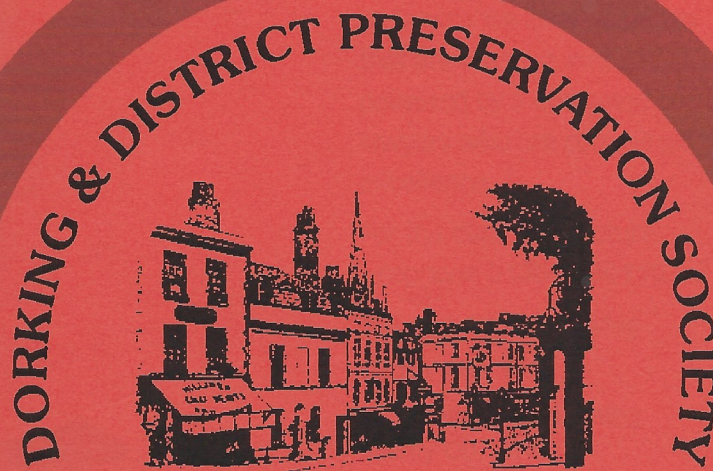


NEWSLETTER

of the Dorking & District Preservation Society

No. 53

Summer 2009



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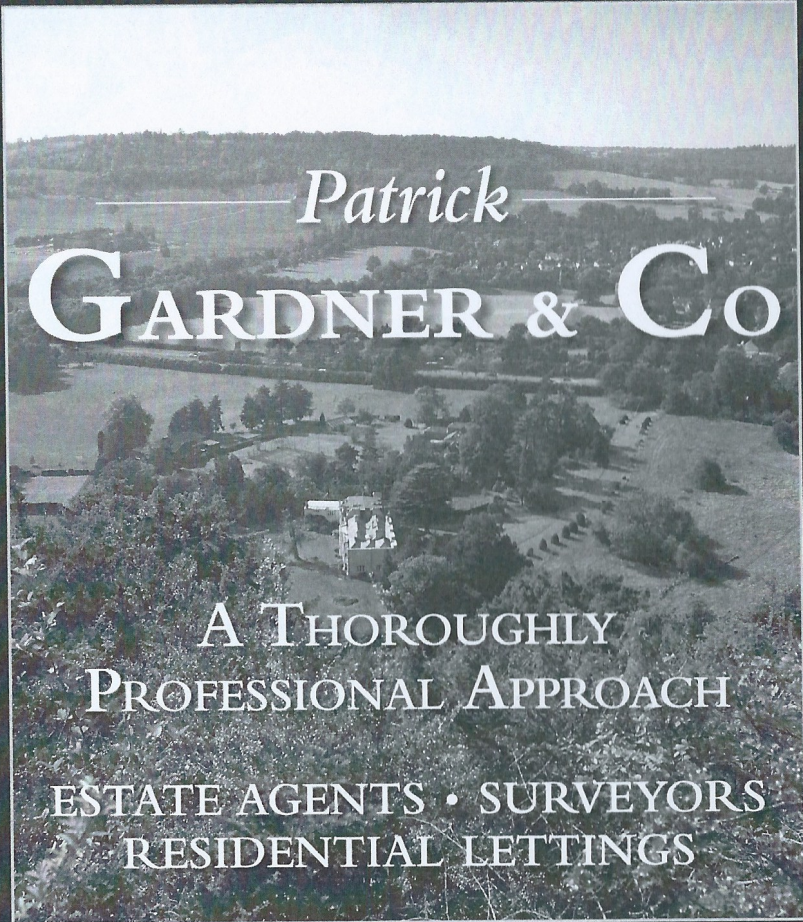
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Free to members

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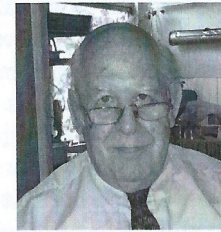
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editorial



I sense a certain amount of disquiet from the people I meet and talk with in and around Dorking. It is difficult to put a finger on reasons for it. The Advertiser is running a campaign to reverse the Council's decision about evening parking charges in the car parks adjacent to the Dorking Halls, but is being stymied. Concerns are also being raised about a possible loss of a Town Manager, and the controversial Pump Corner traffic control still seems to be a nagging sore.

Of course, money is tight and economies must be made, but to my mind, Mole Valley's Councillors and their officers are forgetting that they are Public Servants. Let me put that another way. Councillors are **servants of the people** who elected them, and Officers are **servants of the public** when they carry out the wishes of the Council. Unfortunately, both groups tend to ignore this fact when 'The Natives are Restless'. I don't know what the answer is, but it worries me a lot.

Articles in this issue echo some of these concerns, but one of them, an interview with Derek Rowbotham, holds out hope that the Inspector who examined Mole Valley's Core Strategy plans at the recent Inquiry may put some restrictions on MVDC using the Green Belt and AONB's for housing. We shall have to wait until the end of July to find out.

The Museum is slowly dispersing its artefacts and archives, as you will see from their report. I am looking forward to seeing the elevations and floor plans of the rebuilt Museum, which will reflect the Society's 'encouraging the best of the new' policy.

I encourage all of you to visit the Stained Glass Event at St. Martin's church on Saturday, July 18th. If you read the article by Alexandra Wedgwood, I am sure it will whet your appetite. And it's FREE.

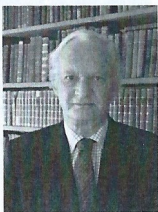
The Darwin connection with Dorking is fully explored in Kathy Atherton's article. It is well worth reading, if only to read about the dynastic inter-relationships.

