

DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY



Established in 1929

NEWSLETTER

No. 31

April 2002

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NEWSLETTER 31: April 2002

Free to members

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The opinions expressed in this Newsletter by the Editor, contributors and correspondents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies 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

Someone labelled only as "Name and Address Supplied" ("N&AS" from here on) achieved publication in the letters columns of *The Dorking Advertiser* at the end of November last year with a long column of fierce and largely negative criticism of our views on various topics. This outburst was not followed up by others writing to the paper subsequently. Despite the author's desire for anonymity, some shrewd guesses have been made as to identity. It was interesting to note that N&AS did not read the standing notice above and blithely assumed that everything that appears in these pages follows the Society's considered official party line. Not so; editorial views and those of others published here are as often as not intended to provoke constructive debate.

Perhaps N&AS will consider becoming a Society member. Membership brings with it the opportunity to speak at our regular meetings and to seek and attain a seat on the Society's Executive or Council. In both cases it is possible to influence policy on the issues of the day.

All the important issues we are currently facing are crucial for the future of the town and its

associated communities. Let us review them in no particular order, in the hope of stimulating some discussion.

Anyone using their eyes does not need DTLR statistics to register the year by year increment in motor traffic feeding into the virtually unexpandable road space through and around our town and village communities. This brings with it ever-increasing noise, congestion and pollution. A major and particularly unpleasant addition will be the increased flow of ponderous waste trucks along the A24 should the County Council's contentious decision to allow the Capel Incinerator not be blocked. Interesting to note in passing how at County Council level this topic has been settled by the manoeuvring of elected representatives taking the narrow "not in my constituency" view. In the ensuing scuffle, the local representations were overwhelmed and a full transport costing, taking into account the social and environmental benefits of the rail alternative, seems to have been overlooked. Is this democracy in action in the year 2002?

Continued on next page

In Dorking itself the small retailers who, in their variety and number, constitute a positive attraction for the town centre, see a threat to their livelihood if the Sainsbury food store in St Martin's Walk is built; affected residents on the proposed site are apprehensive about the timing and nature of their rehousing and the safe parking of their cars. Others see this project as a necessary stimulant for a moribund retail trade, saving Dorking town centre from the fate of its Leatherhead equivalent. There is reason to fear that if Sainsbury's are obliged to pack up their tents and depart, closing their existing shop, even more shoppers than at present will get into their cars and drive to large superstores elsewhere, to buy not only food but possibly also other necessities, adding to the pollution and congestion of road traffic in the area *and* depleting trade in Dorking's remaining shops. This last possibility seems to run contrary to the fear that construction of a new Sainsbury store would damage existing town centre retailers - surely they do not expect to lose trade whatever happens?

Turning to the rural heritage, we must remain ever-vigilant in its protection from inappropriate

development; this was the central issue stimulating the Society's formation almost three quarters of a century ago. Today we have to contend with major changes in land use following the decline of farming and also with proposed radical alterations in planning procedures.

As if all this were not enough to grapple with, our skies are aloud with aircraft - Surrey is already over-flown more densely than any other area in the whole world. This suggests a need strongly to oppose the suggestions now being made for further expansion of Heathrow and Gatwick with all the consequential supporting infrastructure this implies.

Some of these issues are considered further by our Chairman and by Brendon Sewill in the following pages. Readers are invited to assist the Society in forming its future campaigning strategy by contributing their views on any or all of these topics. But please, no negative views and no requests for anonymity!

ALAN A JACKSON

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

ANOTHER BUSY YEAR

2001 was a busy year for the Society. 2002 looks as if it will be even busier. As I write, no less than three proposals of mammoth significance for Dorking and its district hang over our future. In the probable order of their implementation, if finally approved, they are the new Sainsbury supermarket, the incinerator at Capel (both carried forward from last year) and the new Green Paper on planning. I have written articles on each, from which you can see that the Society has been actively involved already. There is, however, much more that is still to be done.

The various ideas that have been floated for increasing the capacity of London's airports carry implications for possible unwelcome changes that lie further ahead. Estimates have been made that three more runways will be needed by 2009 if capacity in the south-east is to meet demand. The Government's experience of the nine-year Public Inquiry for Terminal Five at Heathrow suggests to them that planning for these extra runways has to start now. So ideas for one extra runway each at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted were advanced. The runway at Gatwick would have to be *north* of Charlwood - an idea that was laughed out of court a few years ago. For Heathrow there were two ideas, one for a runway crossing the two existing runways, which

must be an air traffic controller's nightmare, and the other for a runway parallel to the other two but north of the Old Bath Road (the A4) and south of the M4, requiring the demolition of over 1,000 houses. A second runway at Stansted would have to start right on the edge of one village and finish just outside another. More recently there has been a suggestion for a wholly new airport on the north Kent Marshes in the Thames estuary, where there is, needless to say, a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of its bird life.

