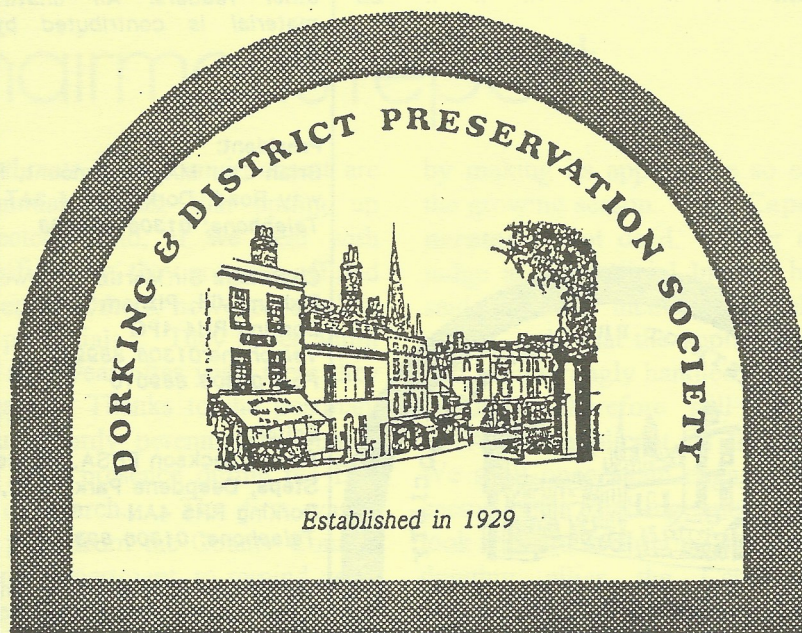


# NEWSLETTER

of the Dorking & District Preservation Society

No. 34

April 2003



Registered Charity 246806

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of the Dorking & District Preservation Society

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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.*

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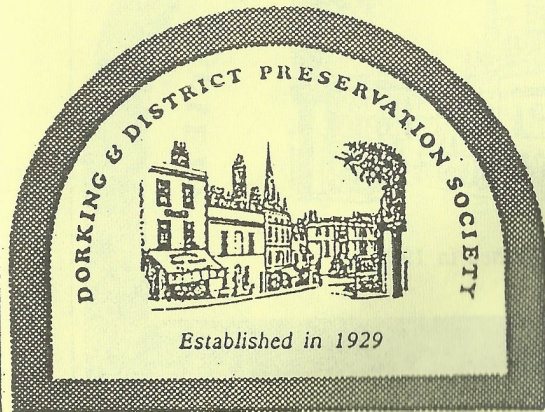
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## editorial

Our new-style A5 format, designed by the energetic and talented Hank Etheridge, is capable of further development and may be subject to changes from time to time. It brings us firmly into the new century and we hope you will now find the *Newsletter* more reader-friendly. We want to hear what readers think of the change. Constructive comments will be welcomed, perhaps even implemented.

In another endeavour to keep ourselves up to date, efforts are being made within the Society organisation

to achieve closer coordination between Executive and Council Minutes and our press dates so that members can be made aware more promptly of news and decisions from these sources.

We have a very full issue this time, providing an excuse for keeping this piece shorter than is usual. Be assured however that longer and more thundery products from the editorial keyboard are not in any way precluded by adoption of the new format.

*Alan A Jackson*

## chairman's report

Some threats to our environment are like annual weeds, that spring up unexpectedly and, if we deal with them efficiently, they are seen off and disappear. Others, however, are like hardy perennials. They never admit defeat and, year after year, there they are again. Thanks to the postman, two such hardy perennials reminded me of their presence during the first week of March. The first was a single page from the County Council Planning Department, to remind us of a weed that we know all about already, but nevertheless surprised me

by making its appearance so early in the growing season. The Capel incinerator is not dead. After all, the judge at the Judicial Inquiry had not said that the incinerator itself was wrong, only that the application for it had been wrongly handled. The application is therefore still 'live' and SITA, the applicant, is trying again. We shall once again engage with the enemy (time to change metaphor) and look forward to fighting alongside our doughty allies the Capel Action Group. It is an absolutely intolerable proposal. It flaunts the Government's

Proximity Principle, it is based on an estimate of requirements for waste incineration that takes no account of the effects of greater recycling, and ignores the smaller, higher-temperature, hugely more eco-friendly incinerators that technology has now made possible. See also what is said below on the Consultation Draft of the South-East Region Waste Plan.

## Gatwick again

One day later I received a parcel from the Department of Transport, containing two fat books. The fatter of the two was called *The Future Development of Air Transport in the United Kingdom: South East, a National Consultation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, February 2003. The slightly less fat volume is marked as a 'Summary'. A few weeks ago we had asked Brendon Sewill, Chairman of the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign, to write an article on this subject in these pages, as he did a year ago. The arrival of this document makes this extremely timely, and I recommend you read his article.

## Sainsbury's

The third hardy perennial is of course the proposed new Sainsbury's, notable this time for not having re-appeared. The last we heard, the formal planning application was to be expected in April. For this one tends to read 'not before April and possibly later'.

Clearly the expected opening date, if there is to be one, is receding ever further into the future. Evidence of this is the decision of Sainsbury to refurbish the old store on the high pavement of the High Street. After a closure of only two weeks the store has been transformed. It is lighter, brighter, and with wider alleyways between the display cabinets, which have been entirely replaced. The new ones enable them to carry a wider range of merchandise. If this is translated into higher sales, it should make it a much more profitable store.

If this is indeed what happens, the consequence, it seems to me, should be that the expected additional improvement to Sainsbury's profits from Dorking, arising from their proposed new store on the site of Church Gardens, would be lower. One can also add that the extra benefit to Dorking of such a new store would likewise be lower.

So, if you do not want there to be a new Sainsbury Store in Dorking and if you currently do your food shopping in Leatherhead or Burgh Heath or Hookwood or Horsham, or wherever, come back to Dorking and help make the refurbished old Sainsbury a success!

