

NEWSLETTER

of the Dorking & District Preservation Society

No. 51

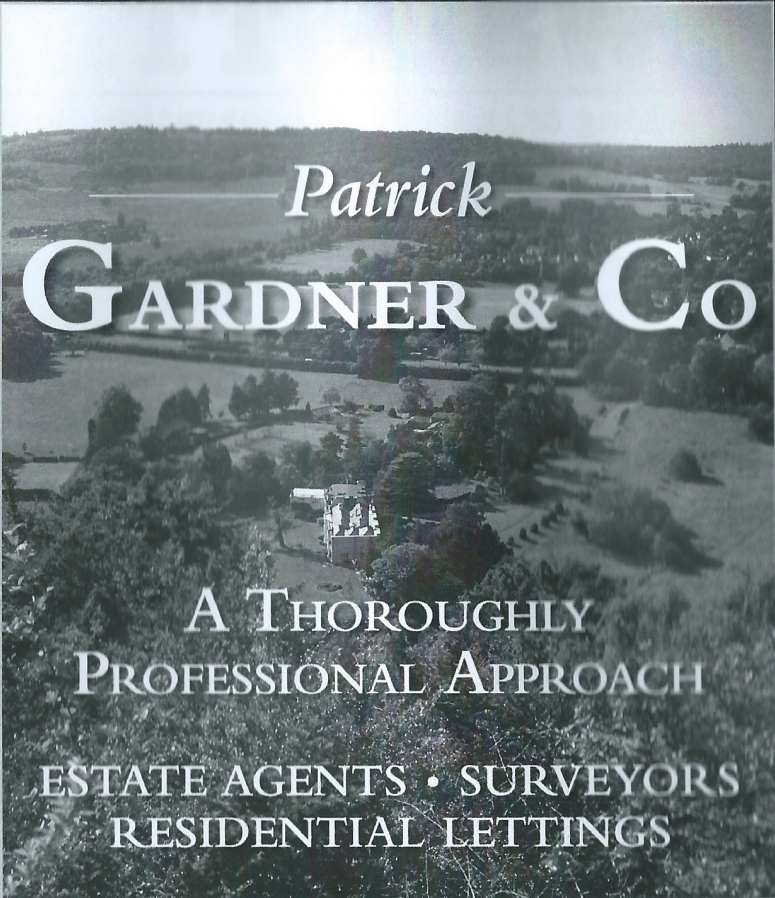
Autumn 2008

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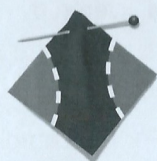
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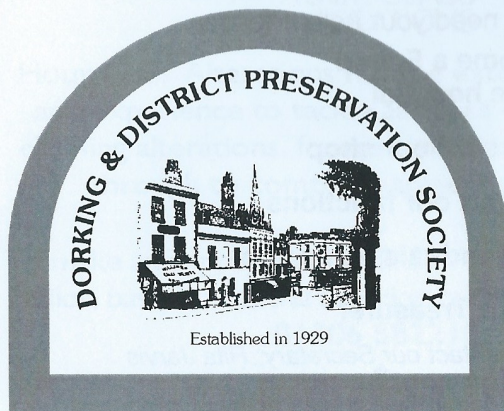
For more information, contact our Secretary: Rita Jarvis
01306 882695

NEWSLETTER

of the Dorking & District Preservation Society

Contents

Editorial.....	5
Chairman's Report.....	7
Planning Report.....	9
News & Views	11
Homes for All	14
Letters	17
Jane Austen & Dorking.....	18
Dorking Museum	20
Mole Valley's Hidden Treasures	22
Adam Jolyon	24



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Free to members

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editorial



Three times a year, I have to bully, cajole and even beg colleagues and others to write articles for the Newsletter. So far, I have been reasonably successful but – for goodness sake – this is YOUR Newsletter, why don't you send me relevant articles to publish? Your name in print: think about it!

Again, with a certain amount of cajoling and begging, we have persuaded Companies, Professionals and Craftsmen to advertise in the magazine to help pay for the ever-increasing costs of production. All we ask is that you look at them first when you are seeking services. If you do, we may keep them for another year.

Throughout what is jokingly called 'Our Summer', I have been reading articles in the local newspaper and listened to Dorking residents going on about the number of empty shops in the town, and why doesn't the Council lower the rates to encourage more traders and do more to make Dorking flourish. I have had my ear bent from both sides of opinion: those who don't want Dorking to change and are against new super stores. They also want

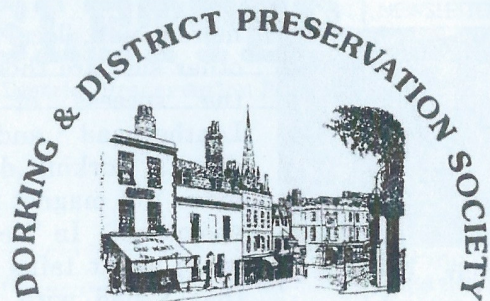
more, small, 'local' shops. On the other side are those who point to the success of Reigate and Leatherhead and ask: "Why doesn't Dorking do the same to make it a magnet for visitors and shoppers?" In 'News & Views', I write about talks on the subject that I had with Sandra Grant, Town Manager, with whom I work from time to time. Her comments may surprise you.

All of us in the Society's Planning Group are up in arms about the latest, silly intention by the government to almost double the number of homes they want built in the South East at the expense of taking more and more of the rapidly decreasing Green Belt for housing. Our pent-up rage is neatly expressed in Derek Rowbotham's article on the subject. Be angry ... be very angry.

I also recommend the intriguing article about Jane Austen's possible connection with Dorking.

Finally, check out the advertisement for the Dorking Museum's 2009 Calendar. Please buy one ... "We need the money guv". Send one to your friends for Christmas ... that's only (Gulp) twelve weeks away.

