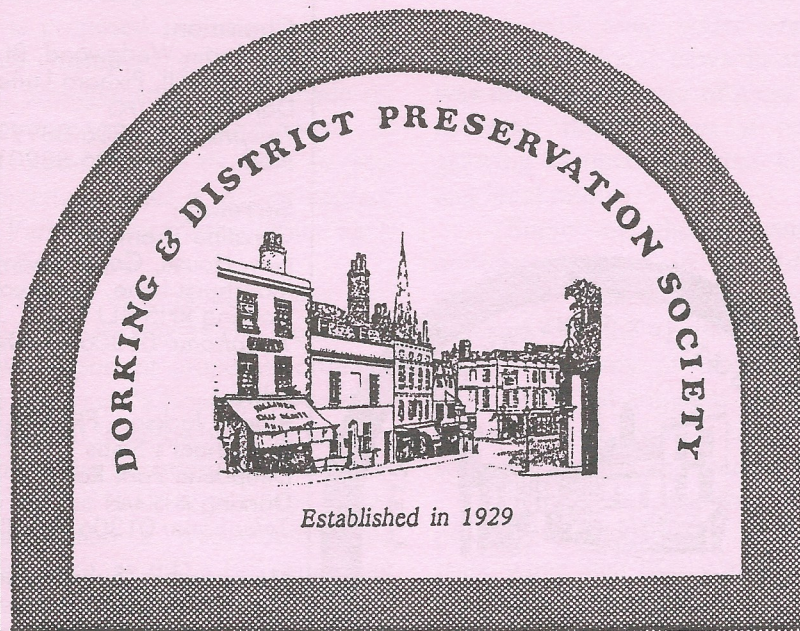


NEWSLETTER

of the Dorking & District Preservation Society

No. 38

Summer 2004

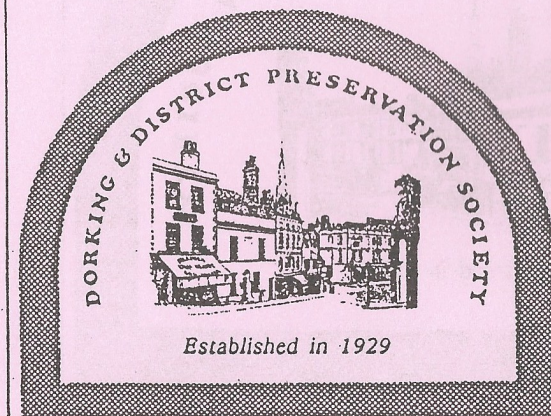


NEWSLETTER

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editorial

This edition of the Newsletter is late in reaching you because the Chairman of the Society and other officers have been working very hard indeed on conversion to a Limited Liability Company, an action taken for the reasons set out in Sir Martin's report on page 2. We have delayed the Newsletter not only to ensure that members are aware of the progress which has been made towards this objective but to remind everyone closer to the date of the importance of their attendance at the Autumn Meeting at the UR CHURCH HALL, WEST STREET, DORKING at 7.30 pm on 21 OCTOBER 2004, when there will also be an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) to endorse what is proposed. Since only fully paid-up members can vote at the EGM, arrangements will be made on the day to ensure this is achieved. If your subscription is overdue or you are uncertain about it, please contact Peter Parkin at the address on the back of the front cover.

Should any member have any questions or comments about either of the two important proposals outlined in the Chairman's Report, it would be most helpful if they would put them in writing to the Secretary at the address given on the back of the front cover no later than a week before the Meeting date, so that a full reply may be given in the Hall.

Although *The Times* and other national newspapers continue to publish obituaries of outstanding personalities, only very rarely nowadays does *The Dorking Advertiser* note the passing of those local residents of some fame or who, as the phrase goes, 'put something back' into the community in which they were born, or where they made their home later in life. When such items do appear, it is usually because unsolicited ready-to-use material has been submitted to the newspaper, not as a result of any positive initiative on the part of the editorial staff.

Meticulous recording of this nature in the local paper ceased about 30-40 years ago after editorial control was spread over wider areas and reporting of local news in this area was diluted in favour of more general material, this perhaps a result of growing competition from television and local radio.

Some of the thousands of obituaries printed in the *Advertiser* over many decades are preserved and indexed in the Dorking Museum library. Many of these items are quite brief but together they form a valuable and well-used reference source for family and local historians.

What can be done to help posterity in this regard? Well, here at least, when their lives come to a close, it is possible to acknowledge our debt

to those who have given their talents and leisure time to work for the Society and its associated organisations, even perhaps a few others. In this issue we have the sad duty to

notice the deaths of not one but two such valued colleagues and friends, who each contributed much to the enrichment of local life and institutions.

Alan A Jackson

chairman's report

Limited Liability – we are nearly there!

It is now some time since I last wrote in the Newsletter on the subject of our becoming a company limited by guarantee. In the last three months progress has speeded up and we should be in a position to put the matter to our members at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held at the same time as our Autumn Meeting on 21 October. This is an informal announcement of what we hope to do. An official announcement should come later. It has by law to reach you not more than 28 days or less than 14 days before the chosen date. But put it in your diaries now.