## New Government guidelines for housing densities

In a new Planning Policy Guideline

(PPG) towards the end of last year the Government laid down that in new housing developments the density should be between 30 and 50 houses per hectare, i.e. between 12 and 20 per acre. This is much more than currently is the case in the suburban areas of Dorking. The Government does allow some consideration to be given to the density of nearby housing, although less than has been the case hitherto.

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, we are already seeing the effects of this new guideline, as in the small development on the north side of Reigate Road next to the cemetery and in the development taking place in St Paul's Road West on the western half of the site formerly occupied by St Paul's School. It is also seen in a current planning application for the redevelopment of the site of the Nower School.

Rural areas and Conservation Areas are exempt. We shall be pushing for the extension of Dorking's Conservation Areas and the creation of new ones.

## Regional Assemblies

The map of England has already been carved up into nine Regions, and the hope of the Government is that from them Regional Assemblies should eventually emerge, starting in the north. What is, however, already clear is that enthusiasm in the north for these Assemblies is hard to find

and that it is the south-east which is keenest. Our own Region, South-East England, excludes East Anglia and includes Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex and Kent. So it runs from Milton Keynes to Ramsgate, taking in Oxford and Southampton on the way. SEERA (South-East England Regional Assembly) is already set up in embryo, although not with elected members. A subordinate organisation RAISE (Regional Action and Initiative in the South-East), funded by the Government, has recruited us as a member and asks us if any of us would like to put up their names as one of seven candidates to be appointed by RAISE as representatives of the voluntary sector. Although there are only four sessions a year, each involves a large amount of paperwork and there are in addition numerous committees for which the same applies. So it is a serious and time-consuming commitment. Members of your Council, you will not be surprised to read, were unanimously of the opinion that they had plenty to do already. Any volunteers?

## The South-East Region Waste Plan

The first piece of Regional planning to be published will be the Consultation Draft of the South-East Region Waste Plan, due to appear on 28 March. So by the time you read these notes we should have it. There are four meet-

ings in the Region at which it will be possible for the public to attend (although seats are limited and tickets are being issued on a first come first served basis). The nearest to us is to be in Guildford on 25 April. Derek Rowbotham and I expect to attend. We will be reading this Consultation Draft closely, with the Capel incinerator uppermost in our minds.

## Finding a site for a new Museum

In January we received from the lawyers our share of the balance of Owen Russ's will which, with accrued interest, now stands at about £525,000. Where have we got to?

The answer is: not very far – as yet. Our preferred solution is to redevelop on the present site, but this is fraught with difficulties. Ideally we would like three or four times the present floor area, in order to accommodate not only room enough for our exhibits, but also for school parties of 50 and proper visitor facilities (i.e. loos and a shop). There is no way we could do this without expanding laterally and this would mean taking over the leases of the other tenants of the old Dorking Foundry site. We know them all well, get on with them and know that none of them wants to move. Apart from that, buying them out would be expensive and could take a very long time to achieve. So it looks as if any redevelopment of our present site, without a long wait, could

only be a modest affair, of a kind that would do little to alleviate the present overcrowding.

We like the present site so much that we are not yet ready to abandon the thought of staying there. We are, however, already starting to look for alternative sites. They must be on or near one of the main streets of the town, with parking nearby. So far we have thought of three, but they may all turn out to be either unsuitable or unavailable.

I hope that we may have further news for you at the Annual General Meeting.

## Comings and goings

Last year **Debbie Jones** asked to be allowed to stand down as Publicity Officer following the forthcoming Annual General Meeting. This is a key job and we were sorry she wished to go. Luckily, in January, **Simon Matthews**, the Town Centre Manager, in a conversation he had with our Vice-Chairman, **Barry Collins**, offered to take her place and was prepared to do so right away. Debbie Jones agreed and so Simon joined our Council in time for its meeting on 20 February. As Town Centre Manager, he has good relations with the local press, and has already put these to good use on our behalf. We welcome him to our team. You will be asked to vote for him at the AGM.

Towards the end of last year **Ian Brotchie** told me that he was unable

to continue organising the distribution of the Newsletter. We are very grateful indeed to him for stepping in when **Michael Beggs** stood down. He was determined, when he moved from Dorking, that his involvement with the town, through us and through the Dorking Rotary, should continue. He found, however, that inevitably ties began to weaken. You will not be surprised to learn that he began acquiring other commitments in Fittleworth (and in the Dordogne), and he found that it was going to be increasingly difficult to continue to help us.

I accepted his decision with great regret, and was concerned that finding a replacement for him might be difficult. I am delighted, however, to tell you that **John Ball** has agreed to step into his shoes. He is a long-standing member of the Society, and some years ago his wife **Claire** acted on occasions as our stand-in Secretary.

This Newsletter reaches you thanks to him and to our dedicated team of distributors. He was not confident that there would not be glitches first time round, and asks you to forgive him if there were.

**Sarah Hawkes** has agreed to serve on the Council where she will surely be a great asset, assuming responsibility for the Best Development Competition and Heritage Open Days (see announcement on page 20).

## Limited Liability

Steps towards the goal of limited liability continue at a snail's pace. My suggestion in the last *Newsletter* that we should be in a position to vote on it at this coming AGM was wildly optimistic. I hope, however, to be able to report to you some progress in this exercise at the AGM.

*Martin Wedgwood*

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# news&views

## Traffic and Highways: Sorting out responsibilities and priorities

A recent Liberal Democrat news sheet informs us that Surrey County Council Highways have now devised

“a new formula to set highway scheme priorities”. As a result, the proposed light-controlled pedestrian crossing of the A24 on the south side of Deepdene Roundabout appears unlikely to attract funding in the foreseeable future. In the same pub-

lication there is a legitimate grumble about the steadily-increasing traffic and parking chaos in our town centre, for which “no-one will accept responsibility....and nothing happens”.