We watch developments here with close interest. This is a subject on which we maintain close contact with the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC), whose leading light is Brendon Sewill. He has kindly given us an article for this Newsletter.

MARTIN WEDCWOOD

CHANGES TO YOUR COUNCIL

We are exceedingly sorry to report the death of Brian Hodges, our longest-standing Council member. He is sorely missed. His successor as Museum Curator (Exhibits) is Fred Plant, who is also a long-standing Museum Committee member but at his own request will not be joining the Council,

where the Museum is represented (*ex officio*) by its Chairman, Martin Cole. Dr Cole will, however, be stepping down as Chairman of the Museum at the Annual General Meeting, after an outstandingly successful four years. Discussions to appoint his successor are already advanced and an announcement will appear in the AGM papers. Pam Hunter, who has represented the Local History Group on our Council since 1999, has also asked to step down. Her calm and sensible contributions will also be much missed. Bob Humphreys, the Chairman of the LHG, will also be retiring - after his statutory three years - at the LHG AGM on 6 April, and Pam's successor on our Council will be appointed by whoever succeeds him.

I am also sorry to report the death of Peter Banks our Footpaths Officer, who joined the Council last April. Taken ill within ten days of being appointed, he was never able to fulfil the role which he had generously offered to undertake. I am glad to be able to thank Harry Gort (once again) for finding his successor, David Read, who has very kindly agreed to take on the job.

Finally I have to report that Ed White, who took over from Ian Brothie as Secretary only last March, has also been struck down by illness and has asked for leave of absence from the Council for a period of at least six months. This means that we are in urgent need of a Secretary. If any member knows of anybody who might be suitable, I would be most grateful for their thoughts and advice.

MW

THE GREEN PAPER ON PLANNING

The Government's 'Green Paper' on Planning was published in December last year by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (Minister, Mr Stephen Byers), and comments from interested parties have been asked for by 18 March. At the time of writing, our own response is in an advanced stage of preparation. The work is being done by a committee of three, plus myself as chairman. All of them are on the Council of the Society. They are Hank Etheridge, chairman of our Planning Committee, Richard Ingle, chairman of our Deepdene Gardens Committee but also, more importantly, chairman of Surrey CPRE, and Derek Robotham, who is a retired planning inspector and does a lot of work for the Civic Trust. I am very lucky to have so strong a team.

The immediate cause of the Green Paper is probably the nine years that it took the Public Inquiry into the proposed Terminal Five at Heathrow to reach its conclusion, but there is a feeling that has been growing for some years that the nation's planning system has become too cumbersome, complicated and slow - and is at least in part to blame for the critical shortage of

housing in the south-east. It is difficult to disagree with this but we do not think that the resulting document is particularly impressive and are concerned with a number of its recommendations.

In particular we are anxious that the formulation of Plans at all levels should continue to have proper opportunities for consultation. It is proposed that County Structure Plans should be replaced by Regional Plans, but in advance of the introduction of regional assemblies with their concomitant civil servants or officers it is not clear how consultation for the Regional Plans can be organised. This must be carefully thought out. The Green Paper mentions the need for Local Plans (to be renamed Local Development Frameworks) to be continuously revised, but here again it is not clear how this can be done with adequate consultation and without making the resulting patchwork harder to follow and to use.

There is no mention in the Green Paper of the maps which indicate the extent of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas et cetera and, most importantly, the Green Belt. This has given rise to concern that it may become possible for boundaries of designated areas to be altered without local consultation. At the next stage, therefore, we will be looking to see what procedure is proposed for consultation on the development of map-based policies. The protection of the Green Belt, it need hardly be said, is just about the most important aim that this Society has.

There is much in the Green Paper that we heartily endorse, such as the strengthening of the powers of Enforcement Officers, and the proposal to reduce from five years to three the time within which planning consent, once granted, can be implemented. But the Green Paper has not been thought out with as much care as the subject deserves and the proposals, if implemented as they currently stand, would result in much confusion in the planning process and a reduction, not an improvement, in its effectiveness.

This is particularly important in the context of the rising debate about the housing shortage. *Land for Housing*, a report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, due to be published on 19 March, reckons that the UK will need 4.5 million new housing units between 1996 and 2016, against a Government estimate of 3.8 million. If the housing shortage in the south-east is to be properly addressed, the south-east will have to take at least its fair share. Enormous ingenuity will be needed to accommodate this huge demand without damage to our environment, but it seems certain that we will have to accept higher density in already built-up areas. We must, however, at all costs resist the emergence of a system whereby major development decisions can be made by central Government alone and foisted onto protesting communities willy-nilly.