Why should we wish to become a company limited by guarantee? The advice of the Charity Commissioners on this matter begins by saying:

'A charity may need to take the form of a company when there is a risk that it might incur large financial liabilities because, for example, it is expected to:

- control substantial assets; or
- employ staff; and/or
- engage in charitable purposes involving commercial risks.'

Until the last quarter of 2002 none of the above would have applied to us. Since then we have received the proceeds of the will of Owen Russ and have been actively searching for a permanent home for the Museum (see page 3). You may remember that in the accounts for 2003 the total assets of the Society, including the Local History Group and the Museum, came to £651,000. So we already control substantial assets. We will continue to do so after the money has been spent on a permanent home for the

Museum, because the cash will have been converted into a building, which also has a value. In order to refurbish or extend or even reconstruct our newly-acquired freehold building we might, for example, find ourselves negotiating a temporary loan towards the end of a fund-raising campaign, in order to start the building work sooner. Further in the future, if we had been successful in accumulating endowment funds, we could be in a position to employ a professional museum manager. There is no doubt that, situated as we now are, we should already be a company limited by guarantee, as well as a charity.

We now have a company!

The business of converting a charity into a company limited by guarantee is somewhat complicated. First you have to set up a new company, which means furnishing it, in one's application to Companies House, with a Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. We burnt the midnight oil on that and submitted it and I am proud to announce that **we do now have a company**, with the same name as the one we already possess, with a company number and a certificate to prove it. It has no assets and of course no liabilities either, so it is dormant. At present it has only three

directors, Derek Rowbotham, Ed White and myself.

We are currently engaged in the next step, which is to apply to the Charity Commissioners to convert this new company into a charity, and receive permission to transfer all the assets (and liabilities if any) of our old charity into the new one. There are various legal complications in relation to endowment funds and restricted funds which have to be attended to but if all goes according to plan, we expect to implement the changeover at the end of December, with the new charity starting on 1 January 2005. This, however, involves winding up the old charity which can only be done by a resolution at an EGM, with 75% of the votes cast being in favour.

After we have gone through all these legal hoops we remain the Dorking and District Preservation Society as before, but with a different registered charity number – and with limited liability.

A permanent home for the Museum? Perhaps we are getting there.

Since I wrote on this subject in our last Newsletter, discussions with Mole Valley over the purchase of a freehold site for the Dorking and District Museum have been progressing at a slightly faster pace. The possibility of a site emerging on the south side of Reigate Road, opposite the Council

Offices, turned out to be a mirage, and permission has now been granted for housing.

The disposal of the 'Old Public Hall' in West Street seems to have been kicked by Surrey County Council into the long grass. The County Council has a statutory duty to find a new home for the nursery school at the back of the property, before they can ask it to move. Until it moves they cannot sell the whole site as a single lot, which they need to do if they are to obtain the best value for it. Attempts to find a new home for the nursery school seem to have been abandoned for the time being. So it looks as if nothing will happen there for quite a long time.

Our architect Robin Wade and our Museum Advisor Simon Lace (who gave the talk at our AGM last April) have both observed that the ideal building for a museum is a warehouse, very much like the building we already use. As I reported in our last Newsletter, we approached Mole Valley District Council early in the year to say that we were interested in acquiring the entire site. At that time it looked as if this would have to be done by means of a consortium. This may still be the case, but it now also seems possible that we might be allowed to do so on our own. If we can, this would have enormous advantages. The current premises of the Museum consist of two buildings. A redevelopment of

these, together with the space between, would allow us to increase our floor space by about 50%. This would provide improved display space for our existing collection but we need to look further forward than that. We must expect the collection to continue to grow both in quantity and in quality, and more space will be needed before long. The leases of the other tenants of the Old Foundry site expire in 2012. So we have the prospect of a two-phase redevelopment. The first should take place as soon as possible after we have the freehold and have raised the necessary money, and will be limited to the present site of the Museum and some immediately adjoining areas. The second could take place some years later, when the other tenants' leases have expired, or the tenants have left.

We are not there yet. Discussions have still to take place in the relevant committees of the Council for them to decide how they wish to proceed, and it remains impossible, after many months, to estimate how long negotiations will yet last. Let us hope that we eventually get there!

Martin Wedgwood

*For full details of the AGM,
see page 19*

news&views

St Paul's Mews

This terraced development of 12 housing units alongside St Paul's School is nearing completion, with a show house open from 30 July. The 'Mews' are of course a salesman's invention, though horses have been kept hereabouts in the past.

Very carefully landscaped, these new buildings can only be described as a visual improvement on what was here before. A considerable number of mature trees have been carefully preserved and these, with new planting and turves, provide a pleasing setting.

This is a choice site at the southern edge of the town, backed by the rising slope up to Glory Wood and the prices of the new accommodation are consistent with the location's attractive environment. A pity though that the brochure's map names only the least important of Dorking's three rail stations and completely omits the main line to London!

