

NEWSLETTER

of the Dorking & District Preservation Society

No. 40

Spring 2005



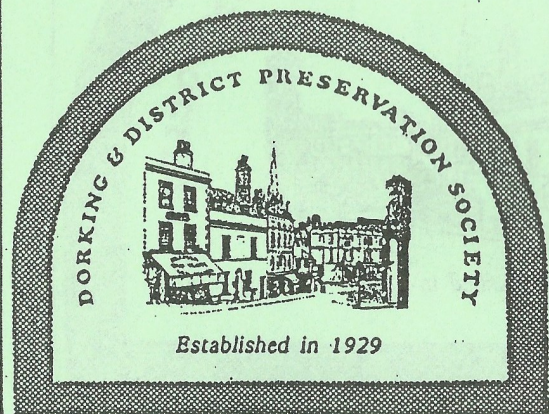
Registered Charity 246806

NEWSLETTER

of the Dorking & District Preservation Society

Contents

Editorial	1
Chairman	2
News & Views	5
Planning	6
Local History Group	8
Museum	10
Gypsies	11
Town Manager	15



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Free to members

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editorial

A walk around Dorking town centre, taking time to study the buildings, looking up at first floor level and above, taken at a time when the road traffic is not too noisy and intrusive, can lead to some rewarding, comforting reflections. It will show how little the built environment has changed over the years. Apart from obvious modern features, the view of the end of the High Street from the Rotunda in South Street (see front cover), and that down West Street from the High Pavement outside Dyas, or the cameo glimpse of Dene Street from the door of the Post Office, would all be readily recognisable to anyone who lived here many decades ago. None of it is great architecture but all is pleasing to the eye.

Unlike many small English towns, Dorking's historic core has not been torn out or drastically reshaped to meet the demands of modern retailing or the still growing weight of continuous road traffic. Although there were a few unfortunate accretions in the period from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, such as the rebuilding of *The Ram* site at the corner of Dene Street/High Street, or the new shops and offices at the north corner of Junction Road/South Street, much of the old survived, thanks to the efforts of the Society and a few

determined individuals such as the late John Walker.

Until the late 1960s it was only possible for individual buildings to be protected from major alteration and demolition on grounds of 'special architectural or historical interest', an equivocal definition which was for a long time quite rigidly interpreted by officials and ministers. Then came the Civic Amenities Act 1967, which introduced the broader concept of 'Conservation Areas' under which groups of old buildings contributing to enhance a streetscape could be protected from alteration or destruction. This development ushered in a new era of conservation and before long was used to protect the historic centre of Dorking.

The idea of Conservation Areas emerged during a Labour administration, nurtured by Dick Crossman and his Parliamentary Secretary Lord Kennet; very soon it was to be vigorously carried forward by a successful Private Member's Bill, originated by the then Conservative MP for Streatham, Duncan Sandys.

So when you take your leisurely walk and contemplate the remarkable survival of the historic Dorking streetscape, reflect too on the equally remarkable cross-party action which culminated in a landmark piece of environmental legislation.

Alan A Jackson

chairman's report

This Newsletter is the last that will contain on its front page the words 'Registered charity no. 246806'. The process of converting ourselves to a company limited by guarantee is now almost complete. The next Newsletter will therefore carry the words 'A company limited by guarantee, reg. no. 5126366, registered as a charity no. 1107459'. The accounts of the new charity will be made up to 31 March each year and the AGM and the Autumn Meeting will change places, that is to say the Autumn Meeting will become the AGM, and a year hence we will be looking forward not to the AGM but to the Spring Meeting.

The new company/charity has to have new bank accounts and this means new Banker's Standing Orders and Gift Aid declarations. Subscriptions for next year will become due not on 1 January but on 1 April. As soon as we have details of our new bank account numbers we will write to all members inviting them to draw up new Standing Orders and Gift Aid Declarations. I strongly advise all members to complete Standing Orders. It removes the worry of having to remember that the next sub. is due and greatly reduces the workload of our overworked Membership Secretary. If you have been kind enough to sign a Gift Aid declaration,

I regret that we will have to ask you to sign another. If you have not yet signed a Gift Aid declaration and pay income tax at the standard rate on some part of your income, perhaps this is the time to do so. Once you have done so, we can then claim back from the Inland Revenue a sum equivalent to 28 per cent of any subs. or donations you may have paid or given us, without committing you to any future payments.

