyover, at the Reigate Road (A25) intersection in Dorking. Unpleasant subways or lengthy footbridges will also become necessary if pedestrians from the east side of town are not to be completely isolated from the shops and other facilities. The continuous traffic roar from the A24, already a feature of Dorking, will become even more obtrusive, as will the varied wails of fire, police and ambulance on their costly way to gory accidents. What price then the quality of life for all those living in the eastern part of Dorking? Surely not much better than that of the unfortunates of Ashted and Leatherhead whose houses have not been demolished for a widened M25, but are left uncomfortably close.

This is a moderate assessment of what could happen in the next decade or so. The Mole Valley Friends of the Earth have painted a darker scenario, which suggests that long term road planning already sees an "improved" A24 acting as an important link between the widened M25 and yet another ring motorway round London (a scheme currently strongly advocated by the road lobby). This "son of M25" would cross our district east to west, on a Charlwood - Capel - Ockley - Ewhurst axis. As I suggested in an earlier editorial (Newsletter 3), the case for such a motorway would be enhanced if rail access to the Channel Tunnel around the south side of London is not improved. And there is still no sign of that happening.

No one would pretend that the present A24 is pleasant for the residents of Mickleham, but most of them have lived with it from the day they moved there and the motorcycle meets at Burford Bridge are not a new feature. The dangers of this section (which have been much reduced by the existing "temporary" measures) demand some action, but the cost need not be great. To use these dangers as the excuse to turn the A24 into a junior motorway at a cost of many millions of pounds is surely unacceptable. An "improved" A24 in a Norbury Park tunnel is not just for Mickleham's benefit; it would have a very drastic effect on a much larger number of people further south, not to mention the environmental damage to Norbury Park and its environs.

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 CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN  
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Now that the newsletter is a regular feature - and we are very grateful to Alan Jackson for the way in which he has edited it and given it life - we thought that members might like each issue to have a column by one of the administrative officers and one by a "specialist" officer. The first of the latter will be by Owen Russ, the Chairman of our Planning Team. (Mr Russ's note has been postponed until the next issue owing to pressure on space - Editor).

Anyone writing about the Society at this time must start by mentioning our sad loss of Ethel Clear and John Walker. Each of them gave so much to Dorking, to the Society and to our Museum. I will say no more, as full obituaries appear in this Newsletter and in the journal of the Local History Group.

It is good to be able to report that the main Society has a full complement of officers and this year in your AGM papers you will see that we have set out the various responsibilities of members of the Council. This does mean that we are in a better position to initiate as well as to react. Please let us have your thoughts, ideas and criticisms, so that we can really represent the membership.

You may like to note that at the AGM this year we are particularly asking for your comments and ideas. We do not want to take too long over this as we have an excellent speaker, but please come ready to express any comment or put it in writing to the Secretary beforehand.

Your Council meets every three months and your Executive in the intervening months, acting under delegated powers. Our specialists meet together in two groups and any unattached member of Council can join either group. In this way we seek to keep in touch with each other and with your views. The work of the main Society is integrated with that of the Museum and the Local History Group which report separately through this Newsletter. I set out below just some of the activities of the main Society in the past year, not in any particular order:-

1. BEST DEVELOPMENT AWARD. For the second year this has been a success and is also good for our relationships with the District Council and the *Dorking Advertiser*. Do please let Peter Hawkes have any nominations for developments completed in the year to March 1992 as soon as you can.

2. COUNTRYSIDE. Margaret Benselin and Neil Maltby drafted our response to the County Countryside Plan. On the whole we were favourable and certainly pleased to be consulted. We have commented on golf course applications from a countryside viewpoint and are considering the effect of "horseculture" and "set-aside" on our changing landscape.

3. HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT. We supported Brockham over the "bridge" and put in detailed comments on the County Transport Plan. Like the County, we would welcome a comprehensive Government transport policy and less concentration on roads as the answer to tomorrow's problems.