Linden Homes development

The Linden Homes (former Sainsbury) site was cleared in July. Four detached houses were demolished along Reigate Road: *The Gables* (1924); *Hill View* (1959); *Southfields*

(1924); and *Fairways* (1926). Four more round the corner in Deepdene Avenue: No.30 (192?); *Canford* (1926); *The Dutch House* (193?); and the Police House (No.36) (1951) were also summarily reduced to piles of rubble. By the end of the month, the demolition contractors had withdrawn from the target area together with their awesome machines, leaving a miniature hill of hardcore, with the cleared area roughly levelled off. Trees that are to be kept were carefully encircled with chestnut paling. The general effect is not unpleasing – an almost park-like open space, this soon to be covered with new buildings, providing a higher density of residential accommodation around a small open green.

It is to be hoped that the attractive decorative wall along the Reigate Road boundary will be restored and maintained.

Sainsbury development

The proposed Sainsbury development on the north side of St Martin's Walk is being rejigged and a new planning application is expected towards the end of the present year. Parking space may, however, prove an insuperable problem, capable of killing the whole project.

A new President

Brian Carr, who had expressed a wish to retire, was replaced as President of the Society by Baroness Thomas of Walliswood, duly elected at the Annual General Meeting of 22 April 2004.

Dorking shop front featured in new book

Kathryn A Morrison's splendidly-produced and superbly-illustrated *English Shops & Shopping: An Architectural History** contains a very fine 21 by 18cm colour plate of a Dorking treasure. On page 72 the familiar sight of Alan Woodcock's shopfront, with its carboy shelf and 1930s lettering, is fittingly displayed for general admiration.

* Yale University Press in association with English Heritage, 2003, £30, ISBN 0-300-10139-2.

Horse riding on rural footpaths

Surrey County Council officials seem to have created a controversial precedent by sanctioning horse riding on a rural footpath (No.82 Punchbowl Lane to Old School Lane, Brockham). Others may now follow.

The disturbance to soft surfaces that this practice will cause in wet conditions is all too familiar to walkers, quite apart from the possibility of accidents to those on foot when encountering horses

inadequately controlled by inexperienced young riders. This path is much used by dog-walkers, which creates a further hazard. However, Rachel Fardon (retired proprietor of Dorking Riding School) offers the following explanation –

The need for riders to use the above-mentioned track first arose in the 1950s when the metal barrier to the east of the Watermill Restaurant (on the north side of the A25) was erected. Up until then it was possible to ride safely to Brockham by using the wide grass verge, but the barrier resulted in the grass area tapering until there was nothing but a precipitous drop into the River Mole; the verge on the opposite side of the road was too narrow. I contacted the then Dorking Urban District Council who authorised us to use the track from Punchbowl Lane.

Sanctioning this usage is not creating a precedent, as the designation 'Permissive Horse Track' (PHT) is used throughout the country to indicate that horses may use a track even if it is not a bridle path. PHTs were introduced in order to enable riders to keep off dangerous main roads – and the 'Watermill bends' section of the A25 is especially dangerous for horses. There is also a law which states that if a track has been used by horses for over 20 years, and providing there has been no objection from the landowner or any physical barrier or notice of forbiddance during this period, entitlement to continue to do so is established.

Old swimming pool site, Reigate Road

It appears that this site is now designated for new housing as well as the relocated Medwyn Primary Care Medical Centre.

Hearing problems at Society Meetings in UR Church Hall

We have commented previously on the very poor acoustics in this hall, all too apparent at Society meetings held there. Those who do not consistently speak loudly and clearly, directing their voices towards the back of the audience, cannot be properly understood, even by listeners with reasonable hearing sitting in the front half dozen rows. Others make a promising start but fade away before

they finish. Now, much to our surprise, we learn there is a fitted in-house sound amplification system, which has not been properly used at Society Meetings.

Apparently there is not only a 'loop system' available in the hall for the hard of hearing but the general problem will be overcome if all speakers at Society meetings use the podium microphone in future instead of trying to project their voices from elsewhere, with varying degrees of success.

Society publicity and estate agents

Steps are being taken to persuade estate agents to hand out Society leaflets to newcomers to the area purchasing properties.