Hank Etheridge, Editor



Established in 1929

**The Autumn Meeting of the Society
will take place on
Thursday October 16th at 7.30pm
in the St. Martin's Christian Centre**



The Best Development Awards will be made



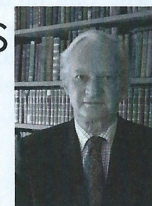
**After the Awards there will be
an interval for tea and biscuits**



**followed by an illustrated talk by
Judie English
on**

The Archaeology of the Mole Gap

chairman's report



July and August are not usually months in which much happens, with people away. On the Museum front, however, things have been moving. Bob Wilson, who is project developer at Biwaters, has worked out a really excellent plan for the new building. We are most grateful to him for the work he has done, and also to our president Adrian White, for allowing us to have the benefit of his services. The next task is to commission architect's drawings to show you at our October meeting (see below), which will also be the occasion of the launch of our appeal for funds because, despite the generosity of Owen Russ, we do not have enough to pay for it all. Details will be announced at our October meeting.

From the articles in this issue by Hank Etheridge and Derek Rowbotham you will read of the work they have been doing on the planning front. Government initiatives pour out nowadays, it seems almost non-stop. We are more than a little concerned with the latest development. Within the last few days the Government have published a 532-page document entitled 'Proposed Changes to the South-East Plan 2006-2026', in which it proposes to allocate 59,100 housing units over 20 years. This compares to the 31,400 units considered sustainable in Surrey by SEERA over the 16 years in 2001 – an absolute increase of 67%. DR has not yet had the opportunity or the time to examine this work thoroughly, but it is clearly alarming. We will be submitting our views.

The District Council's Consultation Draft of the Dorking Conservation Area

Appraisal and Management Plan was published towards the end of August. We were glad to see that the Planning Department has accepted our suggestion that the Conservation Area around Wathen Road be extended to include Hart Road, Rothes Road, Lonsdale Road and Jubilee Terrace.

We have decided to resuscitate the Society's Walk, which I hope will again become an annual event. See the note on page 11.

Pump Corner

No change on the ground since my comments on Pump Corner in our last newsletter, but e-mails, both incoming and outgoing, have been filling up my file. Latterly I have been corresponding with County Councillor David Munro, who chairs the County Council committee on Highway matters. He admits, with sorrow, that they do not know what to do. It looks as if the Highways Department knows it has made a mistake, but cannot find a way of putting things right that would satisfy the rules/guidelines within which they are obliged to operate. Two Mole Valley councillors sit on the local committee, which has also been given the task of finding a solution, and I am in contact with them also. Whether they will be able to find a solution within these rules I do not know.

No rules are set in concrete and if they are impeding the possibility of change to an intolerable situation it is time for the rules themselves to be looked at. I have written to this effect in my latest letter to Mr Munro. This is a matter which we do not intend to let go, and we will keep on harrying the relevant authorities until it is satisfactorily resolved.

The Old Fire Station

The view we expressed in our last newsletter that, whatever happens to the Old Fire Station, its north façade facing West

Street deserves to be preserved, seems now to be the generally accepted view. The County Council is reported to be in negotiations with the District Council and a housing association for it to be converted into commercial premises on the ground floor, with affordable housing units above. No doubt the negotiations, which have been going on for some time, are principally concerned with the price, which is, in its turn, presumably influenced by the estimated cost of repairing those parts of the building which have become seriously dilapidated.

Meanwhile another group has emerged which proposes to convert either the ground floor, or even the whole building, into an Arts Centre. This sounds splendid but the promoters need money as well as detailed plans and estimates of costs. If they succeed in setting up a successful Arts Centre they will deserve everyone's praise. The County Council, however, will need to be convinced that the buyers will be able to pay them on completion, and the District Council will need to be convinced that they will have a viable business before granting permission for change of use.

St. Martin's Walk

In our last newsletter I gave as this Society's view that the new, bigger Sainsbury's, if there is to be one, must have a frontage to the High Street, and that St. Martin's Walk should be pulled down to make way for it. Two of our members have written to say that they disagree. One of them is the owner of Fothergill's Coffee Lounge, and has premises in the upper half of St. Martin's Walk. With his permission we print extracts from his letter in this newsletter. Both writers are absolutely right. We must think again.

I still think that Dorking needs a newer, better Sainsbury's, right on the High Street, to ensure the continued vitality of the commercial centre of the

town. Can we do it in a way that will (a) leave the upper part of St. Martin's Walk undisturbed and (b) find a means to get supermarket delivery vans in and out to service the site? It seems impossible but I hope that our Society will continue to think positively for solutions as to how it can be done. If we think of a way, we will write about it in our newsletter. Please continue to write to us. We need to know what our members think.

Vacancies

Christine Thom finally stepped down as our Secretary in June, having carried the duties of a secretary for six years. We were most sorry to see her go. She has carried out her secretary's duties with great efficiency and she is much missed. To date we have not yet found her successor. Ed White has also stated that he must relinquish all his responsibilities as Treasurer, preferably by the end of September, although he is willing to help with the preparation of our Annual Report, due out early in the new year. Both of them are leaving because of much increased family commitments. Peter Parkin, now that he has reached the age of 80, has also indicated that he would like to hand over to a successor. Thus we are now looking not only for a secretary, but a treasurer and a membership secretary as well. I would like to find them, if possible, from among the ranks of our members.

If any readers would like to know more about these jobs, could they contact me on 01306-889941 or at mar-tin.wedgwood@ntlworld.com.

For membership secretary, I suggest you might contact Peter Parkin direct on 01306-881111 or at pcep@mac.com. These jobs can be tailored to your skills, so no-one need feel shy of coming forward.

Martin Wedgwood

planning report

No doubt due to the economic downturn, especially in the housing marketplace, we have had quite a few weeks with only five or six applications to view. There was one week, however, when, to our surprise, we had fifteen. That shook us out of our lethargy.

Most of the applications have been for minor extensions and a few barn conversions, but we did have two very interesting proposals for which we have sent comments to Mole Valley.