Oh dear! Cannot at least one or two of our elected representatives, of whatever political allegiance, summon the energy to embark upon strong and incisive enquiries to establish which authorities are responsible for trying to improve the often chaotic traffic situation in Dorking town centre and also to extract from SCC Highways officials just which much-needed traffic schemes are likely to be funded in the Mole Valley area in 2003-4? Surely we elect councillors to do just this – to monitor the actions of their officials and argue over their assessment of budget priorities. Is it not the duty of councillors to see that lines of responsibility are clearly established then ensure the electorate is duly and promptly informed how their ever-increasing taxes are to be spent? If it is really true that there exists a confusion of responsibility between the Police and the two local authorities in regard to these important matters it is high time it was sorted out. (As we go to press, a meeting has been arranged of interested parties to look into this)

But wait....A leaflet recently picked up at Pippbrook by the editor informs that in April 2002 Surrey County Council established “Local Transportation Managers” backed by

a team of “expert technical and administrative staff”. These are based in each Borough and District, including Mole Valley. Along with more routine business such as high-way maintenance and emergencies, these teams are required to construct and promote *integrated transport schemes to improve road safety and facilities for all road users (including pedestrians) and to reduce congestion and pollution.* Not much happening so far in these areas but perhaps we should give them more time?

### **Closure of Pixham Lane to through traffic**

On 24 February the long-awaited “experimental” closure of Pixham Lane to through traffic came into operation. Only pedal cyclists and buses on service 516 (Dorking – Brockham Lane – Betchworth Station – Box Hill – Leatherhead) can pass through. Peace reigns and residents are duly thankful. For over 50 years this narrow country lane has been a favourite “rat run” for cars seeking to save a few minutes by cutting off a corner. In recent years the construction of the Denbies roundabout has perversely made the lane’s use for this purpose even more tempting. There have been some grumbles from non-residents obliged to suffer the appalling inconvenience of taking the slightly longer but infinitely safer

route via the Deepdene Roundabout.

None of the moaners appear to have even tried to use the 516 bus or pedal cycle alternatives to reach workplaces such as Denbies Wine Estate or Friends Provident. They might find these methods cheaper and faster than using their cars. To complain about the unsatisfactory nature of public road transport but at the same time not to use it does seem slightly perverse. At present most buses serving the Mole Valley area are far from overcrowded and often seem to run empty. Increased patronage could stimulate better and more frequent services and would certainly reduce road congestion since buses are more efficient users of road space than cars carrying only one person. Reduced congestion would also improve bus time-keeping.

### **“Sainsbury” houses await their fate**

Of the eleven detached properties in Reigate Road and up Deepdene Avenue (A24) east of the Swimming Centre acquired some time ago by Sainsbury for a potential supermarket site, five are now boarded up, with their motor drives blocked to deter potential squatters. A sad sight indeed.

As suggested in our last issue, a scheme for residential infilling is under way. No surprise then when in the autumn of last year planning permission was sought to demolish

two of these houses (40 and 42 Deepdene Avenue) in order to construct a vehicular entry from the A24 into the plots. Intensive residential development of the 1.57 acres with thirty 2, 3 and 4- bedroom housing units is proposed. Backed by some opposition from Deepdene Park residents, permission was refused by Mole Valley DC towards the end of 2002 on grounds of increasing congestion on the A24. The developer, Linden Homes, then lodged an appeal against the decision and a public inquiry is pending.

### **Other residential infilling in Reigate Road area**

In February, a board appeared on the corner of the police housing site just east of Deepdene roundabout (opposite Deepdene Vale) suggesting this area was on offer for residential development. This land is a relic of the manorial “waste” known as Spital Heath, a name derived from the original owner, the Hospital of The Holy Cross, Reigate. The present owner is Surrey County Council and it seems the police houses are likely to be replaced with residential units at a higher density – further details are awaited.

On the north side of Reigate Road, east of Deepdene Vale, the two 1920s detached houses next to the cemetery, *Deepdene Cottage* and *Norton*, were demolished in November 2002 and their plots are now under

development by Try Homes as *Downsview Place*, containing one 4-bedroomed detached house, two semi-detached three-bedroom houses and two blocks of two- and three-bedroomed apartments (aka flats), these last at the south (A25) end of the site.

### **Oasis Health Club site to be developed**

A further change in the appearance of Reigate Road west of the Deepdene Roundabout is pending. The Oasis Health Club site between *The Gables* on the "Sainsbury" plot) and the present Swimming Centre is to be demolished by the Council for redevelopment of the site. This plot, which formerly contained a 1924 house called *The Warren* which was demolished in 1982, is to be used for affordable housing and possibly also for a replacement of the present Medwyn doctors' surgery in Moores Road. If that is achieved, no doubt the old surgery site will also be given the infilling treatment.

### **Residential development of St Paul's School land**

Planning approval subject to certain conditions has been given to Phoenix Land Developments for residential construction on the former school land in St Paul's Road West, west of the footpath up to Glory Woods. The original proposal was for 16 residen-

tial apartment units (including four affordable units) but the MVDC considered this overcrowded the 1.21 acre (0.49 hectare) plot, causing Phoenix to reduce the total to 12 units by deleting the affordable provision. There are 22 trees on the land, most of which will be preserved. The Society has given the project a reluctant blessing with the comment that car ports rather than brick-built garages would enhance the landscaping of the area. Replacement school buildings have already been erected on the east side of the footpath and are in use.

### **Tutt's Garage site to be redeveloped for residential units**

Redevelopment of this site in the sensitive area by the old Pippbrook Mill and Mill Pond has been considered by the Society's Planning Committee. The terrace blocks proposed appear well-designed but we have commented that the apartment blocks proposed look overpowering in this setting. A reduction in size and roof-line has been suggested.

### **Residential development at Westcott**

Plans to erect 12 affordable one- and two- bedroom units in two apartment blocks on the former Unigate Dairy site at the Burrell, Westcott, have been passed by the Council who will buy the land and sell it on to a housing

association. Regarding it as important that developers arrange and landscape small sites in as attractive a manner as possible to overcome the problems created by the higher densities now proposed (see below), the Society objected to the original plan, which had "barrack blocks" set in an uninspiring layout. The initial scheme will now be reconsidered by the Council.

