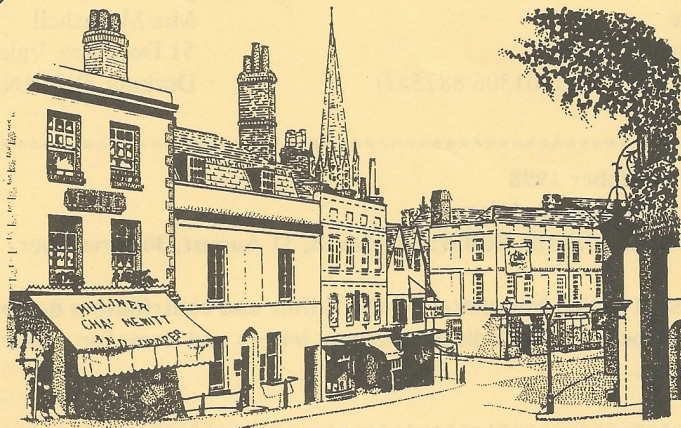


DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY



Established in 1929

NEWSLETTER

No. 21

October 1998

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NEWSLETTER 21: October 1998

Free to Members

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The opinions expressed in this Newsletter by the Editor and contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Society. The Editor welcomes letters and items for publication from Members and other readers.

EDITORIAL

Whilst some people who have chosen to live alongside a railway that has been in place long before their houses were built have become restive and anxious about the possible reintroduction of freight trains between Redhill and Reading (after a break of a very few years), road freight traffic through Dorking town goes on relentlessly increasing. Under the very noses of pedestrians, dangerously close to their legs and arms, huge articulated trucks of up to 39 tonnes (soon perhaps 44 tonnes), emit noxious diesel fumes and impose severe strains on road surfaces and ancient buildings in West Street. They struggle awkwardly to make the sharp turn into South Street at Pump Corner or rumble on up the High Street. Without thought on the part of their drivers, their owners or those responsible for transport planning at local and central government level, these huge vehicles, designed for motorways, daily use roads built for occasional horse-drawn carriages or carts. The perilous nature of such traffic through West Street in particular must surely be obvious to everyone who works there or walks through it. Few if any of the truck drivers realise that much of the sub-structure of the High Street consists of sand cavities excavated in the 18th century or earlier. One day, perhaps soon, there may be a disastrous subsidence. No railway train would be allowed to work over such an insecure track.

Nor does this nuisance end with the town centre. Quiet residential roads now occasionally suffer invasion by very large trucks delivering relatively small loads, even parcels. These monsters also pound up and down the A24 through the old grounds of the Deepdene on a road designed for the much lighter traffic levels of the 1920s. This A24 traffic includes a constant procession of heavy trucks carrying refuse to fill the worked out claypits south of Dorking, whilst another regular flow transports the finished products of these Wealden brickworks northwards. The cumbersome progress of these trucks as they face the long climb from the Mole Valley to Glory Wood slows the constant stream of cars on their necessary (and sometimes unnecessary) journeys, adding the unseen pollution of carcinogenic benzene to the visible and equally dangerous emissions of often poorly-maintained diesel engines.

What is to be done? The construction of more roads, even the dualling of the A24 through Deepdene, is no longer seen as an acceptable or even sensible solution to these very real assaults on our local environment and our health. Because the sensitive landscape of the North Downs and the Greensand hills surrounds Dorking town so tightly, a precious and beautiful garment that must be protected from further damage, there is simply no room for the diversionary route suggested by a correspondent on another page. The use of both our railways, east to west and north

to south, for freight may seem a logical development which must come sooner or later but it will require some major infrastructure improvements outside our area which must pay for themselves by carrying a very high level of traffic.

Of course the return of freight to rail would entail a certain increase in noise, but it is of a nature that only occurs at long intervals and its impact on the ear would be far less stressful than the virtually continuous 16-hour roar that arises from the A24 and A25.

Thoughtless routing of medium distance road truck and car journeys through the town centre can to a large extent be discouraged by closing at least part of West Street to through traffic, accompanied by some traffic calming elsewhere on lines already mooted in these pages. Recent research has shown that making roads difficult for motorists and truck drivers to use or blocking them off altogether, causes motor traffic to diminish. This is the flip side to the recently discovered truth that building more roads only causes the volume of traffic to increase.

Rail freight, at present pitifully small in comparison to road, could be expanded much more than the 140% suggested in the recent report of National Economic Research Associates, but first there is a problem to be tackled. The extent of the deliberate, often government-inspired, run-down of rail freight over the last four decades has brought about a capacity shrinkage. Railway land has been sold off wholesale without thought for the future. As at Holmwood, houses have been built on the sites of railway goods yards and sidings (do their occupants complain of rail noises?) Without a firm expectation that rail freight traffic will be tripled, the case for large scale infrastructure improvements required to increase freight capacity of the railway net (including those necessary for our east-west line) will be undermined. How then to build up the traffic to a higher level that would justify the needed investment?

One way would be to allow rail to play a much greater part in the supply chains. It is too readily assumed that these are fixed in their present form

for all time. If those using the huge articulated road trucks were to be required to cover more of the costs they impose on society and if they were obliged even to come somewhere near the high safety standards imposed on the railways and subjected to really punishing penalties for infringements of safety rules, market force indicators would soon oblige road freight users to look at alternatives to running huge articulated road trucks indiscriminately around the road network. The Rail Freight Group suggests rail-fed distribution centres in the larger urban centres, places where loads could be transhipped to small, more environmentally-friendly 'city trucks' which would then distribute the goods over the road network to retail outlets in areas such as ours.

What happens at the bottom end of the supply chains also imposes its own burden on small town and rural roads. At present strong flows of cars regularly visit urban, 'edge of town' and 'out of town' supermarkets for food and other basic consumer items. Developments in communications technology may soon render outdated the whole concept of private car-sustained shopping at large retail centres with their associated space-hungry car parks. This conjures up the attractive prospect of the ugly asphalted car parks behind Dorking High Street and South Street reverting to the pretty tree-shaded gardens they once were. A substantial reduction in car use from armchair electronic shopping, with its associated home delivery services using small vans would help considerably to clean up our air and reduce congestion.