The first we looked at was a redesign of the proposal for the Malthouse pub site in Mill Lane. It is far superior to the first attempt by Thorncroft, the developers, that both the LPA and ourselves hated and which was subsequently withdrawn. The configuration of the new design has a slightly curved ground plan. This and the lower and more varied roof heights contribute to making the development visually less 'bulky'. We were impressed too with the long, narrow windows and, on the south and western elevations, red cedar, boxed features with lateral fenestration to avoid overlooking. Some of the windows will also have angled, louvered shutters for the same reason. We wholeheartedly gave it our approval.

The second interesting application was for an outstandingly well-designed modern building by architect Patrick Amos, proposed for part of the site of the Little Dudley listed building in South Street. My committee and I were involved in the design

of this project from the start, advising the applicant on what to build. The building will be mainly of glass with copper effect metalwork. It would have its own deep-level heat pump, and be built to high 'eco' standards. In our letter to MVDC, we acknowledged our involvement, and gave the proposal our blessing quoting PPG15, para 4.17, which states that 'on gap sites in conservation areas, developers should be encouraged to create imaginative and high quality designs that respect their context but do not imitate earlier styles'. It has since been refused.

As you may already know, the Mickleham Downs proposal was overwhelmingly refused at the MVDC Planning Committee meeting. All of us who had been involved in getting the scheme thrown out thought that, in light of the enormous amount of objections to the plan, the developer might decide to renovate the existing vacant buildings and add them to the other rented properties around the Victorian courtyard. It was also



possible that he might decide to move the development to the site of the long-demolished Mickleham Downs House. Instead, he has decided to go to Appeal. Various meetings of the

parties concerned – Councillor Ben Tatham, Mickleham Parish Council, CPRE, the Residents' Association and ourselves – to fight the Appeal which will mainly be about Green Belt issues.

The Wonham Mill project has finally been approved by Mole Valley, and Beryl Higgins and I were photographed and interviewed by the Dorking Advertiser because we had been so enthusiastic about it. A well-designed apartment building will replace the ugly, factory-like structure that has been demolished. It will have tunnels under it to allow the stream and flood waters to run under it. Hopefully, our suggestion that a hydro-electric generator be installed in the main tunnel to provide some of the power for the building will be taken up. The listed house on the site will be renovated to a high standard.

We have sent a letter to Mole Valley about a proposed extension to a 'Cottage' in North Holmwood. We said that although the extension would improve the look of the dwelling, it would also make it rather large. A Bull's eye window presently on the existing building has not been included in the proposal. As this feature lifts the rather dull building out of the mundane, we asked for its reinstatement. Apart from these quibbles, we had no objection.

Not all of our time is taken up with viewing new applications. We are often asked to write reports for MVDC's Planning Department. One of these was to comment on BT's intention to remove the familiar red 'phone booths from within the Dorking Conservation Area because of

their non-viability in this age of cell phones. The iconic Gilbert Scott-designed booths concerned are on London Road opposite the Esso service station and at the corner of Hampstead Road, and form part of the 'street scene'. We opined that the removal of the booth from London Road would not harm the street scene, there being a bright red pillar box next to it which would remain. The Hampstead Road booth's removal would detract from the street scene of which it is an integral part. However, we agreed that neither phone booth was of great community benefit, but regretted the loss of yet another part of our history.

A couple of weeks later, we compiled a report for Peter Mills, Mole Valley's Historic Environment Officer, this time to comment upon the present boundaries of Dorking's Conservation area. Our research and subsequent discussions found that the present boundary was satisfactory except for the area north of Wathen Road. It was our recommendation that the boundary should be extended to include Hart, Rothes and Ansell roads, all of which had vernacular Victorian buildings of equal interest to those in Wathen Road. Since we wrote this report, there has been a public exhibition showing our recommendations and others made by the Consultants hired to look at the Conservation Areas in Dorking.

*Hank Etheridge
Planning Chairman*

news&views

Betchworth Park – the Continuing Story

The Surrey Probation Area Unpaid Work Team spent one day a week throughout May pulling Himalayan Balsam by hand in an effort to help control what is a virulent pest on the site. This was also complemented by efforts by a few local users of the park who gave up some of their free time to help pull up this weed. These efforts were very much appreciated, as this is the only effective way of dealing with Balsam. This season's work was concluded with a final mow of the site to help the existing grass to out-compete the Balsam.

An application for a Felling Licence has been submitted to the Forestry Commission to thin out some of the younger oak and sycamores. This will allow the remaining trees to grow to their full potential, improve the biodiversity of the site and restore some of the views of the surrounding countryside.

A bat survey has also been carried out to ensure that the removal of the trees will not have a negative impact on the local bat population.

Welcome

Welcome to Mrs Lowry of Dorking, Mr & Mrs Hart of Newdigate and Mrs Tillet of Beare Green. Hopefully, the Executive will be able to

meet them personally at our Autumn Meeting.

Lord Nelson and Burford Bridge hotel – the facts

We had a telephone call from member Jan Elias who owns the Dorking Desk Shop in West Street. It was to tell us that he was disappointed that the new owners of Burford Bridge hotel were promoting their name instead of that of the historic hostelry. As an afterthought, he repeated the results of his research into Lord Nelson's stay at what was, originally, the Fox & Hounds, later the Burford Bridge Hotel, as you may have read in a previous Newsletter. His findings were that the Naval Hero DID NOT stay there with Emma Hamilton prior to leaving for Portsmouth to board 'Victory' and going to clobber the French at Trafalgar. In fact, his stay there with Emma was in 1801, just before he went off to command a squadron to attack the French fleet at Boulogne. Pass this info to your grandchildren before they sit their history exams.

