

DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY



Established in 1929

REGISTERED CHARITY No 246806

NEWSLETTER

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No.

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MARCH 1993

DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY
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 EDITORIAL
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One of the main reasons for the formation of our Society in 1929 was the then almost total lack of effective planning control, a matter that was put right in the early years of the post-war Labour Government. But today our town and the countryside are under threat just as much, if not more, than when our Society was finding its feet, although the threats come from new directions

It is important not to relax into complacency, pretending that protest is useless; there are so many issues in which we do have the capacity to influence the the final decisions or at least to make a significant contribution, with other bodies, to a coordinated thrust towards challenging a course of action. We have seen how the present Government has been pushed into reconsidering policy on pit closures and on total privatisation of the railways, and we recall how Dorking's years of struggle against the road planners' ridiculous Inner Relief Road Scheme eventually resulted in a triumph for common sense.

This Society has a duty to express an independent view on matters which are affecting the local environment, or which will do so, and if that conflicts with the dogma and policies of those some of us may have voted into Parliament, it remains our duty to press ahead with what we think right. It is all too easy for active followers of any of the political parties to be "nobbled" by paid party officials and professional politicians into toeing the "party line" when they are seen to be making an embarrassing fuss about some local issue which results from a national policy decision, or some scheme which Whitehall or County Hall planners have worked up because they think it will be the one most acceptable to their political masters.

The Dorking and District Preservation Society exists only to show that it cares about our delightful little town, its villages and its countryside, and to try to do something positive when it detects threats to our heritage and environment.

This may mean that we have sometimes to make it abundantly clear that we do not accept that County Council and Whitehall planners always know best and that ministers can often be led into flouting local opinion without good cause

But what is local opinion? It is of course not your Chairman's opinion, or that of the Society Officers severally or collectively, and even less, your Editor's opinion that matters, but yours. If the Society is to work properly there has to be continuous and good feedback from the membership as a whole. Your officers have the very difficult task of assessing the general view and arriving at a properly balanced conclusion to put forward forcefully to the right quarters.

The problems of doing this can be illustrated by two very topical local issues. Firstly we have the County Council road planners' scheme to spend (at least) £15 million of our money on duplicating the A24 through the beautiful Mole Valley between Dorking and Leatherhead, a proposal they seem determined to press through, no doubt in the knowledge they will be supported by the powerful road lobby and its influential friends in the "corridors of power". We are told it will increase the speed of traffic flow along this road, as if that were a desirable objective. The fact that accidents have been cut to an insignificant level by the present nominal-cost traffic calming measures is not enough for the planners. Some of our members in the immediate battle zone understandably support the £15m Tunnel scheme since the nuisance is virtually on their doorsteps, but others, almost certainly the majority, look at the problem more calmly and see the damage this scheme will do, not all of it confined to the immediate site.

The second case concerns a recent statement by Mr Freeman, Minister of Public Transport, who is learning something about railways, having been in post a little longer than is par for the course for a transport minister. He said that his mind is not closed on the use of the Redhill-Reading railway for the conveyance of Channel Tunnel freight around London. This may seem eminently reasonable to many people, but it has quite naturally upset those who live on top of the line, people who have deliberately chosen to buy houses close to a railway that has been in place since 1849. Hardly had Mr Freeman uttered than our local paper was stirring the pot with its giant shock-horror headlines and, more curiously, the County Council, which happily allows its officers to plan damaging road schemes like the one just mentioned, also began to howl in protest. It is inevitable there will be some amongst us who will fiercely object to the rumble of a heavy freight train three or four times a day. But it seems likely that the majority will take a more balanced view, recognising that more intensive use of this railway may not only help to keep it in being as a valuable cross-country passenger link but could conceivably reduce the amount of new road building and road "improvement" elsewhere in Surrey.