It is of course hazardous to predict the future but there are some encouraging signs of a change in attitudes. Sainsburys, Superdrug, Tesco and Safeway, even Eddie Stobart, are all now turning to rail use. We have seen the end of the long-hallowed policy of unlimited road building to meet perceived need with no more than token regard to the costs imposed on society and the environment. The shocking desecration perpetrated at Twyford Down, Winchester, seems to have marked a significant turning point.

Alan A Jackson

THE CHAIRMAN WRITES

The Local Plan Enquiry

After many months awaiting the report of the Inspector on the Mole Valley Local Plan Inquiry, details of the report are now available. On the premise that a number of members have not seen this report, I am commenting on its provisions in so far as these relate to the possibility of Dorking having an edge-of-town superstore.

The Council's Chief Planning Officer, Jon Lloyd, in a recent statement, says that the Inspector has supported the strategy of concentrating retail provision and investment in Dorking town centre. However, the present draft Local Plan which does not permit major retail development, particularly of any large food stores, on the edge of or outside the town centre, was judged to be in conflict with national planning guidance and could not be supported. Instead the Inspector has proposed strict criteria including crucial tests that any proposal would not harm the vitality and/or viability of Dorking town centre and would not cause harm to the strategy of the Local Plan. Please see the article written to Brian Carr, our President, elsewhere in this newsletter. Furthermore, the Inspector is of the view that these changes will strengthen, not weaken, the Local Plan and will provide the MVDC with the necessary measures to protect the town from harmful development.

I have been told that over the next few months the Council will be reviewing the draft Local Plan with the intention of publishing a revised version to incorporate the Inspector's recommendations prior to public consultation early next year.

Although there are a number of procedures to be undertaken, I think the outcome is to be welcomed by all concerned with the future of Dorking town centre. In the meantime, it is to be hoped that the major food retailers in Dorking will now concentrate on ways in which they can expand and improve their services to their customers in the town centre.

Heritage Open Days

By the time you read this, the Heritage Open Days event will have taken place and I very much hope that all members will have enjoyed the very wide variety of properties open and the

excellent choice of walks which the Society was able to arrange. In chairing the working party, I wish firstly to thank colleagues who have contributed so much to the planning of the programme - Rod Shaw of the MVDC, Elaine Erskine, the Town Centre Manager, Peter and Sarah Hawkes, Ian Brotchie and lastly but not least, our former Hon. Secretary, Lynda Bailey, who very generously agreed to return to Dorking for the event and assist Ian Brotchie in co-ordinating the programme. No less than twenty properties were open to the public through the generosity of their owners while the nine walks reflect the willing co-operation of the walk leaders. This was a splendid effort and I wish to thank everyone concerned.

The Autumn Meeting Programme

The Autumn meeting is to take place on Thursday, 29th October 1998. It will be held in the Masonic Hall, Dorking Halls at 7.30pm.

The programme will, as usual, include the presentation of awards to the winners of this year's Best Development Competition, for both small and large entries, the competition arrangements being organised by Peter Hawkes, to whom the Society's thanks are due.

The Speaker will be Mr David Brock, an Inspector of Historic Buildings with English Heritage since 1981. Since 1983, Mr Brock has worked on grants and listed buildings consent issues in the south-east, adding Surrey to his portfolio in 1995. Besides his work on buildings owned or run by English Heritage, he also gives advice on other buildings and he will be involved in the establishment of a new Regional Office which is likely to be located in Surrey. I am confident that members attending the Autumn Meeting will find the subject matter of absorbing interest and I look forward to welcoming Mr Brock.

The Dorking Museum

Those members who have not visited the Museum recently will be unaware of the tremendous activity taking place in preparation for the refurbishment of the display area, including the extension. The fact that the majority of this work is being carried out by the Museum working party in their spare time is testimony to the dedi-

cation of these individuals and something which I am happy to acknowledge publicly in this letter. If only the same enthusiasm could be engendered by our many other members in persuading residents in Dorking and elsewhere to join the Society and support our activities, it would be most gratifying.

Dorking Caves

I am sure that a number of members are wondering what is happening to the proposal to install lighting in the Caves preparatory to regular opening times for the public. As members may know, the Caves are owned by Mole Valley District Council and the Society is engaged in agreeing a renewed lease extending for ten years, allowing the caves to be administered by the So-

ciety, with a portion of the entrance fees charged to be paid to the MVDC in recognition of their investment of approximately £6,000 towards the lighting costs. In the meantime, the Caves Officer, Harry Tyler, and his volunteers have requested a revised lighting scheme which in the event is slightly less expensive to install and has the advantage of retaining the aura of mystery previously created by using candlelight.

It is hoped that the final agreement between the Council and the Society will be reached very shortly. I would like to thank Harry and his team for all their support and also our President, Brian Carr, for his work as the Society's Honorary Legal Adviser.

BC

Letters to the Editor

Sir

Gatwick Aircraft Noise

Mr Cole's piece in the last newsletter is consistent with advice I received slightly earlier this year from the Flight Evaluation Unit, also in conjunction with Cllr Wilkie.

I drew one or two further conclusions and put them to Sir Paul Beresford, MP for Mole Valley, and these may be of interest to Mr Cole and/or newsletter readers to whom you may wish to pass them on. It remains far from clear to me what, if anything, the government plans to do and I fear that if anyone (including the Society) wishes to achieve anything of significance in this area they will need to be ready to engage in a fairly serious struggle with the contrary forces involved in the aviation business.

M B Benoy
Dorking

[Letter to Sir Paul Beresford, MP, Mole Valley, attached to the above]

Gatwick Airport Noise

I am sure you are aware that aircraft using Gatwick Airport are continuing to present a noise nuisance to many of us living in Mole Valley. As a Dorking resident, my lot should be better than that of many others; even so, the trend is worsening and - unchecked - it has the capacity to become a serious problem. Dialogue with a local councillor (Mr Tim Wilkie) recently led to a briefing at Gatwick's noise unit in the light of which I would make the following comments:

1. Night Noise

Current policy notionally allows more than 10,000 night movements in the seven months of summer - around 45 per night. Probably few of these come over Dorking but it only requires one to be awakened and this has happened to me on a number of occasions. Much is currently being made of the gradual introduction of newer 'quieter' types but this is relative. New aircraft such as the Boeing 777 are not as noisy as they might be, given their size, but they are certainly noisy enough to disturb sleep.

