

DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY



Established in 1929

NEWSLETTER

No. 22

March 1999

Contents

Editorial	1
The Chairman Writes	2
Letter to the Editor	3
Annual General Meeting Date	3
Dorking & District Museum Report	4
Local History Group Report	5
A New Book About Box Hill	5
Performing Arts Library	5
Caves Officer's Report	6
Fake History	6
Have You Paid Your Subscription?	6
Superstores Policy	6
Town Enhancement Scheme	7
Too Much About Dorking?	7
Wotton Parish Council	7
Public Transport	8
Dorking Rail 150	9
The Redhill-Reading Line	9
Deepdene Garden Restoration	9
Unfairness of Mole Valley Geology	9
Planning Team Report	10
Membership	11

Registered Charity No: 246806

DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY

President: Mr Brian Carr MA,
Westmount,
Ridgeway Road,
Dorking RH4 3AT (01306 883208)

Editor: Mr Alan A Jackson FRSA,
St Michael's Steps,
Deepdene Park Road,
Dorking RH5 4AN (01306 883324)

Chairman: Mr Barry Collins JP,
Sunridge,
South Drive,
Dorking RH5 4AG (01306 887522)

Membership/Subscription Enquiries:
Mrs Mo Bushell,
51 Deepdene Vale,
Dorking RH4 1NJ (01306 883941)

NEWSLETTER 22: March 1999

Free to members

Published each March, May and October.

Last dates for copy to be with the Editor: 31 January, 31 March, 31 August.

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 NOTES

There is quite enough editorial comment in the main body of this first number of 1999 to render a formal editorial otiose. When agreeing to deliver an extra number each year, it was made clear to the management that there would not necessarily be an editorial with each number. Whilst the themes this time are familiar, please understand that if some topics do not appear to get the treatment they deserve, it is for the reason mentioned in "Too Much About Dorking" on another page. In the hope of varying the tunes played, we have in the past invited guest editorials; this invitation remains open but we are not hopeful, since when we asked initially, only one response was received.

On a more positive note, we extend a warm welcome to Rachel Fardon, who is taking on the production side of this Newsletter. That sounds grand but in practice involves using a computer

competently to lay out and transform the dogs' breakfast that emerges from the 12-15 hour editorial stint into print-ready state. For, let it be whispered, although your editor has Intel Inside and plenty of hard disk capacity, he is barely computer-literate, and far too old in the tooth (and therefore too impatient) to be amenable to spending his remaining valuable time in absorbing new routines from near-incomprehensible manuals.

After the experience of a long delay between editorial completion and distribution of the former 'January' issue, it has been decided to move this to a March distribution, which entails a press date of 31 January in future. Contributors are requested to note the revised press and issue dates printed above in their diaries and Filofaxes.

Alan A Jackson

THE CHAIRMAN WRITES -

First of all, may I start by wishing all the members of the Society a happy and prosperous 1999.

All members will, I trust, have received my letter dated January 1999 reminding them that subscriptions were due and encouraging everyone to renew their membership of the Society. In preparing this letter much credit is due to Mo Bushell, Michael Forster and Ian Brotchie, who summarised so succinctly the main work of the Society during the last twelve months. In view of this excellent review, there is little for me to say, except to update you on the co-option of three new Council members in January.

Countryside Conservation

Both Margaret Benselin, the Countryside Conservation Officer, and I have been concerned over the way forward for this increasingly important part of our remit as a Society. Recently, the opportunity occurred of involving a professional botanist, Nick Owen, who is currently working as Project Officer for the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project and who has worked in the past in a number of nature conservation schemes. With the full support of Margaret and indeed the Council, Nick was co-opted as a Council member, and I take this opportunity of welcoming him to the Society.

Membership Development Officer

John Pratt, who has filled this position since 1997, has regrettably resigned due to business pressure. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking him publicly for his involvement and indeed his continuing interest in the Society. It is due to him that I have been fortunate in contacting individuals who have subsequently become active members of the Society.

On John's suggestion, I contacted Nigel Gibbons and David Leggatt of Patrick Gardner & Company in Dorking, and I am delighted to confirm that they have jointly accepted an invitation to join the Council. They will work as a team in developing the Society's corporate membership

among the commercial and retail community in Dorking and additionally assist in the development of ordinary membership in the surrounding neighbourhood. Accordingly, both Nigel and David were formally co-opted on to the Council in January.

Footpaths & Bridleways Officer

Another Council member, Harry Gort, has written to say that he will not be standing for re-election as Footpaths Officer. Harry has been an active Council member and regularly walked many of the footpaths in the district as well as organising several Spring Walks. On behalf of the Society, I wish to thank Harry for his dedicated involvement and wish him well in the future.

Chairman

As members will recall, I have previously indicated my intention of standing down as your Chairman in April 1999 on completion of five years. I have greatly enjoyed my term of office in this important and well-respected Society, and I owe a great debt of gratitude to my colleagues on the Society's Council who have given me so much support and encouragement over the years.

