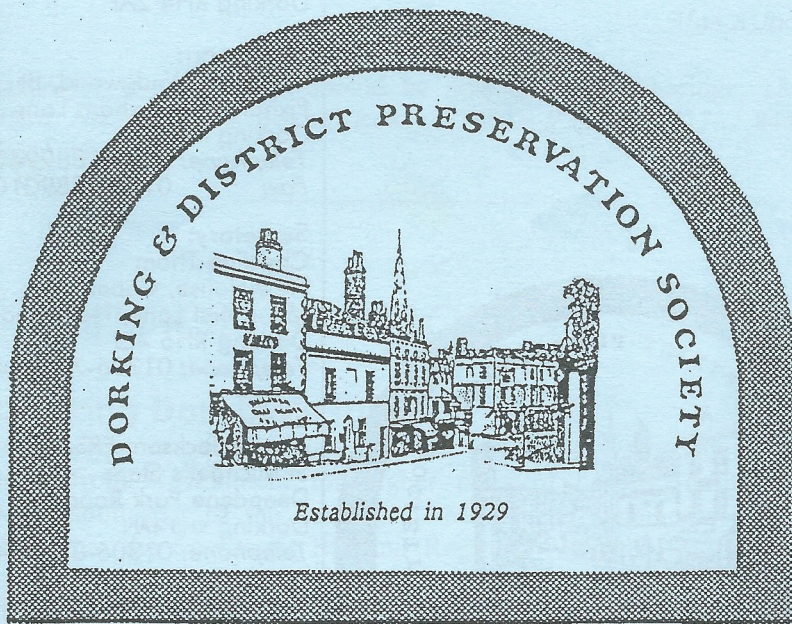


NEWSLETTER

of the Dorking & District Preservation Society

No. 45

Autumn 2006



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NEWSLETTER

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editorial

Having edited this Newsletter since its birth in March 1990, I decided last February that its childhood and adolescence concluded, its place among local topical publications established (there is, or should be, a complete indexed set in Dorking Museum Library), it was high time I retired and no.45 would be my last. This was duly conveyed to the Society's Council on 23 March and the editorial chair is now open to any member prepared to devote a few hours three times a year, preferably someone computer-literate (unlike me) able to handle a Desk Top Publishing package. The Chairman (address on inside of front cover) would be pleased to hear from anyone interested but meanwhile Hank Etheridge has gallantly agreed to produce the April 2007 issue.

As I bow out, my sincere thanks go to Sir Martin and to Hank, who in recent years have been the most regular contributors, ensuring the editor is not left to provide the whole of the contents. Thanks also to the meticulous and conscientious Rachel Fardon for managing the production of each issue and for spotting errors I have overlooked.

Alan A Jackson

Material for the next issue should be sent to Hank Etheridge, 18 The Orchard, Ashurst Drive, Boxhill Road, KT20 7LP (tel/fax 01737 844379) by 5 March 2007.

chairman's report

Protecting Dorking's future

Over this year our Society has become increasingly worried about the pressure from Government for higher rates of house-building in the crowded south-east of the country. Ministerial statements suggested strongly that the South-east England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and through them Surrey County Council (SCC) and Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) would be required to increase the building rate. MVDC is at present required to build 171 housing units per year. It believes that

this figure can just about be maintained over the next 20 years by utilising 'brown-field' sites. Should Government force an increased rate on us, MVDC might well be obliged to take difficult decisions, involving the reclassification of Green Belt land as land available for building. This Society is deeply committed to the protection of the Green Belt, and we would bitterly oppose any move to take land from it.

If, however, the temptation to take Green Belt land is successfully resisted, the result is likely to be an even greater pressure on already developed land for redevelopment to greater densities. One way or another, unless MVDC can be persuaded to establish strategies to handle this pressure, we will see existing pressure for more housing to be relieved by a continuation of ad hoc piecemeal development in the most vulnerable areas around the edges of the town.