Once we have passed this hurdle, the DDPS will be properly equipped to handle the much higher sums of money that we now have under our control, thanks to the generosity of our members and late members, but especially that of Owen Russ.

Martin Wedgwood

The South East Plan

Derek Rowbotham and I spent some time last year combing through the new Surrey Structure Plan, which covers the years up to 2016. We were not happy with the decision of its authors that it was an inappropriate place to comment on the unsuitability of further extensions of Gatwick Airport. Nor did we like the somewhat arbitrary division of the county into sub-regions, in particular the region called 'North Surrey', which included a belt on either side of the M25, so that eastwards from about

Abinger it extended south to include the escarpment of the North Downs, including Dorking. We pointed out that this comprised a wide range of different landscape types, from areas where there was no open country to others which were deeply rural. We were pleased therefore when this idea of sub-regions was effectively dropped by the introduction of the concepts of 'regeneration' and 'renaissance'.

Now we have the South East Plan, produced by the South-east England Regional Assembly (SEERA), a body set up in 2003 by the Government as a precursor to the elected English regional assemblies that have now been abandoned. It covers the years up to 2026. The South-east Region comprises Kent, Surrey, Sussex (East and West), Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. SEERA, despite its name, and although it has an assembly (of sorts) attached, is an unelected advisory body, all of whose decisions have to be submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister, for his endorsement or refusal. The actual assembly consists of 77 members nominated by local authorities and 34 other members representing industry, commerce, and non-governmental organisations etc., i.e. they are all delegates; they are not representatives. They can voice their opinions, but the ODPM is not obliged to pay them any attention. SEERA is thus a regional

authority with far-reaching planning responsibility but without legitimacy. Its opinions can be welcomed or ignored entirely at the whim or convenience of central government.

The Plan identifies twelve areas, covering about two-thirds of the total area of the Region. The boundaries of these areas sometimes follow county or district boundaries and sometimes not. The area that includes Dorking is called the 'London Fringe' and extends comfortably south of the line connecting Guildford to Dorking to Reigate, thus containing about half the area of Mole Valley, and on eastwards to include a piece of Kent around Sevenoaks. The south-east corner of Mole Valley forms part of the sub-region Gatwick, which extends well into both East and West Sussex.

The plan presents three possible quotas of housing overall, distributed in two different ways, the first of which continues existing policies, the second gives 'a sharper focus' on development in or alongside areas already significantly developed. For Surrey this presents a requirement for the following number of housing units a year:

	Continuing Policies	'Sharper Focus'
Less than Structure plan equivalent	1,400	1,850
In line with Structure plan equivalent	1,550	2,100
More than Structure plan equivalent	1,950	2,600

The presentation of these three

possible levels, however, is a smokescreen. The ODPM has already issued the Consultation Draft Regional Housing Strategy, which sets out targets at the upper end of the range that appears in the South East Plan in the 'sharper focus level'. Building at this kind of density in Surrey, with its high proportion of protected land, is simply not possible without further degradation of the environment.

We strongly object to this plan because

1. The organisation responsible for it is tantamount to an arm of central government which has already made up its mind for it. The choices on offer have already been pre-empted. In effect the powers and the authority of local government, and the powers of people to influence their own environment are further undermined.

2. The Surrey Structure Plan runs from 2006 to 2016, the South East plan from 2006 to 2026. The figures do not coincide, nor necessarily do the policies. Yet our local Council is governed by both. It would have been better government if a new institution had been required to insert itself uncontroversially and introduce changes governing the entire region gradually. The danger is that, in being forced to deal with ham-fisted interference by central government, local government is not only undermined, it is demoralised.

3. The proposed level of new housing every year is simply not sustainable.

4. We are told that there are references to affordable housing, but to date we have seen none. When they do emerge, they should contain references to central government legislation designed to make it easier to build them. That is where the really desperate shortage lies. Since SEERA is the central government, that seems a reasonable request.