My decision to stand down should not be regarded as any lessening of my commitment to the Society and its aims, but rather the acknowledgement that change is a necessary corollary of progress. The importance of electing a new Chairman to guide the Society through the first years of the 21st century is self-evident. In this context, Sir Martin Wedgwood, my Vice Chairman during the last five years, has consented to being nominated as Chairman, which gives me the greatest pleasure and which I am confident will receive your overwhelming acclaim at the AGM in April 1999. It therefore only remains for me to thank you all for your support and encouragement over the last five years and to say that I shall hope to continue supporting the work of the Society in whatever role may be open to me.

Barry Collins

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

I must express my gratitude for your editorial in the last Newsletter concerning the traffic through Dorking. As you say so truly, it is not many years since freight trains were a regular feature on the Redhill-Reading line. When residents with property backing on to this line bought their houses, the railway had been there for generations. I suspect that those who object to the return of freight trains also complain about the huge articulated lorries emitting noxious fumes and creating a danger to pedestrians and other road users. You cannot have it both ways - goods of all sizes have to be moved from A to B, and it is far better they go by rail to large goods depots, say for example in Redhill or Reading, to be delivered from there by small road vehicles to towns and villages in our area.

Whilst Deepdene Avenue provides a useful channel for heavy traffic going north or south, there is no such provision east/west. My heart bleeds for the residents of Vincent Lane, which is totally unsuited for the one-way system. We need a by-pass to solve this problem but the 'Greens' would object to the destruction of some countryside Long-distance goods traffic must be returned to rail.

On the question of supermarkets versus small shops, it is Government that has to step in. It is iniquitous that because of the huge quantity discounts they can virtually demand, the supermarkets can sell goods at a lower price than small

shops can buy from the wholesaler. I have been shown the figures, so I know this is true. The general public use their cars to get to the supermarkets, but if they add the true car costs (licence, road tax, fuel, maintenance, insurance etc.) to what they pay in the supermarkets, the corner shop might well be cheaper!

As regards Gatwick noise, aircraft have got quieter in the 40 years I have lived in Newdigate, but still have some way go to. I wager that many complainants fly and use Gatwick as they travel to and fro on foreign holidays. As an airport, I like Gatwick but I loathe Heathrow!

Colin P. Hales
Newdigate

(In calculating private motoring car costs, it is noticeable that most people only quote the fuel price when considering alternative options; in addition to the other expenditure mentioned by Mr. Hales, vehicle replacement cost is almost always ignored. As to aircraft, intrusive noise is not the only negative factor; air traffic causes far more atmospheric pollution than road vehicles. And whilst large passenger aircraft may well have become a little quieter in recent years, there are far more of them flying through the Mole Valley air space than as recently as five years ago. Also helicopters and 'pleasure' light aircraft continue to be as noisy as ever, and their activity proliferates by the year in our area. - Editor)

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be held on

Thursday 22 April 1999

at Ashcombe School, Dorking

starting 7.30 p.m.

After the business part of the meeting, there will be a talk by
Mr. Michael Gwillim of the Civic Trust

All members are invited to attend

DORKING & DISTRICT MUSEUM REPORT

Party for Stewards and Working Party Members

Over 60 Museum helpers and spouses attended the party which was held in the partly-refurbished Museum extension on 2 December. Many expressions of appreciation were received, the occasion providing an opportunity to see the progress with the building work, to hear about future plans and to meet other supporters of the Museum. Offers to help with reorganisation work during the public closure period were received. Mary Turner and her helpers were thanked for organising the event. Our Treasurer, Sue Tombs, raised £64 on the raffle.

Progress with Building Work

Terry O'Kelly and his Working Party members worked hard to get the extension to reasonable decorative order for the party. Eric Mansfield managed to retrieve several lighting panels and sturdy double doors from a nearby office refurbishment. The lights have already been fitted in the new suspended ceiling, and the doors will be used between the existing Museum and extension.

Reorganisation of Museum Exhibits and Library Records

Fred Plant has taken on the task of co-ordinating the rearrangement of existing exhibits and planning new ones in connection with expansion into the extension. This will be a big team effort, involving all Curators and their helpers. Fred Plant and Brian Hodges have completed the computer-based record of all objects held in store, and the reorganisation of exhibits will provide an opportunity to extend the record to items on display.

Mary Turner and her helpers have been busy reorganising our maps and putting them into conservation sleeves, part of the cost for which was met from the South Eastern Museums Service grant. Work has started on reorganising our card indexes during the Museum closure period as a prelude to computerisation. Gladys Artlett has started work on planning the preparation of a computer database of our main collection of photographs. Alan Jackson is in process of preparing a computer-based gazetteer of road, feature and place names, from our 25in. OS maps of the Dorking area.