### **Housing density**

Along with the requirement for affordable housing on the larger developments, there is pressure for more efficient use of space. The new planning guidance (PPG3) recommends a density of between 30 and 50 building units per hectare (a hectare = 2.4711 acres), depending on the surroundings. Developments of under 30 units per hectare are to be avoided. As already mentioned, any future development of 30 or more units will have to be "pepper-potted" (to use planning jargon) with affordable housing. The days of middle class "ghettos" with plots of one third of an acre or more are now past.

### **Videos of local interest**

A member of the Society, Mr Eric Jenkins (who has no financial or other connection with either of the publishers), recommends two videos depicting the history and life of our area. The first, to be had at the Ancient

House Bookshop, Bell Street, Reigate, runs for 45 minutes. Written, photographed and edited by Malcolm Pendrill and narrated by local resident Nicholas Owen, the television news reader and presenter, it is entitled *A Portrait of Dorking*. The other, *Brockham Jubilee Celebrations 2002*, was photographed and edited by John Duncan (enquiries should be made to him at 01737-845220).

### **Incinerator proposal shot down by Mr Justice Sullivan**

The proposal by Surrey Waste Management Ltd to build an "energy from waste plant" at the Capel landfill site, approved by the Surrey County Council Planning and Regulatory Committee on 6 December 2001, subject to certain conditions (see the website below\*) was brought before Mr Justice Sullivan in the High Court on 6-8 November 2002. He quashed the Committee's resolution (see the website below\*) in a famous victory for the well-organised and energetic local opposition (Capel Action Group), confirming that the Conservative-led County Council had shot itself in the foot by misapplying the policies in its own 1997 Waste Local Plan. CAG were awarded costs and the Council's leave to appeal against this decision was quashed.

Since the applicant does not wish to withdraw the application, the SCC,

as Planning Authority, must now reassess the application and address the issues raised by the judicial review and the judgement. The revised application will be considered by the SCC Planning Committee this summer. (\* www.surreycc.gov.uk)

### **Norbury Park sale frustrated**

The Surrey County Council has reversed a proposal to sell off a part of its Norbury Park land that had been transferred to the Council's Highway Service. When no longer needing the land, that part of the SCC organisation had decided to dispose of it.

### **St Martin's to be floodlit**

The Mole Valley District Council is contributing to the cost of floodlighting St Martin's Parish Church.

### **London Road/High St danger spot**

We commented in the November issue on the need for a pedestrian light-controlled crossing at this place following the tragic accident in which an elderly couple were killed. It was encouraging to read that the coroner had subsequently reached the same conclusion and registered a recommendation. Such things are never arranged with great despatch and it will probably be a year or so before this essential modification is made to

the present light signals. In the meantime it is to be hoped that parking of high vehicles on the north side of the High Street at this point will be carefully monitored and sternly dealt with since it obscures the sight lines of pedestrians crossing London Road east to west. An instance of this dangerous stupidity by the van driver of a Dorking-based firm was noted as recently as 13 March.

### **Town centre improvements postponed for five years**

The proposals for upgrading the approach to St Martin's Church from the High Street, major improvements to West Street to make it more attractive for pedestrians, improvements to South Street, new boundary signs for Dorking and improvements to the town's car parks have all been put back for at least five years by the Mole Valley District Council. This news follows almost three years in which nothing has been done to improve the appearance of our traffic-ridden town centre.

### **Footpaths**

The very dense network of footpaths in Surrey is a great asset but does create maintenance problems, especially now that finance for this item has been slashed in the District Council budget for 2003-4. Society members who use footpaths for recreation or

simply to get away from the pollution and danger of walking in close proximity to the still increasing traffic on the road system can help in two ways. To maintain access they can clip back overgrowth as they walk and if they also equip themselves with a large plastic bag this can be used to remove small items of litter encountered along the way. It is known that just as graffiti often attracts more of the same, litter lying about encourages the

irresponsible to throw more down.

The "Right to Roam" maps recently published have been examined by David Read, our Footpaths Officer, who did not disapprove of anything in them. They may be seen at the Council Offices in Dorking if you wish to study the position in a favourite walking area; unfortunately they cannot at the moment be purchased.

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## **Protest at Gatwick airport expansion NOW!!**

In July last year the Government decided that no new runways should be built at Gatwick, partly because of the legal agreement ruling out any new runway before 2019 and partly because of the huge environmental impact any expansion of this airport would have. That decision was successfully challenged by a judicial review organised by Kent and Essex County Councils which required the Government to include Gatwick in the consultation. At the end of February, the Minister published a document setting out three options for new runways at Gatwick.

Even the smallest of these options, a "Close parallel runway", would double the present size of the airport, making it as large as Heathrow is today. This option contains the danger that if Gatwick became a two-runway hub airport, there would be immense pressure from the airlines to have a third runway.

The option for **two** new runways (option 3) involves making Gatwick twice the size of the present Heathrow with an inevitable pressure on all the communities and countryside in the Mole Valley area. Four hundred and thirty houses would need to be demolished, mainly in Hookwood, and 1,300 acres of Green Belt countryside would be lost. New flight paths would be needed above the whole

Mole Valley area and airport traffic on the road network would rise to four times its present level.

The historic village of Charlwood would be sandwiched between the runways. Its Grade I listed Norman Church and 80 other listed buildings would be left derelict. The new North Runway would be in a cutting 1,100 metres (well over half a mile) wide, ten times as extensive as the ugly motorway gash through Winchester's Twyford Down. This extension would destroy the 60-acre Edolphs Copse, a Woodland Trust bluebell nature reserve.

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### *430 houses would need to be demolished....*

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The legal agreement ruling out new runways before 2019 remains in place but unfortunately there are many business interests pushing for new runways, either before or after that date.