We believe that transport, be it roads, railways, Gatwick or whatever, is going to be more and more the centre of importance in Surrey. We are therefore very pleased to have Peter Mills, with all his experience as an architect and as a member for many years of the Mole Valley District Council Planning Committee, as our new highways and transport Officer.

4. FOOTPATHS & BRIDLEWAYS. This most important aspect of our work continues quietly. We were all sorry when Ernie Read, after many years service decided it was time to retire. We owe him a real debt. Luckily Donald Mansfield agreed to take over. He maintains the family connection with the Society and also, incidentally, sharply lowers the average age on our Council.

Many people do many things for the Society. The above is only a selection. We are grateful to them all. The best thing I ever did for this Society was to secure the services of Peter Hawkes as Hon. Secretary. How Bernard Grimsley managed without a Secretary for several years I just do not know! Anyway he survived the experience and we all join in sending him and his wife belated but sincere congratulations on their Golden Wedding.

BRIAN CARR - CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIETY

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 THE SOCIETY AND THE MICKLEHAM BENDS/A24 ROAD PROPOSALS  
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Since the detail and argument in the Society's 14 January 1992 Press Release on this subject was inadequately reported in *The Dorking Advertiser* we reproduce the essential sections of that document here.

....."Before reaching any view on the matter the Executive Committee members had discussions with the Leatherhead & District Countryside Protection Society and heard the views of the Mickleham Ward Councillor of the Mole Valley District Council. The comments of the A24 Action Group, representing villagers' views on the preferred route of the road were also taken into account and the Committee had the benefit of advice from Mr Peter Mills, for many years a member of the Planning Committee of the MVDC and newly-appointed as Highways and Transport Officer of the Society.

At the Preservation Society Executive Meeting considerable discussion took place and opinions varied. All were agreed that the "Priory" and "On-line" schemes were unacceptable. A minority favoured the "Tunnel" option at a cost of £15 million while a large majority favoured the "Do Minimum" Scheme (No. 4). The majority view was that road traffic congestion was preferable to environmental damage to the valley and in particular to the water meadow (the area opposite Givons Grove) and to the Site of Special Scientific interest. The minority held that the damage to the western side of the valley was greatly outweighed by the benefit to the eastern side. The Committee unanimously recommended that, should the "Do Minimum" Scheme be adopted, some part of the saving in cost should be used in providing facilities for safe crossing of the road to avoid such tragedies as the accident which occurred last July, in making the best use of the land within the ownership of the County Council, and in providing properly-monitored speed restrictions and such other traffic-calming measures as might be found to be needed to make the road safe."

Clearly, while the Society favours the "Do Minimum" Scheme, opinions in the area will continue to differ sharply, dependent on the emphasis given to easy traffic flow as opposed to protection of the environment.

The Society's recommendations [including that on the A24 improvement south of Capel mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter - Editor] are being conveyed to the Surrey County Council and the Mole Valley District Council.

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 PLANNING REVIEW SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 1991  
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During 1991 your Planning Group studied some 1,400 applications submitted to the Mole Valley Planning Department, objecting to or commenting on about 42 cases on the Society's behalf.

Since Newsletter No.4, 14 applications warranted a response, including:

1. Erection of 19 dwellings in the BROCKHAM area, 2 houses in TOWER HILL and some 42 flats with parking facilities in SOUTH STREET.
2. Change of use of a residence to a restaurant at HOOKWOOD; conversions of buildings at OCKLEY and BETCHWORTH BR STATIONS into offices; conversion of a barn at CHARLWOOD to residential use; change of use of land at CHARLWOOD to storage, sales and office activities with unpermitted parking of an office caravan.
3. Comments were also made on: proposed 37 spaces extension of the Big Field car park, BROCKHAM; proposed 678 yards of new railings 4ft 9in high on the east side of DENBIES fronting the A24; signs erected or proposed at Kuoni House (DEEPDENE), DENBIES Winery and Dorking Swimming Centre Annexe, REIGATE ROAD.