Signing of Contract for Geology Project

The Chairmen of our Society and Museum, along with representatives of other museums in Surrey, have signed the contract between the Surrey Museums Consultative Committee (of which we are members) and the Heritage Memorial Fund. Further discussions about our collections have been held with Dr. Paul Davis, the Geologist who has been appointed under this contract to help record and conserve our mineral and fossil collections.

Museums Week - Saturday 15th May to Sunday 23rd May 1999

The Association of Independent Museums has supplied a registration form for this event which we have decided to support. Themes from which we can choose include food, travel and treasures.

Conservation of Pictures

Three independent professional conservators have inspected the collection of pictures we wished to exhibit in Millennium events, and their quotations are awaited. Such formal quotations are necessary before we can apply for grants.

Martin Cole
Chairman

List of Acquisitions by Dorking Museum since 1st September 1998

1. Small china mug with black and white engraving of Box Hill, showing the area of the old bridge in Reigate Road. *
2. 'RD' wall can opener - c. 1960. *
3. Cast-iron gully cover cast in Dorking Foundry (P. Smyth) - late 1920s.
4. Yellow china plate showing engraving of St. Martin's Church (the present building) and Willow Walk, looking westwards. *
5. One-pint milk bottle inscribed "Westcott Dairies Ltd.". *
6. Three rug-making hooks. *
7. One stocking ladder darning. *
8. "Addressograph" addressing machine.

* On display in the Museum

B. S. Hodges
Curator (Exhibits)

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP REPORT

Writing this on a rare bright sunny January morning, with the turmoil of Christmas and New Year celebrations behind me, my thoughts turn to what the coming year has in store. In the case of the Local History Group, our regular monthly meetings offer a tempting range of topics. David Drummond has arranged a variety of talks including *Mediaeval Guildford*, the history of local firm *S. J. Clear & Co. Ltd.*, the history of *Holmwood Common*, what the census tells us about *Dorking in 1851*, the garden at *Gatton Park* and members' memories of *Wartime Dorking*. Our winter coach outing, on 20 March, will be to the Roman Palace at Fishbourne and then on to the Military Aviation Museum at Tangmere. At present there are still a few places available. The summer outing in June or July is yet to be announced.

Hopefully, as well as enjoying this organised programme, members are busy following their own interests and researching various aspects of the history of our area. The 1999 edition of *Dorking History* is already in the planning stage, so if you can contribute an article of between 500 and 2,000 words which you think will interest other members, please contact our Publications Co-ordinator, c/o Dorking Museum, West Street, RH4 1BS.

May I remind Group members that all 1999 subscriptions are now due and should be sent **directly to the Group Membership Secretary, Mrs. Sue Tombs**, as soon as possible. The current rate is £5, with additional members at the same address, £2.

New members are always welcome - more information can be obtained from Sue Tombs, c/o Dorking Museum or on 01306 886101. Alternatively, why not come along to one of our meetings, which are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 7.30 p.m. at the Friends' Meeting House, Butter Hill, Dorking. Meetings are at present free to Local History Group members, but visitors - including those who belong to the Preservation Society - are asked to pay £1.

Mary Turner,
Chairman

A NEW BOOK ABOUT BOX HILL

Lalage Grundy has written *The Box Hill Book of Box*, the first in a series about topics related to Box Hill and published by the Friends of Box Hill. The author describes many of the facets of *Buxus spp.*, and includes a history of the shrub on its namesake hill. If you want to produce a topiary sheep for your garden, the book will show you how to set about it. Herbal remedies and the several uses of boxwood are all considered in this well-illustrated booklet, which also contains practical information on cultivation.

Copies are obtainable from Lady Wedgwood at Pixham Mill, Dorking RH4 1PQ, and will be sent in return for a cheque for £3.50 (which includes post and packing). Please make cheques payable to "The Friends of Box Hill".

AAJ

PERFORMING ARTS LIBRARY

Mole Valley District Council has offered to provide a new building for the Library on their Dorking Halls site but would require a commercial rent, something the Surrey County Council is not prepared to pay. A purpose-built structure at the readily-accessible Dorking Halls site is seen as the ideal solution, but it would require the setting-up of a trust to raise the finance and take over the running of the Library from the County Council.

Adrian White has also generously offered to accommodate the Library at his Denbies Winery building, free of charge. The County Council appear to favour this solution and are disposed to draw up plans and seek planning consent.

Enquiries about the progress of this saga and all offers of assistance should be addressed to the PAL Users' Group at 21 Daneshill, Redhill, RH1 2DW (01737 763565).

AAJ

CAVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Following the busy and well-attended "Heritage Weekend" opening of the so-named South Street Caves, the team have conducted further booked tours for around 200 people (for the normal charge).

Over the past few months we have had many favourable comments from visitors, both near and far. Even many Dorking and district dwellers are surprised and delighted to discover one of the treasures of the area virtually beneath their feet!

We continue to receive many interesting suggestions as to other uses for the Caves, such as a Santa's Grotto or a party venue, both rather impractical I'm afraid. Why? Well, why not come and find out on a tour or, if you have already visited and understand, perhaps you'd like to become a Caves Guide?