I have been told to remind you that you can see the Newsletter, in glorious Technicolor, on the Society's website. There is also talk about sending some copies out via the Internet, an idea not particularly liked by our Council, and certainly not by me. I am old-fashioned enough to think that having a magazine in your hand to read is better than sifting through reams of print-outs. Let me know what you think.

We are still desperately in need of a Minute Secretary (see the repeat Ad.). At the moment, this task is falling on the already over-taxed shoulders of the Chairman. Surely, there must be someone out there who would welcome the not-too-onerous-task of this post? You get to meet a great bunch of people, and will be doing something important for the town.

Hank Etheridge, Editor

chairman's message



Mole Valley District Council needs to prune its expenditure... But how?

MVDC is in a bind. It is forbidden by Government to raise the Community Charge, and it is required to balance its books. Yet its income in this recession is shrinking. So it has either to find other ways to increase its income or to reduce its expenditure, or both. What it does in either direction is bound to be unpopular.

The introduction of parking charges in the car park behind the Leisure Centre and the Dorking Halls has elicited the expected response, particularly from those who use the Leisure Centre. The Advertiser has decided to support the objectors in this case and has given them some impressive publicity. But it is not clear how numerous or how committed the objectors are. A more deserving case can be made for the people using the Medwyn Surgery, who have to pay their £1 every time in the evening that they have to drop in to collect their prescription.

We might logically expect that, on the other hand, initiatives to reduce expenditure should be welcomed with enthusiasm. This of course is not the case. The Visitor Information Centre in the Dorking

Halls costs some £50,000 a year to run, and deals with some 5,000 enquiries yearly, or about 20 a day. The decision has been taken to move it to the general enquiries desk in the Council offices across the road, where it can be serviced by the Mole Valley front desk staff. This seems logical, but its new location will have to be properly advertised and the staff trained. Presumably, as a division of the Council Offices, it will close for the day at 4.30pm. It is not ideal.

More worrying is the decision of the Council to withdraw support completely from the funding of the department of the Town Centre Manager, with the expectation that the other organisations supporting it will be willing to fill the gap. These expectations at present do not appear to be forthcoming. The Manager's other supporters include the Chamber of Commerce, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Boots, St. Martin's Walk and Barclays Bank (which supplies its offices). In the current recession, none of these businesses are well placed to increase the amount of support they give. Yet it is precisely in a recession that the work of the Town Centre Manager can make the most critical difference and is most needed. We would be totally opposed to the closure of the Town Centre Manager's office, which in our view is not an option. If sufficient extra funding is not there, Mole Valley should be prepared to continue to find the balance.

A yet more worrying suggestion is that, as a consequence of the closing of the Visitor Information Centre, it could be that Mole Valley might have to abandon the Heritage Open Days next year, because it is the Visitor Information Centre that prints the tickets for access to properties. The Heritage Open Days are of course run jointly by Mole Valley and ourselves, and have become one of the most successful in the country. All organisations, public or private, should play to its strengths. To do otherwise is folly. If the 'VIC' has to close it will be a pity. We do not believe that it is impossible for the Dorking Halls, or Mole Valley itself, to print the tickets and allow Heritage Open Days to continue.

Drilling for oil in Bury Wood

You will remember that, earlier this year, there was much alarm that an application had been made to Surrey County Council by Europa Oil & Gas for permission to undertake an exploratory drilling for oil from Bury Wood, just north of Coldharbour. Objections had to be with SCC by mid-April.

We wrote to SCC to object, but when it came to asking you, our members, to write in as well, the timing was all wrong. Our last Newsletter, circulated with the Annual Report, had already been posted or delivered.

The news now is that the Application will not be heard by SCC until mid-September, and objections can be sent to SCC until

August 9th. We have written again, just to show we are still here and to make our points again. It would be extremely helpful if members who feel inclined would also write in. Letters should be addressed to SCC Planning and Regulatory Committee, County Hall, Penrith Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, KT1 2DW, quoting the Application reference number: 2008/0169/PS.

The points we made in our second letter are:

The site in question is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is protected by numerous policies from central government downwards.

The applicants want to install a traffic-light system on Coldharbour Lane between Dorking and Coldharbour, so that traffic can run first in one direction and then in the other. How would people living along the lane know which way they could safely turn when leaving home? Lights would be red for long periods of time. The line of waiting cars at the Dorking end could stretch back to the junction of South Street and Vincent Lane, bringing all traffic in the western part of Dorking to a standstill, or even the whole of the town and the A25.

Coldharbour Lane is surfaced to a standard that is enough for the current load of light traffic. It also has many areas of steep gradients, and the huge trucks running back and forth between Dorking and the drilling site could do it huge damage.

500 yards north of Coldharbour there is a 200 yard stretch of hard-standing that leads directly to the site. Is this the real reason this site was picked and five others rejected? They seem entirely to

have overlooked the problems with Coldharbour Lane itself, and the difficulties at the Dorking end.

If you would like to find out more, the Europa Oil & Gas Application can be found on the internet at: www.thevirtualvillage.com, and then click on the Application itself in the column on the left. If on the same page you click on The LHAG Rebuttal, you will find the objections sent to SCC by the Leith Hill Action Group, which set out the objections I have summarised above, together with many more that you may also like to take up yourself. **The more letters, the better.**

Martin Wedgwood

[Below] *A view of the proposed site and how the oil rig would appear.*

[Above right] *A view of the proposed site from Ranmore.*

[Below right] *This picture dramatically shows the narrowness of Coldharbour Lane.*

PHOTO'S BY PERMISSION OF ALAN HUSTINGS



current planning

My prediction last issue that the oil drilling proposals at Bury Hill Woods would become a *cause celebre* turned out to be right. As you know, my committee and I fired off one of the first letters on the subject, which summed up our objection as being about access and likely disruption to not only residents of Coldharbour itself, but also to traffic in Dorking (see Sir Martin's comments). Recently, the Woodland Trust (of which I am a member) contacted me to ask my committee to add disruption to the landscape and disturbance of wildlife to our initial objection. There is one part of the Local Plan that could be relevant but, by far, our original summary of the problems of access is much more important. If all the objections are accepted by Surrey, then there would be no disturbance of woodland and wildlife. I have sent a copy of our letter with a covering note to the Woodland Trust.