Since the plan is being disclosed by degrees, we look forward to further instalments. We shall be watching closely, and we fear with growing concern.

Martin Wedgwood

with plentiful help from Derek Rowbotham

Annual General Meeting

Thursday 21 April 2005

7.30 pm

United Reform Church Main Hall
West Street, Dorking

*There will be an illustrated talk
by*

Gail Jeffcoates

on

Butterflies of Mole Valley

4.

news&views

Burton building

This building, in the High Street at the corner of Church Path, dates from 1938 and is in the standard style (architect Nathaniel Martin LRIBA) of many erected by the Montague Burton men's tailoring chain in the 1930s, few of which now survive. Like the other large Burton shops, the Dorking branch originally had a billiards saloon above the ground floor retail area, operated as a club, with its own manager, who was provided with a flat above. Montague Burton, 'The Tailor of Taste', who at one stage was clothing a fifth of the male population, was an idealist and saw his temperance billiards clubs as a way of keeping youths off the streets and out of public houses.

Saved by being in a Conservation Area, the Burton building has now been bought by Sussex Stationers, who are submitting a new planning application.

A wall restored?

A section of the pleasant brick wall bordering the Linden Homes development at the Deepdene Roundabout was being demolished in early March. This feature, which once marked the north-west boundary of Deepdene Park, is probably over 100 years old

but the workmen did explain that all the bricks and coping stones would be kept and used when a new boundary wall round the development is built later in the year. We hope they are right.

A new book about Surrey

Surrey Industrial History Group has recently published *Surrey and The Motor* by Gordon Knowles, a book describing the development of roads in the county and pioneer motoring (including police speed traps and the Brooklands Racing Track). There are also detailed accounts of motor vehicle manufacture at various places in Surrey. The book may be obtained from local bookshops or ordered at £10.95 post free from John Mills, 35 Trotsworth Avenue, Virginia Water GU25 4AN; cheques should be made payable to 'SIHG'.

Dorking relic discovered in national museum

On a recent visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum, our Chairman discovered it possesses a twin of the London Brighton & South Coast Railway station platform lamp standard we have in Dorking & District Museum. It had been donated to the V&A by Mr White at the time of the station's 1982 rebuilding.

5.

Motor vehicles on bridleways & countryside tracks

The Times reported (21 January) that new legislation was being drafted by the Government to curb the increasing use of motor vehicles along 'green lanes' by inconsiderate 'off-roaders', a 'sport' that causes severe damage to these unsurfaced tracks as well as generating a safety hazard for walkers and animals.

The new law would provide that with a few possible exceptions, such as agricultural or residential access, a right of way cannot suddenly become a 'Byway open to all traffic' (BOAT) simply because it was used historically by light horse-drawn vehicles. Since many applications claiming rights of way on these grounds have subsequently been prepared by 'off-

roaders', there is a possibility that the new law may be made retrospective to December 2003, when a relevant consultation paper was published.

It now seems unlikely that any Bill on this subject will be enacted until after the General Election but the main political parties can and will no doubt be questioned on their intentions regarding this matter during the Election Campaign.

To what extent is this 'recreational' activity by 4x4 owners and motorcyclists a problem in our area?

Swimming Centre demolished

Work began in mid March on the demolition of the 1973 Swimming Centre in Reigate Road.

planning committee report

Before catching up on the Committee's last report in the Newsletter, I need, once more, to make a sort of policy statement. Chairmen of committees tend to influence the direction of their committees either intentionally or unintentionally. As an Architectural Illustrator (I do water-

colours of heritage and new buildings), I have placed more emphasis on the aesthetics of architecture rather than getting bogged down too much on regulation. Don't get me wrong. We still use the Local Plan as our 'bible', and also consider Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) from

Government in many of our deliberations, along with the comments of owners of neighbouring properties. However, *how* buildings look and relate to their surroundings seems more relevant to a Society like ours, whose aim is to retain the best of the past and to influence and recommend well-designed new buildings. Local Planning Authorities (LPA) have knowledgeable Case Officers who are well versed in the intricacies of Planning regulations, and don't really need an outside body telling them how to 'suck eggs'.