Conclusions

I would be grateful if you would remain alert to the continuing threat to the local night environment posed by the continuing growth in the use of large transport aircraft by airlines using Gatwick. In particular, I would ask that you be alert to the ambitions of British Airways and the use it makes of the Terminal 5 issue to transfer the effects of traffic growth from Heathrow to Gatwick.

2. Noise Preferential Route (NPRs)

In one brief sample period (13.05 to 15.05 on 8 November 1997) three large aircraft passed close to where I live at altitudes of about 4,000-5,000 feet. These aircraft were notionally flying one of the NPRs which involves a 'U' turn north of the Gatwick westbound extended centre line on to an easterly heading. To be where they were means that they were around 3 miles north of the relevant NPR although, in view of their height, I cannot be sure they regarded this as effective (see next paragraph).

Now I have been told a number of things: that the large aircraft using Gatwick today have difficulty in flying the NPR; that they have navigational difficulty in knowing where they are; that the NPR has, in any case, no validity above 3,000 feet (by implication, that aircraft are not noisy above that height).

In view of these comments, I would like to make the following suggestions:

1. The heavy jets seem capable of flying a 180 degree turn from a westerly departure on to a reciprocal path about one mile north of the present NPR. This capability should be clearly determined and a new NPR established which, with a suitable margin, will keep aircraft clear of populated areas.
2. The validity of this NPR should be extended to an altitude of 5,000 feet.
3. **The DoT should provide for the imposition of penalties on airlines whose aircraft depart from this NPR (and other NPRs) by more than an agreed amount.**
4. Notwithstanding the capacity of some, perhaps a majority, of airlines to employ more accurate on-board satellite navigation equipment, steps should be taken to support the new NPR (Paragraph 1) with a Radio Beacon closer than the existing one at Detling.

Conclusions

Steps need to be taken on the one hand to set realistic flight path objectives for Gatwick aircraft and, on the other, to give the airport firmer duties and powers for their enforcement. Your assistance in pursuing these objectives, e.g. along the above lines, would be appreciated.

M B Benoy
Dorking

This problem grows worse by the month. In addition to the increasing row from Gatwick departures, we are now subjected to the tiresome droning of aircraft stacked up for landing at Heathrow; hopefully never the twain shall meet!

Editor

Sir,

I write to you as a visitor to Dorking and as a traveller to many towns and villages.

I would say that great times could lay before the town, it has a fine linear spaciousness and retains

an element of community shops which gives the town life.

I have enjoyed my walks around the town, particularly the discovery of the Drill Hall. The Baptist Chapel looked interesting and the 'White Horse' was certainly welcoming.

However, in order to go forward and develop it is necessary to address the negatives as well.

The overwhelming challenge the town faces must be that of noise and pollution. The culprits being motor vehicles, and the other being the incessant bleeping of the pelican crossings along the High Street.

The latter can be resolved simply by adding a special Braille button thus shrieking only when specifically required, the former problem I am afraid faces many towns and needs imagination to solve. A diversionary route is the only answer. Revealing the cobbles thereafter would surely dissuade all but the buses!

A plea to you as a body keen to preserve the built heritage of Dorking:

1. don't cheapen Dorking with another pedestrianisation scheme
2. persuade your Council to ban PVC double glazing. The effects are catastrophic and sadly a walk around the town will reveal properties and terraces in Dorking being spoilt.

These are my views as a tourist and what a tourist comes for. Thank you for giving me space to air them.

R C Rush
London E7

Sir,

I apologise for not responding earlier to the article appealing for news and views from villages in the Dorking area. Since no-one else in Holmwood wrote, I can only speak for myself but hope others feel the same. I am concerned about the following (no order of preference since each deserves attention):

1. **A24.** The 60 mph limit is a great improvement but there must be more, i.e. speed cameras. I understand that the police have used speed traps to try to catch motorcyclists but as they are able to communicate to others following who slow down, it hasn't been that much of a success.

2. Monitoring, management and conservation of rural areas.

We are fortunate in having Holmwood Common owned by the National Trust so that this acreage is inalienable. I want future generations to enjoy the countryside as I know it today.

I am concerned that so many people, from Surrey C.C. down to householders, are obsessed with cutting grass and flowers down as soon as they appear.

North, Mid and South Holmwood (also Beare Green) make up a particularly pleasant rural dwelling area and I am thankful that the Dorking & District Preservation Society concerns itself not only with buildings in the town and the general 'look' of Dorking but also the impact of any development or change of use of property in rural areas which will further reduce the countryside.

Mrs M Woolven
Holmwood

P.S. I have written to the Dorking Planning Committee about a proposed application for holiday cabins at Newdigate. This is ridiculous when so many people need homes and a tasteful secluded group of small houses, say four, would be much more practical, seeing that the same services (water, gas/electricity) would be installed and the properties would not remain empty for many months of the year.

For this planning application see the report of our Planning Committee on page 11. **Editor**

Sir

I agree with those sentiments expressed in your Editorial for Newsletter No. 20 regarding the lack of news and views for the Newsletter. However, I think there is a shortage of news from sources closer to home, i.e. from the Society itself.

We can read informative and interesting "Reports" from the Museum and the Local History Group and the same may be said about the 'Notes' from the Planning Team but where are the notes or reports about the other concerns of the Society?

One piece from the Chairman is unsatisfactory and hardly fulfils two of the primary Objects of the Society namely 'to stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the area of Dorking and district' and 'to en-

courage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest".

It's a sad reflection that upon reading the account of the Society's first 50 years of preservation (booklet on sale in the Museum) I felt a sense of longing for what seemed to be the 'good old days' when there was a wider base of contributors.