These are only two of the issues waiting in the wings and we must not allow them to obscure several others, some more urgent. Very soon now there will be a statement from Marsham Street about more night flights in and out of Gatwick and Heathrow. Then there is the plan for another terminal at Gatwick, which will only serve to beget even more air traffic in our crowded skies.

Do we not already have enough noise from aircraft - what about making more use of other airports, or even building a new one close to the sea? Oil companies are searching for oil around Dorking, where the geology seems favourable - Should we be backing the case for subsidising rail sidings if this will keep the potential Mole Valley oil traffic off unsuitable roads? Only the other day the Secretary of State for Transport announced that such subsidies were to be introduced; this is sensible and long overdue, and might have a direct local application.

What other issues should we be monitoring? We have appealed in the past, with little success, for your letters, your opinions, to publish here or at least to inform your officers. If you do not make your views known, if you do not give your officers the support and guidance they need, in the end you will only have yourself to blame if nasty changes occur to the Mole Valley environment.

Whilst we must not relax our grip on several issues that will not wait, there may be a case for organising in the next year or so a properly-structured inquiry into members' concerns and their attitudes regarding current and potential threats to the local environment. Let's have some suggestions for topics on which we might consult the membership if we decide to send out a questionnaire. Do tell us what is worrying you about the local environment - before it is too late!

A.A.J

A NEW GUIDEBOOK - FOR NOTHING!

A very attractive new guide to Capel, Beare Green and Coldharbour has recently been published "with the authority of the Capel Parish Council". On good quality glossy paper, with plenteous colour and black and white photographs and maps, and a splendid coloured photograph cover, it consists of 63 pages of text and pictures, followed by 24 pages of advertisements and is available FREE!

Other parish, district or county councils wishing to emulate Capel's enterprise may be interested to learn that there is no cost whatsoever to the commissioning authority, but parish councils in particular should be warned that they may find difficulty in mustering the requisite quantity of advertising. Details of the deal are available from Russ Morley, 38 Cardiff Road, Dinas Powys CF6 4JS (0222 515122)

DORKING & DISTRICT MUSEUM

The following items have been acquired since our last Newsletter (* = on display):

A World War 2 Government recipe book, *The Kitchen Front* *

A single row seed drill *

An oil painting of Willow Walk in 1965 *

A Redhill League Cup silver medal (1907-8) awarded to Mr A F Collins*

An oil painting of the Old Pest House, Hampstead Lane (demolished by Arthurs in 1960) by Willie Samuel Collins (brother of Charles Collins) *

Engravings by Charles Collins (1) Guildford Grammar School Courtyard
(2) Chaffinch in nest (3) Bird on nest

Late C19 steel engraving of Dorking High Street

Newdigate Home Guard uniform with webbing, steel helmet, respirator, gaiters etc.

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A handsome new side door and lock have now been fitted to the Museum.

A recent school visit involved 75 pupils, spread over three days.

Members of the Society are warmly invited to visit the Museum (Wednesday and Thursday afternoons and 10.00-17.00 Saturdays) to see the new display BREWERIES AND THEIR PUBS IN 19th CENTURY DORKING. It is regretted that the Museum has no licence and no samples are available.

LOWFIELD HEATH WINDMILL

This preservation project is now six years old and restoration is well advanced. The mill is open to the public in the summer months on Sunday afternoons. Please phone Jean Shelley at Lowfield Heath (862646) for details, membership of the Friends costs only £3 a year (four years for £10!).

MAKING OURSELVES KNOWN

Assisted by Pauline Watson, Barry Collins, our Publicity Officer, organised a most effective display point to advertise the Society in Church Square on 29th August 1992. Sixteen new members were recruited.

An illuminated barrow was also manned at St Martin's Walk on the Christmas Late Shopping Night (12th December 1992).

PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR 1992

The Planning Appraisal Committee have had a busy year scanning some 1,400 planning applications to Mole Valley District Council of which roughly half originated from the southern half of the Mole Valley.