MW

SAINSBURY STORE

When I wrote on this subject in the last issue, we were awaiting the exhibition of the architects' proposals in one of the vacant shop units in St Martin's Walk. The exhibition took place, and a disappointing exercise it was. It was eventually open, at the Town Manager's insistence, for a week, but was only manned for less than two days and a half. We were not expecting a full and detailed proposal as for a proper planning application, but what was on display was still no more than the architects' preliminary ideas and included a model of an earlier version that had been superseded. We wrote giving them our comments on their ideas as they then appeared. One hopes that the exercise provided them with helpful guidance.

At the time that I am writing these notes the planning application is still awaited, and the date it can be expected is still unknown. We would like to hold a public meeting to debate it. We would like that meeting to be in the Dorking Halls, which we are unlikely to get at short notice. We will have to do the best we can.

There is a wide range of opinion, for and against a new Sainsbury's, in Dorking, within the Society and within your Council itself. At one end, there are those who oppose a new Sainsbury's under any circumstances. I doubt if there can be many who, at the other end, are unconditionally in favour, but there may be some. In between these two extremes stand, I believe, most citizens of Dorking, who would accept a new Sainsbury's, provided certain problems are satisfactorily sorted out. Here are the major problems, as I see them, and my own views about them. I would stress that they are only my own views as they stand now. As with all things to do with this proposed development, they are subject to revision once we have an actual planning application to react to.

1. The plans cannot avoid being extremely tough on the people who live in Church Gardens, whose interests will have to be looked after properly. The tentative plans shown in the exhibition give a rough idea of how the developers intend to do this, but it is the detail that counts. Nobody likes being forced to move; the new accommodation must be at least as good as and preferably better than that which they are being asked to leave - and it must be affordable.

2. South Street is not a good place for the market. There is nowhere nearby for the stall-holders to keep their vans and cars, or indeed for members of the public to park. Dorking is a market town, and in an ideal world the market would be in the High Street. That is clearly not possible, but in practice it should be as near to the centre as can be managed and right next to parking - in other words, exactly where it is now.

3. Both the Council and the applicants are conducting their own traffic impact assessments, on the effect of increased numbers of cars and juggernauts turning into and out of Mill Lane. If it were found to be necessary to have extra bollards, traffic island and traffic lights in the High Street, here at its widest point, the effect would be awful and it would not be acceptable.

4. The residents of the houses at the bottom of Mill Lane at present have enough space on the road and in front of the Malthouse pub to park their cars at night and, to a lesser extent, during the day as well. This could cease to be the case if the scheme goes ahead. The easy answer, which I received from one of the attendants at the exhibition in St Martin's Walk, was that they could park overnight in the new underground car park. This would only be acceptable if the car park was equipped with CCTV for which there were credible guarantees that it would be properly monitored. Memories of the recent unlamented skateboard rink above Meadowbank, and of the activities that it attracted, are too recent for there to be public confidence in any unattended underground car park at night.

5. The 'roof' of the development needs to be much better than in any of the suggestions that were being discussed in the exhibition. It is a mistake to think that, just because it is intended that parts of it be grassed, it will look natural in any way; there is not enough soil for that. The circular building on top seems a mistake, both in design and in function. Circular buildings on the whole are weak, and its proposed use for bars, night clubs etc is out of place. This use may well have been chosen as a way of replacing the Malthouse, but that is tucked down at the bottom of the hill and noise from it does not travel far, while the proposed installation would be on a level with both old and new housing. The 'grain' of the area, of which the architects talked early on, is in fact one of dense streets of housing, with on-street parking. Could that be a better cue for the future appearance of the site?

6. Most important of all, we wait to see whether the layout of the proposed supermarket will overcome the problems created by the different levels and the upward slope to the south, so that customers of the supermarket will be attracted in sufficient numbers up through St Martin's Walk and onto the High Street. If it does not do that, the new supermarket will not benefit Dorking, and will withdraw custom from the High Street rather than add to it.

MW

THE CAPEL INCINERATOR

The last issue of the Newsletter had hardly reached readers' hands before there were developments at last, and not of a welcome kind. Giving less than three weeks' notice, the County Council announced a decision to hold a two-day meeting of its Planning Committee, on 5 and 6 December, at which decisions would be taken on three applications for incinerators in Surrey. These were at the Copyhold site just to the east of Reigate, at the Slyfield site near Guildford, and at Capel. The applicants for the Copyhold and Capel sites were Surrey Waste Management, who hold the current waste management contract with the County Council. Those for the Slyfield site were another firm. The recommendations of the planning officers were that the Copyhold and Slyfield applications, which were being heard on 5 December, should be refused and that the Capel application, which was being heard on 6 December, should be approved.