Let us hear from those Council members whose areas of concern are Countryside Conservation, Footpaths and Bridleways and Highways and Transport. What, for example, is being done about the often complained-of obstructed pavements, access to the countryside along footpaths and bridleways? What does the Society do about our complaints about traffic?

To conclude I take the liberty of paraphrasing the Editor (from the same Newsletter) 'can it really be that in none of these areas of interest there is nothing happening or threatened that is worthy of report and discussion'?

Judith Mindan
Dorking

Sir

Village Homes for Village People

Having read the Editorial Column in Newsletter No. 20, Ockley Parish Council feels that the following news is worthy of report.

At the MVDC Planning Committee Meeting held on 3 June 1998 the Chief Planning Officer was authorised to grant permission, subject to the conditions and with the informatives set out in the report, for the erection of five houses and two bungalows (seven affordable homes) and conversion of existing building to provide one dwelling, together with creation of new access off Friday Street, land at the junction of Friday Street and Stane Street, Ockley.

A survey carried out by the parish council in November 1992 showed that there was a need in Ockley for some affordable housing. The parish council, working with the Rural Housing Trust, then had to see whether a scheme could be provided.

Plans drawn up showed a small development, tucked behind a high wall, with buildings in character with the rest of the village. When the planning application was submitted to MVDC in the earlier part of the year the Rural Housing Trust advised the parish council that letters of support for this application would be of help.

The Planning Team from the Preservation Society supported the application for which the parish council is very grateful. Many other letters were also written from people and organisations who very much hope that in the near future the young people of Ockley will be able to stay in 'their' village.

J P Naylor
Chairman

Ockley Parish Council

Sir

I was interested in your comments in the recent issue of the Newsletter; for my own part I have been in contact with local councillors a number of times with queries about many aspects of Dorking, including traffic problems and shopping, to mention just two.

You mention the number of closed shops there are; I believe this to be mainly the result of the

ever increasing demands of property owners which eventually forces many retailers to quit.

On the same subject, I do think that many shops do not make one welcome and often there is poor service. The attitude does not encourage people to return or even buy. It is often 'take it or leave it'.

Another worrying subject is movement of traffic, or lack of it, despite mentioning this to local councillors, who often tell me that the matter is under review by experts, but no action ever appears to happen.

It might help if the local newspaper started to campaign for general improvements, but perhaps they are worried that they might upset the authorities? Anyway, many thanks for all your efforts.

Leslie West
Dorking

Reports from the Dorking & District Museum

Museum Extension

The new warm air heating system has now been installed by British Gas subcontractors. The heating unit is located on the mezzanine floor of the extension. Getting it there was quite a major undertaking. Its weight and bulk were quite beyond the mechanics who came to do the work and it took the efforts of four hastily recruited volunteers to help them manhandle it up the stairs. The system is programmable so that the heating can come on automatically before opening hours and at any time if the temperature drops too low. It will serve both the extension and the original museum.

The work on enclosing the stairway is complete except for fitting the door and decoration. The next major task for the Working Party is to cut the holes in the walls for the connecting doors to the existing museum. A location hole has been made for the one at the back (the fire door). This revealed the wall to be 15" thick and made of soft handmade red bricks. To remove the brickwork for these doorways is going to be a dusty job so it is planned to erect, on the museum side, temporary covers over the affected areas. We hope to keep the museum open for as long as possible but when we start relocating the displays it will involve such a major disruption that closure will be inevitable, probably in the late autumn.

The rewiring work in the extension has been carried out by Local History Group member, Tony Hall, a professional electrician. We thank him for the long hours he has put in. The fire alarm wiring for the extension and existing museum has still to be done.

BBC Antiques Roadshow visit to Dorking - 30 July 1998

At short notice Steve Potter, Director for the show, contacted our secretary, Graham Potter (no relation), saying he would like to visit our museum to help him prepare the script for the introduction to the programme. We were asked for what is Dorking best known. To find out you will have to watch the programme due to be broadcast in January! I thank those involved in the discussion, particularly our past Chairman, Lionel Green. Mr Potter was shown round the museum and wrote in the Visitors' Book "fascinating".

Selection of Paintings for a possible exhibition at the Millenium Festival of Arts Exhibition, Dorking Halls

Following their cataloguing of all of our pictures, Joyce Foster and Barbara Turnbull made a selection of ones which might be suitable for public exhibition. Sandra Wedgwood and Chris Kohler, along with Brian Hodges, Curator of Exhibits, and myself spent an afternoon inspecting these pictures and confirmed a list of some 50 covering both town subjects and local

countryside views. The Panel was impressed by the range and quality of paintings, but noted that several short-listed ones were in need of cleaning and repair. A previous professional evaluation of restoration work suggested a cost of around £3,500, although half of this relates to one oil painting by John Beckett, entitled "South Street".

A proposal for the possible exhibition of some or all of these pictures at the Festival of Arts Exhibition has been favourably received by John Cawdell, Leisure Services Manager, MVDC. Grant applications for help with restoration will be made to the Council and to the S.E. Area Museums Service.

Martin Cole

List of Acquisitions since 31 March 1998

1. Electric iron - 1920s*
2. Stoneware ginger beer bottle inscribed "J Bonny & Sons, Reigate"*
3. Collection of miscellaneous bygone cigarette packets etc.
4. Penn's Decimal 'Addipresto' portable adding machine - c. 1970
5. Flat bottomed circular copper bed warmer - c. 1900*
6. Dorking Highways Board Seal - press and carrying box with keys; Dorking Rural District Council seal matrix (2) - 1894.
7. Chemist's handscales, with 8 rough square apothecary's weights, in wooden box - Victorian
8. Corkscrew with bone handle - late Victorian*
9. Machine made cleat for holding piping - early 20th century*
10. 'The Neo-Cyclostyle Duplicating Apparatus' made by Gestetner - 1920s.
11. Two-gallon red petrol/oil can - 1920s*
12. Two-gallon earthenware household water softener - Victorian*.
13. White enamel "Quick-Cooker" bowl - 1930s*
14. Lead pencil inscribed "Butler's, Portland Road, Dorking for Quality Mineral Drinks" - 1950s*.
15. Kodak photograph wallet inscribed "Alan Woodcock, Photographic Dealer, Dorking" - 1950s*
16. 'Magic Pocket Savings Bank' for sixpences (from W J Robins shop)*
17. Wooden sock darning egg - late Victorian*
18. 'The Model Ready Reckoner' - book published by Frederick Warne & Co, London, in 1867 (from W J Robins' shop)*
19. The 'Astor' short handled garden shears with multiple blade action - 1920s*
20. Crayon portrait of Alfred Strudwick by William Narraway - 1976
21. Wedding bonnet belonging to Fanny Sykes (née Goford) - 1892.
22. Miniature book of Common Prayer and Hymns Ancient & Modern, inscribed "To Maude Ansell 17 March 1903".
23. Three posters relating to the South African War and Dorking in 1900*
24. Child's coral necklace owned by Miss Barbara Sykes, donor - pre-1930s.