Empty Shops

You will have read the mention in my editorial about the number of empty shops in Dorking. To get the factual information, I spoke at length with Sandra Grant, the Town Manager, who I know for a fact does an outstanding job for traders in the town. One of the comments bandied about regarding

Business Rates is that they should be reduced by the Council to encourage more retailers and services to take up some of the vacant premises. The fact of the matter is that Business Rates are levied by the government and so all the income goes to them and not to the local council, who have no control over the rates. The main reason for the perception that there are lots of empty shops is because of those in St. Martin's Walk which are managed by Sainsbury's who owns them. Although the shops at the High Street end are thriving, those at the lower end are mostly not in use. Take those away from the total and the percentage of vacant premises becomes average for a town the size of Dorking. Sandra told me that if the town had premises with larger floor spaces, major stores such as Debenhams or Dickens & Jones could dramatically increase the footfall in the shopping areas, and attract more people into the town. Until something positive happens with the Sainsbury's situation in St. Martin's Walk, this subject will remain an itch that will continue needing to be scratched. The next item continues the subject.

More about St. Martin's Walk

Talk about serendipity. While I was writing about empty shops, Sir Martin received a very long letter from Ashley Baker who owns Fothergills Coffee Lounge in St. Martin's Walk, containing nothing

but praise for the shopping centre. He says in the letter that: "The shopping centre itself is not an ugly monstrosity. If you were to compare the Swan Centre in Leatherhead or the Peacock Centre in Woking on its architectural merit, Dorking would win hands down". Further on, he states: "This is jolly pleasant [St. Martin's Walk] and should be remembered as an asset to the town". We agree. What the Society is concerned about is the uncertainty hanging over it.

DDPS Autumn Walk – Sunday October 5th

Our Autumn walk will take us through the River Mole Nature Reserve, led by officers from the Lower Mole Countryside Environment Agency, as well as our own geologist, Professor Richard Selley. The walk will take us through a variety of habitats from Common Meadows in North Leatherhead to the edge of Norbury Park in the south. There will be time to stop and discuss the features that make the river corridor special.

Meet at Park House (entrance from Randall's Road car park) Leatherhead in good time to depart at 2.30pm on Sunday, October 5th. At the end of the walk, there will be refreshments at Park House.

The walk will be of about 4 miles and should take, approximately, 2 hours. Friends and relatives (who do not need to be members of DDPS) will be welcome. Please wear suitable shoes for a riverside walk.

You may bring dogs but they must be under strict control as we shall be going through areas rich in wildlife.

You can just turn up on the day, but if you are able to notify Sarah Hawkes (01306 883699) in advance that you are coming, it would assist in judging numbers for the catering. There will be no charge to join the walk but there will be an opportunity to make a donation to DDPS.

Dorking's BT's red 'phone boxes

As you will have read, I mentioned our consultation with Mole Valley about BT wanting to remove some 'phone booths from the town. Although we were only concerned about those in the Conservation Areas, there were two others involved. One is at Oak Ridge and t'other on the corner of Ansell and High Street.

Mole Valley has now written to us asking if the Society would like to take responsibility for the booths if they are denuded of their telephone capabilities and left as shells. Under BT's 'Adopt a Kiosk' programme, this would mean us having to keep them clean and repainted from time to time. Having had experience on Box Hill of cleaning our 'phone booth, and having had to remove syringes and needles and other disgusting detritus, not to mention having to disinfect because of its use as a urinal, I recommended to the Chairman that it would not be a good idea. The booth in South Street is listed so will not be removed.

The Autumn Meeting

The Speaker at the Autumn Meeting will be Judy English, whose talk will be about "The Archaeology of the Mole Gap". The talk will be based upon her Thesis which gained her degree. As a student of Anglo Saxon history, I shall be spellbound up until the Norman Invasion, after which, all history is 'modern' to me.

The NUM3ERS GAME

With acknowledgements to Paramount TV Corp.

51%

The fall in the number of new home starts during the three months from April to June, compared with the same period last year.

National House Building Council Statistics

3000

The number of extra Offshore Wind Turbines needed to help meet EU targets of sourcing 15 per cent of energy renewables by 2020.

25%

Householder planning applications that will be taken out of the system under new regulation on October 1st.

Source: Planning Magazine & Sunday Times

Homes for All –

A Contentious Proposition

by Derek Rowbotham



IMPORTANT READING

The future for the South East is written in considerable detail in the publication **'The South East Plan – The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South East of England – Schedule of Changes and Reasoned Justification – July 2008'**. In this article, we refer to this document as the **'Changes'**. This outlines a regional planning strategy that the Government wants to implement over the period 2006–2020. It is spelled out in 532 pages carrying statutory force. The draft RSS prepared by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) 2003–2006 was examined in public by a Panel of Inspectors in 2006–2007, who recommended changes. The Secretary of State then proposed further changes which are now published for consultation.

Nine sub-regions are identified, all of which will focus on growth or regeneration. In these sub-regions, there are 22 'Regional Hubs', aimed to concentrate investment in multi-modal transport infrastructure, new development in health, education, social infrastructure and public services. In the Hubs, general economic growth, market and affordable housing, plus new retail and employment initiatives,

will be concentrated. Within Surrey, there will be an emphasis on an urban focus and renaissance. The part termed 'The London Fringe' will have 3 Hubs: Woking, Guildford and Redhill/Reigate. To the south, Gatwick/Horley is the 'International Gateway Air Hub'. Of the 3m national target of homes, 662,500 (22%) will be found in the region. Allocated to Surrey is an absolute 59,000 dwellings, up from 35,400 in the draft RSS. If this pattern of growth is achieved, consequential, unsustainable pressure will be loaded onto the space in Surrey.

Attack on the Green Belt

On top of the channelled growth and pressure, a detailed pattern of development has to be squeezed into the populous acres of Surrey, which contains 73% of the land subject to the safeguarding policy of the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB). The Changes to the RSS retains Green Belt policy, its continuation and support is emphasised, although allowance is made to permit selective reviews of the MGB to the NE of Guildford, and smaller scale reviews to other locations in Surrey through the Local Development Framework (LDF) process. The contradiction implicit in the retention of the Green Belt policy, with also the promotion of widespread housing development, is to be seen in the emerging Mole Valley LDF. This has to provide 3,760 homes, or 188 per annum, to be delivered over the plan period. Out of the 307 dwelling units proposed on the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), around the margins of Dorking, the Society has identified site development for 185 dwelling units (60%), which are within designated Green Belt or the extant AONB's/AGLV's.