The three applications were accompanied by a 600-page document which listed the pros and cons of each site, without weighting them, separately. It did not compare the relative merits or demerits of all sites together. At the end of its discussion of each application there was a brief statement that 'on balance' it should be refused or, in the case of Capel, approved.

Twenty members of the public were allowed to speak for no more than three minutes, and those interested in doing so were invited to telephone from 8am on a specified day. The invitation did not say that permission would be given to the first twenty who telephoned, but I heard indirectly that this was the case, and rang early. The answer-phone message was misleading (I thought at first it meant that the line was not yet operating and that I should ring again later) but at the third try I left a message, just in case, and heard later that I had in fact rung and recorded my message on time. I was thus able to speak on 6 December, though I do not know to what effect, if any, and I was there all day. Others, notably our own Council member Richard Ingle, representing the CPRE, and members of the Capel Action Group, attended both days.

The Chairman was blatantly partisan. On the first day he gave speakers opposed to the applications (and thus in favour of the Officers' recommendations) ample time to have their say. I was thus advised when I arrived on the second day that I need not worry too much about the three-minute time limit. Luckily I had timed my address to last just that long, but before me the others, including the Capel Action Group, were cut off in mid-sentence.

In the morning the debate in the Planning Committee was quite sensible, even though all but one of the members of the Committee were for wards in the north of the county. After lunch, however, two further members of the Committee were there who had not been able to attend earlier. Their contributions were strongly in favour of the Capel site, and they made the point that Capel people also produce waste, so why should they object to having an incinerator in their neighbourhood; there were far fewer of them after all. The proposal to approve the application was passed by a majority of one vote.

Luckily this is not the end of the story, because the County Council has intentionally disregarded its own policies as well as those of the Government. When this happens, the Council concerned is obliged to refer its decision to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions. The Minister, Mr Stephen Byers, then has to decide whether to call the case in. If he decides not to, the decision of the County Council stands. If he decides he will, he makes a decision on the advice of his department, who in their turn take into account not only Government policies and principles but also representations of interested parties such as your Society, and anything else they consider relevant. We have, of course, already written, suggesting strongly that the case should be called in. If you, too, would like to write and want advice on what to say, please contact me. It would be a mistake to think optimistically that sense will prevail in the end.

MW

SCULPTURE SCHEME WITHDRAWN

The debate on the perceived merits and demerits of the scheme to commission a sculpture to stand outside the Post Office, which was well aired in the last issue of the Newsletter, has occasioned some hard thinking on the part of your Executive Committee. Its conclusion was that in 2002, with so many important potential developments demanding the close attention of our Society, it was inappropriate for us to continue a commitment to this scheme, both because of the large amount of time that would be devoted to fund-raising in what is already going to be an abnormally busy year, and because it is particularly important this year to have the membership fully united. The recommendation of the Executive to the Council of the Society was therefore that the sculpture scheme be withdrawn. The Council accepted the recommendation.

MW

THREAT OF A NEW RUNWAY AT GATWICK

Consultation documents are due to be published in April or May setting out a variety of options for airport expansion throughout the UK. There will then be about four months for the public to express their views, with the final Government decision due by the end of this year. Reports in the press have suggested that the options will include an additional runway, or even two additional runways, at Gatwick.

A new runway to the north of the airport, as proposed in 1993, would leave Charlwood, with over 80 listed buildings and features, between the two runways and virtually uninhabitable. Wherever a new runway were built, its purpose would be to double the size of Gatwick, making it larger than Heathrow is today. Double the size would mean roughly double the number of aircraft (with new flight paths), double the pollution, double the airport traffic, and

a huge increase in house building for the extra staff and commercial development.

A legal agreement between BAA and West Sussex County Council prevents the construction of any new runway before 2019. To set this aside would need legislation. There is a reasonable hope that the House of Lords could be persuaded to reject such a serious breach of faith.

The campaign against any new runway will be co-ordinated by the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign. If you have any ideas to suggest, or would like to help at this stage, please get in touch with GACC (tel. 01293-863-369, e-mail <gacc@onetel.net.uk> or website <www.gacc.org.uk>).

BRENDON SEWILL

NOTES, NEWS AND VIEWS

TOWARDS A MORE PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY A24

Early in March work was proceeding on the long-awaited island crossing of the A24 at the north end of Deepdene Drive. This will make the road crossing much safer for all who use the delightful Penny Fields footpath to walk between the eastern edges of the town and Deepdene Park to Cotmandene and the town centre. It is only just and fitting that this improvement should be made, since this historic and pleasant footpath was ruthlessly cut in two when the Dorking By-Pass was carved through Deepdene Park in 1931-34. The long waits as walkers watch for a brief pause in the roaring tide of cars and trucks in both directions will now be much reduced.