Outcomes from our last report

The Longfield Road development has been given the go-ahead, and the linked Starhurst School Affordable Homes scheme is at the Application stage.

The situation regarding the proposed Apartments at Furze Hollow on Tower Hill has proved to be slightly complicated. The current position is that the original Application is still under Appeal and a revised smaller redevelopment of six apartments and eight parking spaces has been approved by MVDC. The developer has now slapped in another Application, using the same design but increasing the number of apartments to eight by raising the roof ridge height on one building but keeping the eight parking spaces. This raises the issue of 'where do

visitors park?' We have written emphasising this aspect, highlighting the almost certain Highway problems that will be caused on Tower Hill and the Horsham Road, and recommending refusal.

We sent a letter to the LPA, expressing our approval of the latest proposal for The Nook in the Dorking Hospital grounds. We were told by the Case Officer that they were recommending its approval. After receiving a 25-page letter from the Cliftonville Residents' Association, the Council had other plans and refused it. The NHS, owners of the site, are now likely to go to Appeal. The Residents' Association would prefer individual houses rather than Apartment Blocks. However, the site is a 'Brownfield' one and, as such, has to be developed to its maximum potential: houses would not be an option. The contours of the site also militate against houses. The feeling at the LPA is that the Inspectorate may well approve the Appeal. We shall have to wait and see.

New Applications

Back in 2003, we enthusiastically recommended an extremely well designed contemporary building proposed for a piece of open land at Forest Green. To our delighted amazement, the Application was approved. Last year, an article appeared in *Building News*, illustrating the plans; a model of the building

and an almost complete quotation from our approving letter.

Another outstanding, contemporary environmentally-friendly building proposed for **Chart Cottage on Punchbowl Lane, Dorking**, about which we wrote an approving letter, was refused after two high-powered letters arrived at the LPA from owners of neighbouring properties. The Applicants have now gone to Appeal. One wet and miserable winter's afternoon with a member of my Committee, I visited the site to see if the proposed building would be intrusive to neighbours. We thought not. After discussing our visit and looking at the plans and elevations once more, the Committee unanimously decided to support the Appellants and a letter was sent to the Inspectorate.

We commented favourably on an elegant conversion to the listed **Pilgrims Cottage, Buckland**. It has since been approved.

The owners of **Rose Hill House, Dorking**, are proposing to restore a coffered, eaves/cornice to match the one on neighbouring *Butter Hill House*. We have sent a letter thanking them for instigating what may well be an expensive restoration.

An **Antiques Shop in West Street** has applied to turn part of their premises into a coffee shop. Customers will be served surrounded by antiques; hopefully, not leaving ring marks on the furniture. After speaking with the Preservation Officer, Peter Mills, we decided to make no comment.

Hank Etheridge

local history group report

Last year I wrote my report in a state of great anxiety – a Chairman's 'lot' is not always a happy one! But my requests for 'volunteers' were eventually answered in good measure and we now have an excellent Committee. This year, however, there have been different problems, now hopefully resolved. Our stalwart Convenor, Sue Tombs, is due to retire but Coffey Holland has agreed to take her place and we anticipate that a new

Editor will be appointed soon.

Our monthly meetings are still well attended and enjoyable, with a good variety of speakers and topics but because of increased costs for the meeting room and for speakers we are running at a loss and our subscriptions need to be upwardly revised.

We had two interesting outings – the Kew Steam Museum was especially popular and the visit to Parham did not disappoint those who

went but unfortunately these ran at a loss through lack of numbers. It is difficult to avoid clashes of dates in a community with so many interests and so many of us have private means of transport, enabling us to visit many of the nearest attractions independently. Travelling further afield now costs more per mile and not many of us wish to spend long hours on a coach. Whilst our 'winter' outing to Maidstone has been oversubscribed, the proposed summer trip to Godinton House has been abandoned because of the high cost. We thank Cathy and Tim Stevens for their help in making the arrangements.

In August we took part in an 'Open Day' at the Museum of Rural Life, Tilford, which was an event to mark the Surrey Archaeological Society's 150th Anniversary Year. Despite the best efforts of a number of our members who manned our display, we only managed to sell one book. However, the sun shone on us and we enjoyed meeting our counterparts in other societies and 'networking'.