Another application I dealt with in the last issue was that of proposed 'Footballer's Wives' houses in Camilla Drive, Westhumble. I am glad to say that the appeal I spoke of has been dismissed. I like to think that by *bon mot* about cuckoo eggs in sparrow's nests helped, or at least brought a smile to the face of the Inspector.

The number of applications for extensions has risen dramatically, but I don't think this means 'The Green Shoots of Recovery', but rather that people are enlarging their own houses instead of moving to larger ones. Whatever the reason, my committee and I have gotten something

to get our teeth into at our Wednesday meetings at Pippbrook.

One recent application which caught our combined architectural eyes was a proposal to demolish some outbuildings at Little Abbot's Farm in Betchworth, replacing them with some really elegant, single-storey extensions at an angle to the main property. The modern design compliments the main building without slavishly copying it. We sent off one of our 'Don't you dare refuse it' letters.

We also sent off one of these letters about an elegant conversion of the upper profile of a dull, brick building in Chalkpit Lane; Vine Court. Our blandishments obviously fell on deaf ears because it was refused. Why, we don't know. We could see no reason to refuse it.

Latchmere have once again consulted our committee about a new proposal for a modern building in the car park of Little Dudley House in South Street. Although we liked the first application, which was refused, this new proposal is much better. We discussed it with Latchmere and their architect, and made the odd suggestion. We are looking forward to seeing the working drawings, to which we shall more than likely give our 'Stamp of Approval' but, hopefully, not the 'Kiss of Death' which seems to be attached to all of the modern, 21st century architecture we approve, in keeping with the Society's mantra: preserving the best of the past and encouraging the best of the new.

Hank Etheridge
Planning Chairman



Keeping The Green Belt Buckled up

Over the past three years, the Dorking & District Preservation Society's Strategic Planning Group, under the Direction of Derek Rowbotham, have submitted a range of 'preferred options' in response to Mole Valley's consultation about the Core Strategy for the Local Development Framework (LDF). This year, the DDPS was joined by CPRE which has similar concerns about invading the Green Belt. In all the responses, DDPS has stressed that including the Green Belt in the Core Strategy was wrong and unnecessary. Unfortunately, it appears that MVDC has ignored this aspect of the Society's reasoning, and has made no revisions to its original plan.

The Inquiry

MVDC's plan, and the responses from DDPS, CPRE and others, were tested by the Inspector over a three day period in May, attended by all the concerned parties. The first day was spent examining MVDC's spatial strategy, housing provision and location policy, contested strongly by all respondents. The

following day, there was an examination of MVDC's SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) and, on the third day, an examination of the LDF targets and milestones (timing programme).

Throughout all these assessments, both DDPS and CPRE were adamant that there was no necessity to build housing in the Green Belt or on AONB sites in the Dorking area. However, there was agreement with MVDC about including 'Windfall' sites into the equation. These sorts of sites crop up all of the time on spare pieces of urban land, brownfield sites and back gardens. They cannot be predicted but happen quite often in the district, and most agreed that they should be included: there would then be less necessity to invade the Green Belt. The Inspector was pressed to acquiesce with this to avoid the need to take Green Belt land.

Both DDPS and CPRE stressed the importance of the AONB's and AGLV's, and the visual beauty of the 'Green Ring' around Dorking, with its mixture of woodland and rural pathways. The 'character' of Dorking should be considered seriously, they said. This point was well noted by the Inspector. Derek Rowbotham said, *"In my opinion, the inquiry was a thorough examination of the challenging issues contained in MVDC's plan"*.

At the end of July, the Inspector will present binding recommendations on Mole Valley's Core

Strategy. *"It is hoped that protecting the Green Belt will be part of those recommendations"*, Derek Rowbotham said.

Reasons for being hopeful

The point was made in the Inquiry that, throughout the country, there has been recognition by Inspectors of the importance of preserving the Green Belt. Harrogate, which has a physical situation very similar to that of Dorking – a town completely surrounded by Green Belt and AONB's – persuaded the Inspector dealing with that district's LDF, to remove these parts of the plan.

A more dramatic action is being taken by Guildford, South Oxfordshire and CPRE, by challenging the lawfulness of the government's Regional Spatial Strategy in the High Court. If the Court upholds the plaintiff's case, it would have a profound effect on governmental strategies.

Final words

The DDPS is highly critical of the whole business of building millions of houses without any consideration of the general lack of infrastructure which could not be upgraded by money from developers alone, and to the damage that could be wreaked upon large tracts of beautiful countryside, at present protected by law. *"John Prescott, making one of his inept political gestures, drew the figure of three million houses out of the blue, causing his civil servants to jump through hoops to find some way of*

achieving it. Hence, the problems the government is having trying to fudge the issue during the present recession. They have, in fact, put it on the back burner until the next election, when they can pass this poisoned chalice to the next government", Derek Rowbotham told this reporter.