We also understand that, despite problems with sub-surface cables and other services, it is still intended to provide a light-controlled pedestrian crossing immediately south of the Deepdene Roundabout.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED DOWN BELOW AND AROUND THE HOUSES

More Guides are sought to conduct parties round the Dorking Caves in South Street. Full training will be given. Enjoy the pleasure of giving pleasure to others - Harry Tyler (Dorking 886174) will be pleased to give further details as to what is involved.

The final and important stage in distribution of this Newsletter is undertaken by those prepared to give up an hour or so three times a year to push envelopes into the letter boxes of fellow members in their neighbourhood. More volunteers are now required to lighten the burden of those who work unduly large territories. If you feel you could help, please discuss what is required with the congenial Ian Brotchie (01798-865567) and benefit from the exercise involved.

Whilst not an essential part of the routine, Newsletter distribution can not only provide contacts with the membership but also opportunities to recruit new members. Those who perform this task are sometimes brought to question why the letter box of a particular neighbour, friend, acquaintance, fellow churchgoer or whoever, does not feature in their round. It is useful then to have membership forms at home ready for use. Ian Brotchie or Peter Parkin (Dorking 881111) can arrange supplies.

PARKING PROBLEMS AT PIPPBROOK

Elderly and disabled people unable to visit the Public Library at Pippbrook House without using a car are currently finding it extremely difficult to secure short-term parking spaces during the working

week. This appears to be caused by the reduction in spaces available in the Reigate Road Car Park during the construction of the Sports Centre. Somewhat surprisingly the Chief Executive informs us that there is "no formal control" of parking spaces at Pippbrook, and the Council "does not and cannot monitor who uses them". If this remains the case when the present construction work is completed, it seems likely to encourage misuse of the parking spaces by those with no business at Pippbrook House or the Council Offices.

MIDDLE LODGE, DEEPEENE

This charming early 19th century Grade II listed building at the north end of Deepdene Drive is one

of the two remaining lodges of the historic Deepdene Park and bears the emblem of the Hope family on its south side. It has recently suffered severely from an excess of ground water draining down the slopes which surround its delightful garden on the north, east and south sides. The foundations of the Lodge were imperilled and the main entrance door and porch subsided into the saturated mire, requiring underpinning and complete reconstruction. This work was undertaken early in 2002 by conservation building specialists Aspect Structural Repairs, using the original materials for rebuilding the entrance porch. The owners, Society members Mr & Mrs Toomey, are to be congratulated on the resulting restoration and the cheerful way in which they have endured the unavoidable disruption.

"A GREEN AND PLEASANT HERITAGE"

At the end of 1999, Patricia Bennett was asked whether she would undertake the research and writing of the history of the Society over the twenty years from 1980 to 2000. Essentially this would compliment the first history of the Society written by Doris Mercer under the title *Fifty Years of Conservation*. Happily, Patricia agreed to undertake this, and many months later, following various tasks including editing, re-editing, word processing the text, and inserting a

number of colour photos and line drawings, the booklet has been completed. It is anticipated that the first print-run of 100 will be ready for sale in April, and copies will be available at the AGM. The sale price will be £4.50. If, as expected, there will be demand for this excellent full-colour history, further supplies will be ordered.

Make sure you get your copy!

BARRY COLLINS

**REPORTS OF PLANNING OFFICER
AND LOCAL HISTORY GROUP**

Please see papers for the AGM circulated to members

DORKING & DISTRICT MUSEUM

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Please see the Society's Annual Report circulated to members with this Newsletter.

ACQUISITIONS BY DORKING MUSEUM November 2001 to 11 February 2002

1. Dorking Gardeners' Club Champion Gardener Trophy in the form of a Model Wheelbarrow, naming the winners 1948-2000
2. Victorian Rat Trap formerly in use at *Broomfield*, Dorking
3. Seal-embossing Press used by Dorking Electric Theatre Ltd
4. Picture Postcard of Dorking Royal Electric Picture Palace, dated 1913
5. Butter Knife with Dorking Crest
6. Letter Opener, carved from a Hazel-wood Rod, inscribed "Dorking 1890"
7. Elizabeth II Coronation Decorative Medal
8. Framed Pictorial Poster Map of East Surrey by MacDonald Gill, showing London General Omnibus Company routes 1920
9. Radiation Cookery Book for Regulo-controlled Ovens, 1933 edition
10. Judge Enamel Milk Saucepan, purchased from Gamages, Holborn, in 1952
11. Victorian Metal Folding Child's Cot with attachments to convert it to a Rocking Cradle

FRED PLANT
Curator - Exhibits

LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

In the year 2001 the Museum Library & Archive department dealt with 107 accessions, two of which are complete archive collections in their own right. In the first two months of this year we have already had nearly 40 additions to the collections, so we are having to put a lot of thought into making the best possible use of the storage areas we have at our disposal.

