

DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY



Established in 1929

NEWSLETTER

No. 26

July 2000

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EDITORIAL

Fear not, Ye Nimbies *

Predictably, our splendid local paper has begun to report sensationally on proposals by the Central Railway plc (CR) to provide a new rail freight and passenger link between Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and the Midlands and Lille via London and the Channel Tunnel. We are invited to tremble at the prospect of "massive" freight trains "thundering" through the Denbies vineyards and "sweeping around the edge of Box Hill" as the proposed railway "cuts a swathe through the countryside".

You may be surprised to hear that should it be built, this railway is likely to reduce environmentally-unfriendly long distance road freight traffic, not only in the south-east. Presently costed as requiring an investment of £5 billion, CR was thrown out by the last Government in 1996 but has obstinately resurfaced, now backed by the Road Haulage Association. On reaching London, it is planned to run alongside the western sector of the M25 (serving Heathrow) where it could hardly do

more environmental damage than that road has already achieved. There are two favoured routes through our area, as explained below. One avoids Dorking and the Mole Gap completely, the other uses existing railways, connected by three short links at Effingham, Leatherhead and Westhumble/Pixham.

Whilst the latter would involve a land-take far below that accepted for the M25 and M23 motorways and whilst electric rail transport is much more environmentally friendly in terms of noise, atmospheric pollution and visual impact than modern roads, it is inconceivable in the present "green" climate, that (unlike the M23/M25) CR would be allowed to enter the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its surrounds other than in a tunnel.

This is the first decade of the 21st century, not the 1970s, when our nearby motorways were planned with ruthless disregard of the effect on the landscape. We have come a long way since the M25 and M23, with their land-greedy junctions, were

* Nimby = Not In My Back Yard, *pl.* Nimbies

allowed to splodge concrete around the meadows and woodlands at Wisley, Cobham, Leatherhead, Reigate Hill, Merstham and Nutfield. Given that the damage has been done, it is sensible to use the same corridors for a new railway. Tunnelling is expensive but unlike road, electrified rail transport does not need costly ventilation systems. Long tunnels are presently being built through Kent for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to London and it should and will be the same for the CR. The fuss and sensational reporting of the surface alignment option through the Mole Gap is premature and should not be allowed to divert political will from proposals which have real merit in terms of the wider national interest and indeed are not without narrow local advantage for our area. When they think about it more deeply, is it too much to hope that Surrey Councillors and MPs will change their Nimby-focused spectacles and take the longer view?

What is important about CR is that it would reduce very substantially the weight of road freight through south-east and middle England, doing that by carrying road trucks and pricing

itself below the current cost to hauliers of using the roads. Its target is to shift to rail 40 per cent of the present road truck traffic between Britain and Europe. With passenger traffic on the West Coast main line approaching saturation point, there will be an urgent need for an alternative rail freight link to be in place towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century. These CR proposals will soon reveal whether our politicians (Tory, New Labour or Liberal) are really serious about shifting a substantial portion of long-distance road freight back to rail.

As for the local benefits, which would you prefer to see - an upgrading of the Redhill-Reading railway to accommodate a substantial flow of bimodal freight trains or to have this traffic diverted through a 12km (7 mile) tunnel north of the North Downs? Would you also not welcome direct access by fast trains to Heathrow, Europe, the Midlands and the north from a conveniently accessible station in the Leatherhead area?

ALAN A JACKSON

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE CENTRAL RAILWAY SCHEME

All that exists at present is a consultants' report on possible routes for the new railway around the west and south sides of London. Hurdles yet to be crossed by the promoters include a decision by Parliament and public consultation, not to mention financing, though the company seems fairly confident that the required capital can be raised in the US and other markets.

So far as the Mole Valley and adjacent areas are concerned, two options are favoured by the consultants: Route 1, and Route 2.

Coming from Heathrow, Route 1 would be built close up to the inner side of the M25 motorway on a strip 9 metres wide as far as Downsends School at the southern tip of Ashted. From there it would be in a 11.65km tunnel as far as a point just west of Merstham, passing under Walton-on-the-Hill. It would then again follow the M25, but this time on the south side, before turning south against the west side of the M23. At Nutfield, a new north-to-east curve would be built to join the existing Redhill-Tonbridge railway at Bletchingley Tunnel. This route is strongly preferred but does require costly tunnelling.

