

DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY



Established in 1929

NEWSLETTER

No. 24

November 1999

Contents

Editorial	2
A Threat to the Green Belt	3
Heritage Open Days	4
Performing Arts Library	4
War Memorial	4
Caves	4
Changes in Officers	4
Museum News and Acquisitions	5
New Members	5
History Group	6
Deepdene Gardens	6
Letter to Editor	7
Public Footpath 105	7
Corporate Members	8

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NEWSLETTER 24: November 1999

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. All unattributed material is contributed by the editor.

EDITORIAL NOTE

As this is a 'catch-up' issue to bring publication dates into the new sequence, it is necessarily slimmer than usual owing to the short interval since no.23.

Please note that the next issue will be distributed in mid-March with the papers for the Annual General Meeting scheduled for 13 April 2000 at a location as yet undecided; **any material for that issue must be with me by 5 February 2000.**

EDITORIAL

As we go to press, some lively controversy is reported over a proposal to build 19 housing units on the *Rokefield* site at Westcott. This very neatly encapsulates two of the Society's most urgent concerns: the constant pressure for more housing development and the increase in road traffic that any building development, whether it be residential or commercial, brings to an area whose inadequate local road system is already overwhelmed by a surfeit of motor vehicles of all kinds.

With its pleasant countryside, and its rail and motorway facilities which, for all their perceived inadequacies and congestion, provide reasonably good access to most parts of Greater London and south east England, the Mole Valley is inevitably subject to continuous pressure to accommodate more housing. It is a pressure currently boosted by a booming service economy, dual income households and the popular desire to live in rural or semi-rural surroundings, which the wide availability of private and 'company' motor cars transforms into a seemingly easy option.

In the Dorking district, the special quality of the Green Belt and the existence of many acres of National Trust land has so far seen off threats of large-scale housing developments but for many years now, developers have pushed hard to exploit every available space, converting large houses into 'apartments', crowding small individual housing units into the land occupied by redundant institutions and buying up Victorian and Edwardian villas set in very spacious gardens to convert into small groups of houses. These houses are often high on indoor convenience but the proud new owners of their lavishly fitted and bathrooled interiors frequently have to tolerate minimal garden plots, closely beset by fencing and the presence of neighbours owing to the developers' understandable drive to maximise their profit from the scarce, highly-priced building land.

Whilst examples of this tightly-packed, cramped-curtilage housing can be found without difficulty in the Dorking district, it has so far been more fortunate than the area immediately to the north, which is also within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The intense pace of 'infilling' at Ashted, Bookham and Fetcham since the early 1960s will be familiar to many of our readers and it has done much to

accelerate a process of suburbanisation that had started between the wars. In the Westcott case, the additional housing provision proposed is modest enough and indeed the Village Association has greeted it with little protest, even saying that "many think it very handsome". Yet it is a reminder of the continuing demand for more housing units in the Green Belt and comes at a time when Surrey faces an ominous new threat of a huge increase in housebuilding, a topic dealt with by the Society's Chairman on another page.

Although ready to accept the proposal itself, Westcott's residents have not been slow to realise that the construction of the new development will inevitably mean heavy industrial vehicles proceeding along the twisting and cramped A25 to the west of the village before and after negotiating dangerous junctions with winding and narrow lanes in the village, where pedestrians must perforce walk in the roadway. This would be unpleasant, perhaps even perilous, for existing residents, pedestrians and animals, but of course only a temporary nuisance. More important is the permanent increase in motor traffic, for here, as elsewhere in our area, almost every new household will possess at least one motor car, soon enough two, even three. These must compete for space on roads built for horse-drawn vehicles, not only in the immediate vicinity of Westcott but in Dorking's West Street and its Station and Ashcombe Roads.

Each new unit added to the existing Mole Valley housing stock now brings with it more cars, whose owners expect equal rights of access to an already heavily overburdened road system. Each new housing unit also adds to the local demand for retail goods, delivered to the larger shops by commercial road vehicles of massive proportions. Ask yourself whether the consequent congestion and environmental nuisance of this additional traffic load is likely to be alleviated by building new relief roads through the countryside or around or through the built-up edges of Dorking itself. Or will such further road building, even major road improvements, prove politically impossible? If it is allowed, if the pressures for more road space become irresistible, be sure that the damage to the rural landscape and the townscape you may now enjoy will be very tangible.