Books added to the library so far this year include: *Leatherhead, a History* by Edwina Varley (2001), *Shere, a Surrey Village in Maps* published by SASy (2001), *In Pursuit of the Picturesque* by members of the Surrey Gardens Trust (2001) (describing William Gilpin's Surrey excursion in 1768; copies are for sale in the Museum shop), *Old Cottage and Domestic Architecture of South West Surrey* by Ralph Nevill (1889); *Labby, the Life of Henry Labouchere* by Hesketh Pearson (1936); and *George Meredith, his Life and Lost Love* by David Williams (1977).

Among other items received are a hand-written diary kept by Percy Fuller of Betchworth while

serving in the trenches in France in 1915 and an account of his brother Ernie's experiences as a prisoner of war in 1918. Both make very harrowing and moving reading but it is good to know from their niece that Percy went on to live a long life, dying well into his nineties.

We have also received a microfiche of the Mickleham Parish Registers transcribed by Audrey Sykes and Cliff Webb. We hope to obtain fiches of the 1901 census returns when they become available to local museums and groups; at present users have to go to the Surrey History Centre at Woking to see them or join millions of others on the internet.

Visitors to the Museum Library (reopened from 13 March) will notice that it is all much brighter thanks to new windows and a couple of coats of white paint. The work caused a lot of upheaval but I think you will agree that it is worth the effort.

MARY TURNER
Curator - Library & Archives

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I wonder how many members of the Dorking Preservation Society are aware of proposals by Mole Valley Council to build a series of concrete skateboard ramps on a 90 foot by 30 foot stretch of tarmac, right in the heart of Meadowbank.

The proposed skate ramp area will lie in-between the children's playground and the pond, just below the grassy bank which countless generations of children have rolled down whilst their parents sat on benches above, enjoying the lovely views of the pond, the church and the town.

The Meadowbank used to have a much smaller wooden skateboard ramp located at the far end of the park, against the fence bordering the railway. Even in this remote location, it was a focus for under-age drinking, drug-taking, graffiti and vandalism, which finally resulted in the ramp's destruction last summer by a fire caused deliberately by a gang of youths.

As a resident of Rothes Road, with a garden backing onto the park and two young children of five and seven, I and many other local residents are horrified at the prospect of a much larger series of ramps being built so close to our homes. We believe that, like the smaller ramp, it will be a focus for even more vandalism, graffiti and bad behaviour. We believe it will spill into the children's play area and generally

make the park a far less attractive place for young families and older people. As a former resident of London, I have witnessed this kind of downward spiral, where precious open spaces have become abandoned by the majority of the community, creating a vacuum into which greater vandalism and crime is drawn.

Meadowbank is a rare gem, found as it is, in the heart of Dorking, full of wildlife and with sweeping views to Boxhill and Ranmore Common. There is a sense of history about the place, an echo of Dorking's rural past. Building a series of concrete ramps across a 90 foot by 30 foot area, right in the middle of this beautiful park would, I believe, be nothing short of an act of vandalism on the part of the Council.

I hope members of the Society will lend their weight to our campaign, which is calling for the ramps to be located within an all-weather centre, such as the new leisure centre, where they can be monitored by responsible adults at all times. Please express your comments and concerns on this issue to Robin Davis, Mole Valley Council's principal Parks Officer (*e-mail* <robin.davis@mole-valley.gov.uk>).

Yours sincerely

CAROL MILLETT-COURT
Rothes Road, Dorking

29 January 2002

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome the following new members -

Mr M Collins, Roman Road; Mrs D Hicks, Reigate;
Mr D J Larkins, Church Gardens; Mrs G Morley, Parkway;
Mrs S Tillett, Ashcombe Road; Mr & Mrs E White, Deepdene Drive; Mrs Barber, St Martin's Mews; Mr J Davis, North Holmwood; Dr & Mrs J E Mason MBE, Deepdene Park Road; Mr D Read, Overdale.

We regret to report the death of the following members -

Mrs M Barker, Deepdene Avenue; Mr L A Fenn, Ashcombe Road; Mr N E Hallett, Westhumble; Mr G Fernall, Beare Green; Mr Brian Hodges, Lonsdale Road; Mr D J Homer, Westcott; Mr D F Evans, Croft Avenue; Mr & Mrs A E Davies; Mrs J Cook, Canterbury Court; Mrs E Burt, Garth House (formerly of Deepdene Park Road); Mrs A Kingston, Parkway; Mr F R Macher.