Some 47 of these were considered undesirable by reason of non-compliance with regulations, damaging effect on the environment and persons and warranted, with some success, comment by our Society. Twenty-one of these obtained permission and twenty-six were turned down.

Briefly the applications can be itemised as:

- 1) Residential development in the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 2) Change from residential to industrial use.
- 3) Use of residential grounds for vehicle activities.
- 4) Expansion of business activities in the countryside.
- 5) Erection of a 100 bed hotel
- 6) Addition of extensions
- 7) Erection of business signs
- 8) Retention of redundant farm buildings
- 9) The Sunday opening of superstores.

The Society is presently concerned with the current and future developments and effect on the environment of the Bury Hill and the Betchworth Castle fisheries and with the development on the Johnson site in Vincent Lane.

TOWN TRAILS

The two new Town Trails leaflets have now been published; these have been renamed "Walking in Dorking" and are available at the Museum Shop at 25p each. We are grateful to Mr Edwin Sykes, Mr Peter Hawkes and the Local History Group for their work on this project. Copies have been sold (in bulk) to the White Horse Hotel, Dorking Travel, Waterstone's Bookshop and the Public Library.

WIDENING THE M25

Mr Kenneth Baker, MP (Con) for Mole Valley has informed the Leatherhead Society that although he does not oppose the widening of the M25 within its present boundaries, he would oppose any proposals for new feeder roads.

The Society has formally objected to the feeder roads proposed between Junctions 15 and 15 and has also criticised adversely the apparent attempt of the Department of Transport to adopt a piecemeal approach to the question of feeder roads. An Inquiry is likely in 1994 and the Society is keeping in touch with other interested bodies. A copy of our objection has been sent to Mr Baker.

The Surrey Society is coordinating all opposition to the M25 proposals and will be trying to raise the substantial funds needed to meet costs at any Inquiry. The Society will need to consider whether it can offer financial support for this appeal.

SEAT SURVEY

The survey of public seats in our area is being kept up to date by a team consisting of Messrs Donald Mansfield, Harry Gort and David Spencer.

 LITTER

A litter bin donated by the Society is now in position between Lincoln Road and Deepdene station. This part of the A24 has always been a problem area for litter.

 PUNCHBOWL INN SIGN

We are pleased to report that following the Society's agreement to donate £100 towards its cost, a sign with gold lettering on a black background should soon be erected to perpetuate the traditional name of this place of refreshment at the eastern entrance to Dorking.

 NAMING OF DEVELOPMENT ON BUS GARAGE SITE

Despite efforts by the Society and private individuals to achieve an appropriate name with historical associations for the residential apartments now being built on the bus station site at South Street/Horsham Road, the developers have refused to alter their choice of The Maltings. There never have been any maltings on or near this site.

 MEMBERSHIP

The membership total is now around 850, a significant net increase having been gained over the past year or so. The results of the campaign to get each member to recruit a new member have proved very disappointing. However we now have a satisfying body of Corporate Members and have received welcome donations from these and from local businesses amounting to £310 over and above the subscriptions.

Corporate membership is a new venture for the Society and we are delighted to welcome these new Corporate Members:

Bales Tours Ltd *	Harvey Jones Phillips Partnership
Bricom Group Ltd	IBJ Associates Ltd
Briggs Amasco Ltd	Industrial Maintenance Group Ltd
Broadheath Restorations	Kuoni Travel Ltd *
Country Gardens at Dorking	Locomotive Software Ltd
Cowan & Wood	Martin Brown *
Cripps Villier Ltd	National Westminster Bank PLC
(Englishman's Castle)	Newspaper Press Fund
Crow's Auction Gallery	Philip Sears Designs
Dorking Travel	Tuck & Mann
Downs	Unum Ltd
Ellis Atkins & Co	Venhill Engineering Ltd
FDK Design Consultants	Victoria & Edward Antiques Centre *
Graham Brown & Co (Dorking) Ltd	Viscount Agencies Ltd
Graham Leather	West Street Antiques
Grosse UK Ltd	Whitelegg Machines Ltd
Hart Scales & Hodges	Warboys & Wilkins

* denotes also contributing to the Local History Group.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The Chairman writes:

"The Society is flourishing and is continuing the splendid work done by our predecessors not only to preserve all that is best in Dorking and

District but also to seek improvement where we can. It is and will continue to be an uphill fight and we can never afford to relax. Our membership really should be much bigger if we are to represent the people of the southern part of the Mole valley area and to expect other people and bodies to listen to us and to take action.