At the heart of the argument in the 'Changes' is a less than convincing case to show why so many new dwellings are needed. The reasoned justification seems merely to conjure up numbers by a simplistic arithmetical exercise to determine allocation at district level. The query is whether these homes would realistically meet social as well as economic demand in terms of affordability. In the document, complicated reasoning is obscured by simple statements. There are reservations as to the limitations of the bottom-up, 'evidence-based underpinning', used in the allocation arithmetic. For example, the assertion that long term affordability is worsening draws on average house prices nearly being trebled, and average first-time buyer deposits rising from £5,134 to £42,930 in the 10 years from 1995. Despite the admitted limitations of the available technical data, and the absence of reasoning for a downturn in the market housing circumstances, the document goes on to state that long-term affordability must be based on increasing the supply of homes, on "commonsense grounds if nothing else". Further exaggeration is evident when the document states that Policy H1 numbers are to be treated as a minimum.

The extraordinary increase in the housing target has been rejected by many who are versed in the planning of the region, and these are summarised in the words of the past Chairman of SEERA – Keith Mitchell – who (referring to the increase to 662,500 of new dwellings planned for the region) states that the increase "has no credibility", especially at a time when the current disruption of the house building industry is in full play. Keith Williamson, of the National Housing & Planning Unit, set up by the Government to ensure that regional and district dwelling

targets are substantially raised, states that his unit's advice offers a minimum and maximum spread of numbers of homes which must be contemplated for delivery if affordability is to be stabilised. The Government drive to manipulate the planning process has been revealed, however, when the spectacular decline of the housing market has shown up the fragility of assumptions based mainly on demographics. Matters of sustainability and adequacy of infrastructure are not properly dealt with. The impact of this volume of homes to be delivered in the region will be felt in every district, and will inevitably lead to the broad excision of land in the Green Belt and protected landscape areas.

This centralised edict to deliver homes using the planning process must be challenged. Space and density of use is a major consideration of sustainability. Of the pressures on the region, the projected growth in population, economic activity and car ownership will generate demand for more road space. Within and around the margins of Dorking, the proposed identified sites in the SHLAA add to potential points of severe traffic congestion in the future. It is already very evident that the local road structure is overloaded with parked cars, mainly from in-commuting, significantly reducing road space. A widespread burden of this kind applies across the region, because a diverse pattern of employment is a reflection of today's economy. The SE Plan has to deal with the pulling power of the region in attracting net migration, which seeks destinations that have been concentrated there. The national homes targets now imposed do not deal with this segment of demand which, in a forecast rise of a 10 million increase in the UK population by 2028, has a migration component of 7 million. Even

allowing for uncertainty in accurately forecasting population growth for planning purposes, the very exercise of setting down a national target of new homes, then projecting this to sub-regions and districts is laden with inaccuracy.

To further place pressure on individual districts, the Government has announced the 'National Housing and Planning Delivery Grant' which will be doled out to reward those councils which deliver more homes and the land to build them on. A good proportion of these Grants will be dependent on the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategies and Development Documents being issued and adopted, and will only be allocated if at least 2,000 new homes are delivered in the future. The way the Government will act is to ensure that the Planning Agency's Inspectors, in ruling on the soundness of LDF Core Strategies in their enquiries, will make clear that an adequate housing provision has been given priority if the LDF is to be found to be sound.

These centralised processes will lessen the democratic influence of the electorate to decide the form and detail of residential development in their districts. It is a damaging measure for the Government to override this responsibility and, in doing so, will end up causing great damage to the long-standing protection offered to our countryside that has been essential in saving and maintaining its beauty and character. The Society has opposed the emerging Core Strategy of the Mole Valley LDF, and will have prepared the evidence to support this opposition at the statutory inquiry when this convenes sometime next year.

What can you do?

Hopefully, you have read most of Derek's cautionary article which, in simple terms, says that the government, using 'smoke and mirrors', intends to steam-roller through a series of planning measures without any heed to the lack of suitable infrastructures, adequate road systems, the economic situation and the frightening projections of future immigration of foreigners into the country. In addition, although they have used 'Weasel words' about saving the Green Belt, they intend to steal great chunks of it to build housing.

This is certainly true of our area where, as we pointed out in our leaflet 'Keeping the Green Belt Buckled up', Mole Valley Council has had to allocate considerable areas of our Green Belt and other protected areas for housing. They have had to do this or be penalised by government, which is using 'Carrot & Stick' methods to ensure compliance.

It's time to fight back

The Society knows it has a strong case to present to the Inspector at the LDF inquiry, but would be in a better position if it could say it represents large numbers of residents of Dorking & District. Please persuade your friends, neighbours, relatives, and even the milkman, to join us in our fight. Contact Peter Parkin on 01306 881111 for a membership application form, or download one from our website: www.ddps.org.uk.

Hank Etheridge
(wearing my Planning Hat)

Dear Editor,
A Mangled Rumour
I would like to draw brief attention to an error that appeared in your last newsletter. Some crucial text got left out of the middle paragraph of my remarks on the latest Sainsbury rumour. It should have read:

It is assumed that if Friends' Provident successfully merges with another firm it will leave Dorking. The rumour is that this has not escaped the notice of Sainsbury, who have their eye on the site – for a new **supermarket. Fifteen years ago we successfully argued against their proposal to build a new supermarket on the site of the car-park behind the Dorking Halls. All the disadvantages of that scheme would be repeated even more strongly with this new idea. Let us hope that it is only a rumour. But if it is not, we will be ready for them.**

The words I have put in bold somehow got left out, with the effect that readers must all have been wondering what on earth I was on about.