Derek Rowbotham and Hank Etheridge, with some help from me, have examined this trend in more detail and concentrated on specific areas recognised in the current Local Plan adopted in 1995. We have surveyed specific areas in which permission for development has been given. In many cases permission was granted on appeal. A majority of them related to plots that were designed to accommodate a commodious detached house, often with gardens, trees and hedges within ample garden space. Two of the areas we examined, Chichester, Calvert and Keppel Roads, and Deepdene Park/Wood, are designated as 'Residential Areas of Special Character', a classification which the Department of Communities & Local Government (DCLG) will henceforth disallow. Other areas we have identified are Tower Hill, the land around Ridgeway Road; North Holmwood and land to the west of Vincent Lane, including Priory and Powell Corderoy schools.

Our analysis of successful planning applications shows that they are coming forward piecemeal in all areas of the town in a way that we believe will promote changes in character likely in turn to promote extensions of the footprint of the town. We are therefore proposing to MVDC that the forthcoming Local Development Framework contains a policy that can be applied in the consideration of proposed development in any of the areas given above. None of these areas include any Green Belt land.

The draft wording of the Policy is:-

In these areas development will only be permitted if it does not represent ad hoc or piecemeal scattered development that would erode the area on the edge of the town and cause the reduction of the visual coherence of the town to the detriment of its character.

In other words, if there is any development in these areas, it must be the result of proactive planning, which takes into account the provision of services and ensures that the overall character of the area is preserved.

Seats in Dorking town centre

We have been approached by several members complaining that the provision of seats in Dorking, particularly in the High Street, is inadequate. Why, for instance, is it not possible for there to be a seat on which you can sit down while waiting for a taxi to take you home? These requests of course come from the elderly who can no longer drive a car, and for whom to stand about waiting is indeed a hardship.

Of course there should be seats, but the matter is not as simple as that. After dark, quite different considerations prevail. As the pubs close, young people continue to socialise in the street. They have had too much to drink, and manners are not of the best, food from takeaways and its packaging gets left on the ground and the odd window gets broken. The resulting damage and mess has to be cleared by the Council. Guests at the *White Horse* may be deterred from returning. Shop windows can be repaired, but the shop also loses business until it is repaired and, if the windows of a shop are broken repeatedly, its insurance premium goes up. Seats are therefore not popular with businesses in Dorking.

It is intolerable that the elderly should be put to inconvenience because of the exuberance (and public bad manners) of the young. I cannot believe that the extra expense of clearing up round one or two more seats can be a significant item in the Council's budget. The businesses in Dorking have a more serious point, and we must address it. Only seats in full view, round which numbers can easily congregate, are likely to attract undesirable attention. Can we not identify sites for benches which are not likely to attract late-night revellers and also identify sites where, during the day, it would be convenient for the elderly to take the weight off their feet, especially if they are having to wait for a taxi or friends to pick them up?

If any readers have ideas on this topic, would they please write to me, at the address on the inside cover of this Newsletter.

The will of Owen Russ

I have mentioned this so often in the past, that I risk no longer being believed. It does, however, look as if the exchange of contracts between Mole Valley District Council and this Society for the purchase of the site

and the building that houses the Dorking & District Museum will not be much longer delayed. That it will happen is not in doubt.

We have already jumped the gun a bit, and started on the next phase. I explained in the last Newsletter the procedure we followed to choose an architect. The architects we chose, Cullum & Nightingale, have produced a model to show how the site can be developed to provide the greatest amount of museum space. This first exercise represents the maximum they reckon we can build on the site – a museum on four levels, basement, ground floor, first floor and a smaller second floor. Not unexpectedly, our quantity surveyor's estimate of its probable cost is rather higher than it is sensible for us to imagine we can raise, even with the full support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and the generosity of our supporters. We are asking our architect to produce less ambitious plans, more in line with what we may expect to be able to pay for.

Our aim is to submit phase I of our Heritage Lottery grant application by the end of November. We are having some busy weeks. More in our next newsletter.