*On display in the Museum

Brian Hodges
Curator (Exhibits)

Dorking Museum Library

I am happy to report that researchers now have access to the David Knight Photograph Collection in the Museum Library. Under the able leadership of our Curator of Photographs, Gladys Arlett, a dozen volunteers have been engaged in the mammoth task of making the collection usable.

When we obtained the collection of 2,280 photographs they were housed in a large box and over 20 assorted albums, each with its own numbering system. David had written many detailed notes on the album pages and the first task was to transcribe these, using David's numbering. Each photograph was then measured and clear conservation sleeves purchased for their protection before they could be removed from the albums.

Detailed information of each photograph was entered into a computer database, which was then sorted into general areas and date order. The actual photographs could then be given new numbers, K1-2280, and be sorted into the correct order. At this point the Museum Library resembled a GPO sorting office, but under Gladys's guidance the photographs were safely housed in their new home of metal drawers.

While this was taking place the database was being checked and double-checked and three printed indexes produced - one of place names, one of personal names and the third a subject index. A full catalogue has also been produced including all David Knight's notes and information.

We must now start on the maps. Thanks to generous donations and a 50% grant from the South Eastern Museums Service we have just taken possession of 175 clear, acid-free conservation sleeves, which will enable us to protect all our 25" OS maps and a few more besides. The cost of this project is almost £600 - conservation does not come cheap, but I am sure you will agree it is worthwhile.

Mary Turner
Curator, Library & Records

Report from Dorking Local History Group

Since the question of an independent Local History Group was raised it is becoming increasingly apparent that many members know very little about the actual working of the Preservation Society and its two subgroups - the Local History Group and the Museum.

The Local History Group has about 300 members and has for many years been self-contained and fully self-supporting. Membership of the Group is open to anyone who is interested in the history of the area and pays the Group's annual subscription. It is not necessary to be a member of the Preservation Society.

The Local History Group is concerned with research and information. Subscriptions provide for monthly meetings on a variety of appropriate topics with speakers drawn from its own members or outside. Members receive a twice yearly newsletter and an annual publication, Dorking History, which contains articles of local interest and is also offered for sale to non-members. There are at least two coach outings a year and the August meeting is usually an outside visit. Members are encouraged to research and write up the history of the area and there are chances to mount exhibitions and take part in events with other Local History Societies in the County. The Local History Group also publishes books and leaflets written by members on historical aspects of Dorking and its neighbourhood. Profits from the sale of these are used to fund further publications.

No part of your Preservation Society subscription, or any other Society funds, are used to finance the Local History Group in any of its activities, likewise nothing is paid by the Group to the Society.

The Local History Group has its own, properly worded and approved, constitution. It is managed by a Committee, consisting of a Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and up to nine others. Officers and Committee members are

Newsletter Distribution

The May 1998 issue called for a volunteer in Westhumble, and another for Strood Green. We were delighted to receive calls from three members, two living in Westhumble, the other in Betchworth, namely Mrs Gosling, Mr Senior and Mr Robert Clarke. Having two from West-

humble allows for that round to be split. Mr Clarke has undertaken to cover not only Strood Green but Betchworth and Buckland in addition. Our most grateful thanks to these three members of the Society.

Reading this one may be forgiven for thinking that the Local History Group is already an independent body, but this is not so. It is a subgroup of the Preservation Society and technically the Society owns all the Group's assets, including its stock-in-trade of publications.

A resolution was put to Local History Group members present at its AGM in April when they were asked to vote in a secret ballot. The result was:-

For independence: 57, i.e. 69.5% of those present, or 70.4% of the votes cast

Against independence :24, i.e. 29.3% of those present, or 29.6% of the votes cast

Non-returned paper: 1, i.e. 1.2% of those present

To pass a resolution the rules of the Preservation Society and the Local History Group require a majority of 75% of members present at an AGM to be in favour. Therefore, despite a large proportion being in favour of complete independence, the Local History Group is for the present still a subgroup of the Preservation Society.

Mary Turner

Chairman, Dorking Local History Group

Eric Ferguson

Eric is now a resident at The Garth, Tower Hill. A recent visit revealed him in good form but he is unable to continue his work as our back cover calligrapher. On behalf of all the Society's officers and members we would like to record our thanks to him for a task undertaken with great skill and enthusiasm. We have a small stock of his work still to be published and arrangements are being made for someone to take Eric's place. Meantime there will be a delay in making use of poems and prose submitted. A special word of thanks and an apology in this regard to Jennifer Huber of Westcott, who has sent three poems.

AAJ

humble allows for that round to be split. Mr Clarke has undertaken to cover not only Strood Green but Betchworth and Buckland in addition. Our most grateful thanks to these three members of the Society.

MB

Notes from the Planning Team

The most significant event that has occurred since I last wrote on these pages is the publication of the Inspector's Report on the Deposit Version of the forthcoming new Mole Valley Plan. Our President has written a separate note in this issue on this important subject (see page 11), so I do not need to comment further here, other than to say how pleased with the outcome all the members of my sub-committee are.