Alan A. Jackson

A THREAT TO THE GREEN BELT

We were considerably alarmed in October by articles in the newspapers about a report that recommended a significant increase in the quota of houses in each of the counties of the South East. We have had a sight of the report. It is by a Public Examination Panel set up in December 1998 by the Secretary of State, John Prescott, to comment on the draft Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG) published several years ago by SERPLAN, a.k.a. the South East Region Planning Conference. The Regional Planning Guidance for the South East, when approved by the Government, will be the document that sets the framework within which all subsequent County Structure Plans and District Local Plans will be drawn up. We were startled to see its guidelines taken into question at this late date, but now learn that it was always intended that this should happen. It claims, however, not to be an examination of the whole of the SERPLAN proposals, but a means of ensuring that there is public debate. This is something it is certain to do.

The report is scathing in its criticism of the reasons set out in the draft Regional Planning Guidance for the South East for its view that the region should carry less than its 'natural share' of the expected national housing requirement between 1996 and 2016, and holds that the figure there proposed of 862,000 units, rising possibly to between 892,000 and 914,000, is inadequate. It proposes instead a total number of dwelling units for the whole of the South East of just under 1.1 million. After allowing for the 195,000 units that have already been built since 1996, this represents a 65% increase on the SERPLAN figure for the remainder of the 20-year period. For Surrey, however, the proposed figure for 77,000 units represents an increase over

the SERPLAN figure of no less than 120%. Nor is it clear where the sites are to come from. Four APLEs (Areas of Plan-Led Expansion) are proposed, but only one of them, the Crawley/Gatwick Area, is likely to have direct implications for Surrey. In a separate section on Green Belt policy, the Report argues that Green Belt land that has no 'intrinsic' designation of its own, i.e. AONB (Area of Great Natural Beauty), is less sacrosanct than the Green Belt land that does, and might well be allowed to fall victim to a sequential approach in the search for suitable land for building when the pressure for development is strong.

Altogether the report is a comprehensive rejection of the intention of the Secretary of State to develop greener planning policies, and has gone straight back to the 'predict and provide' attitude that he criticised.

The next stage is for the Secretary of State, with the assistance of his Department, to produce a response to the report. The response will contain proposed policies which may or may not take on board the proposals of the report, and is likely to appear around Christmas or the New Year. It will be a consultative document, on which the views of all interested parties will be sought. This Society will almost certainly have views, and will express them. In particular we are likely to oppose strenuously any proposals to weaken Green Belt policy, and argue strongly that any quota of housing for Mole Valley must take into account the high proportion of land within Mole Valley that happens to be designated as Green Belt and can therefore only be developed to an extremely limited degree.

Martin Wedgwood

NEWS NOTES

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Once again this annual occasion proved remarkably popular. There were 26 events, visit sites and walks in Dorking and our 'ex pat' historian, Allan Brigham, had a packed house for his talk on the town's development. 4,000 copies of the brochure were printed but there was some criticism of lack of supplies in the villages. A wider distribution and larger printing very much depends on further financial help, which will be actively sought next year.

The Museum, with its temporary Dorking Rail 150 Exhibition, also proved very popular, over 200 visitors arriving over the two days, when almost £50 was received in donations. Sales of the 50p Rail 150 brochure and other books were brisk. A few copies of the Exhibition brochure remain on sale in the Museum shop.

PERFORMING ARTS LIBRARY

Planning consent for the move of the Library to the Denbies Winery building has now been given and legal agreements are being drawn up preparatory to a start on building work. It is hoped to complete the move by the end of summer 2000.

A group with a constitution and an elected committee is being formed to examine ways to ensure the long-term future of the Library, perhaps by setting up a trust. It will be known as **Friends of the Surrey Performing Arts Library** and will replace the PAL Users' Group. The new organisation, which will probably seek registration as a charity, will be pro-active and committed to making the benefits of the Library known more widely, helping it by raising funds for special books and periodicals and non-budgeted amenities which will make the Library more welcoming, and raising its profile so that its true value is appreciated within the community.

The annual subscription for Friends is £10 but alternatively £5 will secure the newsletter and other material. An inaugural meeting is to be held on 10 November 1999 but there is no deadline for applications to become a Friend or receive the newsletter - just get in touch with David Lees, 21 Daneshill, REDHILL, RH1 2DW - phone 01737 763565. His e-mail address is: lees@nfms-sech.freemove.co.uk.