Thank you, Alan, and thank you, Rachel, too

In his Editorial Alan Jackson has broken the news that he is retiring from his editorship of this Newsletter, which he has undertaken ever since its inception in 1990. For seventeen years he has carried this responsibility with enthusiasm and skill, originally twice a year, and after 1995 three times a year. In his editorials he has never shrunk from writing on controversial subjects and, as the editor, he has unfailingly seen to it that the contributions of others are grammatical and correctly spelt. Above all, everything that he has produced has been readable. We owe him our most heartfelt thanks.

Rachel Fardon, our Newsletter Producer, writes: 'Old age is also catching up with me, and I have been aware for some time that it would be wise for me, too, to relinquish some of the jobs that I do. Therefore, with the post of the Editor now vacant, it seems an appropriate time for me to ask the Chairman to find a successor to take over the computer work.'

Dear Rachel, you have been invaluable, and we will miss you, but I will do as you ask. We are greatly in your debt.

Martin Wedgwood

planning report

Greystones in Deepdene Park Road has taxed our Planning Committee during the summer months. That, along with a proposed Cellphone mast next to the Cemetery, has produced innumerable 'phone calls from nearby residents and letters to MVDC and the Inspectorate from us. The first Greystones Appeal for two houses was dismissed. The second, for four houses, was looked at by the Inspectorate on 27 September. We have not yet received notification about the outcome but, no doubt, by the time you read this, a decision will have been made. We are keeping our fingers crossed that it also may be dismissed.

The Cellphone mast, refused by Mole Valley, was dismissed by the Inspectorate upon appeal. They said that it would be an intrusion upon the landscape, not a health and safety issue or its proximity to the school.

In our last report, we stated that we had objected to an extension to Little Cornards in Rose Hill because it made the building too bulky. It has since been approved. We also objected on similar grounds about a house in Ladyegate Road. It too has been approved. Not a very good record for us so far!

The High Ashurst Application on the cusp of Box Hill, Headley and Mickleham when discussed at the Council Planning meeting, ended up with a split decision. Building on the Green Belt was allowed but with lots of objections to the proposed egress and exit from the site along the unmade Headley Heath Approach and Ashurst Drive on Box Hill. Because of the contentious nature of this application, the meeting about it at County Hall has been moved to 11 October. Even if the County override the objections, it will still have to go to Ruth Kelly MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, for approval as the development is proposed for the Green Belt.

The application for 29 houses to be built in a large field in Ifield Road in Charlwood has, as we expected, been refused.

During July, my committee was asked by MVDC to carry out some research on Mickleham Downs House Stable block, owned by Lord Beaverbrook. We did this with considerable help from Bette Phillips at the Museum. People already living in this beautiful group of buildings also were of great help in compiling the research, and donated a 1911 postcard of Mickleham Downs House – now demolished – given to them by Beaverbrook's mother. I have now given it to the Museum.

Research was done for Coldharbour Parish Council regarding the history of a farmhouse on the edge of the grounds of **Minnick Wood House** in **Anstie Lane**. The proposal was to demolish this old farmhouse and replace it with a large Victorian/Edwardian style reproduction building to which we objected on design grounds, and because of the fact that here was an opportunity to build something of the 21st century rather than harking back to the past. The proposed design has since been approved.

On the other hand, we heartily approved of a beautifully designed, contemporary-style house at **Furzefield Copse, Ewood Lane, Newdigate**. We said in our letter to MVDC that this was a house that *needed* to be built. It has been approved.

Quite a while back, we were asked by the owners of **River Cottage, Brockham** to suggest ways of overcoming their flooding problem. We duly wrote back making suggestions based upon some research we carried out on the subject. In August this year, the owners of the Cottage made an application to raise the inside of the building, adding about 21 courses to the top of the dwelling and raising the roof accordingly, an engineering feat of some complexity but an intelligent answer to the problem. Although this application came just as we received a Drought Order and flooding couldn't have been further from our minds, we had no objections. It was approved.