In the four months from April to July your Planning Committee wrote some 48 letters on planning matters, of which 38 were to the Chief Planning Officer on the subject of planning applications, six to the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol in connection with appeals and four to members of the public (not necessarily members of this Society) on various other matters. Do please write to me, or get in touch on the telephone, if there is any planning matter which is causing you concern. My colleagues and I are there to help.

The Planning Committee of Mole Valley District Council has reached decisions on both Lower Boxhill Farm and Green's Farm, on which I wrote in our last issue. Our request that the long cart-shed on **Lower Boxhill Farm** should be converted into a communal garage and not into a dwelling was taken up, but not our suggestion for the demolition of the only barn not worth preserving. There are however, still going to be six houses there, which we had thought too many. We can regard this as a partial victory. The important thing, however, is that the old buildings are going to be preserved by being found another use.

The plans for the conversion of the old buildings on **Green's Farm, Newdigate**, were also approved. We are sad that our suggestion to extend the curtilage of the farm house into the area of the old farm yard was not accepted, but the important thing is that these buildings are now going to be put to good use and so will be saved for posterity.

Probably the most important application to have been received during the summer was one from the Council itself and was for a **new Leisure Centre** extending over the whole of the whole of the old Baker garage site. It will be joined to the Dorking Halls, but separated from them by a passageway at ground level. It will include inter alia a swimming pool, larger than the present

one, which will be demolished once it is built. We liked the plan, but wrote expressing concern over the future use of site of old swimming pool. (This was before the opinion of the Inspector on the emerging Mole Valley Plan was known and we were worried that Sainsbury's could move in to exploit the site) We wrote that we saw it as a possible new site for the Performing Arts Library.

We were astonished when an application, also from the Council itself, to erect **four flagpoles** outside the Dorking Halls was turned down. We thought they would have greatly enlivened the Dorking Halls as well as advertising forthcoming events and balancing the joyful architecture of the Council offices themselves, immediately opposite. We had not written in support, not thinking for one moment that the application would be refused, but we did write afterwards to express our surprise. It is, however, reassuring to know that the Council can on occasions turn down its own planning applications.

We do occasionally find ourselves writing in support of applications, as we did earlier this year in connection with a scheme for building **low-cost housing in Ockley**. More recently, the **Thai Shop in South Street** near Pump Corner put in an application for a most imaginative re-ordering of its shop front, which will be a great improvement on its present appearance. It was, of course, approved.

Sometimes, though not often, we find that we have a different view from that of those living near the site of an application. There have been two such cases recently. One of them related to a thin strip of land running westwards from the top of **Lonsdale Road** in Dorking, for which there was an application to build five small dwellings with parking spaces for eight cars. This is two less than planning guidelines suggest for five dwellings. A revision of the scheme reduced the number of dwellings to four, suppressing the dwelling at the actual head of Lonsdale Road and using the area for the parking spaces. We preferred the earlier version, for aesthetic reasons, and wrote to say so. The second version, however, was produced in response to objections by the residents of Lonsdale Road, who are greatly concerned at the shortage of parking spaces in their road and anxious not make it worse. We gave greater weight to the appearance of the buildings than to considerations of parking, for

local residents it was the reverse. The Planning Committee of the Council heeded the local view, and approved the revised version of the scheme.

Last October an application to reopen the **Newdigate Brickworks**, which has been turned down by the Council, was allowed on appeal. This summer the owners of the site applied, as an alternative, to build an estate of 36 houses on part of the site. The site is of course deep in the Green Belt, where new dwellings are not normally permitted, and we are deeply committed to maintaining the integrity of the Green Belt. Once houses are built, the site is in effect under houses for ever, whereas in the end, once the clay deposits of the site are exhausted, the brickworks will close. Thus, although we dislike both alternatives, we have to dislike the brickworks less. This is the view that we expressed. Residents of Newdigate, however, understandably, prefer clean, tidy housing to a dirty, messy brickworks. The application has yet to be decided.

In both these cases it is a matter for regret that we felt unable to back up the local residents. It is, however, inevitable that on occasions this will happen as our viewpoints, although close, are not identical. We always consult local parish councils or amenity societies whenever we can and are happiest supporting them.

This was the case with another application in the Newdigate area. This was a site called **Grace-lands**, to the south of the village, where the owner was seeking to convert two ruinous agricultural buildings into seven holiday cabins. We spoke with Newdigate Parish Council, whose views corroborated ours. We then wrote to the Chief Planning Officer to observe that holiday cabins are still dwellings as far as concerns the planning regulations and that as such, this site being again in the Green Belt, they should not be permitted. The application has now been turned down. **Martin Wedgwood**

Mole Valley Local Plan ... What next?

The Chairman refers in his letter to the recently published Inspector's Report and discusses it in particular in relation to the possibility of a Dorking edge-of-town foodstore development.

What is especially satisfying is to see that the Inspector backs totally the Council's policies in relation to the **Green Belt**. These have had the full support of this Society. We have all seen the effect over the years of chipping away at the boundary between the urban area and the countryside, where the Green Belt is particularly vulnerable. The Inspector agrees with the refusal of the Council to give way at any point. Site owners and developers sought at the Inquiry to exempt sites such as **Chalcraft's Nursery**, land at the **end of Lincoln Road**, part of **Sondes Place Farm**, **Pixham Lane Sewage Works** and land at the **edge of Capel** from Green Belt protection. None of these objections succeeded. As a Society we will continue to help the Council to fight to maintain the Green Belt and its boundaries. It really is good to see the unequivocal backing for this policy from the Department of Environment Inspector. This has not always been the case!

Then there is the problem of **housing provision**. We all recognise the need of people to find places to live. What is in doubt is the number of new houses required and where these are to be

built. It is a national problem and the battle here is to seek to ensure that we in Mole Valley do not have a disproportionate burden which would endanger the balance of development both in the town and in the countryside and that more land is not released for housing than is actually needed. The Inspector has accepted the Council policy of 'wait and see'. Although he feels that the Council assumptions as to 'windfall' sites may be over-optimistic, he agrees that there is no present need to make further land available for housing and that the release of the 'Reserve Housing Sites', identified in the previous Plan, will be based not on a fixed time-scale but on the result of future assessment.