Martin Wedgwood

Dear Sir,
I read with interest your Chairman's report in the Summer Newsletter and must applaud him for his efforts in attempting to reverse County Highway's decision to incon-

venience any traffic entering Dorking from the West Street end. I note that to-date, County Highways continue to refuse to admit that they are in the wrong and obviously I hope he has a more constructive dialogue with Councillor David Munro. I would, of course, be delighted to write in support of his campaign, should you feel that this would be appropriate. Obviously, I wish him every success and very much hope that this problem will be resolved shortly.

It is indeed a shame that the County Council are not statutory required in their decision making process to respond to public opinion as is illustrated by the felling of trees adjacent to Betchworth Park Golf Course.

Mark S. Eshelby

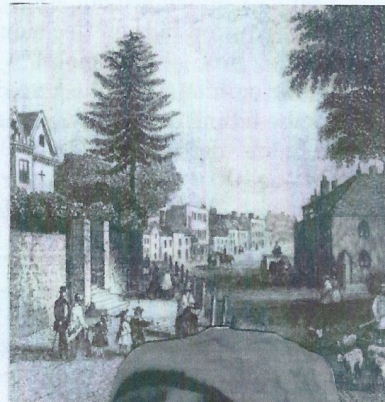
Sorry Martin. I am just learning after all these years to 'Multi-task'; something ladies do naturally. With me it takes a little longer.
Ed.

Is this Dorking?

Jane Austen
and the Watsons

by Kathy Atherton

Dorking from the east with the authentic
portrait of Jane Austen



In early July the Local History Group received a cry for help from Dr Linda Bree of Cambridge University Press. The Press was about to go to print with an edition of Jane Austen's juvenile fragment, the Watsons, but were concerned at the accuracy of the editorial regarding certain settings in the book. In short, the following passage:

"The next turning will bring us to the turnpike. You may see the church tower over the hedge, and the White Hart is close by it. I shall long to know what you think of Tom Musgrave." Such were the last audible sounds of Miss Watson's voice, before they passed thro' the turnpike gate and entered on the pitching of the town – the jumbling and noise of which made further conversation most thoroughly undesirable. The old mare trotted heavily on, wanting no direction of the reins to take the right turning, and making only one blunder, in proposing to stop at the milliners before she drew up toward Mr Edwards' door. Mr Edwards lived in the best house in the street, and the best in the place, if Mr Tomlinson the banker might be indulged in calling his newly erected house at the end of the town with a shrubbery and sweep in the country. Mr Edwards' house was higher than most of its neighbours with windows on each side of the door, the windows guarded by posts and chain, the door approached by a flight of stone steps. "Here we are," said Elizabeth as the carriage ceased moving, "safely arrived; and by the market clock, we shall have been only five and thirty minutes coming which I think is doing pretty well, tho' it would be

nothing for Penelope. Is not it a nice town? The Edwards have a noble house you see, and they live quite in stile. Thee door will be opened by a man in livery with a powder'd head, I can tell you."

Is this Dorking?

Well, Jane Austen was certainly familiar with the area, having set the famous Box Hill picnic nearby in 'Emma'. But, did she base the town in her early novel on Dorking? In the time-frame, it was not possible to bring together a team of Old Dorking hands to mull over the issue so Mary Turner, curator at Dorking Museum and I looked at the passage in detail and tried to map out the described route.

The town would have been pitched in 1804 (when the fragment was probably written); a turnpike road certainly came south from Epsom to Horsham via Dorking, running down through what is now Denbies; the town was much smaller then and it is not unlikely that the church tower – the spire came later – could be seen over the hedges as you entered the main street; the White Hart might well be based upon the White Horse which still has pride of place in the town centre. Of the existence of a market clock, we cannot be sure, for though Dorking had a market hall rather like Reigate's, pictorial evidence is scanty, but it may well have had a clock. So far, so plausible. But what of Mr Tomlinson's house on the edge of the town with its shrubbery? Might it be Deepdene? Possibly, though it is rather more out of town than 'at the end of it'. Another candidate would

be the now disappeared Shrub Hill (roughly where Wathen Road now sits) which today is right in town but which, at the beginning of the century, was peripheral and still surrounded by orchards and the like. And what of Mr Edward's house, the best 'in' town? Rose Hill/Butter Hill House might fit the bill, being arguably the grandest in town, but the building does not fit the description. Rather more likely is The Dutch House, engravings of which survive, showing a Dutch influenced façade next to the White Horse into which parts of it have been subsumed, with railings to the front, accessed via steps to a central front door with windows to each side – a rather good match for the description. Although many details conform to what we know of Dorking in that period, there is also nothing that would let us say with certainty that the town is Dorking or even based upon it. However, neither is there anything that would suggest it is not. We have sent our findings to CPU who may now feel safe to go to press without fear of criticism from local historians. Although we cannot claim that Jane Austen was familiar with streets in the town, it has been an interesting exercise and an insight into the process of literary attribution. We don't know if Dr Bree will cite Dorking as a likely source of the author's description, but what do members think? Maybe other eyes might see things we have missed that can confirm or deny the proposition.



Dorking Museum

Closure of Dorking Museum

Plans for the rebuilding of Dorking Museum are progressing rapidly. The museum will close at midnight on 20 December. According to the current timetable it is hoped to be able to open the new museum in the middle of 2010. When the plans are finally approved they will be displayed to members of the DDPS, and to the public. Fund-raising for the additional monies required to fit out the new museum will commence.

Dorking Museum Calendar

To raise funds for the rebuilding of Dorking Museum a 2009 calendar is offered for sale at the exorbitant price of £12.50. The calendar is illustrated by 12 oil and water colour paintings of local scenes by famous local artists such as John Collins, George Gardiner and John Beckett. The calendar will be on sale at Dorking Museum during

normal opening hours (Wednesday & Thursday between 2.00-5.00pm, and Saturdays, between 10.00am and 4.00pm). Copies may also be ordered by post using the order form printed in this newsletter. (Page 23)



South Street from Pump Corner. 1830. Oil. John Beckett (1799-1864)

The above scene shows South Street before it was widened in 1919 to make way for the Bandstand and War Memorial.