In October we submitted our display on 'Newspapers' to the Symposium of the Surrey Archaeological Society held at Chertsey. Cliff Weight and Greta Morley assisted me with this project and a small contingent of members supported us on the day. To our surprise and pleasure we were awarded the 'Gravett Award' for the

best exhibit. The prize consists of £50 from the Archaeological Society and additionally books to the value of £50 from the local history publishers, Phillimore's. When we have chosen suitable books, they will be housed in the Museum library, available for loan to all members of the Preservation Society. The newspaper display is currently on show in the Museum.

Part of the display features Inspector William Donaldson, Dorking's policeman from 1838-1851. His cruel murder, at the hands of railway 'navvies', took place in Haslemere 150 years ago. His widow and children subsequently returned to live in Dorking 'among their friends' and I am trying to find out more about them. We have been invited to join in a commemorative event, 'Donaldson Day', in Haslemere in July and intend honouring him as Dorking's 'hero'!

Despite the lack of an official Editor, we managed to produce another edition of *Dorking History*, thanks to several contributors and an expatriate computer assistant. I'm afraid that despite our best efforts, there were 'bugs' in the transmission to the Printer, which we hope to avoid in future. It only remains for me to thank most sincerely all our Committee and members, and everyone who helps and encourages Dorking Local History Group.

Mary E Day

Chairman, Dorking Local History Group

dorking museum report

The Museum has received £1,000 under the will of the late Miss Doris Mercer.

Work has begun on the Exhibition **Dorking in Wartime**. We hope to open this on the last day of April, and would like to ask members of the Mole Valley Council to a preview. Our loan box on **Dorking in Wartime** has been delivered to Newdigate School. It was on display in the Archaeological Society Symposium on Saturday, 26 February, in Ashted

Peace Memorial Hall as part of a display mounted by the Museum. Martin Cole gave a talk on the role of a local museum, which was well received.

Barbara Turnbull has liaised with the representative from the group who are compiling a catalogue of all the oil paintings in museums and galleries in Britain. We have 60 oils, and a great many watercolours that we are not able to display to their best advantage.

Bette Phillips

Chairman, Dorking & District Museum

Letter to the editor

Dear Mr Jackson,

Following our recent telephone conversation and your editorial in the *DDPS Newsletter*, I would like to suggest some contact ideas.

First of all, Andrew Pinchin is the Tree Officer for Mole Valley and would be able to help and hopefully give support to the idea of more trees along the A25. Of course this will probably be viewed as a 'Highways' matter and therefore involve that department at Pippbrook as well.

The Tree Council set up a national Tree Warden Scheme many years ago and there are numerous Tree Wardens,

appointed by their Parish Councils, in the Mole Valley although I regret to say that so far as I know there are none in Dorking! The Chairman for Surrey is Mr Ray Thorn, of Spelthorne, tel. no. 01932-883259. The Tree Council website is – www.treecouncil.org.uk tel. no. 020-74079992. Another contact would be the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers who have a large volunteer workforce. Their website is – www.btcv.org.uk tel. no. 01491-821600, address 36 St Mary's Street, Wallingford, Oxon, OX10 0EU.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs) Diana Salisbury

Newdigate Parish Tree Warden

18 November 2004

Gypsies – the Augustus John Idyll they're not!

When asked to write a piece about Gypsies, a.k.a. 'Travellers', my thoughts fled back to my youth in the '30s. Every year, my grandfather would allow a brightly-painted, horse-drawn Gypsy caravan onto his land for four or five weeks during the summer. They would park up by a small stream; do whatever Romany Gypsies used to do, and made what I thought at the time, a colourful addition to the property: you could say this was my 'Augustus John Moment'. I was always surprised that my grandfather – an irascible old gentleman – allowed this to happen but, I think, my grandmother wanted to avoid 'The Gypsy Curse', and forced the issue.

Another itinerant, a less glamorous group of Travellers back then,

were Irish Tinkers, who sharpened knives, scissors and shears and mended pots and other metal receptacles. In addition to the Tinkers, there were what the Romany gypsies called 'Didicoi' – non-gypsy travellers who were given the derogatory epithet 'Hedge Crawlers' in my part of Wessex.