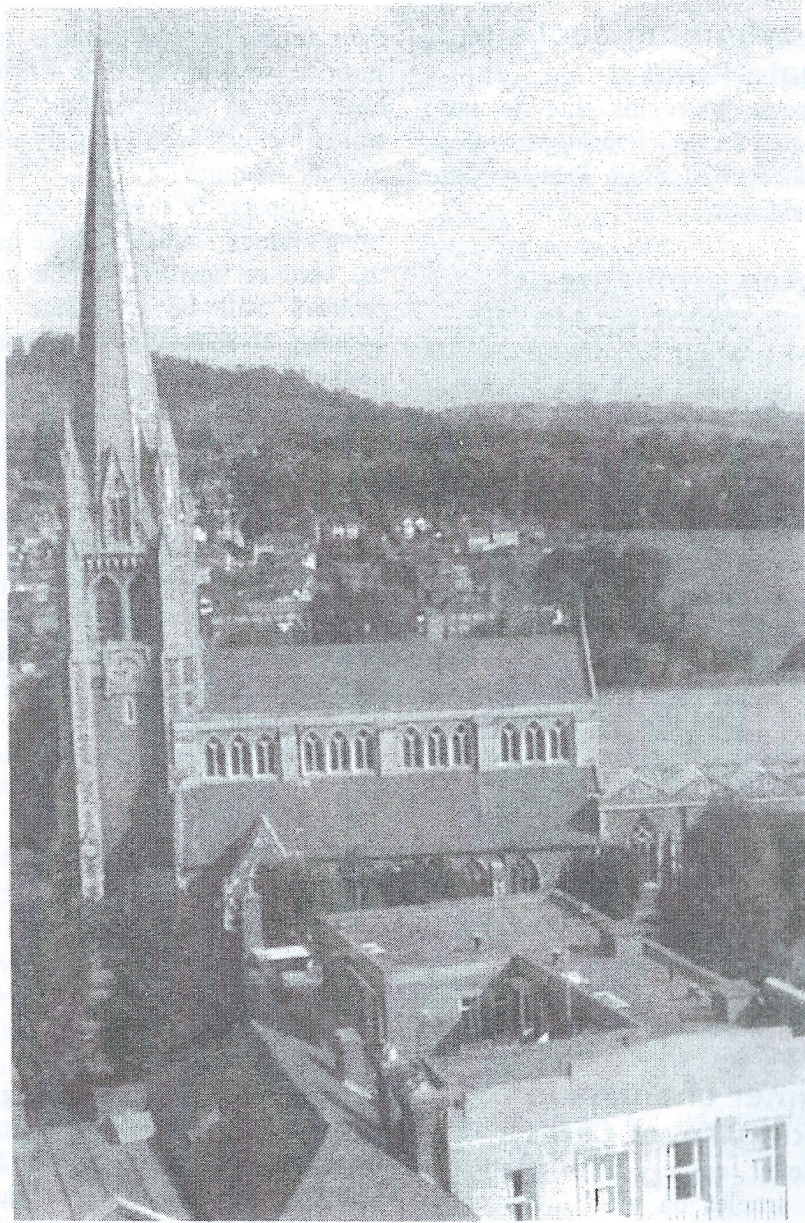
town manager's report

Summer changes in Dorking Town Centre

Newsletter readers will recall my recent articles on what factors now influence the shape of our retail centre and who is represented there. As my office over the last few months has

been frenetically busy dealing with potential retailers and new-starts, this is an ideal opportunity to bring DDPS members up-to-date on what is happening and may be happening in Dorking in the near future.

Most noticeable to the casual



The Burton Building (bottom right) as seen on 14 June 2004 from the crane used to build the New Michael Shanly development situated behind the high pavement on the High Street © DTCM/MVDC/Chris Marsh

observer will be the new openings taking place across the town. 'Carphone Warehouse' have at long last solved their legal delays and opened in the old Cottage Bakery site, rebalancing our mobile phone offer. 'Absolute Temptations', a specialist independent lingerie shop, is a most welcome addition to the High Pavement. With experience gained in her York shop, owner Margaret Kallagher is keen to make a success in Dorking. At the northern end of the High Street a beautifully fitted-out bathroom shop, quaintly called 'Village Ceramics', has opened; this must be a strong contender for this year's commercial premises award. South Street has also seen a specialist music and dance shop 'DAPA' (Dorking Academy of Performing Arts).

Checking the onslaught of the restaurant trade

The ever-growing restaurant offer has been very active since Christmas, with the top-notch contemporary Italian 'La Scala' adding a beautiful fit-out to the old Partners site in West Street. The much-discussed Bank Chambers building now houses 'Prezzo', whose glass atrium seems to be the prime choice of seating. The Mediterranean influence continues with a new

restaurant called 'Seven' which has opened in the Old London Road parade. The much-missed Highland Cottage in Junction Road has been replaced by another Indian restaurant with the strange choice of name, 'Dorking Brasserie'.

The onslaught of the restaurant trade has been checked in the prime area of the town. The nationwide coffee shop chain, 'Caffe Nero', was unsuccessful in trying to acquire a site in the High Street. A developer trying to get a massive underground restaurant in the old Burton building planned redevelopment (see later) has been encouraged to change the use to retail. One application for daytime café/restaurant use in West Street has been generally supported by the retail community, taking a view that it will increase customer footfall into West Street, which has been suffering recently. Although popular opinion is that Dorking has too many restaurants, latest town comparison figures from the Government statistical office show that it has the lowest percentage of 'A3' (restaurant/café/take-away) space within its quartile of towns, Reigate being the highest.

The old (1930s) Burton Building, which currently houses the popular Sussex Stationers bookshop and opticians Dollond and Aitchinson, has been acquired by a developer with plans to build 14 apartments to the rear of the site and create a large two-floor retail unit. Town Management,

the Town Forum and traders' groups put pressure on the planners and developers to withdraw their desire for a massive underground A3 restaurant use. Although the final application is yet to be determined by the Council, there is now a chance we can encourage an 'anchor' retailer to this larger site which would improve the town's desirability amongst shoppers. The 'art-deco' style façade of the building up to the marble stonework laid by Montague Burton in Church Passage is planned to be retained with a completely new rear constructed. Early plans indicate 'art-deco' styling to the new rear section, which could make an interesting addition to our townscape, removing the eyesore of pipes and grilles from the view to the Church from the High Street.