The caves will be open on a regular basis this year; would-be visitors, please watch for tour booking details in a forthcoming press release!

Harry Tyler
Caves Officer

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR SUBSCRIPTION?

All subscriptions are now due (no action is of course necessary if your bank/building society have been instructed to pay at the current rates, as set out below). Please send the appropriate amount to Mo Bushell at 51 Deepdene Vale, Dorking RH4 1NJ, together with any donation you may feel able to add.

Ordinary £5
Family £7
Pensioners and Students £3
Corporate (up to 10 staff) £10
Corporate (11 or more staff) £20

All telephone enquiries on membership to 01306 883941 please.

If you have paid, whilst still feeling virtuous at your promptitude, there is still something you could do: **recruit your neighbours!** Membership leaflets are available from Mrs. Bushell at the above address. We are seeking to increase our numbers and are aiming at 2,000 members as a Millennium target. The greater our membership, the better we shall be able to achieve our aims.

AAJ

FAKE HISTORY

At the Society's Autumn Meeting on 29 October, your Editor asked about the 'retro' street furniture item which has appeared on the pavement outside Lloyd's Bank in Dorking High Street. Somewhat to his surprise, he was assured by an official of MVDC present at the meeting that this was a reproduction of an old pump which had long existed on this spot.

Not so. As letters from Messrs. Green and Molyneux in the *Dorking Advertiser* (14 January 1999) have stated, the true facts are otherwise. Research at Dorking Museum shows that what did exist here was a late 19th century *fire hydrant* of quite different configuration. The base of this was still present on the site until quite recently, when it was "sent away for restoration", to quote a MVDC official. What came back from this operation was a fake hand-operated water pump, which was then erected in a slightly different position, its spout sticking out dangerously into the footpath. Quite apart from the fact that it is now apparently to be turned with the spout pointing the other way (more expenditure!), it is wholly regrettable that taxpayers' money should have been spent on decorating the townscape with this counterfeit item, which will apparently now remain in place to deceive visitors and residents alike. Perhaps before spending our money in future, those concerned with altering (restoring?) the face of Dorking will undertake some preliminary research.

AAJ

SUPERSTORES POLICY REPORT

Last autumn saw the publication of a government-commissioned report by consultants CB Hillier Parker which found that the advent of superstores left a void in town centres, reducing trade at local food shops by between 13 and 50 per cent without necessarily increasing job opportunities. As well as food shops, dry cleaners, post offices, pharmacies and cash points have lost trade. The net effect is to reduce local employment, not create it. The report criticised the last government's planning rules as being "too lax", allowing, for example, an "edge-of-town centre" store to be sited only 200 yards from the agreed boundary. Commenting on the report, a CPRE representative said that towns were being destroyed by superstores, adding "it has been going on for far too long".

[Based on a news item in *The Daily Telegraph*]

TOWN ENHANCEMENT SCHEME AND THE DORKING MOVEMENT STUDY

Many members will have visited the exhibition of these proposals at Dorking Halls. Although the plans shown were excellently produced and the staff courteous and helpful in facing a barrage of questions and comments, the general impression was one of a distinct lack of will to grasp the nettle, or even to put the horse before the cart. The Town Centre Improvement Strategy (estimated to cost £750,000 over five years) aimed "to restore and enhance the historic character of Dorking town centre whilst accommodating ... necessary traffic movement ...". Therein lies the nub. What exactly constitutes "necessary traffic movement"? Is it the present all-day rush of motor traffic from one end of the town to the other, most of it with no apparent intention of stopping? Dorking's 'Historic Core' is described in the Enhancement Report as "a place to explore and walk around, a place for enjoyment in its own right". But is that possible to achieve comfortably alongside fast motor traffic which hardly ever lets up, most especially in the narrow confines of West Street, the street which has the town's finest grouping of old buildings and interesting shops, inviting quiet and leisurely inspection?

The 'prettification' measures set out in the Report will be of little avail and a total waste of resources unless the major problems of traffic weight and flow through the town and most particularly up West Street, are addressed. Does the Movement Study do that? We think not.

It is often argued (and we have heard it from Dorking traders) that the presence of motor traffic is necessary for the commercial vitality of a street or area. This was perhaps understandable when pedestrianisation was a novelty and little was known about its effects, but nowadays it ought to be self-evident that well-designed schemes to give streets over to people, rather than to cars and freight vehicles, are highly popular with shoppers, enabling them to concentrate on shopping and shop-browsing rather than dodging traffic, breathing in foul fumes and trying not to be deafened by traffic noise. Pedestrianisation does not need to be absolute, access arrangements for deliveries and emergency vehicles are always feasible whilst keeping out the through movements which so degrade the environment. Forget about Leatherhead; those who knew the town centre in the 1960s are well aware it was never a resounding commercial success, even when motor traffic had free access to it. Instead, study Guildford and Kingston and, if you are a trader, speak to your colleagues there.