That was then. Nowadays, Gypsies and Irish Travellers are involved in, among other things, scrap metal and tarmacking house drive-ways. They no longer live in gaily-coloured caravans but in trailers,



Augustus John and family 'Go native' in their Gypsy caravan, Circa 1909
Photo: From a private collection, with acknowledgements to: 'The Tate Britain Companion to British Art' by Richard Humphreys

motor homes and mobile homes. Many of them are still nomadic, parking up on any piece of vacant land, knowing full well that removing them can take some time. They then move on to another piece of ground and the process starts all over again. Other groups, such as the 'Alternative Lifestyle' people – old and young 'Hippies' – the ones that always turn up at Stonehenge for the solstices, and Glastonbury during the summer, following 'Leylines', are also covered by the portmanteau word 'Travellers'. Some of these groups are now buying land, some of it in the Green Belt, moving on to it and then making a retrospective planning application for the trailers, mobile homes and storage facilities for scrap metal and tarmac materials. Planning permission is then refused, and the Travellers go to Appeal. As this process takes an even longer time, they can stay for, in some cases, up to two years before being moved off with all the consequent hostility between them and local house owners during that time. You can see that this is not a minor issue for Local Government and their Planning departments.

Over the past two decades, Travellers have been the subject of Legislation, Regulations, Guidance and tons of documentation, some of which I have spent hours wading through for this article. During that time, Travellers have gained protection under the Race Relations

Act and the Human Rights Convention. They are represented by at least five websites, plus various National Associations. They are in fact a 'Lobby'. The latest consultation document about Travellers emerging from John Prescott's Office, is 'Planning for Gypsy and Travellers' Sites (2004)'. Among a plethora of items this Paper covers is the suggestion that the definition 'Gypsy' be altered to recognise that Gypsies may stop travelling, either permanently or temporarily, and ensure that the Planning System recognises and protects facilities for them to do so. As an aside to this, when working in advertising, I had to go to Tunisia to deal with a Tourist Industry client. One day, as we were driving along the coast road to look at some new hotels, we went past groups of small, white-painted houses inside their own low, circular-walled area. In the enclosed yard, were Bedouin tents and, wandering in and out of the houses, were goats. When I pointed this out to my client, he told me that the Tunisian Government were trying permanently to settle the nomadic Bedouin into these developments but were finding it a difficult task to persuade them to live inside the houses. 'It is difficult' he said, 'to stop nomads being nomadic'. Is there a lesson to be learnt from this?

We had a slightly similar situation in our area. A Gypsy family were moved into a house in Ashted. The

adult son, however, could not get used to living in bricks and mortar, so a plot of land at the junction of Reigate Road and Station Road, Betchworth, an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), was purchased by the family, and the son and his young family moved into two mobile homes on it without Planning Consent. The subsequent, retrospective Application was refused, and went to Appeal. The Inspectorate ruled that because the son could not bear living in houses, he could stay in the mobile homes with his family. The Appeal was therefore upheld.

In the Consultation Paper, it states that local authorities will be required to identify suitable sites for Gypsies and Travellers in their Local Plans. The new Plan should be 'fair, reasonable, realistic and effective in delivering sites'. It also requires local authorities to make local housing assessments to quantify the level of need and shows how the proposed new planning system, with the involvement of Regional Housing Boards (some of them unelected), will translate that need into allocation of housing for Gypsies and Travellers. It also emphasises the local authorities' responsibilities under the Race Relations Act (this covers Gypsies and Irish Travellers). Local authorities are required to 'engage with Gypsies and Travellers to build trust and to include in their plans advice from them and their

representatives' (the 'Lobby' I mentioned above). All this, of course, has implications for schools, housing, payment of Council taxes, and policing.