In the Local Plan there is an item called DTC 18 (Dorking Town Centre 18). This states that the Council does not encourage older buildings being 'tarted up' (*my words*); rather they should be demolished and a new property built on the plot. In **South Street, Dorking** the owners of **Haybarn House** applied to redesign the exterior of the front of the building to be in keeping with its neighbour, with internal alterations to make apartments. The retail ground floor would remain as commercial premises, and windows at the side of the building would be removed to avoid overlooking adjacent houses. We discussed this application with both the owner of the building and the Case Officer concerned, the latter digging her heels in somewhat. After a lot of discussion about the economics of demolishing and rebuilding compared with re-cladding, we decided that some leeway could be made by Planning in this case. We have written to MVDC in this context and await their decision.

In August, we disapproved of a proposal to build a road through a wood near **Pebblecombe Hill** that would exit onto a particularly unsuitable part of **Boxhill Road**. It has been refused.

We made an objection to a proposal to remove a rural, five-bar gate from the front of a property in **Holmbury St Mary** and replace it with an

ugly, slatted wooden gate more suitable in front of suburban commercial premises.

The owners of **Beatrice Webb House** in **Holmbury St Mary** recently applied to convert an unused horse training building into a dwelling with stables. The design made little change to the exterior of the building and the conversion inside was extremely pleasing. After discussion, we agreed to support this application. It has since been refused on the grounds that 'it would constitute an inappropriate form of isolated residential development in this rural area detrimental to its current character in conflict with LO4 and Local Plan RUD19'.

We really liked alterations proposed for **Paddock Stables** in **Balchins Lane, Westcott**, and relayed this to MVDC Planning in a letter. It was approved. Shortly afterwards the applicants requested a variation to the Conditions of Approval to install Photo-Voltaic panels into the south facing roof. The latest Government advice on these installations is that as long as the panels are flush with the roof tiles they should be allowed. Slightly more rigorous conditions, however, would apply in Conservation areas and with Listed buildings.

One of the frequent complaints we hear from members and others is the loss of school playing fields and other sporting venues to developers, usually with the approval of local councils. These areas are deemed by councils as 'Open Space' and, as such, viable sites for housing. In Scotland, a draft (SPP11) to be presented to the Assembly would stop this happening, stating that these spaces are 'the green lungs for our towns, cities and villages'. Councils would be required to carry out an audit of such spaces in their district, and set out a strategy for managing them. We hope that people in SEERA and the Treasury read *Planning* magazine and will consider a similar scheme for the South East.

While this sort of Town Planning thinking is happening in Scotland, here in England an influential Government think tank is advocating building on green belts. The United Kingdom – one nation?

Hank Etheridge
Chairman of the Planning Committee

[At the 2006 Conference, the Conservative Party Leader also hinted that a future Conservative Government might be disposed to consider the sanctity of green belts. (Ed.)]

news&views

Free bus travel

All Surrey residents aged 60 or over are now eligible for free bus travel within the county boundary after 09.30. The requisite passes are available from the MVDC cashiers' counter at Pippbrook. So far the buses appear not to have gained any noticeable increase in passenger loading. Car traffic on all roads continues to grow.

More trains to Reigate, Redhill, Gatwick Airport, Guildford and Reading

The First Great Western fast service on this line, which calls at Dorking Deepdene station, will be increased from hourly to half hourly with the new timetable from 10 December 2006.

Surrey Waste Plan

The Society has objected to three sites out of the proposed 27: Clock House Brickworks Capel, Randalls Road Leatherhead and Reigate Quarry Betchworth. The separate plan to extend quarrying at the latter has also been the subject of an objection.

It would seem prudent, in view of the associated increase in heavy road traffic on the already congested A24, that should the Capel site nevertheless be the final choice, every effort should be made to get the Surrey County Council to launch an in-depth study of the rail transport alternative. This would involve one or two suitably-located collection points with room for a siding and a short siding just south of Ockley & Capel station. Rail transport of waste has been used for many years by Greater London and other area authorities, and the line between Dorking and Horsham in particular is at present used well below its potential capacity. (See also the note on page 9 on the views of the CPRE)

Local History Group

Membership shows an increase over last year and attendance at the monthly meetings remains high. A modern digital projector has been purchased from bequest funding. The annual journal *Dorking History* edited by Terry Wooden, is now available. The Winter Outing on Saturday 24 March 2007 will visit the Museum in Docklands. Membership enquiries will be welcomed by Barbara Parnell (01306 886721).