We are grateful to our Membership Team of David Harding, Michael Beggs and Audrey Sawyers and to our Publicity Officer, Barry Collins for all their hard work. Members like Edwin Sykes and Ernie Read have done sterling work in their own areas, but now we are asking ALL our members to make a real effort to increase our numbers.

In May and June of this year we are involving many of our members living in Dorking in a concentrated effort to increase our membership in the town. If you would be willing to help and have not yet been asked, please ring David Harding (884333). Good luck to all those taking part.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

This was a great success, with 84 entries received, all of a very high standard. A small profit was realised and we are grateful to Pauline Watson and Mr Laurensen for their hard work. The winner was Mr E. Howard for his photograph "Snow over Denbies"

BEST DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

The competition for these awards is organised by the Society in conjunction with Mole Valley District Council and the Dorking Advertiser.

The two silver cups will be held for twelve months by Bredero Properties PLC in association with the Equitable Life Assurance Society for St Martin's Walk (large development category) and by Abinger Hall Estate Company for the restoration of the Great Barn at Crossways Farm, Abinger (small development category). Additionally a "Very Highly Commended" certificate was this year awarded to Mole Valley District Council for Kenward Court at Strood Green.

RANMORE COMMON

The Society has made a formal objection to the landowner's proposed closure of seven tracks claimed by walkers and/or riders to be footpaths and/or bridleways. Support is being sought from the Surrey County Council and the Countryside Commission.

RAIL NEWS

Dorking received a nasty shock when it was announced at the end of last year that Seacontainers, a potential franchisee for lines in our area under the Government's highly controversial rail privatisation proposals, would want to close the Reading - Redhill line since it would in their view not be capable of earning its keep under private operation. The Government endeavoured to calm things down by stating that the present arrangements for subsidising such lines, and the present closure procedures, will not be affected by their privatisation proposals. It has since been made clear that this line will be excluded from the Network South East South Western Division when it is put up for auction.

Meanwhile BR NSE have announced that in April its Thames and Chilterns Division will take over responsibility for the Reading - Dorking - Gatwick service and plans to introduce the latest Class 165 turbo trains by October, when a new electric service in connection will also be introduced between Reigate and Tonbridge, and the few through Reading - Tonbridge trains will be withdrawn. The modernised Reading - Dorking - Gatwick service will be marketed as "Thames - Gatwick". Platform reconstruction to accommodate the slightly wider trains has already begun at Dorking (Deepdene) station. Timetable improvements, says NSE, "will be focused on the air travel market"

AAJ

Published by the Dorking & District Preservation Society.
Hon. Secretary, Peter Hawkes, 15 Yew Tree Road, Dorking RH4 1ND.
NEWSLETTER No 7.

To the poet Shenstone (1714-1763)
on a votive tablet and urn at Burford Lodge, near Dorking
(from History of Dorking, by J. S. Bright 1884)

To the bard of Leasowe's grove,
Tears of silent tribute lend;
Scenes like these he loved to rove,
Nature and the Muse's friend.

Tho' no more the path he guides,
Through the dell's embow'ring shade
Still his spirit there presides,
Still his urn shall deck the glade.

Leasowe: Shenstone's estate in Worcestershire

A 'Harvest Home' verse sung in parts of Surrey
(from Notes and Queries - 26 February 1853)

We have plough'd
We have sow'd,
We have reap'd,
We have mow'd,
Ne'er a load
Overthrow'd
Harvest Home!