Membership currently stands at 871. Who will help recruit the 129 now required to reach the 1000 milestone? Are your immediate neighbours all members? Perhaps some newcomers have moved into a nearby house and might be invited to join? If you are reading this in the Public Library, why not support the Society by joining and make your views heard? Membership details are available from Peter Parkin (for his address, see inside front cover)

OBITUARIES

BRIAN HODGES (1921 - 2001)

Brian Hodges devoted a substantial part of his retirement volunteering his services for the benefit of our Society and its Museum. He retired from the Civil Service in 1980, and having promised Ethel Clear, Museum Secretary, that he would help at the Museum, became a steward and Working Party member. As the Museum expanded into the adjacent building, Brian helped Alan Brewer, then Assistant Curator to John Walker. Alan had a severe stroke in 1987, and Brian became an Assistant Curator together with Doris Mercer (Library) and Terry O'Kelly (Working Party). When Ethel Clear died Brian took on some of the work that she did, making almost daily visits to the Museum to check that all was well, sorting out the post and carrying out what he used to call his janitorial duties. In 1993 Doris Mercer retired and the Council of the Society appointed Terry O'Kelly Curator (Exhibits), Mary Turner Curator (Library) and Gladys Arlett Curator (Photographs).

Brian meticulously recorded in the Accessions Register all non-library items given to the Museum and was very anxious to display as many as possible; he used to refer to "dressing" the cabinets. As the years went by, this led to crowding but he vigorously defended the policy of displaying as much as possible, citing the favourable comments in the Visitors' Book.

The expansion of the Museum exhibition area into the adjoining building presented new challenges, and Brian was very pleased with the outcome, not the least being able to display our fine collection of paintings, many of which were professionally restored. He enjoyed showing Lord Hamilton around the Museum following the official opening of the expanded facilities on the 9th June 2001.

Brian was a serious person but not averse to a bit of leg-pulling. We soon discovered that a joke about something would be followed by a pause, which his failing hearing might have indicated he had not heard but was in fact a prelude to a penetrating retort. He had a habit of mislaying his spectacle case, wrapped around with all the rubber bands he seemed to collect. One Working Party evening someone put the case into a display cabinet as a "new exhibit" - some fun was had looking for it.

Brian had an immense knowledge of the items in the Museum and loved showing people round, including children who came on special visits. He will be greatly missed but we have some endearing photographs in our collection, for example Brian, hammer in hand, with Gladys Arlett seemingly attempting the repair of the Museum door, with me and a model of William Mullins presented by David Crump and with a group of lady stewards in their coats behind the old reception counter (it was often cold).

Brian Hodges was a man of great energy, and from 1982 for 12 years was a member of the Society's Planning Committee, assiduously carrying out a study of Planning Applications every fortnight. He also found time to help at St Martin's Church and the Age Concern centre, Dorking. His relaxation was to read, do the crossword puzzle and smoke his pipe. He was stewarding in the Museum a few days before he passed away on the 16 November 2001. We are very pleased that his wife, Pam, who often helped Brian at the Museum, has agreed to continue as a steward.

MARTIN COLE

REGINALD FREDERICK (PETER) PHILPOTT (27.10.1910 - 9.1.2002)

On 21 January 2002 we paid our grateful respects to Peter Philpott as he lay in his beloved St Joseph's church in Dorking. His contribution to the revealing and understanding of the local history of the area was immense.

Raised on the Kitlands estate where his father was head gardener before the First World War, he attended Coldharbour School where his mother was head teacher. After moving to Anstiebury Farm, he went to Holmwood School and on to the High School in Dene Street, Dorking. Before his sixteenth birthday

he left to work for the Rural District Council which had an office above Downs the Solicitor in the High Street.

In 1933 the Dorking & Horley Rural District Council was formed, and purpose-built premises were constructed at *Brookmead* in Chalkpit Lane. Peter worked there in the finance section of the Council.

His association with the Roman Catholic Church began in 1934 and led him to research the history and founding of the church in Dorking. This

generated an association with the Norfolk family at Arundel and the archives there, and also with E L Sellick, a local historian. Sellick was the Dorking Local Secretary of the Surrey Archaeological Society (1937-1954) and Clerk to the D&HRDC.

When he moved to Finchley, Peter took over as Local Secretary, having joined the Society in 1949. His aptitude with figures soon made him offer his services to the Surrey Record Society as their Treasurer.

Peter Philpott came into the possession of Sellick's vast collection of books, manuscripts, photographs etc on local history. This resulted in Peter building an annexe onto his house in Cleardene to accommodate them. A few original documents were donated to the Surrey Record Office, now at Woking.

In 1972 Peter published his Centenary History of St Joseph's Church.

When the Dorking Museum was formed in 1975, Peter Philpott generously donated the Sellick Collection, which now forms a major part of the Library. His contribution to Dorking was marked by his election to a Vice Presidency of the Dorking & District Preservation Society.

Unfortunately the health of both Peter and his wife Alice deteriorated and they had to leave their home in Cleardene where they had lived since marriage. Alice died in 1989 and Peter was cared for in various homes until his death.