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### *....and 1300 acres of Green Belt countryside would be lost....*

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This expansion must not be allowed to happen and all DDPS members are asked to respond to the Ministerial consultation. A short three-sentence letter will suffice. It should be addressed to:

**Future Development of Air Transport – South East**  
**FREEPOST LON 17806 SW1P 4 YS**

*Brendon Sewill*  
Chairman

Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign

*[Even if only half our membership gave up 30 minutes or so to send a protest to the address given, this could have a significant influence on the final decision.*

The Times of 28 February gave the impact of the minimum option as generating an additional 20m terminal passengers, with another 4,000 households in the area subjected to noise levels of at least 57dBA (the boundary for "significant community annoyance"). The corresponding additions for two new runways would be another 68 million passengers through the terminal and another 25,000 inhabitants subjected to intolerable noise nuisance. This option would also expose an additional 7,000 to nitrogen dioxide pollution above EC limits – Editor]

## **Affordable housing in town and country**

First, a correction. In the last *Newsletter*, page 9, under Mr Benoy's letter, we suggested that affordable housing is only affordable for the first owner. Neil Maltby FRICS has drawn our attention to a publication of the Rural Housing Trust, *Home Ownership Made Easier: Guidance on Shared ownership Housing in Villages*. This explains how shared ownership with a housing association can allow a house to remain "affordable" in perpetuity. Mr Maltby points out that the Rural Housing Trust already have a few houses with this type of shared ownership in Capel, Ockley and Newdigate.

Affordable housing, incorporated in planning policy for high value areas since 1998, is becoming a political and social issue in Greater London. It is now the rule in London that all new developments of 15 or more units should provide 25 per cent of their content in

this category. Low paid key workers and perhaps also disadvantaged households (usually with children) are to be mixed in with other property buyers, all living cheek by jowl. In London, the present Mayor is so enamoured of the idea he wants to see half of all new developments "affordable", divided 35 per cent social renting and 15 per cent for the low paid key occupations such as nurses, teachers and postal workers. We have yet to see this social engineering experiment on any scale in Mole Valley but with plans in the wings for development of 30 plus units in Reigate Road/Deepdene Avenue (see above) and pressures on the less attractive corners of the Green Belt we may not have to wait much longer as the District Council are wanting to see a proportion of affordable housing on all future developments of 25 or more housing units.

It is of course important that if the Mole Valley area is to retain and attract essential low paid workers much more of this type of housing be made available.



## Gladys Arlett 1919-2003

Gladys Arlett was born in Dorking and lived in the town most of her life. She was educated at Powell Corderoy School and Dorking County Grammar School (now Ashcombe School) where she was a good scholar and excelled at sport. Her working life was spent in the Civil Service.

She was always full of life and energy and maintained her interest in sport. She played hockey for the Dorkinian Association, was involved with the Meadowbank Cricket Club and was still playing badminton well into her seventies. Retirement did not slow her down and among her activities was work for the local branch of the National Trust and the Canterbury Court Residents' Association, where she was very much involved in the successful campaign to prevent a night club being opened in nearby Curtis Road. After retirement she devoted much of her time to Dorking Museum, where she was Curator of Photographs for the last ten years of her life.

Soon after she became Curator, the Museum acquired the David

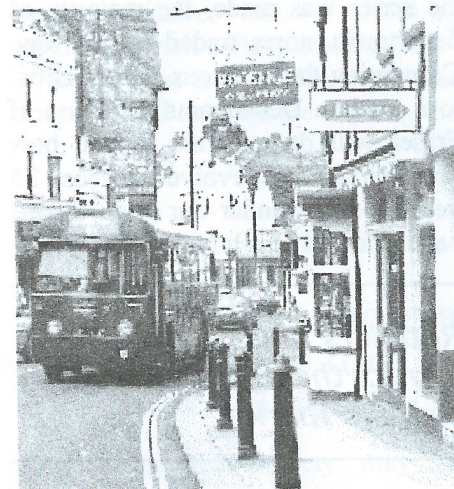
Knight Collection of over 2,000 photographs contained in many albums. She realised that in order to conserve the photographs properly they needed to be removed from the albums. She and her small band of helpers put each photograph into a conservation sleeve and then sorted, renumbered and catalogued them. Finally full indexes were produced using a computer database. The work took over two years to complete. She did not rest on her laurels but turned her attention to the even larger collection of loose photographs, postcards and albums that have come into the Museum over the years. That work is almost complete – only the indexes remain to be produced.

Gladys's perseverance, attention to detail and extensive local knowledge were invaluable to the Museum. It was always a pleasure to work with her, and her wicked sense of humour meant that there was usually a great deal of laughter. We have lost a valued colleague and a very good friend. She will be sadly missed by us all.

*Mary Turner*

## The changing face of our High Street

Everyone has a view on the type of shops there should or should not be in our High Street. Young people want more trendy fashion shops, music/games shops and cool cyber-cafés they can 'hang' in. Young parents want children's clothes, shoes and toy shops. The older generation harks back to when small towns such as Dorking could sustain a full range of shops trading in every category, including many of the larger chains, as well as independents. Every town is full of amateur retail analysts!



Vintage London Country bus  
in Dorking High Street  
*Photo: CHRIS MARLOW*

Unfortunately the reality of retailing in 2003 is very different to the layperson's perceptions. Dorking has an indigenous population of around 12,000 and catchment area of around 25,000. The town has a very long linear, traditional, open-air High Street with shop units rarely bigger than 1,000 sq ft. Dorking's combination of low population, traditional infrastructure and lack of large units does not currently appeal to the major national chains. They are looking for populations of around 100,000 and a minimum shop size of around 5,000 sq ft. Unfortunately opening up in a town like Dorking is currently not high up on many national chains' space requirement lists. The last factor which has an impact on the town is the close proximity of competing shopping areas. Reigate, Redhill and Horsham are on our doorstep, with one of the UK's most desirable shopping towns, Guildford, under half-an-hour away. Even the shopping city Bluewater, with a clear M25, is under an hour away. All these have an impact on the viability of market towns such as Dorking.

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### *Dorking has a rich variety of retailers*

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That said, in March 2003 demand for retail premises in Dorking was high. Most vacant shops in High Street, South Street and West Street were

either under offer or going through a freehold sale. Admittedly St Martin's Walk, now owned by Sainsbury's, is in temporary flux whilst waiting to see if the planning application for a new supermarket was lodged and what the public reaction might be. The picture in Dorking is of a healthy demand for the right retail unit, even though the national press was reporting a retail meltdown following poor Christmas trading.