*One of the lowest
small town vacancy rates
in the South East?*

There are many other developments in our High Street under way. The ex-Cathy Stephens Jewellers on the High Pavement has been acquired by specialist kitchenware retailer 'Steamer Trading Company'. The old Thomas Cook/Studio Brampton shop is now open as a much-needed trendy youth clothing shop. The old High Street Co-Op funeral services shop is

under offer, as is the red-windowed Old Bakehouse in West Street. Out of our 275 trading shop units there will always be some left vacant; it is unhealthy for new businesses if not, but by Christmas 2004 I am confident that we will again have one of the lowest small town vacancy rates in the South East.

Unfortunately the spectre of the potential Sainsbury development still blights St Martin's Walk, with little prospect of its empty units being let until a planning application is determined. Higher than 'market' rental levels and service charges have deterred new retailers. Sanity, the town's only dedicated music store, remains locked in liquidators' wrangles as do many hundred other closed shops in the chain. The local management of the centre is still working hard for the remaining tenants and actively support the town as a whole. 'Chimes' café remains busy as a popular location for mid-shopping refreshment.

DDPS members should be assured that Town Management is working hard to maintain the economic vitality of Dorking, encouraging new businesses starting-up and helping existing businesses remain viable. We can always be contacted as follows:

e-mail: townmanager@visitdorking.com
tel: 01306-655017

Simon Matthews

planning committee report

A busy few months

The Planning scene in our area is extremely active at the moment. I expect that a great deal of the items in this report will have been resolved in one way or another by the time you read it.

Among all the extensions, conversions and new builds we have looked at during April, May and a part of June, was an application to convert all of the buildings at **Wonham Mill, Betchworth**, into a residential complex. The scheme entailed converting the various-sized buildings, including a massive, corrugated iron-clad one, into houses and apartments. Although we liked the design of the conversions, we thought that the large iron-clad building would make the site too dense, so we recommended that it be demolished and replaced with a landscaped area reflecting the beautiful countryside that surrounds the site. We were also very concerned about a proposed new access road from the site onto a down-sloping sharp bend in Wonham Lane. This part of Wonham Lane is inclined to flood but we made no mention of this in our letter, presuming that the developer's surveyor would have considered this before the application was made. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) were equally concerned and have asked the developer

to think again. The application has been withdrawn and we await a revised design.

In Dorking Town

We looked at a major application to demolish the rear part of the **1930s Burton building** in Dorking High Street, replacing it with retail units, apartments (including a roof-top penthouse) and a basement restaurant. We thought that the overall design of this proposal was excellent, especially the side elevation onto St Martin's Passage – or 'Pavement' (its proper name). However, we were a mite sniffy about the design of the rear elevation facing the church. This presented a large area of unrelieved brickwork with a few windows. With our comments to the LPA we included three coloured treatments of this elevation, prepared by us, showing just a few ways of using decorative or contrasting brickwork to make it more interesting. Soon after we had sent our letter to the LPA, we heard that many Dorking traders weren't too happy about yet another restaurant, pointing out that the necessary flues from the kitchens of the restaurant were not included in the drawings. Simon Matthews, the Town Manager, then wrote to the LPA (copying to us), saying that it would be preferable to replace the proposed restaurant and

part of the ground floor to provide space for a much-needed small department store. Although we think that we do not have a remit to comment upon this sort of matter, after discussion with other members of the Society, we sent another letter to the LPA supporting this idea. The restaurant has now been replaced, along with part of the first floor, by retail space.

A proposal to install a Mansard roof on a **post-war building in South Street** appears to conflict with DTC8 of the Local Plan. Basically, this states that the Council would prefer unremarkable buildings to be redeveloped rather than tinkered with to extend their life. We have not commented about this at this stage but are keeping it under review.

Attracting more customers to West Street

Still in the town centre, the owner of a **listed property in West Street** has submitted an application to convert it into a café with two small apartments above. At present, the property consists of two shops, and the proposal is to knock two openings through the dividing wall, demolish an odd-shaped rear projection, replacing it with a conservatory-style extension. The problem is that, although the right-hand shop is in a very bad state,

the left-hand one retains some of the original features. Clive Smith, Head of Planning, told us that the LPA have had talks with the West Street Association, and have tentatively agreed to relax Policy DTC4 – ‘Dorking Antiques Trade’ – to allow some suitable changes of use to take place. This has been prompted by a number of Antique shops closing because of lack of customers. We have spoken with Simon Matthews, the Town Manager, who is enthusiastic about the application. On the other hand, Peter Mills, the Preservation Officer, is less sanguine. After much discussion, we wrote a letter saying that we were not totally opposed to this scheme but that it will have to be modified to allow for the preservation aspects before we can give it our whole-hearted approval. This application has been withdrawn.

Before detailing the next proposal we studied, I must explain about ‘Section 106’. This is a legally binding agreement between a planning applicant and the Council when a proposal is approved. This agreement, signed by both parties, details exactly what the applicant can or cannot do within the approved project.