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Surrey Branch

The following notes are extracted from a report to the DDPS by Barry Collins.

New members recruited in recent months have brought the Surrey Branch total to 1,966, making it the third largest after Kent and Sussex. Mr Collins (01306 887522) urges DDPS members to join to help the Branch reach its 2006 target of 2,000 and will be pleased to supply details of membership.

The CPRE has argued that the Surrey Waste Plan ignores potential waste facility sites outside but close to the Surrey boundary, notably Gatwick/Crawley, near to a major waste source and more accessible for heavy waste traffic.

The CPRE is pleased that Surrey County Council has agreed with District Councils to finance a consultant to justify designations of Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) which are considered essential if the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is to be protected adequately in the longer term. AGLV has a longer history as a planning policy than AONB and is important in our area for such locations as the Cherkley Court estate.

A useful book

If your house or bungalow was built between 1901 and 1939, a period which saw a considerable amount of residential development in our area, you may like to know about a new publication – *Understanding the Edwardian and Inter-War House* by the architect Dr Alan Johnson (The Orowood Press, 2006, ISBN 186126 834 3). Such houses often exhibit a level of craftsmanship and solidity not found in more modern properties and are increasingly sought after for their period look, high ceilings, generous room sizes, large windows and spacious gardens.

In his first two chapters Alan Johnson surveys the historical background, the house types and estate development but the bulk of this book (pages 38-219) consists of reference material, offering a detailed practical description and analysis of construction characteristics, along with a guide to authentic restoration, renovation and improvement. There is some disquieting material on major pitfalls for the unwary, which may be encountered in important features, notably foundations, drains and roofs but

the author explains how they should be remedied. He notes that foundations are especially vulnerable to subsidence and heave when resting on clay subsoil but may also be rendered unstable if drains are damaged by tree roots, allowing water to escape and accumulate under the load-bearing exterior walls. Other problems such as wood rot, insect damage, rising damp, defective damp courses and damage within cavity walls are among those discussed. The text is well illustrated with plans, diagrams and photographs.

Waterstone's in South Street will obtain a copy of this book for its published price of £19.95 or the Dorking public library will secure a loan copy for a modest fee.

Flat chance – houses v apartments

In an article in *The Times* in June this year, journalist Susan Emmett said that developers were putting up mainly apartment buildings on urban, brownfield sites that the majority of young buyers did not want, preferring individual houses in the suburbs. From 2005 to Spring 2006, 44 per cent of all new housing were apartment blocks with one or two bedroom dwellings with 'Studio' apartments tucked away in odd corners of the buildings. Three-bedroom apartments were likely to be 'Penthouses' at exorbitant prices.

Official projections suggest that – UK wide – households should grow at around 209,000 a year until 2016 but it is estimated that only around 159,000 homes will be built each year, a shortfall of 50,000 – that's 500,000 short by 2016. Add to this the impact on housing to accommodate the projected numbers of incoming EU and other foreign nationals and you can see that there will be an enormous problem.

Now of course, young people want to live in their own houses with gardens, garages, conservatories and all the other amenities and the privacy this implies. However, logic dictates that only a minority can achieve this dream if we wish to preserve the Green Belt and other parts of the countryside from being concreted over. Developers are urging the Government to let them build in these areas. "British homebuyers are not getting the homes they want" quoted the MD of a large development company. Because the Government want to build vast numbers of houses here in the South East, you can see that they are quite likely to give in to developers to achieve their aims. MPs on the Housing, Planning and Local Government Parliamentary Select Committee added their voice by stating

"The recent increase in two-bedroom flats in town and city centres needs to be balanced by an increase in family housing."