AAJ

TOO MUCH ABOUT DORKING? ... WELL, IT'S UP TO YOU!

If you live outside Dorking you may quite reasonably consider that there is far too much emphasis in this Newsletter on the town, its immediate interests and its problems. Your editor lives in Dorking and is much involved with its Museum and its modern history; regrettably he knows little of the concerns of the villages and countryside of the MVDC area. This bias is reflected in the contents of this Newsletter. 'Extra-mural' topics cannot receive the treatment they deserve in these columns *without the co-operation of members and others who live outside the town*. Their contributions are earnestly sought. Most of the Society's planning concerns seem to arise from the area outside the town itself; is there no-one who can offer general rather than particular comment on this often controversial topic? And what about limiting and controlling the movement of motor traffic in the rural area; are there realistic alternative options for short journeys, such as car-sharing, walking and cycling, and greater usage of buses and rail services for longer ones? Has anyone devised a 'Living-Bus' scheme for escorting younger children on foot to and from school as a healthier alternative to one-child one-car transit? What would improve the quality of life in your village; what threats to its life-style exist?

A previous appeal to Brockham, Betchworth, Capel, Westhumble, Westcott and the rest for such contributions brought little or no response. Is there anyone out there who can offer regular comments on these themes, if only for the fun of shaming the other communities into similar action?

AAJ

WOTTON PARISH COUNCIL

The new Parish Council Clerk is:
Mrs. Shirley Russell, Whiteberry Cottage,
Broadmoor, Dorking RH5 6JY (01306 730022).
We hope she will keep us aware of what matters to Wotton!

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Your Editor attended this meeting in the Pippbrook Council Chamber on the evening of 25 January. The interest shown was apparent in a large and lively attendance of councillors and public. Almost all available seats were occupied; it could not have been due to the quality of the 'free' hot drinks and biscuits on offer. Attention was primarily focused on bus services, and there was a prolonged grilling of the three busmen and the County Council official present. We heard a heartfelt cry from a lady at Walliswood who wrote a letter that was circulated to all the audience: "We have no choice, we have to use our cars all the time we spend hours driving, we are breeding a younger generation entirely dependent on, and only knowing, car transport increasingly there are those who are environmentally enlightened about using the car less [and wish to avoid] the motorised scrum [who] abhor the thought of bringing up a generation of totally [car] dependent children we, as citizens, really are trying to use public transport but it's an uphill struggle at the moment ". This we fear got short shrift from the busmen, who noted how thinly-populated areas such as this brought them around £20-£30 a day in fares revenue for a regular bus service likely to cost £250 a day to run. The most such areas could now expect was a daily Postbus and a weekly Shopping bus. The man from the County Council also seemed unmoved and likely to spend his thin ration of public subsidy on more worthy causes.

Others were concerned about 'Kneeling Buses', which lower themselves to make boarding and alighting easier for the elderly and disabled. These it seems are in use on services 408 and 465 but they cannot operate in areas where traffic-calming measures raise up the road surface or for that matter in the centre of Dorking, where the contours of the roadway prevent their use. Anything above the normal level of a road (such as traffic-calming bumps or debris) will damage the mechanism. The County Council man was embarrassed to hear that the bus stop signs in Dorking (for which his authority is responsible) bear outdated route-number information.

As for the main roads, with their more important and marginally profitable bus services, one of the busmen gave vent to an impassioned plea. There can be no commercially viable bus services, he said, unless we have more customers, and we cannot expect more customers unless our bus

services are more reliable. The main traffic arteries are clogged with motor traffic that plays havoc with the timetable; bus lanes and other bus priority measures would help, but there are too many meetings and *too little action*. This was confirmed when we heard that there will exist no Local Transport Plan in conformance with the Government's integrated transport proposals until summer next year, and even then it will not be fully implemented until mid 2005! A lot of meetings and very little action between now and then, no doubt.

Only one railway representative attended, a woman manager from Connex deputising bravely for another tending his sick wife. We heard a string of promises: rolling stock will be refurbished, travelling train cleaners are proving a success, lighting and fencing at stations is being improved, and there were soon to be 'Help Points' on stations providing, at the press of a button, information or emergency aid. This last will be useful at unstaffed stations such as Dorking Deepdene, but one does wonder about the abuse they will receive from youngsters before they are totally wrecked and scrawled-over by those who gain pleasure from such activity. Human staff at stations would be far more valuable, especially at school turning-out times and weekends when most vandalism occurs; they might even prove less costly in the longer run. The County Council man told of a possible sensible change in track layout which will enable terminating off-peak services at Dorking to arrive and depart from Platform 1, eliminating the need to negotiate the subway, which is not easy for the disabled, the elderly and those encumbered with luggage and baby carriers.

Another improvement not mentioned but noticed on a recent trip to Guildford is the installation at Dorking Deepdene of monitor screens and loud-speakers giving 'real time' information on the next train service.