The Report is 389 pages long. It deals thoroughly and fairly with the objections raised at the Inquiry. Most of the suggestions made by the Society through its Planning Team (Martin Wedgwood, Bill Merry, Richard Ingle, Beryl Higgins and Daphne Rice) were incorporated by the Council in its own proposed alterations to the Plan made at the Inquiry and almost all are accepted by the Inspector. The Society does not agree with everything now in the Plan but it can take a quiet satisfaction in the help it has given to the Council Officers, who are to be congratulated on a first-class job done so far on behalf of the people of Mole Valley.

Finally to return to the all-important issue of a **possible retail store development on the edge of town**. A Government policy paper (known as PPG6) was published shortly after the Inquiry. Rightly the Inspector has taken this into account in reaching his conclusion that it would not be right to exclude absolutely in the Plan any possibility of an edge-of-town store being built at any time in the future. That is why he has followed PPG6 in calling for what is called a 'sequential' approach, but at the same time saying that the Plan should include criteria against which to judge any such proposal. In the Inspector's own words, these should be 'stringent in both the standards they set and in their application'. He sets out the following as a possible set of criteria, but emphasises that these are not intended to be definitive but a starting point':-

Proposals for major retail development, including large new foodstores and/or retail warehousing, on the edge of or outside Dorking town centre will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

- a. There is a need for the development;
- b. There are no suitable sites available or likely to become available within a reasonable period of time within or, in the case of out of centre proposals, on the edge of the town centre;
- c. The proposal, either individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed retail developments, would not harm the vitality and/or viability of the town centre;
- d. The proposal is of acceptable scale, materials and a high quality of design and would

When Dorking was Safe

One of the reasons advanced for using the motor car for every journey of more than a mile or so, when it might be achieved just as conveniently by a healthy walk or by public transport and a walk at each end is *the perceived, rather than the real*, danger of criminal assault late at night, especially on the part of women and girls.

It was not always thus. In a book of the recollections of elderly people (Winchmore Hill Lives, compiled by S Devlin, 1990) we recently read of a lady who came to Dorking regularly in 1933 to visit her sister who had just given birth to twins. The writer of this reminiscence, who was unmarried and 33 years old at the time, states that she always caught the 23.05 train from Waterloo, arriving at eight minutes before midnight. She "then had a walk across the fields" (presumably

not harm the urban or rural environment or residential amenity;

- e. The proposal is sited so as to reduce the number and length of car journeys and to be accessible to those using public transport;
- f. The traffic generated by the proposal can be accommodated safely on the local highway network, with sufficient car parking, and servicing provided on site, and in the case of out of centre proposals, is easily accessible to the Distributor Road Network;
- g. In the case of edge of centre proposals, be easily accessible to and from the primary shopping area for those travelling on foot;
- h. The proposal will not cause harm to the development plan strategy nor by located on land used or allocated for other purposes and/or required to meet other plan objectives, unless at the time of the proposal the need for it outweighs the harm caused by the loss of such land.

Please look carefully at the above and, if you have any comments, criticisms or suggestions do **please** get in touch with any member of the Planning Team (I set out their names above) so that the Society can once again do its bit by helping the Council Officers to achieve the best result. This is so important, because if the owners of the existing retail sites in the town centre have genuine fears that an edge-of-town development is likely to be permitted, there will be an understandable reluctance to spend the money that is needed to bring these existing sites up to modern standards. The whole future of Dorking as a viable and therefore attractive country town is at stake.

CBC

to Pixham). "There was no question of ever requiring an escort. Life was certainly apparently far safer in those days".

We can recall no incident in this area in the last 15 years but how many would brave this same late night train journey and then walk unaccompanied to Pixham today. What has happened to our society since 1933 to cause such apprehension - is it soundly-based, or is it just an excuse to travel by car?

AAJ

Dorking Rail, 150

On 4 July next year, the railway between Redhill and Dorking will have served our area continuously for 150 years. 15 October 1849 saw the line opened throughout between Redhill and

Reading. Until 1867, when the more direct route to London via Leatherhead and Epsom came into use, Dorking's link with the metropolis was circuitously achieved by trains operating between Reading, Redhill and London Bridge/Charing Cross. We saw this anniversary as something worthy of celebration by the railway authorities, perhaps by running a steam-hauled train which would pick up passengers at all the stations along the line, an event to which we might make some contribution along with other interested bodies. Initial approaches have proved somewhat disappointing. Your Chairman has written twice to the Managing Director of the train operating company (Thames Trains) in the hope that they might take the lead in arranging the event. His response was to suggest only that they are prepared to help develop any proposed celebrations in a low-key way, wanting to leave the main initiative to local groups. This attitude of course arises because there is no longer any single management in charge of the railway with a sense of pride in its history, nor even anyone prepared to take the lead and co-ordinate action on an important anniversary such as this. Privatisation by the previous administration has resulted in the track, signalling and infrastructure being the responsibility of one organisation, passenger train operation that of another, freight services and chartering of steam-hauled trains that of a third body. Thames Trains did not even offer guidance as to appropriate contacts in the other organisations with an interest.

We do not intend to let the occasion pass without some recognition, however modest. Ideas and offers of help would be most welcome. **AAJ**

Watch Out - Lawyers About!

The May/June issue of the Surrey Archaeological Society Bulletin contained a solemn warning that: "The Society has been advised that members expressing opinions on planning matters and specifically the architectural merit or age of a building or streetscape may lay themselves open to a claim from a litigious complainant who may seek to recover damages if the opinion expressed can subsequently prove to be ill-founded".

The quoted statement is indeed an extraordinary one, and, if taken seriously, would stifle all criticism in published material. It has the flavour of being written by a lawyer. Whilst the age of a building is a (usually) verifiable fact which should of course be checked before making a public statement, opinions as to the architectural merit of buildings and streetscapes are surely another matter altogether. Of their nature they are subjective and as such surely not easily capable of dispute by lawyers unless there is obvious malice. Forthright opinions of architectural merit in books, newspapers and magazines have always been freely made, though today writers are in general more mealy-mouthed than formerly. How often have such opinions been disputed in courts of law? **AAJ**

OUR AUTUMN MEETING

will take place on

**Thursday October 29th
at 7.30pm**

in the Masonic Hall, Dorking Halls

**The speaker will be be
Mr David Brock,
Inspector of Historic Buildings with English Heritage,
who will be talking on
'English Heritage and the Historic Buildings of Surrey**

Please note that seating is limited, so please come early to ensure you have a place to sit.