With regard to apartments versus houses, figures from the Halifax show that the price of a new apartment fell by almost 5 per cent while the cost of a semi-detached house rose by nearly 6 per cent so there is really no contest for first-time buyers. This does mean of course, that they will have much more financial chance of getting onto the housing ladder and upgrading at a later date when they are in a position to do so. On the whole, I think that people unable to afford the enormous price of houses in our area may quite well have no other choice than to move into apartments. In some cases, apartment buildings are better designed than the ubiquitous, pastiche boxes being built as individual houses these days. I recently finished a watercolour of an apartment building in Shepperton that, apart from some silly false balcony railings, was very well designed, fitting into its surroundings by the river extremely well.

It is obvious that there will be a massive increase in housing in the next few years, no matter which party is in power. This being so, we shall need more nurses, police, care workers, utility workers and a whole army of other people to service these extra homes. Apartments, at reasonable prices, seem to be an answer to accommodating them.

Because of Dorking's geographical orientation, to have too many apartment buildings within the town would tend to spoil the special character that the Society is fighting to retain. At present, there are two apartment buildings proposed for South Street. Other sites are Harrowlands Nurses' Home and an extension of the Linden Homes development on the Deepdene roundabout and A24. Planning permission has already been granted for the latter two sites and there are likely to be two small apartment buildings at Tutt's Garage on London Road at some time in the future.

Other tempting sites for developers could be the brownfield industrial areas around Dorking West rail station. The problem is that there could be other prospective sites in Dorking that the Society would not be happy with and which we are in the process of identifying for the upcoming Local Development Framework. There is already an application to demolish a bungalow on a large piece of ground in Leslie Road, off Pixham Lane, and build a small apartment complex. My Planning Committee are utterly opposed to this and there are two or three other sites where a house could be demolished and an apartment building put up. We must be on our toes to make sure that *any* building in and around Dorking must not in any way

spoil its character. At the same time we must be alert to any encroachment on the Green Belt and other parts of the surrounding countryside.

The next few years are going to be difficult ones for the Society's Planning Strategy team and, for that matter, the Mole Valley District Council, who will have to satisfy dictates from the South East England Assembly (SEERA) and the Government, who are pushing for even more housing than SEERA have indicated. Apartment building is one way of housing more people in a smaller area of land. That along with more terraced housing is a likely route that the Government will take.

Hank Etheridge

Digging the dirt on Box Hill

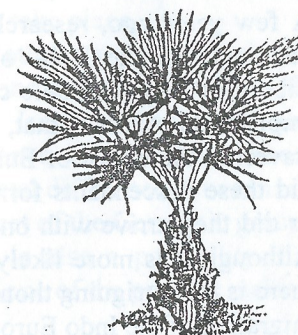
I moved onto Box Hill twenty five years ago, and found that gardening 700ft above sea level didn't restrict my choice of flowers and plants to Eidelweiss and Alpines. Previous to this, I had gardened in Hampshire, Berkshire and mid-Surrey where I tended various-sized gardens with varying soil types at houses I owned at one time or another in those shires and county. The tending bit was usually just done at weekends: you could say that I was a part-time dirt digger and planter.

My interest in gardening was prompted 67 years ago by my grandfather's gardener 'Truckle' – no one but he and the Census knew his full name – who grew the most wonderful range of vegetables and soft fruit in our modestly sized kitchen garden that was turned into equally wonderful dishes by our cook, Mrs Prankard. Truckle, although unable to read or write, had an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of all things horticultural. When I was home for the holidays, he would take me under his wing and instil in me a *regard* rather than a 'love' for gardening and the tasty bounty it provides.

Back on Box Hill, my garden is considerably smaller than those I have tended and developed at other houses. Because of my busy schedule at work – I was in Advertising – for the first few years, all I did was to plant shrubs and masses of seasonal bulbs that needed the minimum of attention. Later, when I had my own company, I installed a small pond and developed an area for soft fruit that, due to lots of double digging and heaps of manure, cropped heavily each year. I restricted vegetable growing to containers of various shapes and sizes in which I grew carrots, beetroot and potatoes.