Route 2 having similarly followed the M25 as far as Pointers Green (north of Effingham Junction), would diverge south over a new railway to join the existing Effingham Junction-Bookham-Leatherhead railway at a point just east of Effingham Junction station. It would then use the existing line as far as Leatherhead, where a new north-to-south curve would be built to afford direct connection with the existing railway between Leatherhead and Dorking. The southern junction would be immediately west of the Leatherhead Leisure Centre. The line southwards would then be used as far as a point just beyond the southern end of Boxhill & Westhumble station. The existing tunnel under Norbury Park would need to be enlarged to accommodate the enhanced structure gauge required for trains carrying road trucks. Beyond Boxhill and Westhumble station, there would be a new south-to-east curve to reach the existing Reading-Dorking-Redhill railway. This would pass between the foot of Box Hill and Pixham and join the existing line immediately east of Boxhill Road near Lower Boxhill Farm. Existing railways, suitably upgraded, would be used east of this point. This route, though less costly than Route 1, is wisely described by the consultants as "more difficult in environmental and planning terms".

DO WE WANT A NEW SAINSBURY SUPERMARKET IN DORKING?

The publicity has been extensive and there can be few people in Dorking who do not now know that Sainsbury is planning to build a new store, not by enlarging their present site but by developing a new one attached to the northern end of St Martin's Walk. Hard words have been said about the selfishness of the national chains. We must, however, be grateful to the management of Thornfield Properties, the company that hopes to undertake the development, as well as to Sainsbury, for declaring their intentions at a time when most of the details that will accompany their formal planning application are some way from being decided upon. The reports in the press arose mainly from a presentation that they gave to a meeting of the Dorking Town Forum, on which your Society is represented. Some days earlier they also gave a presentation to your Society's planning committee.

Not surprisingly, there is a lot of concern, which we share. Tucked away at the far end of St Martin's Walk, will the new development draw business to itself and away from the High Street? Will it make traffic-flow through the town even more difficult than it is already? Do we want an enormous new building, looming like some alien presence over Meadowbank? What about the people who live in Church Gardens, the block of flats that would have to be demolished, as well as some other houses that might have to go as well? What about the parking? Why cannot Sainsbury decide instead to extend their present store by acquiring properties on its eastern side, and excavating further into the soft sandstone?

Those in favour of the proposal argue that too many residents of Dorking, let alone those who live in its natural catchment area, shop at the supermarkets in Burgh Heath, Croydon, Hookwood, Horsham, Leatherhead or Redhill and never come near Dorking High Street, and that a decent-sized Sainsbury in Dorking could change that. It is only recently that serious concerns were being expressed about the future of shopping of any kind in Dorking, as premises stood empty. Things are better now, but commercial centres never stand still; they either grow and flourish or dwindle and die. It is too soon to declare that Dorking is out of danger; the next downturn could be worse.

It would seem that a new Sainsbury could present Dorking with a range of opportunities and dangers. We would not be happy to see the development approved unless the balance was clearly tipped in favour of opportunities. There are six areas of concern on which we would want to be satisfied. They are as follows:

1. The most important question of all concerns the upgrading of St Martin's Walk, including especially the reordering of its far end, to provide a link to the new supermarket that will draw shoppers southwards - up a slope, which is not normally thought a good idea when planning a site - and on into the High Street. The developers have announced their intention to do this, but none of the actual details have yet been worked out. When the planning application is made and the detailed plans are available, this is the area which should attract the closest scrutiny. Will it be successful in drawing those using the new store up into the town as a whole? Or would it be a barrier, insulating the town and Sainsbury's from each other?
2. There is much concern that the new store will stock a wider range of goods than the normal range of supermarkets, to the detriment of High Street shops with which it will then be competing. The store is planned to have an area of 24,000 square feet. This compares with 11,000 square feet for Sainsbury's existing store and 9,000 square feet for Waitrose, both stores being among the smallest units in their respective chains. By the standards of new supermarket stores currently being built, 24,000 square feet is not enormous. There are mammoth stores of more than twice this area, and 'hyper-markets' larger still. How great a threat of increased competition will a store of the proposed size represent to the shops in the High Street?
3. The new building will be one of the largest in Dorking and will be highly visible, even though some way from the High Street. From the churchyard and the southern half of St Martin's car-park, as well as from the west, it will appear mainly as a single-storey building but its roof will be in full view, often from above, and it must look attractive. This is not easy to do for a large roof. From the houses to the east the entrance to the service bays on the lowest level will be prominent, and must be intelligently handled. From Meadowbank we would see a long three-storey building probably with few windows on the lower floors. It must not appear as a featureless hulk but actually contribute favourably to the view.
4. The present proposal is to reorder the northern half of St Martin's car-park so that shoppers can walk into the new Sainsbury store without changing level. This would add only 30 extra parking spaces. This would hardly seem to be enough, even though the present 'Sainsbury's car-park' would by then be less heavily used.
5. More juggernauts will be turning into and out of Mill Lane on their way to and from the new store. This would be an improvement on their present course along Dene Street/Chart Lane and Marlborough Road,

but there would still be a net increase in their numbers, and the effect upon the junction between Mill Lane and the High Street would have to be carefully studied and the junction if necessary modified. It is already awkward because of the gradient of Mill Lane. This might well have to be altered.

6. The proposed development requires the demolition of Church Gardens, a block of 24 flats housing some 40 people, many of whom are elderly and have lived there since the flats were built in the 1960s. The District Council has a social duty, if the new store be approved, to see that they are rehoused in accommodation acceptable to them. To build an equivalent number of housing units elsewhere would not be enough - in many cases only rented council or housing association flats would do.

These are some of the questions that will have to be discussed over the next few months. Your Society intends to play as large a part as possible in this debate, in order to ensure that public opinion becomes as informed as possible and therefore an effective influence on the eventual decision of the planning committee of the District Council. This is likely to include calling a public meeting, to take place after the publication of the definitive plans on which the planning application will be based.

MARTIN WEDGWOOD

(A letter to the Chairman of our Society on this Sainsbury scheme is printed on page 6, and our Planning Officer also discusses it in her report on page 8.)

NEWS AND OTHER NOTES

DORKING AND OTHER WAR MEMORIALS

Work on restoring the names of the victims of World War I on this memorial should be in progress by the time you read this. We presume that MVDC, who are responsible for the maintenance of this important feature of Dorking's streetscape, are aware that English Heritage has allocated a new grant in aid for two years for restoration and conservation of free-standing war memorials. This grant is being administered by The Friends of War Memorials and is restricted to memorials listed Grade II or in Conservation Areas. It may indeed be available to assist in the restoration of other war memorials in our area.

THOMAS CUBITT STATUE

A welcome addition to the eastern entrance to the town opposite Dorking Halls is a fine statue of Thomas Cubitt, master carpenter and builder. For his own occupation, Thomas built the Denbies mansion on the summit of Ranmore (now demolished) but died when it was barely finished in December 1855. His son George (1828-1917) lived in the house and developed the estate, becoming Baron Ashcombe of Dorking in 1892. The statue, completed in 1994 by the Sculptor W Fawke, was purchased by the present owner of the Denbies estate, Adrian White, who has now generously gifted it to the town. It comes to grace Dorking in English Heritage's "Year of Public Sculpture" and was placed in a neat paved enclave with two fine teak benches late in May.

HERITAGE PLAQUES AND TRAILS

The month of May also saw the fixing of "Heritage" plaques at various points around the town. These attractive and handsome plaques, decorated with the Dorking Cock, can be seen at the Dorking Museum, Rose Hill, Barclay's Bank and elsewhere. They mark places featuring in "Heritage Trails", two self-guided walks intended to inform visitors (and interested residents) of the basic facts about the town and major places of interest around the centre. A detailed colour leaflet about the walks, sponsored by F W Mays, is available free of charge at the Dorking Halls Reception Desk.