Richard Selley

Few opportunities remain to visit Dorking Museum before it closes for rebuilding and reorganisation



*By Fred Plant
Artefacts Curator*

The Museum will close at 16.00 hours on Saturday December 20th. Until then, the open hours will continue to be 14.00 to 17.00 on Wednesdays and Thursdays and 10.00 to 16.00 on Saturdays. Please don't miss this last opportunity to view the marvellous collections of Dorking-related memorabilia.

It is intended that the museum will reopen in 2010 in an environmentally friendly building where artefacts and archives can be safely preserved for posterity. New displays will tell the story of Dorking through the ages. Visitors who wish to study the artefacts or consult the archives will, of course, be received with the warm and friendly welcome that has been a noted feature of the present museum. This is to the great credit of the dedicated team of volunteer stewards who welcome visitors. The accompanying picture shows a group of visitors studying Lord Ashcombe's mineral collection, while in the background a small part of the museum's agricultural collection can be seen displayed on the wall which forms the party wall

with the former ancient 'Gun' public house in North Street.

Other News

The displays commemorating the 50th anniversary of the death of Ralph Vaughan Williams and his life in Dorking remained in place until last year's Heritage Weekend. It has been followed by a display encouraging the 'Exploration of Surrey's Past' with a panel related to Mole Valley. This feature will remain until Saturday October 18th.

In 2006, a comprehensive display of David Drummond's collection of mouse traps attracted considerable interest and resulted in the sale of several copies of David's book 'Mousetraps – A Quick Scamper Through Their Long History'. A new collection from David will be on show until December 20th, and a new book 'British Mouse Traps and Their Makers' is available from the museum bookshop.



Visitors at the museum studying Lord Ashcombe's mineral collection

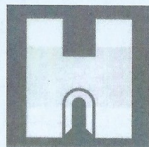
**Mole Valley's Hidden Treasures:
its Caves, Tunnels &
Subterranean River**



This is a micro-extract of Richard Selley's Heritage Weekend keynote lecture. If you missed it, do not panic, it will be repeated at the meeting of the Mole Valley Geological Society in the Follett Hall of the United Reformed Church in West Street on January 8th, 2009. Details on www.dendron.net/mugs.

Mole Valley is rich in subterranean hidden treasures within its chalk and sand strata. Of all the diverse rocks that crop out in the Mole Valley, the soft sands of the Folkestone Beds within the Lower Greensand are the most caverniferous. Caves and tunnels are ubiquitous in Dorking and have been dug all along the Greensand crop, from Albury Park in the west and east to the Deepdene, where a tunnel runs for some 200m (650 ft.) from Kuoni House to Dorking Golf Course. Dorking's famous South Street caves, including the 'Mystery Chamber', are regularly open to the public (see www.visitdorking.com). The River Mole did not get its name from its habit of vanishing underground, but it has been famous since the 16th century for its propensity to vanish through swallow holes at the foot of Box Hill, to re-

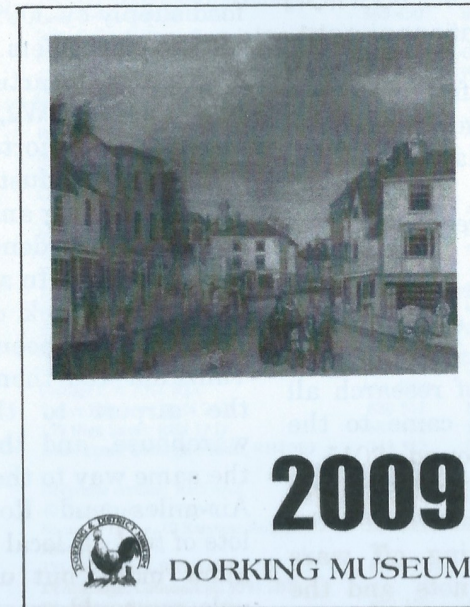
emerge at Leatherhead. There is some evidence that the river dried out more frequently in the past than today. Maps published up to and including 1729 all show the River Mole at Box Hill running underground. Maps published since 1768 all show it above ground. This fluctuation may correlate with clear evidence in Dorking's ancient wells that the water table in Mole Valley rose during the 18th century and has dropped since then. The present river flow owes as much to water pumped from sand quarries as to natural discharge. As more houses are planned for Mole Valley, perhaps its ground water is its most important hidden treasure.



The entrance to the Mystery Chamber in Dorking's famous South Street caves.



DORKING MUSEUM CALENDAR



To raise funds for the rebuilding of the Dorking Museum, a 2009 calendar has been produced for sale at the exorbitant price of £12.50. Well-known local artists including John Collins, George Gardiner and John Beckett illustrate the calendar with high quality reproductions of oil and watercolour paintings of local scenes of old Dorking. The calendar will be on sale at the Museum during the normal opening hours (Wednesdays and Thursdays, 2pm to 5pm. Saturdays, 10am to 4pm.)

You can also order by post using the coupon below

TO: CLARE HILL . PO. BOX 425 . DORKING . SURREY RH5 4WA

Please send me Copies of the Dorking Museum calendar 2009 at the exorbitant price of £14 each (includes post & packing). I enclose a cheque for £..... made payable to: **Dorking & District Preservation Society**

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

..... Post Code.....

A sentimental passion of a vegetable fashion Gilbert & Sullivan 'Patience' act 1

Back in the late fifties/early sixties, I was Creative Head for a large Industrial Magazine Company in London. One of the magazines I was responsible for was 'World Crops', a prestigious agronomist journal edited by a Dr. Heffner, a leading expert in the field – if you'll excuse the pun. After many years of research all over the Globe, he came to the conclusion that around 2015 – 2020, there would be mass starvation in what was then called the 'Third World', setting off wars between the 'have nots' and the 'haves', some of which we are already seeing in the Sudan and sub-Saharan Africa. For this issue, I prepared a harrowing illustration for the front cover depicting an emaciated African woman holding a dead baby. The article and my illustration have haunted me throughout the years since.

