

*The
Dorking
and
District
Preservation
Society
Newsletter*

6

SEPTEMBER 1992

DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY
 =====

President: Mr Gordon Lee-Steere DL
 Chairman: Mr C.B.Carr MA
 Editor: Mr Alan A. Jackson FRSA
 Editorial address: St Michael's Steps,
 Deepdene Park Road,
 Dorking RH5 4AN (0306 883324)

 EDITORIAL
 =====

THIS is the sixth of the Society's twice-yearly newsletters, cumulatively covering a period of two and a half years in which your Society has been very active, and it is interesting to pause and take stock.

We began in March 1990 with a screed on litter, a subject which (it became apparent) touched strong feelings. This is an area where things really have begun to change for the better. The Society has sponsored litter bins on new sites, with the Mole Valley District Council cooperating fully. A new regime based on a Government initiative has produced some patchy results. It was certainly pleasant to hear one of my grandsons, on a visit from his home in the Orkneys this summer, making an unprompted comment on the absence of litter in the centre of Dorking. This is an improvement we all recognise and welcome. But at the edges of the town the verges of the main roads often remain untidy. It is of course an uphill struggle, since many motorists unthinkingly discard drink cans, bottles and cigarette packets as they pass through our area or whilst parked in laybys and most of this rubbish ends up on the footways and grass verges. Another problem area is the approaches to the railway stations off the A24, where schoolchildren discard quantities of confectionery wrappings and soft drink cans. Many youngsters remain completely resistant to attempts to educate them out of this lack of respect for the environment. It seems we may have to accept that they cannot be expected to carry their litter home; unless rubbish bins are generously provided at strategic spots, as soon as their eating and drinking are done, almost all will throw down the containers and wrappings at their feet or push them into a convenient hedge. Our Council has yet to install a sufficiency of large bins serviced by regular collections at the approaches to the main and Deepdene stations. In particular the area around the Deepdene railway bridge remains a disgrace to the town and the litter on the approaches to both stations provides a poor impression for visitors arriving by rail. But it is wrong to assume the only offenders are untidy motorists or young people; it was a sad surprise to discover recently that some adult residents of "sought-after" roads of our town are also not averse to this anti-social behaviour.

In the woodland east of Punchbowl Lane opposite Ladygate Road a large area has become a dump for garden rubbish and builder's debris, complete with paths made to provide access. Perhaps the Council should give wider publicity to the correct disposal procedure for such items.

Noise pollution was the subject of our second editorial. Here things are getting worse. Motorcyclists with silencers illegally removed from their machines or suitably modified, continue to roar along the main roads at weekends; their antics on the A24 (and those of some irresponsible motorists) regularly bring the sirens of ambulances and police cars to add to the cacophony on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Above our heads, aircraft noise intensifies by the month. In the past few years, as the airspace immediately north of Gatwick airport has become increasingly congested, jets struggle noisily to gain height as they turn to the east-west/west-east axis, moving nearer and nearer to Dorking town; they now frequently fly over it, many of them so low that they seem little higher than the light aircraft and helicopters which are also growing in number. Expounding what is patently theory rather than practice, the Gatwick Control Tower management explain that their departures are "at least 4,000 ft altitude, often much higher" by the time they are over Dorking with its busy low-flying traffic. We are told that it is entirely the pilots' responsibility how quickly a jet aircraft departing Gatwick is raised to the 3,000/4,000 ft at which "air traffic control" intervenes, but observation suggests that some pilots are more skilful at climbing fast than others and that some are dangerously low. As we try to listen to television with the windows open or carry on a conversation when one of these monsters passes over, we increasingly expect a "near miss" or worse. Perhaps there is little hope of any check on the growing air traffic nuisance: but we do wonder whether if like the French, our Government had invested in a new fast railway from London to the Channel Tunnel instead of prevaricating and postponing decisions, there would be fewer people flying from Gatwick to the nearer European cities after the Tunnel opens in a year's time?