WAR MEMORIAL

A tentative start was made in early October with restoring the legibility of the names. A signwriter wielding a brush and black paint was seen at work on the side panels (World War II victims). Some doubt remains as to whether all the names will be given the respectful treatment they require and deserve. A proposal has been floated in the local newspaper that the memorial be floodlit but surely it would be right first to spend any available money on rehabilitating all the names?

SOUTH STREET CAVES

Lighting and new handrails have been installed and regular monthly openings are now proceeding. Bookings must be made through the reception desk at the Dorking Halls (tel: 01306 881717: FAX 01306 877277), an arrangement that is working smoothly. Credit card bookings are accepted, subject to a surcharge of 50p.

CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL

Harry Gort, our Footpaths and Bridleways Officer since 1992, has decided that it is time for him to retire, and we have accepted his retirement with regret, mindful of all the crucial work he has done quietly and without fuss for the last seven years. An example of this can be found on page 7 of this issue. He will be much missed, the more so as we have yet to find somebody to replace him.

We have, however, found a new Publicity Officer in Deborah Jones, who gallantly offered herself. We are delighted to welcome her and look forward to working with her. Members of the Society may well already know her, since together with her sister, she owns and runs Browns of Dorking, the delicatessen and cheese shop in Allen Court, Dorking.

MW

RICHARD INGLE

Mr Ingle has given notice of his intention to resign from the Society's Planning Committee but has offered to remain available for help with specific items if requested.

MUSEUM NEWS

Dorking Museum has received from Mole Valley District Council a grant of £1815 (half the cost) for restoration of its paintings of local scenes, and the grant from South Eastern Museum Services for the other half of the cost has also been confirmed. It is hoped the pictures will be restored for exhibition under suitable lighting during the 'Millennium Year'.

As reported in our last issue, a donation of £5000 has been gifted in memory of Mrs Kathleen Cole, Dr Martin Cole's mother, who died earlier this year, to be used for the sole benefit of the Museum. This money is now in the Deposit Account pending discussion on how it is to be spent.

David Crump, a skilled joiner, who has already made and donated a fine statuette of Dorking's William Mullins, has now given the Museum a superb model of the *Mayflower*, the ship in which Mullins and the other Pilgrim Fathers sailed away to North America. Both are now on show in the Museum's window off West Street.

The very successful exhibition about West Street, prepared by Gladys Arlett, Mary Turner and Brian Overell for the West Street Antiques Festival, attracted much interest, proving an excellent feature of this event.

David Hodgson has been appointed to carry out a survey of museums in the Mole Valley District and prepared recommendations for the District Council. He has already paid a preliminary visit to the Museum to make the acquaintance of some of the voluntary staff and listen to their views.

The Rail 150 Display generated many additional visitors as well as donations and loans of rail-related items. The first two panels were exhibited at the Surrey Local History Symposium at Chertsey in October, and the panels were photographed before

dismantling and storage of the displayed material for possible future use.

LIST OF ACQUISITIONS

The following items have been acquired for the Museum since 15 July 1999:-

1. One set of fire engine tools - early 1900s *
2. One Merryweather fire bucket with leather handles - early 1900s *
3. Two 1-pint milk bottles inscribed "Safety First Milk Association", found in a well on Box Hill *
4. Clay tobacco pipe bowl found 25 in. down in solid sand behind the White Horse, c. 1965 (Pattern 1860-1910) *
5. Cash box and two rubber stamps from Coles, Leather and Travel Goods, formerly at 75 High Street, Dorking. Also a Victorian wooden box containing old motor-car bulbs.
6. Signboard from Mickleham Railway Crossing signal box *
7. Framed press cutting re retirement of Mr J Comber at Dorking North Station in 1956 after 48 years as a railwayman *
8. 20 used rail tickets to and from Dorking North Station with dates from 1920-1980 *
9. 5 oz tin of dried egg powder issued by the Ministry of Food in 1944, supplied by "USA for European Recovery" *
10. Model of the *Mayflower*, in which the Pilgrim Father William Mullins and his family travelled to the New World in September 1620 *

* On display in Museum

B S Hodges
Curator (Exhibits)

MEMBERSHIP

I am pleased to report that our membership total has risen to 1,025, and I would like to welcome the following new members:

Mr P Barclay (Dorking)
Mr & Mrs J Fitzpatrick (Dorking)
Miss C Lore (Dorking)
Mr & Mrs P Hinchliffe (Dorking)
Mr T Rhodes (Dorking)
Mrs M Rothwell (Dorking)
Mr & Mrs G Say (Dorking)
Mr A Winslade (Dorking)