Many new shops have opened in Dorking during 2002 including: a replacement linen shop, a trendy ladies' fashion shop, a local bakers'/café, a discreet beauty salon, a promotional goods shop, a picture framer, an upmarket art gallery and a ladies' shoe shop, with the prospect of further new shops opening in early 2003. The common thread running through these openings was that they were all independent retailers not national chains. They opened in Dorking because their owners believed it was the right location for their businesses, most investing sizeable sums of money in fitting-out and setting-up. I hope that Dorking is able to support these businesses.

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### *Businesses must adapt to current retail trends*

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Dorking, by having comparatively competitive rental levels, has started to attract a sizeable number of new

businesses. Cynical observers may say that few will survive beyond a couple of years' trading. This cynicism notwithstanding, a number will succeed and become part of Dorking's rich variety of retailers. Some new faces will fail allowing other businesses to take their spaces and hopefully succeed. The same process of natural selection also applies to existing businesses, no matter how long they have been trading. If they fail to adapt and evolve in line with current retail trends then they will eventually close. We look back at repeats of the now classic sitcom 'Are you being served' and laugh at the old-fashioned 'behind the counter' style of retailing, not realising that in the mid 1970s when the series was made, the majority of department stores traded in this way. Comparing the fictitious 'Grace Bros' to a modern Debenhams or House of Fraser will demonstrate to you how far retailing has evolved in just 25 years. No wonder our High Streets have changed beyond all recognition!

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### *Retailers must strive to attract the visitor and tourism market*

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So what is the future of a small market town such as Dorking? First we must be realistic about what we can offer a retailer. With no massive house-building projects like Horsham,

our population will continue to remain relatively fixed. The lack of sizeable office developments, such as found in Reigate, will not jumpstart the lunch-time or evening economies. Dorking, other than through brownfield development, is stuck for good or for bad with basically what we have now got. Therefore we have two options if the town is to sustain its current retail offer. First, to encourage as much local shopping as practically possible. Second, to attract new customers who are looking for something different, possibly via the ever-growing visitor and tourism markets. Dorking Town Management is actively pursuing both these routes through initiatives such as the annual 'Dorking Directory' and the recently-launched visitor and tourism initiative: *Discover Dorking* booklet and visit [dorking.com](http://dorking.com) website.

In the next issue I plan to discuss in more detail how we are tackling the

above issues and where I see Dorking moving in the short to medium term. In the meantime, if you have any feedback on the above article please email me at [town.manager@visitdorking.com](mailto:town.manager@visitdorking.com) or fax to 01306-742359.

*Simon Matthews*

*[Simon Matthews is Dorking's Town Manager responsible for the economic vitality and viability of the town. He recently joined the DDPS as Publicity Officer. Simon has a background in retail and marketing, having worked for BHS, Mothercare and Habitat from the mid 1980s to early 1990s. He then worked for a major sports goods importer before owning a group of five cycle shops until 1999 when he sold-up and started a new career as Dorking's second Town Manager. He lives in the centre of Dorking with his distinctive Wheaten Terrier, Zak.]*

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### **Is there a future for the village shop**

Members of the Society may be interested in commenting upon my views on one way in which the village shop could survive and prosper in spite of the power of the supermarkets. I set out below a letter in which

I attempted to explain how I think this could be achieved

"Over the past thirty years, coincident with the arrival of the supermarket chains, numerous cases of the closure of the village shop have been reported in the local and national press. Many reasons have been advanced to explain this decline, but for the purposes of this short paper, I

believe that they can be summarised as follows:

- The economic purchasing power of the supermarket chains is so great that no village shop has any chance of competing on price or selection.
- The choice of merchandise in the village shop is limited and is constantly under attack on price and quality issues.
- Ownership of these stores is often a family business with younger generations unwilling to take over the business from parents or relatives with the consequent demise of the enterprise.
- The continuation of the village shop is only sustained by the loyalty of its customers, normally in locations far distant from main shopping areas, thus providing an incentive to the local community to use the local shop. Such loyalty is often strained by lack of selection and relative high prices and the attraction of motoring to main towns.
- To enable the business to survive, owners are forced to diversify, which while meeting the need for viability, at the same time causes additional business stress.

I know of no organisation or business which does not support, in principle, the value of the village shop and its importance to the community it serves. This is, however, not the reality in practice and it is time that a

more proactive approach be considered, involving the government, big business and voluntary organisations which are involved in the countryside and concerned with its survival. According to the Countryside Agency Survey in 2000, **71% of all parishes have no general stores while only 60.9% of rural households are situated between 0-2 kms distance from a supermarket in England. 30.1% of households are even further from their nearest supermarket.**

A possible solution to this vexed problem might be a co-operative partnership between the supermarkets and the village shop in the following way.

The local supermarket, or a combination of two or more such companies, to supply an agreed list of foodstuffs and domestic items at cost to specified village shops in a defined area. The village shop(s) would in turn agree to retail food and other items at agreed prices, thus equalising price levels in the villages with those applying in major town centres. Obviously, regional price differentials will continue to apply, but the general principle of making village shops retail a greatly increased selection of goods at attractive price levels would be the outcome.

Such an approach would have the following significant benefits to both parties:

- Increasing the wholesale throughput of the supermarkets without damaging their profitability.

- Providing foodstuffs in local village shops at competitive prices including a greatly improved selection and quality.
- Instead of being regarded with hostility for their aggressive marketing, supermarkets taking part in such an initiative would attract considerable credit in playing an active part in the survival of the local community and the rural countryside.
- The scheme should attract funding support from government agencies such as the Countryside Commission in helping to meet the initial costs of researching and promoting a trial scheme especially identifying the number of such village shops interested in taking part.

A significant resulting benefit to the community and country could be the reduction of car journeys, reducing carbon emissions.