Despite some useful discussion during the Election Campaign there is no sign of any progress towards an overall road and public transport strategy, a topic touched on in nos. 3 and 5. More road building in Surrey, initially by widening the M25 (thus generating more traffic to be fed on to it and drained off it), remains a very real threat. Breathtaking sums of taxpayers' money are to be allocated to accommodate "exit to next exit" traffic on the M25. We are told that the Department of [Road] Transport considers the cost -- no less than £120 per centimetre -- entirely "reasonable"; and it seems that the Department plans to tackle this M25 expenditure in stages, in the hope of diluting the opposition. Looking at Twyford Down and Oxleas Wood, we tremble to think what the road planners could do in the Dorking area. Meanwhile your Society has entered a cool and rational response to the County Council's more extravagant remedies for the Mickleham Bends on the A24 (Newsletter 5). Money for new or improved roads seems always readily available but the Government postpones or chokes off capital investment in British Rail, preferring doctrinaire fiddling at the edges with "privatisation" and futile "customers' charters". Electrification and new stock for the Reading-Guildford-Dorking-Redhill line is now deferred into the far distant future and

we must continue to make do with the time-expired diesel cars. Whilst the road lobby and its friends at the Department of Transport confidently plan more road construction in Surrey, the improvements to the east-west rail line which, with electrification, could take much Channel Tunnel and other traffic around London and off Surrey's overcrowded roads are kicked into touch.

Feasible low cost amenity improvements were considered in Newsletter no. 4, coupled with the suggestion that the Society must strive for greater strength and influence. Here the outlook is much more cheerful. Work has started on Deepdene Terrace and there is reasonable hope that the result may persuade Kuoni to begin to restore the once lovely Deepdene Gardens. Within the Society itself, a bold membership drive, referred to elsewhere in this issue, is showing much promise, and is something we can move by our own efforts.

There is another burgeoning ray of sunshine. Now that our MP is released from ministerial responsibilities he is free to join us and we welcome Mr Kenneth Baker as a member of the Society. He has agreed to speak at our AGM in April 1993. As a former Minister, Kenneth Baker is a man who will be taken seriously in Whitehall and Downing Street and we must hope that he will listen to us, and give due weight to our views, as he is not now quite so fettered by the "party line". The Society, whilst remaining politically neutral, must ensure he is kept constantly aware of our wider concerns about the environment; about the futility of laying ever more concrete and tarmac for road traffic whilst ignoring the need for a national transport strategy; and about other matters which although dealt with at Government level, are likely to impinge strongly on our local concerns. AAJ

THE HON. SECRETARY'S COLUMN

My job as the Secretary in this Society is much as in any other similar organisation, except perhaps that this particular job is unique in that I was largely responsible for the way the Society is now organised. I think I got it nearly right but every now and then it needs a little tweak.

Apart from the normal run of arranging meetings, dealing with agendas, minutes and correspondence I am lucky to have the time to take a reasonably active part in the Society.

One of my personal objectives is to keep the Society in the forefront of peoples' awareness and to this end I have been known to give the occasional talk. In addition I have been particularly involved in the Best Development Competition and in the Survey of Public Seats. This last is now being used a vehicle for assessing priorities for repairs and re-siting where necessary. This may well involve trying to find out who was the donor of a seat and if necessary tracing his or her descendants. But enough of me, rather let us consider the Society and its needs.

Our Constitution states the Society's first objective to be "to encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in Dorking and district". To achieve this objective to its fullest extent we need as many members as we can get so that we may be a force to be reckoned with when unwelcome developments are proposed. Your Council is, therefore, continually looking for ways in which the Society can be brought more fully to the attention of the local populace and thereby the membership increased.

Your ideas for increasing our profile are always welcome, so please send them to me, preferably in writing, and I will ensure that they are considered by both the Executive Committee and the Council. PH.

LITTER BINS

The first two litter bins donated by the Society have at the Mole Valley Council's request been placed in Wathen Road rather than Willow Walk as originally planned. They were suitably blessed by our MP. Two more bins are to be donated for location in country areas.

WESTCOTT: PAST & PRESENT

A slide show, "Westcott: past & present" will be given at the United Reformed Church Hall, West Street, Dorking at 19.30 on Thursday 19th November. All are welcome.

DEEPDENE TERRACE AND GARDENS

Mole Valley District Council have started to clear storm-damaged and other fallen trees on their land. Garden consultants are to advise on future action. The County Council began work on their land in the spring and their Ranger has welcomed our interest in this area. Rubbish has been cleared from the paths leading up to the Terrace from the A24. Later it is hoped to persuade Kuoni Travel to tidy up the overgrown areas in their ownership. Since the seat installed just below the Terrace in memory of Gordon H. Elsworthy (chairman of the Society 1953-68) is now completely overgrown and damaged, consideration is being given to a replacement on another site.

TOWN TRAILS LEAFLETS

Edwin Sykes, with some help from the Local History Group, has redrafted and updated the Town Trails leaflets. The new versions will be published by the Society later this year.