LIONEL GREEN

BACK COVER

The back cover of this issue has been prepared by Mr C E Etheridge of Box Hill, who has kindly agreed to take over this popular feature following the retirement of Mr Eric Ferguson.

If you have any short poems relating to the Dorking area or other local pieces suitable for the back cover, please send them to the Editor.

Thanks also to Jennifer Huber, who has already provided several suitable poems.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be held on

Thursday 18 April
at 7.30 pm

at The United Reformed Church Hall, West Street, Dorking

The meeting will commence with a video presentation by -

Mr FRANK GREY

of the South-east Film & Video Archive

of Films of Old Surrey, after which coffee will be served.

The formal business of the meeting will then follow.

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
Betchworth Park Golf Club	Reigate Road, RH4 1NZ	882 052	Golf club
Bits & Bobs	20 South Street, RH4 2HL	743 119	Party shop
Bray Estates	278/280 High Street, RH4 1QT	740 837	Valuers, surveyors & property managers
Broadheath Restorations	Dean House Farm, Church Rd, Newdigate, RH5 5DL	631 773	Window frame restorers
Browns of Dorking	182 High Street, RH4 1QR	881 212	Delicatessen and catering
Bullimores	Old Printers Yard, 156 South Street, RH4 2HF	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
Clear, S J & Co Ltd	65 High Street, RH4 1AW	883 340	Electrical contractors/shop
Cowan & Wood	114 South Street, RH4 2EZ	886 622	Solicitors
Dorking Desk Shop, The	41 West Street, RH4 1BN	883 327	Antique furniture dealer
Dorking Golf Club	Club House, Deepdene Avenue, RH5 4BY	886 917	Golf club
Downs	156 High Street, RH4 1BQ	880 110	Solicitors and notaries
Downsman Ltd	Overdene, Paper Mews, RH4 2TU	877 023	Management Services
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	BPA House, High Street, 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 Prtnrship	57 West Street, RH4 1BS	742 200	Ind financial advisers
Hulsta Studio	120 South Street, RH4 2EU	880 330	Contemporary furniture specialists
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
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	Ranmore House, 19 Ranmore Road, RH4 1HE	884 208	Chartered accountants
Omya UK Ltd	Curtis Road, RH4 1XA	886 688	Mineral extraction
Patrick Gardner & Co	16 South Street, RH4 2HL	877 775	Estate agents
Priory School, The	West Bank, RH4 3DG	887 337	School
RGP	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
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
Temptations	Old Kings Court, High Street, RH4 1AR	885 452	Antique jewellery & silver
Treeline Services Ltd	Holmwood Farm Court, North Holmwood, RH5 4JR	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
Whitelegg Machines Ltd	Fir Tree House, Horsham Road, Beare Green, RH5 4LQ	713 200	Electrical engineers
Wyevale Country Gardens	Reigate Road, RH4 1NP	884 845	Garden Centre

OTHER CORPORATE MEMBERS SUPPORTING THE SOCIETY:

Abinger Parish Council	Friends of Holmwood
Amis de Gouvieux, Les	Guildford Society
Bartholomew Court Residents' Association	Headley Parish Council
Betchworth Parish Council	Holmwood Parish Council
Box Hill Afternoon Women's Institute	Leigh Residents' Association
Brockham Green Village Society	Mickleham Parish Council
Buckland Parish Council	Newdigate Parish Council
Capel Parish Council	Ockley Parish Council
Charlwood Parish Council	Reigate Society
Coldharbour Sports and Social Club	Westcott Village Association
Friends of Box Hill	Wotton Parish Council

Published by the DORKING & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Hon Secretary: Mr E White, 16 Deepdene Drive, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 4AH. Tel. 01306-882037

NEWSLETTER No. 31

THOUGHTS of SPRING



Spring cannot be far away
The song of birds, the lengthening day
Young shoots burst through warming earth
Rounded ewes their lambs give birth,
Harrowed fields like soft brown suede
Dressed and sown all ready made
To yield the crops of summer days
And grow lush grass for cattle graze.
The drone of bees within the flowers
The smell of freshness after showers.
Those days of mists that are so still
Where shrouded valley meets the hill.
The trees in all their stately grace
Re-clothe themselves in fresh-green lace.
In shaded woods there can be found
Bluebells spreading o'er the ground
They reign in glory - but so brief
And fading blue returns to leaf.
Huge chestnut trees with candles glow
Proudly flaunt their greatest show.
The primrose, modest and discreet
A joy to see beneath ones feet.
Cow parsley flanks the country lane
Abundant after heavy rain.
Feel the sun with warming ray
Burn through the haze to greet the day.
Stay longer with us spring - don't fly -
Too quickly summer passes by.

Jennifer Huber