There will, of course, be numerous problems to be overcome including contractual arrangements with existing village shop suppliers, eg: Spar, the transportation of fresh goods from the supermarket to the village shop locations, contractual arrangements between the village shop and the supermarket and last but not least the attitude of the village shop owners/managers to engage in such an operation. However, these can be overcome, I believe, given the urgency of the financial viability of

urgency of the financial viability of such shops and the determination to make the scheme succeed by all concerned with the objective of improving the countryside and those living there."

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### *Using the village shop reduces carbon emissions*

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I decided to write to HRH The Prince of Wales in view of his interest and support for the countryside and my views were acknowledged very courteously. It was suggested that I write to Business in the Community which I did and subsequently had correspondence with both that organisation and J Sainsbury, who have developed a scheme called 'Assisting Village Enterprises'. While this scheme goes part-way to helping rural shopkeepers, it offers very little financial incentive, since the village shopkeepers are treated as ordinary customers and their purchasing limitation is £3,000 of goods per week or less. I informed Sainsbury of my reservations of their scheme but unsurprisingly I received no response.

I am undecided whether to contact other supermarkets in pursuit of this idea and the opinion of Society members, dependent upon their views, will be of help in making up my mind.

*Barry Collins*

## Heritage Open Days

This year's Heritage Open Days are on the weekend of 13 and 14 September when many properties, not normally open to the public, are open and FREE. Also there are exhibitions, quizzes, walks, talks and other events with a heritage flavour. The Society supports Heritage Open Days in Mole Valley. The Dorking Museum opens specially and many members of the Society support the event in many ways. In 2003 Dorking had the third most extensive programme in the whole of England, beaten only by Bristol and Guildford.

Arrangements are in hand for the programme for 2003. The theme this year is "Historical Personalities". If you:

- know of a property that might wish to take part or;
- know of a local "Historical Personality" whose achievements could form part of the programme (we have already lighted on the obvious people such as Vaughan Williams) or;
- could spare some time during the weekend of 13 and 14 September and could help out by stewarding or serving teas,

please do get in touch with Sarah Hawkes - 01306-883699 - who will be pleased to give more information.

The free booklet, giving details of all the events will be available from

the end of July, from Mole Valley District Council Offices, Libraries, Dorking Halls and various other places. Do pick up a copy and make a note in your diary to support Heritage Open Days in 2003 - why not invite friends, particularly those who do not live in Mole Valley, to join you? You will be guaranteed a most interesting time.

*Peter & Susan Hawkes*

## Best Development Competition

As you probably know, the Society, along with *The Dorking Advertiser* and Mole Valley District Council, organise a "Best Development Competition" which is now in its fourteenth year. Prizes are awarded for new or converted buildings, including extensions, completed between 1 April 2002 and 31 March 2003. If you know of a property that could be entered for the competition, please ring Peter Hawkes, 01306-883699, who will be pleased to send you a leaflet. The presentation of the trophies will be made at the Society's autumn meeting.

*Peter & Susan Hawkes*

## local history group

In September the Group was greatly entertained by Jan Murray, the new owner of *Juniper Hill*. Since purchasing the property in 2000, Mr and Mrs Murray have devoted themselves to restoring it to its former grandeur, a task rendered all the more challenging by the state in which it was left by the previous occupiers. At the October meeting we enjoyed the film *Tales of the Pilgrims' Way*, a presentation a little different from our usual fare by graphically focusing on Surrey as a whole.

Members' Evening coincided with Guy Fawkes' Night but despite the weather and the clash of dates there was a pleasantly large attendance. Bob Miller took members on an amusing anecdotal perambulation of shops in Dorking from his perspective as a schoolboy. He was followed by Bob Humphreys who talked about schooling in the town in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, describing the lack of schools and the large classes with a curriculum based on a strict moral code and religious expectations rather than scholarship.

*Judith Mindan*

In December Don Josey provided a well-illustrated presentation on *The House and Landscaped Park of Broome Park, Betchworth*, and this was followed in January by Janet

Balchin's fascinating talk *Sir Henry Doulton of Ewhurst* which prompted much questioning from an interested audience.

Paul Ritchie's talk in February *Veteran Trees - Our Common Heritage* proved very popular. It transpired that "veteran" trees are defined as those existing before 1600 AD. Many were surprised to learn that over 2000 of them, mainly oak pollards, are on Ashted Common, making it one of Britain's most important sites for these true veterans, honoured since time immemorial in literature and paintings. We shall be looking for this feature when we visit Ashted Common on 12 August.

The Summer Outing on 12 July will be by coach to Lewes where we visit Anne of Cleves House, the Castle and the Barbican House.

I am pleased to report that Mrs Mary Day has been nominated by the Committee to succeed me as Chairman from 1 April and is willing to serve.

Our publication *Early Victorian Dorking*, compiled from original sources researched by members and launched in December, has been well received with encouraging sales. It costs a mere £5 and is available from the Museum shop or Waterstone's bookshop in South Street.

*Bob Humphreys*

# museum report

Repairs having been completed to the front window wall and the floorboards, the new carpet has been laid in the Library at a cost of £434, and the files and chests have been reinstated. The area is much more amenable as a workplace for researchers and archivists.

The Archives Curator has returned to duty after her recent operation.

We are very sorry to record the death of Gladys Arlett, Curator of Photographs, who did so much to put our photographs into order and improve the system. Her assistant, Margaret Read, is acting as Assistant Curator at the moment, so the work goes on.

The Curator of Exhibits, Fred Plant, has begun a programme of re-arranging and re-signing the display cases.

Alison Wilson has taken up the post of Education Officer, and re-vamped the Museum children's quizzes. She has devised a Family Trail on the theme of Water for the summer holidays in a Surrey-wide organisation of holiday activities. She has also begun a Learning Pack on Dorking in Wartime for the use of schools.