 SPRING WALK

The disappointingly small number of members turning up for the Spring Walk to the Norbury Park viewpoint on Sunday 17th May enjoyed superb landscape views in excellent weather -- sunshine and a pleasant cooling breeze. A memorable tea, with quantities of truly delicious home-made cakes, and a warm welcome, awaited us in the Secretary's delightful garden when we returned to Dorking. Needless to say, the organisation, from start to finish, was impeccable. AAJ

 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

At the end of July 1992 we had 796 members. We aim to bring the total paid membership to 1,000 plus as soon as possible and to this end we have instituted the following measures:

- a new membership application form;
- a drive to seek "corporate membership" amongst local firms. Around 450 letters were sent out and this move has been attended with some success; to date 27 new corporate members have been obtained, their contributions reaching £470 enhanced by donations totalling £60.
- invitations to join to be sent to writers of letters on appropriate subjects published in local newspapers;
- existing members have been asked to find at least one new member from friends and neighbours. Please do not overlook this request.
- publicity stands to be manned at local events and possibly in the High Street on Saturdays.

Edwin Sykes has delivered membership application forms to all residents in his road (Upper Rose Hill), achieving a 50% success rate; if others followed this fine example we should quickly pass our first objective of 1,000 members. Please consider what you can do in your road. Mr D.G.Harding, 87 Ashcombe Road, Dorking will supply the membership forms and advise as necessary.

 PUBLICITY

Our new Publicity Officer, Barry Collins, has had several articles and letters published in *The Dorking Advertiser*. The Society has a new letterhead and logo and has purchased a display stand for use at exhibitions, fairs etc. Laminated display material with text and photographs about the Society has been prepared.

 HAPPY EATER (A24)

Following the intervention of the Society, the MVDC has obtained the removal of the incongruous display of flags at this site.

 THE PUNCHBOWL INN (LITTLE CHEF)

At long last, the restoration of the historic name of "The Punchbowl" to this building may be achieved. The owners have agreed to a new sign, provided the Society make a contribution to the cost. Negotiations continue.

 MULLINS HOUSE, WEST STREET

The state of this historic building, which is almost certainly the only surviving residence of a Pilgrim Father in Britain, is giving cause for concern. The Society have asked MVDC to see what can be done and the owners have now been approached by the Council.

 MUSEUM

Specimens of a Dorking White Cock and a Dorking Silver Grey are being mounted to form a new display in memory of John N.Walker, our first curator, who did so much to establish the Museum. An oil painting of a view of Dorking including St Martin's Church has been commissioned from Mrs Christine Neale, the Dorking artist, as a memorial to Miss Ethel Clear, whose work for the Museum was prodigious, almost to the month of her death. Contributions towards both Memorial Funds are welcome. Cheques should be made payable to the "Dorking & District Museum" and may be addressed to the Museum Chairman, Dorking Museum, West Street, Dorking, RH4 1BS.

The Museum has now been provisionally registered by the Museums & Galleries Commission.

In order to keep the Museum open for the present minimum of two afternoons (Wednesday and Thursday) and all day Saturday every week we must have at least six more stewards immediately. Please consider whether you can offer your services. It is a pleasant chore in congenial company, with the latest gossip, and requiring only three hours of your time once a month. Anyone over 18 and under 100 may apply, no qualifications being required other than a love of Dorking and its villages. Offers to Lionel Green (883038).

 The following additional items have been acquired for the Museum (* = on display):-

Universal Marmalade Cutter (Follows & Bate), c.1920 *; a paving brick from Pump Corner, salvaged during the recent refurbishment *; A collection of Food Facts, published by the Ministry of Food 1940-47, designed by our member and Dorking resident, Eric Ferguson; a card of children's boot buttons *; a Victorian rolling pin in sycamore wood*; two splendid silver medals dated 1930 and 1932 and certificate presented to C.Tanner as First Prize, by the Dorking & District Allotment Holders' Association *; two old medicine bottles from Firth & Clark, Dorking chemists *; a 1930's (?) Hartley's jam jar *; a

cotton bag for Spiller's Self Raising Flour (these bags were not produced after c.1940-41) *; a pupil's desk from St Joseph's Convent School, Dorking *; a Women's Voluntary Service cap badge, Civil Defence *; a cap badge, East Surrey Traction Co. *.

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Our 25th Anniversary was splendidly celebrated at the Friends' Meeting House on 2nd June. The theme was fairs, with particular reference to fairs in Dorking, illustrated with displays on our new stand and by some lively readings. The evening concluded with a remarkably nostalgic buffet of fairground refreshments.

Our publication *Dorking: a Surrey Market Town Through Twenty Centuries* has now sold over 1,000 copies since its launch last September. Copies are available at the Museum; every citizen should have one!

It is hoped to reopen the South Street Caves shortly.