Later still, when I had semi-retired, and being a 'Suck-it-and-See' sort of gardener, I thought I would try to grow some dwarf rhododendrons and azaleas. I suspected that the soil covering solid chalk beneath it would be alkaline, so I dug deep holes, filled them with peat compost (this was before we all became concerned about it and turned to coir compost), and put in the shrubs. The dwarf rhododendrons have layered and produce masses of blooms. The azalea, unfortunately, has gone to the big garden in the sky. With regard to soil, I found out later that, on Box Hill, it is mainly ph neutral although there are places that have accumulated leaf mould over the years, making it slightly acidic. Soil scientists tell me that the reason for the neutral ph is due to a layer of clay mixed with large amounts of flint that, unlike some clays strata, makes it free draining. This fact, they told me, combined with the influence of the chalk sub-strata, should make the overlying soil alkaline rather than its actual neutral state. That's the science bit, now back to me.

When I first arrived on the Hill, winters were harsh. I have seen diesel freeze solid during times when the temperature dropped to 12 below zero. Lots of my shrubs perished during those years when they thawed out too quickly, rotted and died. Among these were a daphne shrub I had grown from a cutting taken from the one at our family home in Winchester and a myrtle grown from a cutting from the one in Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. One beloved plant has survived however, a Chusan Palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*). I brought this palm to Box Hill with me in 1981. It was in a large terracotta pot that stood in my living room during the winter and outside on my patio during the summer. In 1986, the year of the hurricane, and because it was still outside, it was blown over, smashing its pot and landing in my pond. At the time I had a Studio in Reigate and was extremely busy so I dug a hole on the far side of the pond and planted the palm in it. "You'll either live or die" I muttered to myself and left it. Twenty years on, it stands about eighteen feet high with palm leaves measuring three feet wide



Trachycarpus fortunei

As the years have progressed, I note from gardening articles I have written over the years, that springs are coming earlier and earlier, and autumn is coming later and later. I intend to embrace global warming and,

when the builders working on my place at the moment have finished, to replant with subtropical species with lots of grasses, ferns and drought-resistant plants. "If you can't beat it, join it" I say. If the Editor allows, I'll let you know how I am getting on.

Adam Jolyon

Membership changes

We regret to report the deaths of –

Mr J R Evans, Westhumble.

Mrs G M Barnett, Liss, Hants

We welcome the following new members –

Mr & Mrs Lapinskas, Deepdene Wood

Mr & Mrs Peter Bolitho, West Bank

Mr Francis Bennett, Howard Road

Mrs Valerie Greenwell, Eastfield, Henfold Lane, Beare Green

Mrs E R Hughes, Broomhurst Court, Ridgeway Road

Mr E P Elderton, Market Street, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent

Where do we come from?

A few years ago, researchers at Cambridge University reported that they had matched the DNA of a frozen body of a 400,000-year-old man in Siberia to that of people currently living in a village in Oxfordshire. The implication of this is that, over thousands of years, descendants of this man traversed the whole of Europe to end up in Britain. Now, the question is: did these descendants form the Neolithic, pre-Celtic inhabitants of Britain or did they arrive with one of the waves of Celtic peoples at a later date? Although it is more likely that they came with the first, pre-Celtic wave, there is the intriguing thought that they could have been part of the massive migration of the Indo Europeans, of whom the Celts were a part.

The Indo Europeans

Without going into great archaeological or histero-linguistic details, the Indo Europeans first came to light in the 18th century, when James Parsons in 1767, and Sir William Jones a few years later, came to the conclusion that there were affinities in many European languages with the ancient

Indian language of Sanscrit. These affinities were in the numbering system and words for water, sheep, milk, bread and many others. It was during the course of a lecture by Jones he quoted – almost as an aside:

The Sanscrit language, whatever may be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a strong affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the form of grammar, than could have been produced by accident; so strong that no philologist could examine all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source which, perhaps, no longer exists. There is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a different idiom, have the same origin with the Sanscrit; and old Persian might be added to the same family.