On hearing a rumour that MVDC was proposing to withdraw from the

Surrey Museums Partnership, I wrote to John Cawdell pointing out how vital it was that our membership continued. His letter in reply seemed to offer a choice – Mole Valley would either continue to pay for membership for Leatherhead and Dorking Museums, and we would forfeit the Museum Challenge Fund or vice-versa. After discussion with the Committee, I contacted the Museums Development Officer on the SMCC to ask what the effect of MV's action would be and then applied for the Challenge Fund. I telephoned John Cawdell and asked if we had to make a choice. He asked me to put into writing my reasons for wanting the penny and the bun – which I duly did. I also asked in my letter if we had any guarantee that the Museum Challenge Fund would continue, as both Leatherhead and Dorking had assumed it was a one-off grant.

The Committee thought it might help interest in the Preservation Society if we kept a few copies of the last Newsletter in the Museum on display. It was thought that a small format would be better from the point of view of display.

Bette Phillips  
Chairman

## Accessions:

Several items of dairy equipment, donated by Terry O'Kelly.

A Swastika Flag recovered from an enemy airfield.

A German propaganda leaflet dropped over England in 1943. This details British shipping losses.

*[Although these items have no immediate relevance to Dorking, they were accepted as possible exhibits for our planned WWII feature. In the meantime the flag will be preserved within our textile collection.]*

"Pilot" table radio c.1940/50s.

A Girl Guides camp kit list from 1928 donated by a Westcott resident. *[The original will be preserved in the Library. Facsimiles will be produced for educational use.]*

## Upgrading:

Display cabinet No.3 – sewing machines and haberdashery – has benefited from a reorganisation of exhibits and captioning. Under the new arrangement, each item is numbered, and the difficult to read descriptions within the case removed. New easy-to-read captions have been mounted on an angled support on the front of the case.

## Publicity:

The *Discover Dorking* leaflet, which has been widely distributed by Dorking Town Centre Management to hotels, tourist offices and motorway service area, contained a competition form which, amongst other items, asked readers which of Dorking's attractions they would like to visit. Dorking Town Centre Management have now furnished us with a list of names and addresses of the many respondents who mentioned the Museum on their completed forms.

Fred Plant  
Exhibits Curator

## Membership

At the end of January we had 819 private members (513 households). 39 people joined the Society during 2002.

### We welcome as new members:

Ms Jacquetta Fewster, Hart Road  
 Nick Owen, Glory Mead  
 Miss J H Senior, St Martin's Mews  
 Mrs C A Thom, South Holmwood  
 S Nutt & Ms Gough, Holmbury St Mary

We regret to report the death of the following members:

Cllr Derek J Edge, Sondes Place Drive  
 Miss K M Dodson, Betchworth  
 Mr J Clement Jones CBE, Sandy Cross, Ridgeway Road  
 Baroness Audrey Hylton Foster, Leith Hill

Lady Doreen Pollock has resigned membership following a move to Bath and wishes the Society continued success.

*Peter Parkin*

## 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, telephone number

### 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 Estate, 278/280 High Street, RH4 1QT (740 837) ...	Valuers, surveyors & property managers
Broadheath Restorations, Dean House Farm, Church Road, Newdigate, RH5 5DL (631 773) ...	Window frame restorers
Browns of Dorking, 182 High Street, RH4 1QR (881 212) ...	Coffee shop
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, Vincent 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
Downsman Ltd, Overdene, Paper Mews, RH4 2TU (887 023) ...	Solicitors and notaries
Ellis Atkins & Co, 1 Paper Mews, 330 High Street, RH4 2TU (886 681) ...	Management services
Friends Provident Life Office, Pixham End, RH4 1QA (740 123) ...	Chartered accountants
Garth House Nursing Home, Tower Hill Road, RH4 2AY (880 511) ...	Life assurance
Graham Leather Ltd, 64/65 West Street, RH4 1BS (887 727) ...	Nursing home
Grossé UK Ltd, BPA House, High Street, RH4 1JL (743 333) ...	China and glassware
Hammond Concrete Testing & Services, PO Box 75, 2 Cedar Close, RH4 2YX (887 854) ...	Wholesale costume jewellers
Hart Scales & Hodges, 159 High Street, RH4 1AD (884 432) ...	Concrete contractor
Harvey-Jones Phillips Partnership, 57 West Street, RH4 1BS (742 200) ...	Solicitors
Iulista Studio, 120 South Street, RH4 2EU (880 330) ...	Ind financial advisers
International Sports Marketing Ltd, Bales Court, Barrington Road, RH4 3EJ (743 322) ...	Contemporary furniture specialists
John Arthur Gallery, Old King's Head Court, 11 High Street, RH4 1AR (741 120) ...	Marketing consultants
Kuoni Travel Ltd, Deepdene Avenue, RH5 4AZ (840 888) ...	Fine art gallery
Munro, Ian, 10 High Street, RH4 1AT (882 270) ...	Tour operators
Newspaper Press Fund, Dickens House, 35 Wathen Road, RH4 1JY (887 511) ...	Men's outfitters
Newton & Co, Ranmore House, 19 Ranmore Road, RH4 1HE (884 208) ...	Charity
Omya UK Ltd, Curtis Road, RH4 1XA (886 688) ...	Chartered accountants
Patrick Gardner & Co, 16 South Street, RH4 2HL (887 775) ...	Minteral extraction
Priory School, The, West Bank, RH4 3DG (887 337) ...	Estate agents
RGP, 21 Monks Court, Monks Walk, Reigate, RH2 0SR (01737 243 980) ...	School
Rose Hill Nursing Home, 9 Rose Hill, RH4 2EG (882 622) ...	Public relations
Sears, Philip, Designs, 18c Horsham Road, RH4 2JD (884 477) ...	Nursing home
Seymours Garden Centre, Stoke Road, Stoke D'Abernon, Cobham, KT11 3PU (01932 862 530) ...	Architectural building surveyors
Songhurst, W Ltd, Rayleigh House, Chapel Lane, Westcott, RH4 3PJ (880 411) ...	Garden centre
Super Specs, 62 High Street, RH4 1AY (875 201) ...	Builders
Temptations, Old King's Court, High Street, RH4 1AR (885 452) ...	Opticians
	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 (Dorking) 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, RH5 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

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