Last year, we looked at plans and elevations for a proposed development on **SCC land on the north side of Longfield Road, Dorking**. At that time we wrote a letter criticising various elements of the layout and building designs. Later

this application was withdrawn and then was re-submitted in May with new building designs and a different layout configuration. We were entirely happy with these new proposals and, after ascertaining that the density and highway considerations had been dealt with by the LPA, decided not to make any comment. Three weeks after we had looked at this application, we received notification that it would be tabled at the monthly Council Planning meeting at Pippbrook on 2 June, and that the LPA had recommended it be refused. We were surprised! At that meeting, after a presentation by a resident of Longfield Road, and comments from some Councillors, including an amendment relating to road safety and density – subsequently defeated – the LPA’s decision was approved. In some ways, this was a technical decision by the LPA, and quite complicated. Because of the Government’s obsession with targets, all applications must be dealt with in 31 days. This meant that there was not enough time for the LPA and Cala Homes, the developer, to reach a conclusion regarding a Section 106 agreement being discussed about a linked provision of affordable homes on another, entirely different, SCC site at **Starhurst School in Chart Lane South**. Additionally, the developer was not informed about this proposal until quite late in their application for Longfield Road. This

is only a broad outline of this complicated situation. We shall try to get a more complete explanation from the LPA and report back at a later date.

Deepdene Roundabout development is now imminent

At the same meeting, the Council approved the revised **Linden Homes development at Deepdene Roundabout**. Linden have now withdrawn their appeal, and building is now imminent. When we looked at the revised plans and elevations, we were pleased that many of the redesigned elements in this new scheme are ones recommended by us.

A developer has applied to demolish a **group of small old buildings behind W H Smith and Halfords in the High Street**. It is proposed to build a number of apartments and renovate parts of the gabled frontage to W H Smith. The design is quite imaginative, and our first impressions are good. However, we shall be making site visits and compiling research about the buildings intended for demolition.

Clive Smith has briefed us on what the Council would like to happen regarding the **Sainsbury scheme for St Martin’s Walk** and has asked the Society to liaise with the LPA.

Our Committee is only human after all, and we get frustrated with the best of them. One cause for this frustration occurs from time to time – thankfully not too often – regarding submitted drawings for applications, and we fire off letters to the LPA with just a touch of angst. One of these went off recently, saying that we have noticed a tiny minority of plans and elevations for extensions to private homes are not being prepared in such a state to allow us to make any sensible comments. We are, of course, aware that some home owners do not want to involve architects but we feel that they should at least try to get some sort of expert advice – maybe from a builder or surveyor – before making an application. The LPA obviously agreed with us, and the application which prompted the letter has since been withdrawn.

An application has been re-submitted for two, semi-detached, **four-bedroom houses at the site of a large bungalow in Knoll Road.** Two years ago, we objected to the first application on architectural and density grounds. The new design is much more acceptable from both an architectural and a positioning point of view, and we decided not to comment at this time

Other parts of our area

We looked at an application to convert **an old Granary in Westcott** into a dwelling. We liked the sensitive

design so made no comment.

In June, we looked at an application to turn two or three apartments, linked to a stable, into one large house at **Mickleham Downs House.** Great care has been taken to preserve the overall look of the original buildings, grouped around a courtyard. However, this application must be considered within the framework of ENV's 2.5 & 6, and RUD9, as it is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Some of our Committee also voiced regret about the principle involved, one of reducing a number of dwellings to make a single house. Considering all our research and visits to the site, we thought that, on balance, this application should be allowed. We did, however, have two caveats about retaining some old brickwork and the superb existing barge boards.

Finally, we are also looking at a proposal for a loft conversion at a **property in Wathen Road** and a **detached bungalow in Yew Tree Road.** We queried the use of lime render on an **extension to St Nicholas's church in Charlwood.** This was resolved after a site visit and some photography.

Hank Etheridge

Chairman of the Planning Committee

obituaries

Ethel Doris Mercer, BA, FSA 1912 – 2004

Doris Mercer was born in Inverness on 17 January 1912. Her father, a senior Post Office engineer, had been posted to Scotland in order to undertake important work on government communications. She and her sister, Edith, who was ten years her senior, both attended Inverness Royal Academy, and when the family returned to live in the south of England, Doris was enrolled at Ilford County Grammar School. She went on to University College, London, where in 1934 she obtained a BA degree in French.

From an early age both sisters had been encouraged by their parents to be interested in many areas of knowledge: botany, geology, history, archaeology. After an initial period of indecision about her choice of career, Doris joined Middlesex County Council's Archive Department (later merged with the Greater London Council's Archive Department) and there found her true metier.

In what was then largely a male domain, she was one of the first to study for and obtain the new qualification for the Society of Archivists. Later, when she was promoted to Head of the GLC Record Office, she became a Fellow of the

Society. Admired and respected by her colleagues, she attended the International Congress of Archivists in Moscow, Leningrad, Brussels and Stockholm.

Meanwhile, in 1937, the Mercers had moved to Dorking, much to the delight of Doris and Edith, who both loved to walk in the Surrey Hills. They took an intense interest in the past as well as the present life of the town and the villages. Doris played an active part in the development of the Preservation Society in the years following the Second World War. After she retired she was a member of Council throughout the 1970s and 1980s and was created a Vice-President in 1994.

Doris's professional expertise had been invaluable during the long process of setting up a local museum and house of records. In 1975, when a building was finally found to house the collection, she became the Library's curator, a post she held until ill-health forced her retirement, in 1993.