In Mole Valley we already have four permanent Traveller sites containing 26 vans, 30 adults and 29 'under-sixteens' – 19 families in all. There is another, unauthorised, 15.8 acre site on the outskirts of Leatherhead owned by the Travellers. They have built a permanent washroom and a laundry room. MVDC issued an eviction order which was appealed against by the Travellers. Although the Appeal was refused by the Inspectorate, they have recommended that the occupants be given twelve months to find another site. At the end of that time, all the permanent dwellings will be razed to the ground, the trailers and mobile homes moved off, and the field returned to grassland. However, John Prescott may get involved, as he has been on a site in Wiltshire, and could extend the time to two years. Heather Kerswell, MVDC's CEO, said 'We will continue to challenge inappropriate development in rural areas. Our residents and businesses rely on us to be custodians of the District's distinctive character and qualities, including the Green Belt.'

The sort of things I have been describing above, are happening all over England and Wales, which is obviously highly unsatisfactory for

both local residents and Travellers, causing confrontations and vandalism. Something has to be done to solve this problem (a word I didn't want to use) to the satisfaction of all parties. If it is not, the Planning system will be stretched beyond its limits, and enraged house owners will be taking matters into their own hands. One very angry resident from Essex told reporters that he is going to buy some land in Hull (John Prescott's constituency) and sell it on to a Gypsy family. 'Just see how Mr Prescott likes having a Gypsy problem on his doorstep' he said.

Hank Etheridge

Heritage Open Days

We are up and running! The weekend is **Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September** – please make a note in your diaries. The actual event runs from **Thursday 8 September** through to Sunday 11 September, a change from the Friday to Monday dates in previous years, as there was not much interest on the Monday.

John Tiffney, former MVDC Head of Leisure, has joined the organising committee.

Again there is no national theme and the local theme we have chosen this year is 'Sticks and Stones'.

Sarah Hawkes

STOP PRESS

After I had finished the above article, the Deputy Prime Minister's Office issued a further paper telling Local Authorities in England and Wales that they have to find another 300 permanent Gypsy sites. When these sites are chosen, the LAs have been told that local householders' objections are not to be taken into consideration. I am sure that these householders – not to mention Councillors looking for re-election – aren't going to be too happy about this. *HE*

Membership

We welcome the following new members:

Mr & Mrs Barnes, Deepdene Drive, Dorking.
Mr Bower, St Paul's Road East, Dorking.
Mr Crane, St Martin's Mews, Dorking.
Mr & Mrs Lovett, Ridgeway Road, Dorking.
Mr G Bishop, Hampstead Road, Dorking.
Mr & Mrs J Austin, Bentsbrook Park,
North Holmwood.

Mrs D Dinsdale, Yew Tree Road, Dorking.
Mr Eshelby, South Street, Dorking.
Dr & Mrs Jeffcoate, Elmhurst Drive, Dorking.
Mrs K Trembath, Punchbowl Lane, Dorking.
Mr M. Anderson, Leslie Road, Dorking.

We are sorry to report the death of
Mrs M Moore, St Paul's Road, Dorking.

Peter Parkin
Membership Secretary

town manager's report

As I have said in previous reports, if you ask 100 people their opinion on how they think the town should be run or what shops they expect to see, you'll get 100 different answers.

Last November, Town Management decided to take a slightly more scientific approach to gauge opinion, commissioning as part of a larger Mole Valley residents' survey a series of questions about the town centres. Nearly 800 people responded, giving quite a robust sample size and were statistically weighted to geographically-spread responses.* The findings of the survey are very interesting. Dorking is used regularly by 80 per cent of its residents, 31 per cent of whom use the town in the evening. The Friday and Farmers' Markets are visited by around 40 per cent of Dorking residents. Nearly 40 per cent of the full survey would not visit a town without public toilets, this percentage rising significantly with older people or those with disabilities. Residents enjoyed town events with 50 per cent attending Gala Night, 15 per cent Heritage Open Days and 14 per cent the West Street Festival. 58 per cent of residents found the Dorking Directory either 'very useful or

fairly useful' and 52 per cent found the 'visitdorking.com' website 'very good or fairly good'. Although residents felt there were enough pubs and restaurants, just under 20 per cent felt there was too little variety. Interestingly 43 per cent of residents thought the car-parking charges were 'reasonable', 31 per cent objecting to them but still using the town and 10 per cent objecting to them and would not use the town. The thorny larger supermarket issue revealed an interesting result with 32 per cent of residents saying they would shop more often if there was a larger supermarket in Dorking. Yet 41 per cent said they would 'probably not' or 'definitely not' shop more often even if there were a large supermarket; developers and planners take note!