We meet on the first Tuesday evening of each month at 19.30, at the Friends' Meeting House, Butter Hill, South Street, Dorking. Membership enquiries should be addressed to 63 Ashcombe Road, Dorking (telephone 889637).

PLANNING

The Society has objected to the planning application in respect of the Johnson Engineering site in Vincent Lane, where a Wickes DIY store is proposed on designated industrial use land. Road traffic access is a major problem and the residents of Vincent Lane have resisted the proposal in spectacular and virtually unanimous fashion.

Other planning proposals on which we have commented include: Flats on Bus Garage site, South Street ("St George's"); Nursery, Station Road, Betchworth (objection); 100 bedroom hotel, Bonnetts Lane, Ifield (objection); Fisheries at Old Bury Hill; Extension, 57 Longfield Road Dorking (objection); Betchworth Castle Lake, enlargement and car park; Denbies Winery, fencing along the A24; car sales in court yard at Westcoats, Leigh; 3-storey office building to replace present building between Lonsdale Road and High Street (objection); the condition and number of motor vehicles parked in the grounds of Glory Farm Cottage, Dorking; New housing at Reliant Works site, Middle Street, Brockham (objection).

 CORRESPONDENCE

Extracts from a letter to the Society Secretary dated 30th March 1992:

".... I have been a member for 20 years now, following my late uncle and father As someone who has walked over the area over the past 30-40 years I could not endorse more urgently your stand on the threat of increased building of roads and even motorways. The leading article [Newsletter 5].....was absolutely right -- the prospect of further intrusion into what is still one of the loveliest landscapes in Europe does not bear contemplating. Please count my wife and myself as fully behind you in your effective endeavours to preserve something which is irreplaceable and really worth fighting for. Only someone who does not know the area and its still beautiful contrasts of landscape and unostentatious, yet striking, architecture could I believe, glibly entertain the idea of using it as a corridor -- to what I wonder?....." M.S.A.GOODCHILD, Faversham.

Extracts from a letter to the Society Secretary dated 24th March 1992:

"....the excellent Editorial in the Society Newsletter regarding the A24.... I feel that it is necessary to rouse all the people in the area to the dangers that threaten our countryside. The people stopped the S.C.C's earlier plan to by-pass our High Street and they can stop other schemes if given the facts. Regarding the immediate plans [for the Mickleham Bends] I suggest that we should press for an experimental large roundabout at the junction of Old London Road, Mickleham and the A24 with a light controlled pedestrian crossing. This would slow traffic and prevent, hopefully, the accidents caused by idiot speedsters...." FRED A.ELLIOTT, Dorking.

 A DORKING WORTHY REACHES 90

Well known to a great many people in Dorking, Mr C.E. (Teddy) Beare, consultant surgeon at Dorking Hospital from 1929-1967, where he carried out over 20,000 operations, and private practitioner based at the Garth Nursing Home, celebrated his 90th birthday in style on Sunday 24th May. A large number of guests were entertained in a marquee erected in the lovely hillside garden of his house in Deepdene Park Road, where he has lived since it was built for him in 1930. Before World War 2, Mr Beare was consultant surgeon to the Surrey County Council and in 1939 was appointed surgeon to the Emergency Medical Service. In 1948 he became consultant surgeon with the South West Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board. Mr Beare loves his garden and still works in it most days of the year.

AAJ

Published by the Dorking & District Preservation Society.
 Hon. Secretary, Peter Hawkes, 15 Yew Tree Road, Dorking RH4 1ND.
 NEWSLETTER No 6.

The green hills of Surrey

AN EMIGRANT SONG

O Farnham, green Farnham,
what hop-grounds are there
That with Farnham's fair hop-grounds
can ever compare!
And what pleasure it were
once again but to lie
On Guildford's green hillsides
beneath the blue sky!
O the green hills of Surrey,
the sweet hills of Surrey,
The dear hills of Surrey,
I'll love till I die.
O Dorking is pleasant,
and Dorking is green,
And sweet are the woods
and the walks of Deepdene,
And for Dorking's sweet meadows
in vain must I sigh,

And Deepdene's green woods
will no more meet my eye:
But the green woods of Surrey,
the sweet woods of Surrey,
The dear woods of Surrey,
I'll love till I die.

O Kent has fair orchards,
no pleasanter show
Than her apple-trees blooming
in April I know,
Save the orchards round Reigate,
sweet Reigate, that lie
With their red and white blossoms
so fair 'neath the sky.
O the green fields of Surrey,
the sweet fields of Surrey,
The dear fields of Surrey,
I'll love till I die.

WILLIAM COX BENNETT 1820-95