Welcome also to the following new corporate members (full list at back of Newsletter):

C J Uden & Co (Dorking)
R G Palmer (Reigate)
Chandler Cars (Dorking)
Bits & Bobs (Dorking)
G Burley & Sons Ltd (South Holmwood)
Seymours Garden Centre (Stoke D'Abernon)
Bray Estates (Dorking)
Browns of Dorking (Dorking)

Mo Bushell
Membership Secretary

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Membership currently stands at 272. At the beginning of July our monthly meeting at Friends House was reminded by Mrs Florence Gapper that Capability Brown worked nearby, at Gatton Park. She gave a clear and comprehensive account of the development of the gardens there and of Surrey Garden Trust's plans for their restoration.

Our summer outing was to Eton and Windsor. A most interesting guided tour of Eton College was followed by a free afternoon in Windsor, and 52 members and friends very much enjoyed the day.

On 5 August, Mr Terry Wooden led a large group on a conducted tour of Westcott, from the church to *Rokefield* via the Millpond and up to the village school. We each received a very useful printed account. The fine evening was a bonus.

A group of members, under the direction of Dr Bob Humphreys, have been working on the 1851 census material and will be publishing the results (household composition and occupations) in a future edition of *Dorking History*.

Mary Turner
Curator, Library & Records

DEEPDENE GARDENS

Rhododendron Survey

This work was commissioned in March 1999 as part of the ongoing series of surveys leading to the submission of a Lottery bid for the restoration of the whole garden. The work was carried out in May at the height of the flowering season but the specialist was only able to complete his written assessment at the end of September. The Committee are now analysing the results and from a preliminary assessment, it would seem that rarer species of Rhododendron are grouped immediately south west of the site of the mansion. The fee for the work (some £1400) was paid by members of the Restoration Committee and included a generous grant of £500 from the Surrey Gardens Trust.

Archaeological Survey

This is the Committee's next task and has yet to be commissioned; this work will probably be by way of limited excavation or by geo-physical survey methods - possibly magnetometry. The

original estimate at the time of the preparation of the Garden Restoration Master Plan was in the region of £5000. Leading firms in this sphere are being approached for estimates, and it is hoped that funding will be available from various environmental sources - The Surrey Archaeological Society seem likely subscribers, and the British Airports Authority Noise Fund is also being approached. Other possible sources are several Landfill Tax organisations.

Historic Tulip Tree.

Members may recall that the replacement Tulip tree was planted, on 12 November 1998, adjoining the site of the early 18th century tree, which died in 1995. The tree was paid for by an anonymous donor. It is growing particularly well, and a small group from the Committee placed a commemorative plaque in September, stating that it was planted by the Society.

Richard Ingle
Chairman, Deepdene Gardens
Restoration Committee

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I am writing to say that I found most of the Newsletter extremely interesting - especially "Do Car Users Have Legs?". My driving days are long since gone following a nasty whiplash accident many years ago, so yes, I do have legs and I use them a lot, I have to! It does make one cross to know drivers only need their cars for short 'in town' trips. I do use the buses whenever I can.

In spite of the Denbies site being in the Green Belt, it seems to me that the Performing Arts Library should not be viewed as a 'commercial' concern in the normal way, and I feel strongly that the Council could, if it considered the matter

thoroughly, find a way of overcoming objections (whose, by the way? ... We, the public, are not informed), as the PAL is primarily an arts organisation and used for non-commercial activities. I agree the Council should study the problem without bias ... a solution must be found to keep the PAL in Dorking.

Margaret Barker
(formerly Hon. Secretary,
Dorking Halls Concertgoers)

Fortunately, as noted elsewhere, the PAL controversy seems to have closed with a happy ending - Editor.

REAL SENSE AT LAST ON PUBLIC FOOTPATHS

Harry Gort has drawn our attention to a dispute over a public footpath that has now been resolved in a really useful way.

Public Footpath number 105, which once ran through open fields, starts at the southern end of Vincent Lane and proceeds more-or-less in a straight line westwards. The first, most easterly, section runs steeply uphill. Then it levels off and crosses successively Nower Road, West Bank and then West Bank a second time as it doubles back to join Longfield Road. Nowadays the footpath is much used by children going to and from the Powell Corderoy and Priory Schools. At two points on the level section it had been encroached upon by neighbouring properties, in one case 20 years ago and in the other 10 years ago. In November 1996, after discussions with the owners of adjacent properties, the County Council decided that it was not necessary to restore the original width of the footpath. In 1998 it issued a Partial Width Extinguishment Order. Six objections were filed, including those of the Mole Valley District Council, the Ramblers Association, and from Harry, representing our Society. The matter therefore went before the Planning Inspectorate, and was heard

in April by Inspector A S Jeapes, CB OBE MC, whose report was delivered in September.