Although Dr Heffner had gotten the end result of over-population right, he did not imagine other factors such as Global Warming, turning arable land over to growing bio-fuels, and the ever increasing price hikes for oil and gas. If he had, he might have brought his doomsday scenario even closer.

As I have written in the past, the world needs to increase its food supply by 300%. If it doesn't: we have a problem.

In another article, I described how, during WW2, the UK population was exhorted to 'Dig for Victory'. We must return to this way of thinking and start turning part of our gardens over to vegetable growing. In a store recently, I bought a pack of Sugar Snap Peas that had been flown in from Tanzania and then trucked from the airport to the Company's warehouse, and then shipped in the same way to the store – lots of Air-miles and Road-miles, and lots of fuel. If local councils would allow more, but ugly, poly tunnels, we could grow these sorts of crops ourselves. They seem to be allowing really ugly wind farms, why not poly tunnels?

As you may be aware, I don't hold much credibility for the Carbon Dioxide theory, but I do know that Global Warming is happening, as it has at hundreds of periods in the Earth's history. What we have to do is to exploit it by growing more of the crops we presently receive from overseas. Tea is already being grown in the south-west, and an acquaintance of mine is starting to grow Olive trees. Make your glass half full, not half empty.

Adam Jolyon

CORPORATE MEMBERS SUPPORTING THE SOCIETY

Please note that all addresses are of Dorking town and all telephone numbers have the code 01306 unless shown otherwise.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Tel.</u>	<u>Business type</u>
ADV (UK) Ltd	The Old Crumpet Factory, 16 Brockham Lane, Betchworth, RH3 7EL	01737 845 450	Building Preservation & Construction
Antony Wakefield & Co Ltd.	Suite C, South House, South St RH4 2JZ	740 555	Fine Art & general insurance brokers
Betchworth Park Golf Club	Reigate Road, RH4 1NZ	882 052	Golf club
Bray Estates	278/280 High Street, RH4 1QT	740 837	Professional property consultants
Bullimore's	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
Carrington (1953) Ltd	5 Stacey's Meadow, Elstead, Godalming, GU8 6BX		
Christique Antique Centre	11 West Street, RH4 1BL	883 849	Antique furniture & interior design
Clear, S J & Co Ltd	65 High Street, RH4 1AW	883 340	Electrical contractors/shop
David Cowan	114 South Street, RH4 1AW	886 622	Solicitors
Dorking Desk Shop, The Downs	41 West Street, RH4 1BN	883 327	Antique furniture dealer
Downsman Ltd	156 High Street, RH4 1BQ	880 110	Solicitors and notaries
Ellis Atkins & Co	Overdene, Paper Mews, RH4 2TU	887 023	Management services
	1 Paper Mews, 330 High Street, RH4 2TU	886 681	Chartered accountants
Fothergills Coffee Lounge	19 St Martins Walk, RH4 1UT		Coffee lounge
Friends Provident plc	Pixham 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
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
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Patrick Gardner & Co	171 High Street, RH4 1AD	877 775	Estate agents
Penwizard Ltd	Dene Lodge, Cotmandene, RH4 2BN		
Priory School, The Rose Hill Nursing Home	West Bank, RH4 3DG	887 337	School
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	Rayleigh House, Chapel Lane, Westcott, RH4 3PJ	880 411	Builders
Treeline Services Ltd	Chadhurst Farm, Coldharbour Lane, RH4 3JH	741 800	Tree care and maintenance
Uden, C J & Co	The Old Crumpet Factory, 16 Brockham Lane, Betchworth, RH3 7EL	01737 845 451	Building Preservation & Construction
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
Woolcock Partnership Ltd, The Wyevale Country Gardens	Hulsta Studios, 120 South Street, RH4 2EU	880 330	Furniture retailer and installation
	Reigate Road, RH5 1NP	884 845	Garden centre

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Abinger Parish Council	Dorking Town Centre Management	Newdigate Parish Council
Amis de Gouvieux, Les	Friends of Boxhill	Ockley Parish Council
Ashcombe School	Friends of Gouvieux	Sir Paul Beresford MP & Lady Beresford
Betchworth Parish Council	Friends of Holmwood	The Dorking Advertiser
Brockham Green Village Society	Headley Parish Council	The Guildford Society
Brockham Parish Council	Holmwood Parish Council	The Reigate Society
Buckland Parish Council	Leigh Parish Council	The Surrey Advertiser
Capel Parish Council	Mickleham Parish Council	Westcott Village Association
Charlwood Parish Council	Mole Valley District Council	Wotton Parish Council
Coldharbour Sports and Social Club		

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MoleValley Visitor Information Centre

Visitor & Tourist Information on:-

- Hotels, B&B's and self-catering accommodation
- Local and regional attractions and events
- Dorking Caves and Guided Walks
- Local places of interest
- Local travel information

Stockists of maps, guides, books & dvd's.

Two internet access stations.



Town Guided Walks

The Mole Valley Towns of Leatherhead and Dorking are steeped in history and culture and both have some fine and diverse architecture.

Enjoy a guided walk through the streets of these historic market towns, learn about the fascinating people and interesting events that make up their past. To book contact Visitor Information.

Dorking Caves

Take a trip into history – deep underground!

The Dorking Caves are one of Surrey's best kept secrets. Carved out of the Lower Greensand, these hidden galleries have been in use for hundreds of years and are the last remaining set of the towns' network of caves open to the public. To book contact Visitor Information.

A visit to Dorking Caves is one you will not forget!

Visit Us: Dorking Halls, Reigate Road, Dorking,

next to the box office Tel: 01306 879327

Email: visitor.information@molevalley.gov.uk

 MoleValley
District Council

TOURISM
SOUTH EAST