

Chislehurst Report

A Publication of the Chislehurst Society

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROPOSED BOUNDARY CHANGES

In April this year, the Society was given only a few days' notice of a public meeting concerning far-reaching proposals to revise a number of ward boundaries in Bromley.

The Local Government Commission had launched a review of electoral arrangements in the borough and had called the meeting to consider a proposal by Bromley Council to increase the number of councillors from 60 to 69. Of far greater concern to our members, however, was the fact that this would have involved transferring a large part of Chislehurst to Mottingham ward.

The Society wrote immediately, on 23 April, to 30 Road Stewards in the affected area and to residents in a further eight roads that at present have no Road Stewards, alerting them to the meeting on 29 April.

As a result, many more of the affected residents were able to attend the meeting than would otherwise have been possible (the Council not having bothered to contact affected residents directly). In fact, the meeting was packed with our—very anxious—members.

The Commission published its draft recommendations in June. It had rejected Bromley's proposal relating to the number of councillors and had come up with its own proposal on ward boundaries. These would still involve transferring part of Chislehurst to Mottingham ward, though a much smaller area, containing about 1,000 electors. Its rationale for this was that Chislehurst has more electors per councillor than Mottingham and that the transfer would even things up.

Our chairman, Reg Parry, wrote to all Road Stewards on 7 July to make sure that they all knew the true situation and had the Commission's address so that individual members could write direct to the Commission. Residents were rightly upset at the proposals and made their feelings known to the Society and the Commission.

The views of members were gathered and on 27 August the Society sent a detailed letter of objection to the

proposed changes to the Local Government Commission. The Society continued to urge individual members to do likewise. All Road Stewards have received a copy of the Society's letter of 27 August.

The Commission is now deliberating its final recommendations; there is no set date for an announcement. The date for last submissions to the Commission is now past. We do, supposedly, live in a democracy, however: there is nothing to stop residents writing to our MP, the Rt. Hon. Eric Forth and/or to our local councillors, to make their views known.

THE WINTER SOCIAL

Those members who missed our last social evening will have priority if they apply for tickets for the next one, to be held at Chislehurst Golf Club, Camden Place, on Thursday 25th November, 7pm for 7.30pm. There will be a buffet supper and entertainment from a barber shop quartet. Tickets are £13, available to members from Nicolette Comport (467 5726), Sue Thorogood (467 2411) and Brenda Calver (467 2510). Dress: Lounge Suits. Please note that ties are essential for gentlemen.

ROAD STEWARDS NEEDED

The Society needs Road Stewards for a number of areas. Our Road Stewards do a vital job without which the Society could not function.

The title may be a little misleading: while many of our Road Stewards do look after entire roads (and sometimes very long ones) there are others who simply look after their own block of flats, or part of a road near their own home.

Being a Road Steward entails collecting members' subscriptions once a year and distributing Cockpits and Chislehurst Reports when they are published (they will be delivered to your door). As you can see from our headline article, Road Stewards are also the Society's line of communication with members in the event that some local emergency arises, where there is a need to inform members quickly.

Road Stewards receive copies of the minutes of every

Society executive committee meeting, so they know all the issues that are being dealt with at any time and can take up matters with committee members between the monthly committee meetings. Often, items will be raised in meetings and action decided, as a result of information received from a Road Steward.

If you live in one of the following roads and are interested, we would like to hear from you: Barham Close, Camden Close, part of Elmstead Avenue, Garrard Close, part of Green Lane, Ingleby Way, part of Manor Park, Mill Place, part of Old Hill, Park Road, Queens Road, Raggleswood, Victoria Road and part of Yester Road.

We would be delighted to hear from anyone who wishes to look after even a part of one of these 'patches'. If you live in one of these roads, please give it some thought. Some very nice people live in Chislehurst; wouldn't this be a good way to meet some more of them? Contact the membership secretary, Keith Heselden, via PO Box 82, Chislehurst, BR7 5TT.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

I am delighted to be able to report that, since our AGM earlier in the year, two of our long-standing members, Frances Follin and Sue Thorogood, have both agreed to be co-opted to fill vacancies on the executive committee. Frances (who has been a committee member in the past) is taking on the editorship of Chislehurst Report, while Sue had already undertaken the job of organising our social events.

With these appointments and the changes that had already taken place at the AGM, the membership of the executive committee is now as follows (areas of special responsibility being shown after each name):

Reg Parry (Chairman)
Ken Chapman (Vice Chairman and Traffic and Road Safety)
Tony Turner (Secretary and Planning)
Norman Godfrey (Treasurer)
Tom Brown (Planning)
Brenda Calver (Publicity)
David Calver (Minutes)
Nicolette Comport (Public Transport)
Henson Davies (Police Liaison)
Frances Follin (*Chislehurst Report*)
Keith Heselden (Membership)
Roy Hopper (*Cockpit* and Local Studies)
Pat Howley (Planning and Tree Preservation)
Bruce Hurn (Schools Liaison)
Alice Sennett (Local Studies)
Sue Thorogood (Social)

All our committee members, as well as many other enthusiastic members of the Society, help in other ways

by serving on our network of sub-committees, representing the Society on other bodies, undertaking special projects or—perhaps the most important job of all—acting as Road Stewards. It is a particular pleasure to me that my predecessor, Bruce Hurn, has agreed to remain on the executive committee for the time being, retaining the vital task of Schools Liaison.