RESIDENT CALLIGRAPHER REQUIRED

Our back covers have long been adorned by various prose and poetry items of local interest transformed into an attractive decorative feature by Eric Ferguson's calligraphy. Eric is now unable to continue with his contribution to the Newsletter, which we know is appreciated by many readers. Although he left a fair number of pieces before his move into long-term care, we now have only enough for just over a year. There are four poems by Jennifer Huber awaiting artistic treatment, and other suitable material can easily be unearthed in the Museum Library by anyone skilled in calligraphy that this plea for a volunteer may attract. If you feel you might be able to help in this way, at the same time assuring your handiwork a measure of certainty for the admiration of posterity, please get in touch with the Editor (see page 1).

STATE OF TOWN FOOTPATHS

Some of the many between-street footpaths that are a special feature of Dorking town are poorly maintained, even poorly lit. That between the Deepdene Roundabout and Pixham etc has no lighting south of Deepdene Avenue Road, and the section leading to Lincoln Road and the main station is very heavily polluted by litter.

These paths see little or no litter clearance undertaken by the Council. We know that there are some members who act as self-appointed litter-pickers when using them, and should others be moved to copy this act of good citizenship, they are warned that it is prudent to beware of drink cans, which are often thrown down half, even three-quarters, full.

Better news comes from the Penny Fields Path, between Deepdene Avenue and Moore's Road. Gaps in the railings on the north side had encouraged youthful trespassing into the narrow strip of land immediately above the precipitous drop into the old sandpit area below, now the Dorking Halls car-park. When Pippbrook's attention was drawn to this as an accident waiting to happen, the main gap was sealed temporarily and, lo, by May 2000, a fine new fence had been erected for most of the length of this ancient right of way.

WESTCOTT ROAD LITTER

A walk taken along the main road from Dorking to Westcott and back in February revealed that this scenic approach to Dorking from the west is much spoiled by thoughtless disposal of litter, mainly confectionery wrappers and soft-drink containers. This detritus lay about the grass verges or was lazily stuffed into hedges. The culprits seem not to be motorists but those obliged to walk this road on a regular basis (need we say more?). Their habit is the lazy one of throwing down at once the packaging or container wherever they might be at the moment when their hunger and thirst are temporarily satisfied; they wait not for the litter bin or the trash can at home. That said, two or three strategically-sited litter bins would at least have *some* effect on the volume thrown down - what about it, MVDC?

OCKLEY STATION LISTED

As a result of the efforts of Mr Trevor Burlinson of Beare Green (see page 3 of NL 25), Ockley station has now been listed Grade II by English Heritage and will be renovated with suitable respect to its surviving original construction features.

WHITHER OUR MUSEUM?

The MVDC has been recommended to support the two museums in its area more positively, and as Dr Cole notes in his Report, there is a prospect of financial assistance, though this is not yet decided. Our neighbour Hampshire has a cluster of museums (two in Alton which is similar in size to Dorking), all supported from local authority funds, all with professional curators. SCC and MVDC remain very shy about even making a timid attempt to follow this example.

Looking forward to the longer term, more accommodation is likely to be needed. Even with the new extension, the display areas for artefacts and pictures are overcrowded and there is little space in the library to accommodate the continuing flow of accessions. When John Cawdell, MVDC Leisure Services Manager, addressed the annual Museum Stewards' Meeting, the unsuitability of the present semi-industrial site in West Street was mentioned. In the past, there have been suggestions that the remaining tenants might be given alternative accommodation in the Curtis Road Industrial Area but Mr Cawdell offered no prospect of this happening in the short term. Various alternative sites for the Museum were briefly discussed including the Mullins House in West Street (too small), Pippbrook House (too remote) and the site behind Dorking Halls, when this is eventually redeveloped by the Council (perhaps the long-term answer).

NAMING OF THE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH STREET

The apartments development in South Street stands on the site of the Pavilion Cinema (1925-63) and the cinema building survived in alternative use until last year. It seems a shame that this new development was not given a name that had some association with a well-remembered entertainment centre. A suggestion was made by the Society but the developers declined to show any interest.