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 CALLIGRAPHY
 

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Owing to an oversight, your Editor failed to give proper acknowledgement to the elegant calligraphy reproduced on the back of Newsletter 4. This was the work of Mr Eric Ferguson of Deepdene Avenue. Mr Ferguson has prepared some more, which we shall use a space allows, and we are grateful to him for offering us these attractive examples of his artistic work and wish him a recovery to better health.

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 SPRING WALK
 

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This will take place on SUNDAY 17 MAY 1992, led by your Hon. Secretary, Peter Hawkes. The objective will be NORBURY PARK VIEWPOINT. Please meet at 15 YEW TREE ROAD, Dorking at 14.30. On return to Yew Tree Road, the survivors will be resuscitated with tea and cake (50p contribution requested). Dog biscuits will be available for those bringing their canine friends. It will assist the cake-maker if those intending to join the walk give prior notice on 0306 883699, but this is not a precondition - please still come if you have forgotten to telephone. Your Editor hopes to be there, so that any who wish to criticise his editorials will have the opportunity to do so!

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 + ETHEL CLEAR 1913 - 1991
 

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Ethel died on 18 December, after a lifetime of service to the people of Dorking and district. The list is impressive and in spite of Ethel's known modesty must be recorded.

For 32 years she ran the Guide Company; she rang the bells of St Martin's for 50 years, and served on the Parochial Church Council. During and immediately after World War 2 she was Secretary to the Management of Central Hall, Westminster, a post which brought her into the organisation of the first meeting of the United Nations Organisation (1946) and contact with the high and mighty. For ten years Ethel was Minute Secretary of this Society. In recent years she acted as driver for the Dorking Good Neighbour Scheme and the Meals on Wheels Service.

In her spare time she was Secretary of the Dorking and District Museum from the time of its opening in 1975 and spent many, many hours sorting and filing exhibits, documents and photographs.

Ethel had many talents and made these available to everyone; whether it was inspiring children at the Museum, or "guiding" raw campers, or encouraging a student with A level studies in the Museum Library, or sharing her musical interests with the Church Organist, or taking a partially disabled person to East Surrey Hospital, or patiently listening to an expatriate's reminiscences of Dorking. In all this she enjoyed every moment, and was never happier than when she had pleased someone. But she quickly discerned when a firm hand was needed, tempering this with a fair-minded interpretation of the rules.

A friend of Ethel's was a friend for life and she always made time to travel the world to visit friends. Just before her last admission to hospital she made her annual visit to a schoolfriend living in Dorset.

Everyone who worked with her learnt something; and she was so happy to pass on all that she had learned. She was the heart and soul of the Dorking Museum and her example will be a continuous source of inspiration to her successors.

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 + JOHN EDWARD NOWELL WALKER 1901 - 1991  
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John Walker died on 7 November. A great Dorking character, the founder and first curator of the Dorking & District Museum and the founder of the Local History Group of the Society, his obituary notice appears in the current issue (no. 7) of the Group's journal, *Dorking History*, circulated to all members of the group, or otherwise obtainable for 30p at the Museum shop.

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 SOCIETY COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES  
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Since the last issue of the Newsletter, your officers have agreed Guidelines to show the responsibilities and prime functions of the Countryside Conservation Officer, Footpaths and Bridleways Officer, Highways & Transport Officer, Membership Secretary, Membership Development Officer, Publicity & Public Relations Officer, Youth Officer and the Planning Committee.

It has been agreed to meet the production cost of the revised TOWN TRAILS LEAFLET to be published in 1992. LITTER BINS provided by the Society have been installed; they are located at the Rothes Road entrance to Willow Walk and near Tutt's. A copy of the Society's SEAT SURVEY has been deposited in the Museum Library. Mr Peter Mills has been appointed as the new HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT OFFICER. A new Logo for the Society is being designed and a new membership leaflet is ready for a recruitment drive. There has been some response to the Society's pressure for improvements in the long-neglected DEEPDENE TERRACE area owned by the SCC and originally given for the enjoyment of the public. These improvements will hopefully be visible by the time this Newsletter appears.