The Inspector found against the County Council, and his reasons are worth attention. He observed that the District Council in its evidence divided the users of the footpath into two categories: those who need to use it, and those who choose to use it as part of a recreational route. He noted that with footpaths the words 'use' and 'enjoyment' cannot be separated, and that changes to footpaths that would tend to make them less pleasant to walk on, and thereby reduce the use made of them by the public, should be resisted. He was also unimpressed by the fears of the owners of adjoining properties with regard to security, noting that no evidence had been presented to suggest that the shrubs and bushes or the corners in the fencing offered scope for serious criminal activity.

So we have it in black and white. The attractiveness of Public Footpaths should not be infringed, and fears that they constitute a threat to the security of adjoining properties are usually no more than fears. Our thanks to Harry for his role in the inquiry that led to this encouraging result.

MW

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 Street, RH4 2TU	740 553	Computer consultancy
John Arthur Gallery	Old King's Head Court, 11 High Street, RH4 1AR	741 120	Fine art gallery
Ashcombe School, The	Ashcombe Road,	886 312	School
Bits & Bobs	20 South Street, RH4 2HL	743 119	Party Shop
Betchworth Park Golf Club	Reigate Road, RH4 1NZ	882 052	Golf Club
Bradney & Co.	56 Dene Street, RH4 2DP	743 939	Chartered accountants
Bray Estates	278/280 High Street, RH4 1QT	740 837	Valuers, Surveyors & Property Managers
Browns of Dorking	2 Allen Court, 56 High Street, RH4 1AY	881 212	Delicatessen and Catering
G Burley & Sons	Burley Corner, Moorhouse Lane, S.Holmwood, RH15 4LJ	711 799	Amenity Horticulturist
Broadheath Restorations	Myrtle Cottage, Newdigate, RH15 5AD	631 773	Window frame restorers
Chandler Cars	Unit 23, Vincent Works, Vinc't Lane, RH4 3HQ	882 001	Services and Sales
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
Omya UK	Curtis Road	886 688	Mineral extraction
Dorking Golf Club	Club House, Deepdene Avenue, RH15 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 Ptnrship.	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 Court, Barrington Road, 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
Newspaper Press Fund	Dickens House, 35 Wathen Road, RH4 1JY	887 511	Charity
Newton & Co.	173 High Street, RH4 1AD	884 208	Chartered accountants
R G Palmer	21 Monks Court, Monks Walk, Reigate, RH2 0SR.	01737 243 980	Public Relations
Rose Hill Nursing Home	9 Rose Hill, RH4 2EG	882 622	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 building surveyors
Seymours Garden Centre	Stoke Rd, Stoke D'Abernon, Cobham, KT11 3PU.	01932 862 530	Garden Centre
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
C J Uden & Co	Pledges Yard, Falkland Road, RH4 3AD	887 551	Drainage Consultant and Surveyors
Unum Ltd.	Milton Court, RH4 3LZ	887 766	Disability insurers
Venhill Engineering	21 Ranmore Road, RH4 1HE	885 111	Specialist cable manufacturers
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 Tree House, Horsham Road, Beare Green, 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

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NEWSLETTER No. 24



From The Dorking Advertiser 19 January 1973

**BEECH MUST GO
IN THE CAUSE
OF JUSTICE**

When Dorking's new Magistrates' Courts are built at Pippbrook this fine old beech tree will have to come down. As a last gesture Miss M. E. Field of The Old Mill House, London-road, has written a poem in its memory.

A LAMENT

*This year of nineteen-seventy-three,
Will always be known as the year of the tree.
But what of nineteen-seventy-four?
The folks of Dorking are not quite sure.
For one of their noblest well-groomed trees
Is due to lie low as its golden leaves.
And this is because - good men and true,
Must punish the wicked and give them their due.
In a wonderful 'court' well spread about
Car dungeons below well guarded no doubt.
No other site I am told can be found,
And so this tree must be felled to the ground.
My doggerel rhymes now come to an end
With a sad farewell "to our beech tree friend."*