SCRE

Part of the 'Green Girdle'
around Dorking
at Deepdene Woods and
Ladyegate Lane

PHOTO: HANK ETHERIDGE



Obituary



BOB MILLER 1925 – 2009

Many of us will remember Bob Miller as a stalwart member of the Local History Group and an energetic volunteer in the Museum. Last year, he joined the Council of our Society as the second representative of the Local History Group, succeeding Chris Childs. His appointment was ratified at the AGM in April, despite the fact that he was, at that time, in hospital having suffered a stroke on April 1st.

I am sorry to report that he died, still in hospital, on May 29. His funeral at St. Martin's on June 11 was well attended and a most memorable occasion.

Bob was born in 1925 and was brought up in Dorking, where he was a pupil of Ashcombe School. For most of his working life, however, he lived in East Grinstead, where for ten years he was a District Councillor. For one year, he was Deputy Mayor.

On his retirement in 1985, he returned to Dorking, and immediately involved himself in the activities of the Local History Group and the Museum. In both these, in his quiet and helpful way, he was extraordinarily active. He was a Mason and rose to be Lodge Leader of the Dorking Lodge. He was also an active member of the old boy's association of Ashcombe School, the Ashcombe Dorkinians. He was always amazingly busy. He will be much missed by many Dorking people.

Martin Wedgwood

I am grateful to Bob's son Glen for much of the above information.

Facing some facts

by Hank Etheridge

**'To solve a problem,
first analyse the
problem'**

ANON

I was born, raised and partly educated in Winchester and am a regular visitor. It has a fine Cathedral, a 'romantic ruin' in Wolsey's Palace, a top-notch Public School, many period buildings (including Jane Austen's house, by the College), the remnants of a Roman Wall and the original, medieval West Gate to the city. Because of this, it attracts visitors from all over the world. Its shops are thriving.

On the other hand, Dorking has a sparse few period buildings, a Victorian re-build of a medieval church, Caves and an 'Antiques Quarter' in West Street. Tourist intake is therefore not massive. Footfall in the main streets is not good but, to misquote the Book of Common Prayer, 'Facing Facts is the beginning of Wisdom'. Accepting this will clear the mind, and solutions become easier.

Yet another quotation is, 'Cut one's coat according to one's cloth'. Dorking has limited resources with which to increase numbers using the shops. Local beauty spots such as Box Hill, Leith Hill and Ranmore have no regular public transport whereby visitors could leave their cars and bus into Dorking to 'do a spot of shopping'.

One of the most important resources is a Town Manager. In Dorking, this role has always been supported by Mole Valley, Sains-

bury's, Boots and the Chamber of Commerce, whose funding helps ALL of the local Traders. This fact is not readily accepted by some shop owners, but is nonetheless true. The Town Manager organises Events and Farmers' Markets, and finds other, more subtle ways of helping all traders. If this function is lost, the owners of the town's stores, both large and small, will face even greater problems than they do at present.

Accepting this as a major problem, the Council, Chamber of Commerce and ALL traders should get together and find small ways to fund this vital resource. The large stores can reduce their funding, but all traders should be able to subscribe £10 per month towards the Town Manager function. Prospective companies and individuals wanting to rent premises in the town should be contacted via the Real Estate network; many of these potential traders use Real Estate Companies to enquire about premises.

Another thing which Mole Valley could do is to carry out some minor research among residents and the surrounding villages, to find out which stores would be welcome. My very minor research suggests a wet fish shop on Friday, a small car accessory shop, a haberdashers and an indoor Farmers' Market at weekends, all year round.

These are a few thoughts. Let me know what you think, either by letter or you can e-mail me via www.ddps.org.uk. We have to dig deep into this problem to find ways and means of solving it.

celebrating stained glass

by Alexandra Wedgwood

The Friends of St. Martin's Church, Dorking, are organising a free event with the above title on the morning of Saturday, July 18, from 10am, in order to demonstrate the splendid stained glass in the church. Most of the glass is Victorian, with the earliest example in the chancel. This chancel was built between 1866 and 1868, on the site of its medieval predecessor and given, together with all its fittings, by William Henry Forman, who was then the owner of Pippbrook House in Dorking as well as being the proprietor of one of the great iron-works in South Wales. The Forman family had originally come from Doncaster where, in early 1853, the parish church of St. George was destroyed by fire. William Forman immediately offered to rebuild the south-east chapel at his own expense, which was henceforth known as the Forman chapel. The glass in his chapel in Doncaster was made by William Wailes of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, one of the leading stained glass manufacturers of the middle years of the 19th century. For the chancel at Dorking, Wailes re-used several of the cartoons from Doncaster: the four windows with standing figures of the Apostles above scenes from the Acts of the Apostles are identical in both places. Both east windows have

scenes from the Resurrection but, at St. Martin's, where the window is much larger, there are also scenes from the Passion. At St. Martin's there are also two completely new windows to the north-east and south-east, illustrating the life of St. Martin of Tours. The bright colours and medieval figures and architectural details in these windows are typical of the decorative work of the mid 19th century.

The chancel, designed by Henry Woodyer, had been added onto the nave and aisles, which had been rebuilt in 1836, and is known as 'the intermediate Church'. It was never greatly admired; opinions about architectural styles changed rapidly at this period, and it was soon considered in 'bad taste'. Therefore, in 1871, the nave and aisles were re-built by Woodyer in the same



style as his chancel. The leading member of the congregation behind this scheme seems to have been Arthur Powell (1812-94), who was senior partner in the glassmaking firm of James Powell & Sons of Whitefriars. Powell moved to Dorking in 1858 and became churchwarden in 1871. Work proceeded fast and the new building was opened in June 1874. As far as the stained glass was concerned, from 1874 a very different style is evident, and the guiding hand of Arthur Powell, and the work of his firm which made all the subsequent windows, is obvious. There is a



great contrast to the earlier work in the chancel; the windows starting in the south aisle, show classical draperies, cool colours and much more naturalistic details of fruit and foliage. It is also the start of the programme of iconography, with the themes of each window labelled below on a brass plate. Following an old tradition, all the subjects on the south aisle are from the New Testament, with those in the north from the Old Testament. The Powell firm did not only specialise in stained glass; it also made a form of mural decoration known as *opus sectile*, which combines the techniques of mosaic work with the design features of stained glass. There are a number of excellent memorials in this medium in the church, with a great masterpiece over the chancel arch.