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership remains at just above 1,000, far from the optimistic Millennium objective of 2,000. Have your local friends and neighbours all been persuaded by you to join? If you have mislaid the form sent with your renewal request, Membership Forms are available at the Museum shop in West Street (on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons and all day Saturday).

LETTER TO THE CHAIRMAN

I write to express my deep concern about recent reports of a proposal to build a large Sainsbury's store in the area of Dorking between St Martin's Walk and Meadowbank Park.

Whilst I am in overall agreement with the current policy to promote shopping developments in urban areas rather than out-of-town, I consider a large supermarket development in the proposed location would be inappropriate for Dorking and out of character for this small market town.

Firstly, I am not convinced that the development will increase trade in the town centre itself. Indeed, I suspect that the High Street shops might suffer, as large supermarkets tend to offer a range of services to encourage one-stop shopping.

Secondly, I believe such a development would encourage car use and increase congestion in the

already over-burdened road system. This will only make Dorking town a less attractive place for pedestrians.

Finally, may I suggest that this proposal has little to do with what Dorking needs, and more to do with the interests of J Sainsbury. The character of Dorking must not be sacrificed for the commercial gain of a limited number of interested parties. Instead, we should develop and enhance the existing unique qualities of the town, which draw in visitors and make it a pleasant place in which to live.

I hope the Preservation Society will form a view on this matter soon, and I will follow your response with interest.

CAROLINE LORE
Rothes Road, Dorking

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I have read with interest a letter from D W Webb and associated comments as regards the development at Rokefield, Westcott Street.

As a resident of Westcott Street and a member of your Society, I feel I ought to advise you of my feelings as regards the development. Through connections, I have had the privilege of inspecting the proposed plans alongside the developers and indeed have been escorted around the site by the new owners and been offered a guided tour as to the proposals.

It would seem to me that the proposals are both sympathetic to the area and certainly within keeping. The developers propose to remove the somewhat unsightly 1950's and 60's additions and buildings and replace these with something more in keeping.

As regards traffic, the addition of the speed limit signs in Westcott Street in my opinion has already made the road somewhat safer, and whilst these signs clearly are temporary and are likely only to be in place during the construction process, I have noted vehicles slowing down through the centre of the Street already. Most welcome.

I very much hope that the developers live up to their proposals and that Rokefield will have the prestige the building so much deserves.

MICHAEL BRAY, ARICS
Westcott Street

SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

July 17: "Gala Day" in Dorking.
Oct 7 : Vintage Motor Car Rally.
Both events are to help fund the
town centre Christmas lights.
Sep 16 & 17: Heritage Open Days.
Oct. 19: "DDPS Autumn Meeting.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY NEEDED

Our Membership Secretary, Mo Bushell, is leaving Dorking. This is an important post and a volunteer is sought - preferably someone with some competence in computer work.

REPORTS OF SOCIETY OFFICERS AND GROUPS

PLANNING OFFICER

With reference to the proposed development of a Sainsbury store behind St Martin's Walk, we have had a discussion with Mr Clive Smith of MVDC Planning Department, and the developers, Thornfield Properties plc, gave us a presentation of their proposals. The plans, which you have all seen in the press, are very preliminary and we were assured that the Planning Department are very aware of the number of questions that will be raised before an application is submitted.

Our main concerns are:

- car-parking facilities.
- traffic that would be generated in the centre of town.
- re-housing of the residents in the flats that would be demolished to cater for this development.
- whether in fact the Sainsbury's store would entice shoppers to walk through St Martin's Walk and into the High Street.

We will have the opportunity of further discussion with the Developers at a later stage and will make sure we are kept informed of any developments through the Planning Department.

Dawes Engineering Ltd of Curtis Road have put in in an application for a **night club** on the first floor of their building for a temporary period expiring in

May 2002. The proposed times are from 22.00 - 03.00 Thursday, Friday and Saturday, with under-18's on Wednesdays from 18.00 - 23.00. There are a number of residential properties in Curtis Road and we have expressed our concern to the Planning Department.