Since that time, it has been proved that we can also include the same origins for Armenian, Albanian, Hittite (now extinct), all of the Slavic languages, Latvian, Irish/Scottish Gaelic, British (Welsh), all of the Germanic languages (from which English is derived), and all the Romance languages. At one time, around 6,500 years ago, these languages were one: 'Proto Indo European'.

It is thought, but by no means proven, that the Proto Indo Europeans emerged as a cohesive grouping in what has been termed 'the Pontic/Caspian' region which comprises a large chunk of southern Russia around the Caspian Sea between 4500 and 3500BC, the latter date being when it is thought the massive dispersal started to take place.

It is unlikely that these people were an ethnic grouping, rather a linguistic one, who for economic and other reasons migrated to the Pontic Caspian and adopted the Proto Indo European language spoken by the original technically advanced or 'Elite Dominance Group' they joined. One of the reasons for this assumption is the skeletal difference between the migrating groups, especially in the bones of the feet of the Germanic groups and those of the Italo/Celtic peoples. There is also a possibility that descendants of the Siberian man could have been one of the peoples making up these proto Indo Europeans.

These early ancestors of ours are credited with the domestication of the horse and were the first to build two- and four-wheeled carts and chariots, not to mention the double-bladed battle axe. From what we know about the peoples they became after the dispersal, they were a clan-based society, with elected chieftains and had already started to construct a rudimentary law code. Physically, they could have looked like this

reconstruction of a 6,000-year-old skull excavated from the region –



This reconstruction of a 6,000-year-old skull from the Pontic/Caspian region of southern Russia could represent the physical type of the Indo Europeans

For reasons that are unclear at this time, groups of the Indo Europeans started moving out of the region in all directions. Some, the 'Arya', moved into Persia and Northern India, displacing or absorbing the indigenous populations. Another group, with affinities to the Italo/Celtic group, moved further east to the borders of Tibet and China. Designated as 'Tocharian' from the area in which their literature and mummified remains were found, they were a tall, red-haired people who wore tartan. Who do they remind you of?

A large number moved up through the Caucasus eventually to become the Baltic/Slavonic and Germanic peoples, while others moved down into Anatolia (Turkey) forming the peoples that were to become the Armenians and Hittites, and west into Greece, becoming the Mycenaens, and even further west to become the Italic tribes of Italy, displacing the Etruscans, a non-Indo European people. Over many hundreds of years, another group of Indo Europeans moved through Switzerland, across Southern France into Spain. A splinter group moved north up through France, and across the channel into Ireland and Britain, forming what we now call the Gauls or Celts.

Why different languages?

When these various Indo European groups moved into non-Indo European territories, either as 'technically advanced immigrants' or what is called 'elite dominance groups', the non-Indo Europeans, over time, came to speak the language of the incomers. At the same time, the incomers borrowed words, and sometimes grammatical structures, from the host (or conquered) country. Also, as the Indo Europeans moved into new areas, they came across trees, features and wildlife for which they had no words in

their core language so they either coined them or used the local names. One of the major differences between the emergent languages of Asia and Europe was the famous division between *centum* and *satem* languages. This refers to the Proto-Indo European sound **k* which has different outcomes in different languages. The word for a hundred **k'mtom*, yields the *k* sound in Latin, Old Irish, Greek and Gothic, but changes to a sibilant (s-sound) in Indic, Iranian, Lithuanian and so on. This process went on for thousands of years throughout Asia and Europe, establishing the languages we know of and speak today.

Apart from the Basques in Europe, the Afro-Caribbean and southern Asian element in the UK, most of us come from these very first Indo Europeans, although it is obvious that there must also be many descended from Neolithic, Cro-Magnon inhabitants of early Britain. On the other hand, there are many Indian Asians in this country who are also descended from our early ancestors, which calls into question some of the hostility they encounter.

Hank Etheridge

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