Do come and see these beautiful things for yourself on the morning of Saturday July 18. There will be a demonstration by Amanda Winfield of Abinger Stained Glass on various techniques of cutting and soldering glass. Norman Atwood will be painting on glass and Annie Pinder will be making mosaics. There will also be talks by experts about the church and the work by the Powell firm, plus activities for children. and it will all be FREE!!

(Opposite page) The south-east chancel window showing the early life of St. Martin, 1867 glass by William Wailes.

(Left) The 'Moses' window in north aisle, 1908, James Powell & Sons.

ornamental carving – St. George and the dragon

by Fred Plant

This carving has graced the south wall of room 2 of Dorking Museum undisturbed for, probably, at least twenty five years. Now, in preparation for the demolition prior to rebuilding, the carving was taken down to be moved to storage by the working party. The back of the carving, after dusting off, revealed a faded sheet of typescript bearing the following text:

GEORGE AND THE DRAGON and other carvings presented to Dorking Museum by Mrs Clarice C. Hoffenden (late of No. 16 Nower Road, and now of No. 14 Hampstead Road). The carvings were the work of her father, the late Henry J. Croucher, and the following information was supplied by Mrs Haffenden, July 1962.

Henry James Croucher was born at Burton, Christchurch, Hants, in 1846 and, as a boy, attended school in what is known as St. Michael's Loft in Christchurch Priory. He came to Dorking when about the age of 28 years, into the employ of W.F. Shearburn who had a joinery establishment at what is now Bartholomew Press.

He was keenly interested in wood carving and also painted a few pictures, but the wood carving was his chief interest. The panel 'St. George and the Dragon' was the second he carved; the first was for a lady (Mrs Balston who lived in South Street, now the site of Messrs Mays).

He carved many panels for the late Mr J.C. Deverell of Pixham, who was also keenly interested in wood carving, and on the staircase of Mr

Deverell's house were several other panels carved by Mr Croucher, of many subjects: Don Quixote, etc., in addition to copies of ancient heads. Mr Croucher also had carvings in one or two local churches; pew ends in Effingham. He also made numerous smaller carvings of small animals, birds, mice, foxes, etc., and carved walking sticks and paper knives. In later years, he often visited Mr Shearburn for a chat about the past, and when he passed away Mr Shearburn's son wrote that he hesitated to inform his father, as the connection in friendship between the two had lasted over such a long period of years.

It is not known for whom the carving was produced, or whether it ever found a home when it was finished. If readers are able to add any information about the carving, or the people mentioned, it will be welcomed by Mary Turner, Museum Archivist.

There are quite a few Crouchers and lots about William Shearburn in 'Memories of old Dorking', published by Kohler and Coombes in 1977. Ed.



Annual Stewards Meeting and introduction of the Dorking Heritage Centre

Having been 'unemployed' since the beginning of the year when the Museum closed, 40 volunteers attended the Stewards' Annual meeting at the Friend's Meeting House on Wednesday, May 13. They were keen to know when they will be able to return to their 'stewarding' duties, and how these will change when the Museum reopens.

Sue Tombs chaired the meeting and reported on the financial position: £330K in the Dorking & District Preservation Society's kitty, which it is hoped will be sufficient to demolish the existing Foundry Yard premises and construct a two-storey, brick-clad, steel-frame replacement.

To this end, Geoff Beech is contacting potential contractors, and Planning permission is being sought for a building that will include permanent 'Discover Dorking' displays on the ground floor and temporary exhibitions alongside a Local History Library and Study Centre on the first floor.

Other features of the proposed design were described by Martin Cole and Archivist Mary Turner, including full disabled access, meeting rooms and a new museum office and workshop in the old Library building.

The Museum will have a new name. Terry Wooden explained that

in 2006 the 'Dorking Needs Action (DNA) team sounded out local opinion as to what could be done to make the town more attractive, and concluded that it needed a Heritage Centre – in addition to the Museum. The DNA team's recommendation reflected the enthusiasm shown for 'Heritage' in the replies to their questionnaires, and the popularity of the Heritage Open Days. It was eventually accepted that a town of the size of Dorking could not support two competing tourist attractions, but some of the DNA's arguments were worth pursuing.

Whereas the traditional role of a museum is to display a 'collection', a 'heritage centre' has a broader remit and a more popular appeal. When the rebuild is complete in 2010, the Museum Committee is planning a more imaginative presentation of the Dorking Story, with new, permanent displays, some creative audio-visual attractions, and with more emphasis placed on the facilities available to local family historians in a Heritage Centre Library. Many more visitors, many more satisfied customers and, hopefully, a balanced budget.



One of the designs
for the new logo,
by Hank Etheridge

The meeting endorsed the Museum Committee's proposals but noted that, although the museum is currently being emptied, the available funds will only provide a 'shell'. At least another £100K will be needed to fit

out the new Heritage Centre. The success of the venture will therefore be dependent on a fundraising appeal, and on a robust business plan. These are currently being prepared. There is also a requirements for new volunteers to fill committee vacancies and provide curatorial support. In due course, there will be a need for new stewards to welcome visitors and library assistants to help researchers.