AAJ

DORKING RAIL 150

Some better news is to hand on this. Thanks to the intervention of Society member Chris Heaps, who is also Traffic Commissioner, Western Area, and to a change of Manager at Thames Trains, it now appears that Thames Trains might well be interested in joining the Society and others to mark this summer's 150th anniversary of the Reading, Guildford & Reigate Railway. What we would most like to see is a steam-worked shuttle service along the line, perhaps between Redhill and Guildford with staff and some passengers in historic costumes. A suitable Southern Railway Mogul locomotive with a main-line running certificate may be available from the Alton-Alresford Preserved Line, which was recently visited by our Local History Group.

We also understand that Connex is planning a steam-worked special train service between Leatherhead, Dorking and Horsham on Sunday 30 May and a naming ceremony of a modern class 319 train set at Dorking station on the same day.

AAJ

THE REDHILL-READING LINE

There are several interesting references to this railway to be found in the *Railtrack Network Management Statement for Great Britain 1998*. The line is scheduled at present for a maximum speed of 75mph and up to 25.4 tonnes axleweight (the maximum in Britain). The present loading gauge will accommodate standard freight wagons but not 8ft 6in containers or swap bodies. This will be altered by 2005 to the minimum 9ft 6in container gauge, allowing the line to be usable as a London by-pass route for Channel Tunnel-West Midlands-Glasgow 'Piggyback' traffic (i.e. transport of road-freight vehicles, usually trailers, on flat wagons, a mode supported and promoted by a consortium of local authorities, including Surrey County Council). Resignalling should be completed between Shalford and Reading by 2008.

AAJ

DEEPDENE GARDEN RESTORATION COMMITTEE REPORT

The planting of a new "Tulip Tree" (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) in front of the Kuoni offices towards the end of last year marked the first phase of what the Deepdene Garden Restoration Committee hope will lead to a restoration of the whole garden. It is believed that the famous Tulip Tree was planted in the early 18th century; it was felled in 1995 after its life had expired. Its great size was periodically recorded over the years: John Evelyn, in his *Sylvia* (published in 1664), described the species as having been imported from North America. In 1826 the tree at Deepdene was said to be "one of the largest in the kingdom", and in 1968 its dimensions were stated to be 90ft high and its girth 17ft 6in. A truly magnificent tree.

The Committee were very concerned that the historic link with the garden should be maintained, and an anonymous member donated a four-year-old tree of the same species as a replacement. The planting was carried out at noon on Thursday 12 October 1998 by the Vice-Chairman of the Society's Council, Sir Martin Wedgwood Bart., with the Vice-Chairman of the Mole Valley District Council, Blanche Douglass, in support. Also present were our President, Brian Carr, the Deputy Director of Kuoni and other staff and Society members. Afterwards Kuoni provided a champagne celebration which gladdened all hearts and established new contacts.

Richard Ingle
Chairman

THE UNFAIRNESS OF MOLE VALLEY GEOLOGY

It is now almost universal amongst property insurers to assess their risks and calculate our premiums by reference to the initial three digits of the postal code. This may be fair enough when it comes to burglary and fire, but when it embraces damage by flood and ground subsidence it is not good news for those who dwell in RH5. As geologists and geographers will not need telling, this code covers an area in which the risks of flooding vary from very possible on low-lying land around the river Mole to nil on the higher ground, and risks of subsidence over a similar wide range, given the various types of greensand and chalk on the heights and the large expanse of heavy weald clay south of Dorking. You can guess which the insurers look at when calculating your premium!

AAJ

NEWS FROM YOUR PLANNING TEAM

The one-month planned delay in the publication of this issue means that these notes report on the activities of your Planning Team for the five months from September 1998 to January 1999, or almost half a year. On these pages there is room only for the most significant planning developments. I note, however, that over the five months we wrote 87 letters in connection with planning applications, five in connection with appeals and five on other matters.

Among the planning applications on which we wrote, however, there are three that overshadow the rest in importance. They are the applications relating to Wotton House, Brockham Park and, just outside the boundary of Mole Valley, Walton Oaks. We have also contributed to the discussions relating to the proposed Dorking Town Enhancement Strategy and the Dorking Movement Study.

We first wrote on the scheme for **Brockham Park** in November 1997 and commented on it in Newsletter No.19, dated January 1998. Since then the scheme has been modified, reducing the number of houses from 46 to 34, and changing the proposed use of the main house of Brockham Park from offices to ten flats. Two late changes were an increase in the permitted size of the pavilion for Brockham Bowling Club from 74 to 170 square metres, and an adjustment to the proposed realignment of Gadbrook crossroads.

We wrote again in September 1998 and in January 1999, commenting on each of the proposed modifications to the scheme, and permission was granted at the meeting of the Planning Committee of the Council on 3 February. There are still some elements of the scheme that we regret. There is the absence of any affordable housing, for which the developer is to pay the Council £350,000 in lieu, to be used in subsidising the cost of eventual affordable housing elsewhere. There is also the barring of the access road through the site (a Highways Authority requirement), which will tend to cut off the inhabitants of the new houses from Strood Green and Brockham. The line of *cypressus leylandii* along the eastern boundary, which we would have preferred to see ripped up, is to be carefully preserved until the replacement planting has grown up, so we must hope that it will be able to compete with the *cypressus* while it is growing.