The survey then asked for some

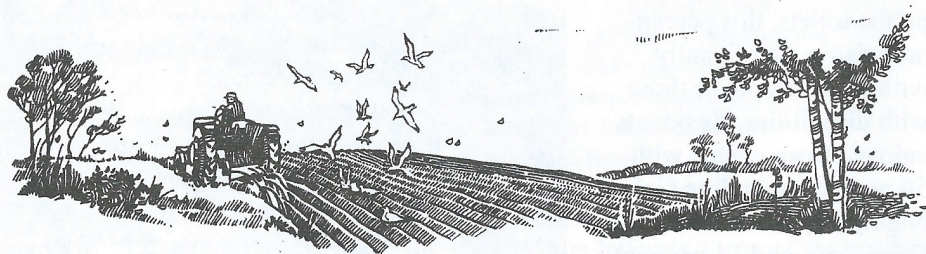


open suggestions, firstly what single improvement they would like to see in Dorking. Not surprisingly 'better traffic management' came first, with free/cheaper/more parking a close second. Secondly we asked what improvement to the shopping offer would attract people to the town; again not surprisingly 'more clothes shops' was the highest score, with 'better variety of shops' being second and, contrary to the earlier responses, 'larger supermarket' was third. The overall survey showed that the Dorking residents felt better about

their town than the Leatherhead residents and that Dorking's surrounding villages used the town regularly. Now we have these statistics (which can be interpreted in many ways) we can use them to focus our efforts on what is most important to the majority of people. Although it may be good to remember what Mark Twain (or was it Disraeli?) said about lies and statistics.

* 797 residents surveyed from Dorking and surrounding villages, © MVDC 2004.

Simon Matthews



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
Downs, 156 High Street, RH4 1BQ (880 110)	Solicitors and notaries
Downsman Ltd, Overdene, Paper Mews, RH4 2TU (887 023)	Management services
Ellis Atkins & Co, 1 Paper Mews, 330 High Street, RH4 2TU (886 681)	Chartered accountants
Friends Provident plc, Pbdham End, RH4 1QA (654 4220)	Financial services
Garth House Nursing Home, Tower Hill Road, RH4 2AY (880 511)	Nursing home
Hart Scales & Hodges, 159 High Street, RH4 1AD (884 432)	Solicitors
Hulsta Studio, 120 South Street, RH4 2EU (880 330)	Contemporary furniture specialists
International Sports Marketing Ltd, Bales Court, Barrington Road, RH4 3EJ (743 322)	Marketing consultants
Kuoni Travel Ltd, Deepdene Avenue, RH5 4AZ (840 888)	Tour operators
Munro, Ian, 10 High Street, RH4 1AT (882 270)	Men's outfitters
Newspaper Press Fund, Dickens House, 35 Wathen Road, RH4 1JY (887 511)	Charity
Newton & Co, Ranmore House, 19 Ranmore Road, RH4 1HE (884 208)	Chartered accountants
Omya UK Ltd, Curtis Road, RH4 1XA (886 688)	Minteral extraction
Patrick Gardner & Co, 16 South Street, RH4 2HL (887 775)	Estate agents
Priory School, The, West Bank, RH4 3DG (887 337)	School
Rose Hill Nursing Home, 9 Rose Hill, RH4 2EG (882 622)	Nursing home
Sears, Phillip, Designs, 18c Horsham Road, RH4 2JD (884 477)	Architectural building surveyors
Seymours Garden Centre, Stoke Road, Stoke D'Abernon, Cobham, KT11 3PU (01932 862 530)	Garden centre
Songhurst, W Ltd, Rayleigh House, Chapel Lane, Westcott, RH4 3PJ (880 411)	Builders
Super Specs, 62 High Street, RH4 1AY (875 201)	Opticians
Treeline 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
Viscount Agencies, Concept House, 3 Dene Street, RH4 2DR (880 715)	Duty free agency
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

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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