If any reader wishes to be involved in this challenging project, or knows someone who might be interested, contact Sue Sheldrake at 50 St. Paul's Road West, Dorking, RH4 2HS, telephone: 01306 886923. Alternatively, leave a message via the Museum Website.

Note: Sue Sheldrake was re-elected at the Annual Meeting to serve for a further year as the stewards' representative with responsibility for recruiting new volunteers.

Dorking Local History Group - Quarterly Report

Since the last meeting, the Group has hosted talks on the Dorking Emigration Scheme of 1831-2 by Judy Hill of Surrey University, on Mole Valley postcards and the production of the book 'Mole Valley Past and Present' by Ian Williams and on 'Leith Hill in War and Peace' by Keith Grieves of Kingston University.

At April's AGM, we were able to welcome three new members, Tim and Kathy Stevens and Jon Gordon, onto the committee, so that all committee posts, save Convenor, are filled. But once again, we are without someone to write-up our meetings for the Advertiser. In the meantime, I am doing this along with my stint as

temporary Convenor.

The History Group has recently taken part in the Mole Valley Local History Forum, chaired by Surrey History Centre, and have agreed to assist the Museum archives' curator in putting archives into protective cases, and cataloguing the Dorking High Street photographs taken by members of the Camera Club for the History Group some 30 years or more ago. Work will begin whilst the Museum is closed, and as soon as we receive the protective albums. (The local branch of NADFAS says it may be able to fund this project.)

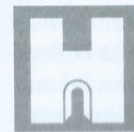
Finally, it is with great sadness that I, once again, report the death of a stalwart member, Bob Miller, of this Council. He has been a member for many years, has done many stints on the committee, and for many years has looked after the Group's book sales. He always warmly greeted visitors to our meetings, and contributed much to our discussions. He will be missed. John Woodcock has kindly agreed to come onto the committee to carry on with book sales.

Kathy Atherton

Dorking High St. circa 1890, with acknowledgement to John Janaway & Countryside Books. Berks & the Book 'Surrey' a photographic Record 1850-1920



E V E N T S



Heritage Open Days

The Society is again taking a leading role in the preparations for the programme of events for Heritage Open Days, which this year take place between 10th and 13th of September. The problems currently faced by the Civic Trust, which has gone into administration, will not affect Heritage Open Days this year or in subsequent years, since English Heritage has taken over responsibility for delivery of the programme nationally.

The full programme is in the booklet available from early July, and the theme will be 'Memories and Mysteries'. There will be around 90 entries, ranging from Open Buildings, Exhibitions, Guided Walks and Talks. Several of these talks and exhibitions will develop the Open Day's theme, including an exhibition of memories organised by the Women's Institute at Pippbrook. Another exhilarating event will be a reconstruction of wartime Home Guard training, involving the chain of defensive Pill-Boxes extending along the North Downs.

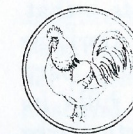
There are a couple of anniversaries which will be marked this year, involv-



ing national figures with local connections, notably Darwin and Meredith. The opening event is a talk by Dame Gillian Beer, who is an expert on George Meredith.

The booklet for Heritage Open Days will incorporate a booking form for events where numbers are limited. Bookings will open on Monday, 10th August.

Rod Shaw and Sarah Hawkes



Local History Group

Events free to members, £1 to non-members, who are always welcome

August 4 A walk around Newdigate
Guide - local author,
John Calcutt. 7:00pm
Newdigate Church

Sept. 1 The Oakdene Estate, Holmwood
Guide - Maureen Cole

Details: Kathy Atherton on 01306 143752 or e-mail kathy.atherton@btinternet.com.

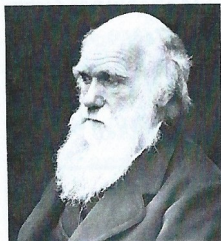
Box Hill Summer Fair

July 12, from 11:00am

Park & Ride Free from the Hand in Hand public house.

charles darwin – the past and future of leith hill place

by Kathy Atherton



As the 200th Anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin is celebrated all over the world, it seems appropriate that here in Dorking

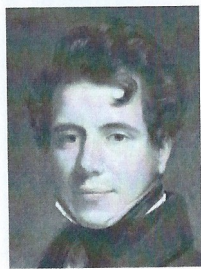
we should acknowledge the part played by the surrounding hills in Darwin's life and work, particularly since the future of Leith Hill Place, where Darwin spent much time, is currently uncertain.

Darwin was not born locally, nor did he live in the Surrey Hills, but he spent much time here. His mother, Susannah, was the daughter of the great Josiah Wedgwood of Etruria, who had established the first pottery 'factory'. Charles married his Wedgwood cousin Emma (daughter of his mother's brother, Josiah II). His elder sister, Caroline, married Emma's brother, Josiah Wedgwood III. Charles and Emma Darwin settled at Down House in Kent, Caroline and Josiah Wedgwood at Leith Hill Place on the slopes of Leith Hill near Coldharbour.

Darwin and Emma were frequent visitors to Leith Hill Place, and on these stays Darwin would work in a study set aside for him. Perusal of the Darwin Correspondence Project, which has placed a large amount of the great man's correspondence online, shows numerous visits over the many years when Darwin was

working toward the theory that would lead to the publication of 'The Origin of Species'. From Leith Hill Place, he corresponded with his confidantes, such as the botanist and plant collector Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, about his work, requesting specimens and reporting on the results of experiments. Even when staying with his wife and family, Darwin was attending to scientific correspondence, though he does sometimes note the beauty of Leith Hill.