Doris was also a founder-member of the Historical Group, formed in 1967 to conduct research and stimulate interest in local history and archaeology. She was chairman

in 1976, when it became the Local History Group, and again from 1978 to 1980.

She wrote, or co-wrote, a number of the Group's publications, including *Fifty Years of Conservation* (1980), *A Corner of West Street* (1983), *The Deepdene, Dorking* (1996) and *Chart Park: A Vanished Surrey Mansion* (1993).

We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Doris Mercer, for the standards she set in steady unflinching commitment, in scholarship and research, and in the keeping of

meticulous records. In the last decade of her life she remained unfailingly interested in the welfare of the Museum, the town, and the countryside.

On a more personal note, she was also a true friend who took immense pleasure in receiving visitors, and sharing with them her memories, her joy in her garden, or the books she was reading. Her comments on current affairs were always measured, balanced and wise. She is much missed.

Patricia Bennett

Harry Tyler 15 September 1935 – 29 May 2004

Members will be very sorry to hear of the death of Harry Tyler, our energetic and enthusiastic former Caves Officer, who died on 29 May 2004 after battling against cancer for some years.

I first met Harry when I had just become Chairman, at a time when the Dorking Caves in South Street had been closed for some considerable period and no visits were permitted. In discussions with Richard Adey and Harry, a programme of opening dates was agreed, with both acting as guides to explain the history of the Caves and various interesting aspects. Before this arrangement had been in place for many months, Richard resigned and Harry was asked if he would be

prepared to become the Society's Caves Officer, which he was happy to accept. It was from this time, due to Harry's wholehearted support and dedication, that visits to the Caves became a tourist attraction and of focal interest to the local community and indeed to many outside the district. The number of interest groups applying for conducted tours rose substantially, and Harry and his small band of guides often worked on Saturdays and Sundays to meet the demand. In fact the programme was so successful that after a few years the Society reached an agreement with the Mole Valley District Council's Leisure Services Department to take

over the administration of the Caves as part of the Mole Valley Tourist Centre with Harry continuing as the Caves Officer.

Harry was a friendly and generous individual, always co-operative and willing to help in any way possible, even if this was at his own inconvenience and that of his family. Indeed his wife, Carole, often came to the Caves to assist Harry, and on

behalf of the Society, I extend to her our heartfelt sympathy in her loss.

We shall all remember Harry, not only for the significant contribution he made to the Society, but also as a much-respected member of the local community, as borne out by the large number of relatives and friends who attended his Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving on 10 June at Randalls Park Crematorium.

Barry Collins

dorking museum report

Accessions include

- (a) A pastel on board portrait of Frank W Gilliam, dated February 1894. Mr Gilliam was a member of the family who operated as stonemasons with premises in West Street and Junction Road. A stone plaque commemorating the founding of the firm is affixed to the wall of the present buildings on the Junction Road site.
- (b) A leather pouch containing nine hand-made iron pig hooks.
- (c) A mourning brooch, jet and metal.
- (d) Spectacles with wire frame and small lenses, thought to be Victorian.
- (e) Spectacles with dark lenses, thought to be sunglasses, also probably Victorian.

Display changes

Barbara Turnbull and Joyce Foster, who diligently take care of the Museum's textile collection, have recently installed a display of Victorian and Edwardian garments and accessories under the heading 'Elegance'. This display, which includes a wedding bonnet made in Dorking in 1892 for Fanny Sykes, replaces the display of Victorian and Edwardian baby clothes.

To coincide with the bicentenary of the Royal Horticultural Society, Dorking Museum is staging a special exhibition entitled 'Great Gardens of Dorking'.

The display shows how garden fashions have changed from formal enclosed medieval paradises to the Italianate gardens of the 17th century, the classical and romantic gardens of the 18th century, exotic planting and colourful borders of the 19th century and what can be achieved in a small space without an army of gardeners in the 21st century.

As well as showing the gardens of Deepdene, Denbies, Norbury Park, Bury Hill, Milton Court and Pixholm Court, two contemporary gardens, which open to the public as part of the National Gardens Scheme, are also featured.

Library

I would first like to pay a tribute to Doris Mercer, who died on 2 June at the age of 92. She was involved in the Museum from its beginnings. As a retired county archivist, she set up the library in a professional way and was its curator until 1993, when I took over. I was very apprehensive when she asked me to be her successor. However, with her guidance, I gradually gained confidence, although when problems arise I usually have to ask myself "What would Doris do?"

In the early days there was plenty of room for the various collections but I think even Doris was surprised how quickly they grew. In 2003 over 350 new items were added and in the first five months of this

Working Party

To improve the circulation of warm air throughout the display halls, the Working Party has installed a ceiling fan in Hall No.2.

Readers with DIY skills and who could regularly spend a couple of hours on Wednesday evenings helping to maintain the building fabric and display facilities are invited to join the Working Party who meet at the Museum at 19.00 on Wednesdays. Why not come along and meet the present 'workforce'?

Fred Plant
Exhibits Curator

year I have already accessioned 230 more. We have also acquired equipment such as fiche readers and computers, and extra work tables and storage cabinets.