The Society has supported the first (orange) option for the A24 WARNHAM - CAPEL IMPROVEMENT (the route which most closely follows the railway) but recommends the new junction be moved to a point south of Kingsfold so that traffic diverting to the A29 does not pass through the village and traffic flow through Ockley is reduced.

In future the BEST DEVELOPMENT COMPETITION will have two sections so that smaller developments do not get swamped by major ones. Another trophy will be obtained and awarded for the new category.



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 LOCAL HISTORY GROUP  
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The Group will be celebrating its 25th Anniversary this year.

The 124-page book *Dorking - A Surrey Market Town Through Twenty Centuries* was published in September and has already sold almost 1,000 copies, thus covering production costs. Most members of the Society will have already bought a personal copy of this indispensable, thoroughly readable and well-illustrated account of the history of our town, but should there be any Rip van Winkles still without it, they should repair to the Museum shop on the first Wednesday or Thursday afternoon or Saturday after reading this, where in exchange for a trifling £6.50, they shall be allowed to recover their self-respect and once again hold their head high.

The Summer Outing on 4 June is to Hampton Court and non-members of the Group are welcome (enquiries to Vivien Ettliger (0306 883839)).

A new Caves Officer to organise visits to the South Street Caves is urgently required. Anyone who would like to offer themselves for this not too onerous voluntary task should contact Mary Day at 72 The Street, Capel (712957).

Any Society member who wishes to participate in the activities of the Local History Group and regularly receive our journal, *Dorking History* in return for an absurdly low subscription, should contact Mrs Sue Tombs at 6, Clifton Terrace, Cliftonville, Dorking (886130).

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 MUSEUM NOTES  
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The Museum Committee has set up two Memorial Funds to mark the passing of two stalwarts of the Dorking & District Museum:

1. To Ethel Clear, our first Secretary (1975-91), who died on 18 December 1991 and
2. To John Walker, our first Curator (1975-87), who died on 7 November 1991.

Members are invited to send contributions to either or both funds to Mrs S M Tombs, 6, Clifton Terrace, Cliftonville, Dorking, RH4 2JG.

It has not yet been decided how we should remember Miss Clear, but John Walker's Memorial is likely to be a new specimen of the Dorking Cock, specially prepared and mounted in a new display case

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The following items have recently been acquired for the Museum (\* = on display): World War 2 ARP Emergency Kit\*; Silk Escape map of the Far East, World War 2\*; Dorking Cricket Club Fixture Card, 1908\*; Dorking Cricket Club score books, 1942, 1943; Dorking Cricket Club balance sheet, 1888; cast iron toffee hammer c 1870\*; two wine coasters hand-turned from timber of the sequoia tree planted on the Denbies Estate by Albert, Prince Consort in 1851\* (the tree fell in the gale of January 1990); pair of spring-loaded nutcrackers, c 1920\*; old wooden water pipe dug up at West Street/Pump Corner by British Gas workmen; Dorking & District Cycling Club badge, 1896; iron hammer-head dug up alongside Flint Hill; "Newmaid" manual vacuum cleaner c 1920; knife board.

[January 1992]

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#### AUTUMN MEETING

Please make a note in your diary that the autumn meeting this year in the Martineau Hall, Dorking Halls, will be on 28 OCTOBER. The subject is likely to be the very topical one of Roads.

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#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor would welcome for publication short pithy letters on local issues relevant to the work of the Society, or commenting on his editorials, or on any other matter in the Newsletter. If you wish to use a pseudonym, please give your full name and address, which will then be withheld. We are anxious to hear from members who consider the Society may be neglecting issues that they feel should be of general concern.

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#### GENERAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

When prospective parliamentary and council candidates or their representatives call at your house, or you meet them in other circumstances, please remember that this is the time when they are most sensitive to your opinions and an important opportunity to seek their views on local issues such as transport, new road construction, aircraft noise, threats to our environment etc. Carefully weigh their responses when deciding which one gets your vote.

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