Transport Development Group plc have put in an outline plan for **five dwellings** on the Cox Plant Hire Depot site in Station Road, Betchworth, together with plans to alter the access, involving cutting back and building a retaining wall. We are very concerned about road safety on this very busy road.

Signs at each end of **Box Hill Village** have just been installed. These have been designed, made, paid for and put in place by some of the residents of Box Hill. The signs read: "Welcome to Box Hill Village. Please drive carefully." - and look most attractive. However, on the night of 4 June they were daubed all over in red paint with the words "Not wanted"! The police were notified and were most concerned. They will do all they can to catch the vandals. Photographs have been taken and the local paper advised. Naturally the villagers are most upset that such a senseless act could happen on the Hill.

ANN CHAMPION

DORKING MUSEUM

BEECHAM RESEARCH LABORATORIES

A showcase has been set up displaying examples of most of the antibiotics discovered and developed by Beecham Research Laboratories at Brockham Park since the late 1950s. On show are the various vials, bottles and packs used to supply hospital and high street pharmacies, together with an indication of infections treated and dosage forms available.

The products range from the earliest semi-synthetic penicillins, phenethicillin (Broxil) to more recent antibiotic preparations such as coamoxiclav (Augmentin). There is a short history of the laboratories which were part of Beecham Pharmaceuticals. The site is being redeveloped for housing, and research is continued elsewhere by SmithKline Beecham.

PAINTINGS

Those who have been to our museum recently will know that our restored paintings have now been hung in the extension. Much interest has been shown by visitors, both in the subject matter (local buildings, countryside scene, etc) and in their artistic merits. As we are still in the process of making the captions, we have had many requests for help with identification, an interesting but not ideal way of interacting with our visitors.

LIBRARY & RECORDS

A gazetteer has been produced based on our large-scale Ordnance Survey maps of Dorking & District. This has been a major undertaking and involved Alan Jackson scanning the maps and recording every place name, building, farm, works and historical site. With Brian Overell's computer

skills, the data has been indexed for easy searching. The gazetteer has already proved a good source of information for enquirers and complements the files on Sales Particulars and Photographs.

To help stewards and visitors find things in the Library, Mary Turner has put together a **Location File**, clearly visible in bright yellow!

Work on making a computer listing of our large collection of **postcards** continues. Compilation of an index to the recently-purchased collection of **David Knight's photographs** is the next task.

STEWARDS' ANNUAL MEEETING

We were very pleased to welcome John Cawdell to our meeting on 24 May. John is Leisure Services Manager for Mole Valley District Council and gave a talk about the Council's draft strategy for **Museums & Heritage**. An excellent draft report has been prepared and is now available from the Council offices for public consultation. We are encouraged by the prospect of formal recognition by the Council of the importance of our local museums and a greater sympathy with financial assistance, particularly with building maintenance. Our current buildings are far from ideal and there was a lively debate about the possibilities for redevelopment or even relocation.

Graham Potter, our Secretary, gave a review of our responsibilities under the recent **Disability**

Discrimination Act for providing adequate access to our museum for people with all kinds of disability.

MUSEUM ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

It is pleasing to record that the Council of your Society has approved an increase in its **grant** to the museum from £500 to £1,000 for the current year. This will greatly assist with our running costs and in effect means that each of our members is contributing about £1 to our museum. Thank you!

Judith Mindan has now taken over responsibility for sales in the Museum, and John Higdon has taken up a new position as Education Officer to help promote our **work for schools**.

We are very pleased to record that the Museums & Galleries Commission has given us **Full Registration status** subject to our continuing to enhance facilities and services along agreed lines. This reflects the efforts of many volunteers over the years to build up our museum to a point where its standards are approved by the Commission and will give the necessary confidence to grant-awarding bodies and persons wishing to make donations.

MARTIN COLE

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The **Winter Outing** to Bletchley Park at the beginning of March proved to be so popular that a second coach was required. Members found the tour of the Enigma machines and other aspects of coding and decoding a most interesting reminder of our vulnerability in World War II.

Recent talks have included a lively account of **Reigate Priory** by Audrey Ward.