A few years ago, when the last Museum expansion took place, the downstairs library room was cleared and we were able to use it for various activities. Its main functions were as a study area, meeting room or schoolroom. Having folding tables meant that we could also use it for events and special exhibitions such as *Dorking's Lost Buildings* for an early Heritage weekend and Surrey Museums' travelling *Dinosaurs*. Now the Library has grown to take up most of this lower room too and sadly it is much less adaptable.

As it has grown, Library usage has also increased. As well as members and visitors using its research facilities, we receive enquiries from all over the country and beyond – Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA being the most common. During the last few months I have dealt with letters from France, Germany and Belgium. Where possible I reply to overseas letters by e-mail but I had second thoughts when I replied to a Belgian and received a

reply in Flemish. Luckily this turned out to be an 'out of office' reply and a few days later one arrived in perfect English – a rarity in e-mails from this country let alone overseas.

All in all, the Library continues to thrive and I am sure this is primarily due to the sound foundations laid by Doris Mercer. The Museum owes her a great debt of gratitude.

Mary Turner
Curator of Archives

The Autumn Meeting

of the Dorking & District Preservation Society

will take place on

Thursday, 21 October, at 7.30pm

in the United Reformed Church Hall, West Street, Dorking

The Meeting will start with the announcement and presentation of
the Best Development Awards for 2004

following which

**Gail Sperrin, director, and Caroline Cation,
marketing communications officer
of the Surrey Hills AONB**

will give an illustrated talk on

Current projects in the Surrey Hills

nb: AONB = Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Heritage Open Days

This year the Heritage Open Days are over the weekend of 11 and 12 September when many properties, not normally open to the public, are open and FREE! Also there are exhibitions, walks, talks and even a concert (at St Mary & St Nicholas Church, Church Road, Leatherhead, on Saturday 11 starting at 18.00). Our chairman and his wife, Sir Martin and Lady Wedgwood, are very kindly opening their home – Pixham Mill in Dorking. Many events, including Pixham Mill, must be booked. The free brochure should now be available at Pippbrook, The Dorking Halls, the libraries and at various other outlets. This gives full details of all events in the Mole Valley area for Heritage Open Days weekend. Booking started at the beginning of August.

As in previous years, we need stewards. If you could spare some time during the weekend of 11 and 12 September and help out by stewarding or serving teas, please do get in touch with Sarah Hawkes (01306-883699), who will be pleased to let you have more information.

Sarah Hawkes

Membership

We regret to report the death of the following Members:

Miss Doris Mercer, a Society Vice-President

Mr Harry Tyler, Dorking

(See Obituaries, pages 15 & 16)

We welcome the following new Members:

Baroness Thomas of Walliswood, Dorking

Mr R Eshelby, Dorking

Mr D T Hartley, Westhumble

Mrs J V Gorling, Westhumble

Mr & Mrs W Skinner and

Miss Skinner, Westhumble

Mr & Mrs F Warren, Westhumble,

Mr & Mrs C Smith, Dorking

Mr & Mrs P Fisher, Dorking

Mr & Mrs C Richardson, Dorking

Mr & Mrs I MacCleod, Dorking

Ms S McLean, Dorking

Mr J Bachelor, Dorking

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
Betchworth Park Golf Club, Reigate Road, RH4 1NZ (882 052)	Golf club
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 plc, Pixham End, RH4 1QA (654 4220)	Chartered accountants
Garth House Nursing Home, Tower Hill Road, RH4 2AY (880 511)	Financial services
Hart Scales & Hodges, 159 High Street, RH4 1AD (884 432)	Nursing home
Hulsta Studio, 120 South Street, RH4 2EU (880 330)	Solicitors
International Sports Marketing Ltd, Bales Court, Barrington Road, RH4 3EJ (743 322)	Contemporary furniture specialists
Kuoni Travel Ltd, Deepdene Avenue, RH5 4AZ (840 888)	Marketing consultants
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
Rose Hill Nursing Home, 9 Rose Hill, RH4 2EG (882 622)	School
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
Treeline Services Ltd, Holmwood Farm Court, North Holmwood, RH5 4JR (741 800)	Opticians
Uden, C J & Co, Pledges Yard, Falkland Road, RH4 3AD (887 551)	Tree care and maintenance
Viscount Agencies, Concept House, 3 Dene Street, RH4 2DR (880 715)	Drainage consultant and surveyors
Whitelegg Machines Ltd, Fir Tree House, Horsham Road, Beare Green, RH5 4LQ (713 200)	Duty free agency
Wyevale Country Gardens, Reigate Road, RH5 1NP (884 845)	Electrical engineers
	Garden centre

Continued overleaf

OTHER CORPORATE MEMBERS SUPPORTING THE SOCIETY

Abinger Parish Council
Amis de Gouvieux, Les
Betchworth Parish Council
Brockham Green Village Society
Buckland Parish Council
Capel Parish Council
Charlwood Parish Council
Coldharbour Sports and Social Club

Friends of Boxhill
Headley Parish Council
Holmwood Parish Council
Mickleham Parish Council
Newdigate Parish Council
Ockley Parish Council
Westcott Village Association
Wotton Parish Council

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