Nevertheless, we much welcome the scheme. As we wrote before in these pages, the only effective alternative is that the site remains in commercial/industrial use. This is normally the preferred use for redundant buildings in the Green Belt, but here, because of the extent of the buildings, any

new commercial/industrial use would be far more disruptive of the Green Belt and add far more traffic to the neighbouring roads.

We have not yet quite come to the end of the story. The permission granted is in opposition to the Government's Planning Policy Guidelines and to Mole Valley policy. This means that it requires the consent of the Minister for the Environment, Traffic and the Regions. It has therefore been referred to his department. His decision will be made known in due course.

The involvement of your Planning Committee with **Wotton House** goes back to at least April 1996, shortly before I took over from Brian Carr. There have been several proposed schemes for the conversion of the house into a hotel and conference centre. The first involved additions to both ends of the house. Discussions with the planning authorities gave rise to a second scheme with all the extensions at the western end. Further discussions produced a third scheme with extensions at both ends again.

Those of you who have visited the house, which is in many ways not easy, will know that it is a long rambling building, with none of its parts overshadowing the others. The concern of the planning authorities, which we share, has been to ensure that the proposed additions continue this pattern. We were also concerned that we do not lose the unique opportunity which this application presents to restore the garden, which dates from the seventeenth century.

The scheme is not perfect, but out of a long process of discussion, to which we have contributed several times, I believe that a solution has been arrived at that is close to the best that we can expect to get. In particular we are glad to see conditions imposed requiring the restoration of the garden as a matter of priority, and a statement that the new leaseholders are not to expect to receive permission on any applications for further extensions. Permission was granted at the meeting of the Planning Committee of the Council on 3 February.

Many readers of this Newsletter will have gone in November to the exhibition of the Dorking Town Environmental Enhancement Strategy and of the Dorking Movement Study, held in the Masonic Hall. Both these initiatives are much to be welcomed.

We were able to write in September before the exhibition on the **Dorking Town Environmental Enhancement Strategy**. We had a number of minor comments to make on what we think is a first-rate scheme that, once implemented,

should greatly improve the appearance of the town. We particularly like the attention paid to Dorking's alleyways, rightly seen as a distinctive feature of the town. They badly need sprucing up, and the one closest to our heart is, of course, the approach to the Museum.

The process of consultation is not yet completed. After that it goes to the Council for discussion and, we much hope, approval. There are, however, big financial constraints. It is one thing to approve the scheme and another to find the money to implement it. The implementation may therefore take years. The main thing is that the scheme should shortly be in place. We will be arguing that the approach to the Museum be given an appropriately high priority.

We found the **Dorking Movement Study** much trickier and wrote on it no less than three times. In many cases there were several alternatives offered, each of which had both advantages and disadvantages, making it difficult to choose between them. With some of them, such as the various one-way systems proposed for Dene Street and Coldharbour Lane, decisions can only be taken after the views of immediate neighbours, who are most closely involved, have been taken fully into account. Although the Movement Study has been long in gestation, much work remains to be done before decisions can be taken. Despite this, it is urgent that they are taken, because until then no proper start can be made with the Town Environmental Enhancement Strategy.

There are occasions when we feel obliged to get involved on planning matters in areas outside those we normally cover. We have done this twice in recent months. In late January we wrote with regard to the scheme to remodel the site of the Thorndyke Theatre in Leatherhead, now that it has gone out of business. We welcomed the continuation of social and cultural activities on the site, with the multi-screen cinema, but said that the Council must continue to support these activities thereafter.

We also wrote to the Principal Planning Officer of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council. This was about the application by Pfizer Inc. to develop the old Beecham site at **Walton Oaks**, just outside the boundaries of Mole Valley, as their new European Headquarters. We are deeply concerned with this application. Firstly, if it goes ahead it would represent a major infraction of Green Belt policy. Secondly, much of the extra traffic generated would be travelling up and down Pebblecombe Hill, that notoriously dangerous road in Mole Valley. Pfizer are seeking to answer the general concerns about traffic by announcing a plan to offer employees salary

enhancements if they agree to travel to and from work on buses supplied by the company to connect with main local railway stations, and also by limiting the company car park to 475 places. In our view this is unenforceable. The effective space for parking cars could be more than doubled by unofficial parking elsewhere on this huge site, and the bus service could be withdrawn at any time 'due to lack of demand'.

Permission for the development was granted by Reigate & Banstead at the beginning of December. Once again, as the scheme is in opposition to Government Planning Policy Guidelines and to Reigate & Banstead policies, they have referred it to the Minister, to whom we have also written. His decision is expected in due course. Fingers crossed!