Our new publication, *William Mullins, Pilgrim Father, and his house in West Street* by Pam Hunter, is now on sale at the Museum and other outlets in the town. We hope eventually to secure sales in the USA as well.

The research work on the **1851 census** continues and has been extended to cover 1861.

PAM HUNTER

OTHER REPORTS

If your Report is missing, or the Report you seek is nowhere to be found in these pages, it is because none had been received by the Editor by 5 June (see dates on page 1) or indeed in the subsequent week, when this issue was assembled by him.

"NATIONAL PARKS: NOT OURS BUT OURS TO LOOK AFTER"

Vicky Elcoate's talk at the Spring Meeting

On observing that the above title was the subject of the talk, members might well have wondered what National Parks have to do with the part of the country in which the majority of us live. Well, the 80 or so present must have been curious to find out, despite probably knowing that the nearest National Park was at least 150 miles away. Beyond that possible mystery, the audience were in for at least a couple of surprises.

We were told that the National Parks of England and of Wales were authorised 50 years ago, under the provision of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 "to conserve and provide access to the land for public enjoyment". The statutory body is the Countryside Commission, which has the power to designate the parks, subject to confirmation by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport & the Regions (for England) or the Secretary of State (for Wales).

Vicky Elcoate, who gave the talk, is The Director of the Council for National Parks. One of the surprises, at least to most of us, is that she lives in Dorking. She opened her address by inviting us to identify from slides a noteworthy scene or two from each of the ten National Parks, plus a couple that are considered to have the equivalent status, The Broads and The New Forest. And here we were informed that on the very day of our meeting, an eleventh one had been approved, The South Downs - our second surprise! We were then shown a slide picturing the delightful scene of the

Seven Sisters, at the Beachy Head (east) end of the South Downs Way. That decision means that we of the Mole Valley are now much nearer to a National Park.

Vicky then told us about the general philosophies: that the designation of a National Park does not affect ownership of land, or remove the rights of the local community; that administration is through local government, despite the fact that the majority of the land is owned privately; and that central government provides 75 per cent of the funding for the Parks, local government the remaining 25 per cent.

Maintaining a balance between the ever-increasing demands for leisure activities, particularly drawn to open spaces, including sporting ones such as hang-gliding, and the preservation of the countryside, is a real concern. This responsibility rests particularly with the relevant county councils, or the special boards of Peak Park and Lake District. The South Downs: To be, or not to be - a National Park? has been a long-running debate across Sussex, and elsewhere, including Parliament. But in the end, 62 per cent of members of the public were in favour of National Park status.

Vicky Elcoate kindly fielded a number of questions, two being prefaced by complimenting her on the excellence of her talk, which sentiment was enthusiastically endorsed at the end of the evening by all those present.

MICHAEL BEGGS

NEW MEMBERS

There are several new members to welcome to the Society this month and they are -

Mr O Bennett	Dorking
Mrs C Bonar	Mid Holmwood
Mrs L Camp	Dorking
Mrs P Coombes	Brockham
Miss V Elcoate	Dorking
Mrs M Huggins	Mickleham
Mr H Mortimer	Dorking
Mr D Redding	North Holmwood
Mr & Mrs P Rosling	Dorking
Mr D Wendon	Dorking

This brings the total of individual members to 1,019.

We also welcome three new corporate members, all based in Dorking: S J Clear & Co Ltd, Grossé UK Ltd, and Superspecs. This brings the total of corporate members to 81.

Although we are half-way through the year, nearly 200 subscriptions are still outstanding from individual members. Please could you check that you have paid.

This is my last article for the Newsletter, as my family and I are relocating to Wiltshire. I have enjoyed my time as Membership Secretary, and I hope that the Society continues to grow while supporting the interests of the residents of Dorking and the surrounding villages.