This early Victorian intellectual curiosity about the flora and fauna of the natural world, which was to culminate in Darwin's theory, was not confined to the man himself; it found expression in other ways, as can be seen today in the flora and fauna of this part of the Surrey Hills. Whilst Darwin corresponded with Hooker and his father, Sir William Jackson Hooker of Kew, on scientific terms, others nearby used them to source seeds to stock the great gardens they were creating at their new country estates, introducing exotic specimen trees and shrubs into English gardens. It is well known that, at Leith Hill Place, Caroline Wedgwood created a rhododendron glade that can still be seen today. It is less well known that the celebrated botanical artist Marianne North considered George Heath's rhododen-



*George Heath
of Kitlands*

*Picture by permission
of JJ Heath Caldwell*

dron falconarii a finer specimen than any she had seen in the Himalayas. Her painting of the species, now held in the Marianne North collection at Kew, was painted in Heath's garden.

Like the Wedgwoods and the Darwins, the Heaths were an intellectual family: George Heath's father was James Heath, the celebrated engraver; his half-brothers were responsible for the famous 'Penny Black' stamp. George Heath's sons, Douglas Denon Heath and John Moore Heath, were close to Tennyson, who stayed with the family at Kitlands. Indeed John Moore was engaged for a while to the poet's sister, Mary, whilst George Heath's daughter Julia was among the first to comment to the poet on his 'In Memorium', when he sent draft extracts to her brothers, Douglas and John. Like her father, who sought the advice of the Hookers on planning his planting, Julia (who later resided at Moorhurst in Holmwood, then Garlands at Ewhurst) was interested in gardens.

The connection between these curious, intellectual families became even closer in 1874 when Caroline Wedgwood's daughter, Lucy (who had written to her uncle, Charles Darwin, about earthworm experiments she had carried out at Leith Hill Place), married Matthew James Harrison of the Royal Navy. He was the son of Julia (Heath) and her husband James Park Harrison, the ecclesiastical architect responsible for South Holmwood's schoolhouse.

Darwin was not the only person working on the theory of the origin of species; Alfred Wallace had also concluded that natural selection was the mechanism by which species

evolved. At the instigation of Sir Joseph Hooker, papers from both men were presented to The Linnean Society in 1858. Darwin was then forced to complete the book he had been working on for twenty years. It was published in November 1859. Pipped-at-the-post, Alfred Russel Wallace later rented a house on Rose Hill, Dorking.

Leith Hill Place is no longer in the Darwin/Wedgwood family. One of Caroline (Darwin) Wedgwood's daughters, Margaret, married Arthur Vaughan Williams and returned to her parents' on the death of her husband. On inheriting Leith Hill Place on the death of his older brother, Margaret's younger son, the composer Ralph, handed it to The National Trust. Its future is now uncertain.

There are quite a few influential people who want the house opened as a memorial to the composer. Given its scientific and musical significance, the Society hopes this happens.



a-setting' and a-thinkin'

by Adam Jolyon

My maternal grandfather – a tenant farmer in West Virginia, I am told – reached an age when he could no longer put in the back-breaking hours tending his crops and live-stock, and he would retire to his porch overlooking the 'Back Forty', sit in his rocking chair with his pipe, a jug of 'sippin' whiskey and a hunting rifle with which to shoot the next day's dinner, and 'Jest think'.

I am sort of that age, but only have a rampant garden in which to sit, smoke my pipe, sip at a single malt, and 'Think'. Indoors, though, I am rushed off my feet writing articles and studying my hobby – ancient history. It is for this reason that I have become – as I might have mentioned before – a philosophical gardener; long on expertise, short on energy. However, I still tend my fruit bushes that are currently (a bit of a pun there, seeing that most of them are red and black currants) bowed down with fruit this year, and I have just bought a 'Canary Palm' to further enhance my budding 'Tropical Garden'.

Spring this year has been wonderful. My dwarf rhododendrons were an explosion of deep red blooms, my Pieris Flame bush and another, the name of which escapes me, but totally covered in pink, bell-like flowers, have been magnificent. Was it the late snow?

My paternal grandfather's gardener, Truckle, once said to me, "We needs snow, master Adam. It feeds the soil. We get better crops after it snows". Although near enough illiter-

ate, Truckle based his opinion on years of observation, not science.

Here's the science bit. Snow crystals form around specks of dust floating in the upper atmosphere after being sucked up by storms, tornados and even hurricanes from around the world. The snowflakes grow into their distinctive shapes around these specks in response to harmonics and then fall down to the ground. Depending on the specks of dust not being toxic (as they were after Chernobyl), they add nutrients to the soil, which helps growth.

There. That's my 'thinkin' for today. Enjoy the Summer.

Some of my spring-fest blooms



LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Your plea for letters has been answered – here is one.

I always enjoy reading your Newsletter, it keeps me up-to-date with what is happening around Dorking. I learn something from each issue, and you have a wonderful, easygoing style to your editorials. It is good to know that we have the Society and its hard-working committee looking after our beautiful area.

When I thought of writing to you in the past, I have always looked for an e-mail address for you but, alas, there is none. I send 95% of communications by e-mail. It is quick, cheap and easily composed on a computer. It is a wonderful alternative to the post, as I cannot get out of the house to post a letter, or I do not have a stamp. Perhaps you may get more feedback from members by publishing an e-mail address for correspondence.

Yours truly
Neil Riley

You can always communicate to me via: www.ddps.org.uk. Just address the e-mail to me and I will get it from our 'Command Centre' at Pixham Mill. It is more than likely that I shall be forced to get on-line soon.

Editor

WANTED

MUSEUM CHAIRMAN

A fascinating opportunity to chair a vibrant committee and oversee the new Museum's revamp. Some experience in management would be an asset.