Martin Wedgwood

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to the new column concerning the membership of the DDPS. Many thanks to those members who have already remitted their subscriptions for this year. A special thanks to those members who had paid over and above their subscription rate, particularly to the many senior members who have done this. The Society greatly appreciates your support, while I appreciate your many humorous comments - especially those from the 'Ancient Britons'!

As you are aware from reading the Chairman's New Year letter, as part of the celebrations for the Millennium, the Society is trying to achieve a membership roll of 2000. Currently the membership stands at 998 individual members, with 53 corporate members representing local businesses. If each member recruits just one more member, then our target can easily be reached. Please do try to remember that, as a lobby group, the Society very much depends on membership support.

Over the New Year period the Society has gained several new members, namely:

Mr. A. Larkman (Dorking), Mr. J. Clement-Jones CBE (Dorking), Mrs. D. Jones (Dorking), Prof. & Mrs. R. Seeley (Dorking), Mrs. P. Toler (Dorking), Miss C. Payne (Reigate Heath), Mrs. E. Franks (N. Holmwood), Mrs. G. Capel-Davies (N. Holmwood).

Welcome to the Society.

If you have any queries regarding your membership, please do get in touch. Best wishes.

Mo Bushell

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.	Address
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
Ashcombe School, The	Ashcombe Road	886 312	School
Betchworth Park Golf Club	Reigate Road, RH4 1NZ	882 052	Golf Club
Bradney & Co.	56 Dene Street, RH4 2DP	743 939	Chartered accountants
Broadheath Restorations	Myrtle Cottage, Newdigate RH5 5AD	631 773	Window frame restorers
Bullmores	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	886 688	Mineral extraction
Dorking Golf Club	Club House, Deepdene Avenue, RH5 4BX	886 917	Golf Club
Dorking School of Motoring	3 Lyons Court, RH4 1AB	880 119	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 Street, 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	880 511	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 Prtnrship.	57 West Street, RH4 1BS	742 200	Ind. financial advisers
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 and framers
Kuoni Travel Ltd.	Deepdene Avenue, RH5 4AZ	840 888	Tour operators
LocoScript Software Ltd.	Unit 10/11, Vincent Works, RH4 3HJ	747 757	Computer software
Newspaper Press Fund	Dickens House, 35 Wathen Road, RH4 1JY	887 511	Charity
Newton & Co.	173 High Street, RH4 1AD	884 208	Chartered accountants
Rose Hill Nursing Home	9 Rose Hill, RH4 2EG	882 822	Nursing home
Michael Schryver Antiques Ltd.	The Granary, 10 North Street, RH4 1DN	881 110	Antiques restoration
Philip Sears Designs	18c Horsham Road, RH4 2JD	884 477	Architectural bldg. surveyors
W. Songhurst Ltd.	Masters House, Guildford Rd., Westcott, RH4 3NG	880 411	Builders
Treeline	The Spinney, Horsham Road, Wallis Wood	741 800	Tree care and maintenance
Unum Ltd.	Milton Court, RH4 3LZ	887 766	Disability insurers
Venhill Engineering	21 Ranmore Road, RH4 1HE	885 111	Specialist cable mfrs.
Viscount Agencies	Concept House, 3 Dene Street, RH4 2DR	880 715	Duty free agency
L. A. White (Dkg.) Ltd.	11 Yew Tree Road, RH4 1HU	885 245	Builder
White & Sons	104 High Street, RH4 1AZ	887 654	Estate agents
Whitelegg Machines Ltd.	Fir Treet Ho., Horsham Rd., Beare Grn., RH5 4LQ	713 200	Electrical engineers

OTHER CORPORATE MEMBERS SUPPORTING THE SOCIETY:

Bartholomew Court Residents' Association
 Box Hill Afternoon Women's Institute
 Brockham Green Village Society
 Coldharbour Sports and Social Club
 Friends of Box Hill

Holmwood Women's Institute
 Leigh Residents' Association
 Mickleham Parish Council
 Newdigate Parish Council
 Westcott Village Association

Published by the DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Hon. Secretary, Mr. Ian Brotchie, Dormer Cott., Deepdene Wood, Dorking RH5 4BQ. Tel. 01306 889374

NEWSLETTER No. 22

The Thrush in February

*I know him, February's thrush,
And loud at eve he valentines
On sprays that paw the naked bush
Where soon will sprout the thorns and vines.*

*Now ere the foreign singer thrills
Our vale his plain-song pipe he pours
A herald of the million bills;
And heed him not, the loss is yours.*

*My study, flanked with ivied fir
And budded beech with dry leaves curled,
Perched over yew and juniper,
He neighbours, piping to his world:—*

*His island voice then shall you hear,
Nor ever after separate
From such a twilight of the year
Advancing to the vernal gate.*

*He sings me, out of winter's throat,
The young time with the life ahead;
And my young time his leaping note
Recalls to spirit-mirth from dead.*

GEORGE MEREDITH