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.	Business
Abbey Information Systems Ltd	1 Paper Mews, 330 High Street, RH4 2TU	740 553	Computer consultancy
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	21-37 South Street, RH4 2JZ	743 939	Chartered accountants
Bray Estates	278/280 High Street, RH4 1QT	740 837	Valuers, surveyors & property managers
Broadheath Restorations	Myrtle Cottage, Newdigate, RH5 5AD	631 773	Window frame restorers
Browns of Dorking	2 Allen Court, 56 High Street, RH4 1AY	881 212	Delicatessen and catering
Bullimores	156 South Street, RH4 2EU	880 880	Chartered accountants
Burley, G & Sons	Burley Corner, Moorhurst Lane, S.Holmwood, RH5 4LJ	711 799	Amenity horticulturist
Chandler Cars	Unit 23, Vincent Works, Vinc't Lane, RH4 3HQ	882 001	Services and sales
Classic Bedrooms	120 South Street, RH4 2EU	880 330	Retailer
Clear, S J & Co Ltd	65 High Street, RH4 1AW	883 340	Electrical contractors/shop
Country Gardens Ltd	Reigate Road, RH4 1NP	884 845	Garden centre
Cowan & Wood	114 South Street, RH4 2EZ	886 622	Solicitors
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
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
Grossé UK Ltd	Portland Road, RH4 1JL	743 333	Wholesale costume jewellers
Hammond Concrete Tstg & Servs	PO 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 Ptnrshp	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
International Sports Mktg Ltd	Bales Court, Barrington Road, RH4 3EJ	743 322	Marketing consultants
John Arthur Gallery	Old King's Head Court, 11 High Street, RH4 1AR	741 120	Fine art gallery
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
Munro, Ian	10 High Street, RH4 1AT	882 270	Men's outfitters
Newspaper Press Fund	Dickens House, 35 Wathen Road, RH4 1JY	887 511	Charity
Newton & Co	173 High Street, RH4 1AD	884 208	Chartered accountants
Omya UK	Curtis Road	886 688	Mineral extraction
Palmer, R G	21 Monks Court, Monks Walk, Reigate, RH2 0SR.	01737 243 980	Public relations
Patrick Gardner & Co	16 South Street, RH4 2HQ	877 775	Estate agents
Rose Hill Nursing Home	9 Rose Hill, RH4 2EG	882 622	Nursing home
Schryver, Michael, Antiques	The Granary, 10 North Street, RH4 1DN	881 110	Antiques restoration
Sears, Philip, 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
Songhurst, W Ltd	Rayleigh House, Chapel Lane, Westcott, RH4 3PJ	880 411	Builders
Super Specs	62 High Street, RH4 1AY	875 201	Opticians
Treeline	The Spinney, Horsham Road, Wallis Wood	741 800	Tree care and maintenance
Uden, C J & 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
White, L A (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
 Betchworth Parish Council
 Box Hill Afternoon Women's Institute
 Capel Parish Council
 Brockham Green Village Society
 Coldharbour Sports and Social Club
 Friends of Box Hill
 Holmwood Parish Council

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

Published by the DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY.

Hon Secretary: Mr Ian Brotchie, Windscrest, The Fleet, Fittleworth, West Sussex, RH20 1HN. Tel. 01798 865567

NEWSLETTER No. 26

THE RIVER MOLE · 1

James Thomson (1700-1748) alludes to the river thus:-

"Here let me trace the matchless vale of Thames,
Fair winding up to where the Muses haunt
In Twitnam's bowers, to royal Hampton's pile,
To Claremont's terraced height, and Esher's groves,
By the soft windings of the gentle Mole."

John Milton (1608-1674) speaks of

"the Sullen Mole that runneth underneath"

Alexander Pope (1688-1744) in his "Windsor Forest"
also refers to the

"Sullen Mole that hides its diving flood."

A passage from the same poem describes the
pleasures of fishing in the Mole:

"In genial spring, beneath the quivering shade,
Where cooling vapours breathe along the mead,
The patient fisher takes his silent stand,
Intent, his angle trembling in his hand;
With look unmov'd, he hopes the scaly breed,
And eyes the dancing cork, and bending reed,
Our plenteous streams a various race supply,
The bright-ey'd perch, with fins of Tyrian dye,
The silver eel, in shining volumes roll'd,
The yellow carp, in scales bedrop'd with gold,
Swift trouts, diversify'd with crimson stains,
And pikes, the tyrants of the wat'ry plains."