Corporate Members Supporting the Society

Note that all addresses are of Dorking town and all telephone numbers have the code 01306, unless shown otherwise.

Name	Address	Tel:	Business
Abbey Information Systems Ltd.	1 Paper Mews, 330 High St., RH4 2TU	740 553	Computer consultancy
John Arthur Gallery	Old King's Head Ct., 11 High St. RH4 1AR	741 120	Fine art gallery
Bales Tours Ltd.	Bales House, Junction Road, RH4 3EB	885 923	Travel agents
Betchworth Park Golf Club	Reigate Road RH4 1NZ	882 052	Golf club
Biwater Group Ltd.	Biwater Ho., Station Approach, RH4 1TZ	740 740	Water treatmt, eqpt, services
Bradney & Co	56 Dene Street, RH4 2DP	743 939	Chartered accountants
Broadheath Restorations	Myrtle Cottage, Newdigate RH5 5AD	631 773	Window frame restorers
Bullimores	156 South Street, RH4 2EU	880 880	Chartered accountants
Classic Bedrooms	120 South Street, RH4 2EU	880 330	Retailer
Country Gardens Ltd.	Reigate Road, RH4 1NP	884 845	Garden centre
Cowan & Wood	114 South Street, RH4 2EZ	886 622	Solicitors
Croxton + Garry Ltd.	Curtis Road, Dorking	886688	Mineral extraction
Dorking Golf Club	Club House, Deepdene Avenue RH5 4BX	886 917	Golf club
Dorking School of Motoring	3 Lyons Court, RH4 1AB	880119	Driving school
Downs	156 High Street, RH4 1BQ	880 110	Solicitors and notaries
Edolph's Farm	Norwood Hill Road, Charlwood RH6 0EB	01293-862 130	Farm
Ellis Atkins & Co.	1 Paper Mews, 330 High St., RH4 2TU	886 681	Chartered accountants
Friends' Provident Life Office	Pixham End, RH4 1QA	740 123	Life Assurance
Patrick Gardner & Co.	16 South Street, RH4 2HQ	877 775	Estate Agents
Garth House Nursing Home	Tower Hill Road, RH4 2AY	880511	Nursing home
Graham Leather Ltd.	64/65 West Street, RH4 1BS	887 727	China and glassware
Hammond Concrete Tstg & Servs	P. O. Box 75, 2 Cedar Close, RH4 2YX	887 854	Concrete contractor
Hart Scales & Hodges	159 High Street, RH4 1AD	884 432	Solicitors
Harvey-Jones, Phillips Prtrship	57 West Street, RH4 1BS	742 200	Ind. financial advisors
Holly & Laurel	Horsham Road, South Holmwood	885 460	Fireplaces; Tea-room
Hurtwood Litho Printers	39a South Street, RH4 2JX	877 557	Printers
Ian Munro	10 High Street, RH4 1AT	882 270	Men's outfitters
International Sports Mktg Ltd.	Bales Ct., Barrington Rd., RH4 3EJ	743 322	Marketing consultants
King's Court Galleries	54 West Street, RH4 1BS	881 757	Art gallery & framers
Kuoni Travel Ltd.	Deepdene Ave., RH5 4AZ	840 888	Tour operators
LocoScript Software Ltd.	Unit 10/11, Vincent Works, RH4 3HJ	747 757	Computer software
Newspaper Press Fund	Dickens Ho., 35 Wathen Rd., RH4 1JY	887 511	Charity
Newton & Co.	173 High Street, RH4 1AD	884 208	Chartered accountants
Rapley & Co.	Jubilee Terrace, RH4 1LE	882 605	Wheelchair sales/repairs
Rose Hill Nursing Home	9 Rose Hill RH4 2EG	882 822	Nursing home
Michael Schryver Antiques Ltd.,	The Granary, 10 North St., RH4 1DN	881 110	Antiques restoration
Philip Sears Designs	18c Horsham Rd., RH4 2JD	884 477	Architectural bldg surveyors
W. Songhurst Ltd.	Masters Ho, Guildf'd Rd, Westcott RH4 3NG	880 411	Builders
Treeline	The Spinney Horsham Rd., Wallis Wood	741 800	Tree care and maintenance
Unum Ltd.	Milton Court, RH4 3LZ	887 766	Disability insurers
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L. A. White (Dkg) Ltd.	11 Yew Tree Road, RH4 IHU	885 245	Builder
White & Sons	104 High Street, RH4 1AZ	887 654	Estate agents
Whitelegg Machines Ltd.	Fir Tree House, Horsham Rd., Beare Green RH5 4LQ	713 200	Electrical engineers

Other Corporate Members Supporting the Society:

Bartholomew Court Residents' Association.	Holmwood Women's Institute
Box Hill Afternoon Women's Institute	Leigh Residents' Association
Brockham Green Village Society	Mickleham Parish Council
Coldharbour Sports and Social Club	Newdigate Parish Council
Friends of Box Hill	Westcott Village Association

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NEWSLETTER No:21

Day swoops in a burst of light
Over the green gauze fan of fields
With fading edges in the far sight
And great pale sky bowl over all.

Slips through the meadows sharp below
The lurex shimmer of the Mole,
Sluicing close in rippled flow
To 'Whites', steep as a castle wall.

Dim yew and box and beech forest
Are interlaced in dark embroidery
Over hole and sett, earth and nest,
Owl hoot, fox bark, mouse squeak, bird call.

Stars at tip-toe from Dorking town
When dusk creeps blue across the Weald;
Diurnal migrant crowds are flown
And Box Hill hushed beneath nightfall.

FRANCES MOUNTFORD