MINUTE SECRETARY

If you are a retired lady or gentleman or self-employed, with some experience of working with Board Directors or Senior Executives, computer literate and have a desire to help in the work of the DDPS, contact Sir Martin Wedgwood at the number below.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Responsible for subscriptions, compiling lists of members and organising distribution of Newsletter. Some computer skills necessary. This is a senior position reporting directly to the Chairman. Contact: Sir Martin Wedgwood, 01306 889941.

COUNTRYSIDE OFFICER

If you are passionate about the beautiful countryside around Dorking, and would like to make a difference, this is the job for you.

ROADS & TRANSPORT OFFICER

An important part of the Society's remit, attending meetings about Highways, Railroads and Airports, and reporting back to the Council.

For more details, please contact Sir Martin Wedgwood on 01306 889941

Email: martin.wedgwood@ddps.org.uk

Surrey before the Beastly Normans

By *Aethelric*

I last wrote about the early history of Surrey about two years ago. (News-letter #44. Ed). Just to remind you, some of this new article will include some of that material, expanded with new desk research.

In the beginning of the early immigration to these islands, Surrey was first called 'Sureg', the 'eg' ending pronounced 'ey'. Later, it was known as 'Sutheg' until 722, when it was named in charters as 'Suthrige'. All of these names translate as 'Southern Region'.

Surrey was one of the first settling places of the incoming Germanic tribes, as can be proved by the 'ingas' endings of place names, meaning 'The Kin of - (e.g.) Aescingas [Eashing], Godhelmingas [Godalming], Woc-caingas [Woking] and Deorcingas [Dorking] - as well as evidenced by early North German grave goods found in cemeteries excavated at Beddington Beaddingaston. Ton = Farm, Mitcham (Big Village) and Croydon (valley where saffron grows).

The region was colonised by Middle Saxons, who arrived via the Thames. They took over territory on both its north and south sides. The boundary of the region was extremely fluid, being encroached from time to time by Kent from the east, South Saxons from the south and West Saxons from the west. Surrey has no independent history. What is known is gleaned from the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, Abby records, Charters and continental sources. It was a

ping-pong ball batted around by the surrounding Kingdoms; Mercia for a time and, for a brief spell, by Raedwald of East Anglia. Its only independent sub-king was Frithwald, who is recorded as giving a large piece of land to Chertsey Abby, originally founded by King Egbert of Wessex.

The Wey Valley in Surrey was one of the very last places to accept Christianity, which replaced the much more ancient gods. But the Saxons had the last laugh, because the church adopted December 25th, the Saxon 'Yule', as their date for Christmas, and Eostra, a Saxon fertility goddess, as their name for Easter. Other Anglo Saxon gods, such as Woden (Head god), Tiw (War god) and Thunor (Thunder god) are remembered in place names all over Surrey. Thunor gives us Thursley in the Wey Valley and Thundersfield near Reigate; Tiw is recalled by Tuesley near Godalming. Anglo Saxon gods also gave their names to Tuesday (Tiwsdaeg), Wednesday (Wodensdaeg), Thursday (Thunorsdaeg) and Friday (Frigdaeg).

Surrey never produced a warrior of fame or a magnate of note, and only a sub-king. It was the hunting grounds for the Middle Saxons both sides of the Thames. Pilgrims beat a path through it on their way to Canterbury and the Danes were trailed through it and fought in it by the English 'fyrd' (militia). It can be said, though, it was never a dull place to live.

CORPORATE MEMBERS SUPPORTING THE SOCIETY

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Antony Wakefield & Co Ltd.	Suite C, South House, South St RH4 2JZ	740 555	Fine Art & general insurance brokers
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Downsman Ltd	156 High Street, RH4 1BQ	880 110	Solicitors and notaries
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	1 Paper Mews, 330 High Street, RH4 2TU	886 681	Chartered accountants
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Woolcock Partnership Ltd, The	Hulsta Studios, 120 South Street, RH4 2EU	880 330	Furniture retailer and installation
Wyevale Country Gardens	Reigate Road, RH5 1NP	884 845	Garden centre

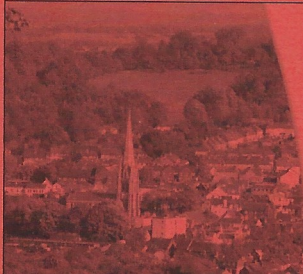
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Brockham Green Village Society	Headley Parish Council	The Guildford Society
Brockham Parish Council	Holmwood Parish Council	The Reigate Society
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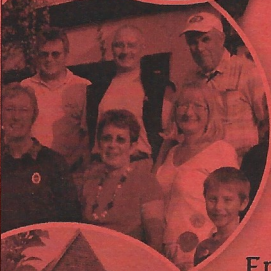
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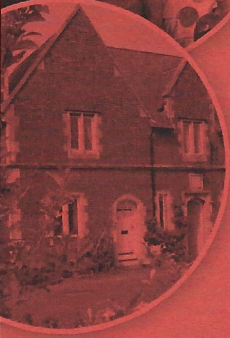
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Take a trip into history deep underground!

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 town's network of caves open to the public. A visit to Dorking Caves is one you will not forget!



Enjoy a guided walk through the streets of this historic market town

Learn about the fascinating people and interesting events that make up its past with our resident Blue Badge Guide. Explore the streets where markets have stood since medieval times, imagine the noise and colour of the annual fairs, picture the hustle and bustle of the 18th Century coaching inns



To book both Caves and Guided Walks please
visit or contact **Visitor Information.**

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Email: visitor.information@molevalley.gov.uk

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Dorking

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