Whenever you want to get in touch with an executive committee member, either ask your Road Steward how to do so, or simply write to the Society at PO Box 82, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 5TT. We are all at your disposal!

Reg Parry, Chairman

THE SOCIETY'S PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

I have become aware that there are a few misconceptions concerning the role of this sub-committee and the way it responds to planning applications. I hope the following explanation will help to provide a better understanding of how the Society participates in the planning process.

The London Borough of Bromley publishes its weekly 'Information List'. This gives a summary of the planning applications received during the preceding week. On payment of an annual subscription to cover the costs and postage, a copy of each list is sent to me, as secretary of the sub-committee, every week. From these lists I abstract the details of the applications for the Chislehurst ward. These details form the four-weekly lists that I send to the Road Stewards who cover the roads in which the applications have been made.

Two days before the monthly meeting of the executive committee, five members of the Society, (three of whom are Road Stewards) meet at the Civic Centre and examine the plans that have been submitted during the preceding 4-5 weeks. These usually amount to some 25-30, files which may take up to three hours or so to examine. Consideration of the proposals take account of any representations or comments from Road Stewards and members. Road Stewards will be aware that the Council notifies residents living close to the sites of planning applications, but when a proposal for an address in their road may be a potential threat to the amenities of residents in adjoining roads or an unwelcome precedent likely to be repeated throughout the area, they should consider widening public awareness by contacting nearby Road Stewards and members who would not otherwise be informed through either the Society's or the Council's system of notification.

The sub-committee's task at the Civic Centre includes drafting letters of observation or objections which, in the view of its members, should be sent to the Council (approximately 26% of those examined per annum).

The letters are then prepared by me for presentation to the executive committee. Only following approval by the executive are these letters sent to the Council's chief planner. As with all other correspondence on file, copies are sent to Councillor Mrs K Boughey, who is our ward councillor on planning committees.

Our letters are available for public examination three days before the applications are due to be considered by the Council's planning committee. (Currently access to this information is not permitted if applications are to be dealt with by the chief planner under 'Delegated Powers').

It is important to note that the Society does not 'allow' or 'refuse' planning applications as is occasionally suggested. Such decisions are made by Councillors or the chief planner under 'Delegated Powers'.

The Council's decisions are published in the weekly information list, and those of interest to Chislehurst are reported to the executive committee, and subsequently included under 'Planning' in the minutes that are distributed to Road Stewards each month. Any Appeals to the Department of the Environment (by the applicant only) lodged against refusal decisions by the Council, and decisions by the Department of the Environment, are also recorded in the minutes.

Please remember we are volunteers. We are sometimes criticised, either by residents if our efforts on their behalf are not successful, or by others if they are!

Pat Howley
Secretary, Planning Sub-Committee

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

As many of you will know by now, the old Neighbourhood Watch scheme is defunct and has been replaced by a new scheme whose symbol is a group of meerkats, the animal famous for its socially co-operative life-style. All the individual Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the borough are members of the new London Borough of Bromley Neighbourhood Watch Association, whose constitution received provisional approval at a meeting (held on Tuesday 21st September) of Watch co-ordinators from across the borough. There seems to be a feeling in Chislehurst that residents are none too impressed by the scheme so far. Newsletters that are promised but fail to turn up, lack of availability of police officers for Watch meetings and lack of information about local crime are complaints that have reached the Society. As we do not have our own Police Station any more, it is particularly important that Chislehurst Neighbourhood Watches should have a meaningful, effective relationship with the Police. This means that we must all be involved in reporting crime and suspicious events to the Police, but it also means

that we need to receive information from them so that we know what to look out for and are alert to current crime risks in the area. If you feel that this is not happening in your Watch, please let us know. The Society liaises with the Police and we want to bring any relevant matters to their attention as they have the power to improve the running of this scheme.

Frances Follin

THE 'RED CROSS' CAR PARK

Some weeks ago the High Street sub-committee urged the London Borough of Bromley to renew the directional and bay markings, which were so faint as to be ignored.

Recently, we were delighted to see that this has been done. Perhaps it would have been done anyway, but it is satisfying to think that our suggestion may have speeded things up.

Pat Howley

CHISLEHURST & ST PAUL'S CRAY COMMONS CONSERVATORS

On 18 June 1999 at the 'Pride of Place' awards ceremony, held in the Council Chamber of the Civic Centre, the Chislehurst & St Paul's Cray Commons Conservators were presented with a certificate as runners-up in the Countryside and Wildlife Section. This award was in recognition of the work of their volunteer team with conservation and extension of the heathland on St Paul's Cray Common.

The volunteer team, formed four years ago, meet at 9.30am every Wednesday to undertake various conservation tasks on the commons. They normally work for two hours. **New volunteers** are most welcome and anyone wishing to join the team should contact John Mitchell, the leader of the volunteer group - Chislehurst & St Paul's Cray Commons Conservators, The Old Fire Station, Hawkwood Lane, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 5LZ. Telephone 0181 467 1886.

GRAFFITI

While the work of American graffiti artist, the late Jean-Michel Basquiat, may have attracted the enthusiastic attentions of film makers and art dealers, those of us who find graffiti on our own walls and fences may take a more jaundiced view.

Bromley Council takes this problem seriously and has a 'hotline' to its graffiti removal service. Ring 0181 313 4510 at any time (there will be an answerphone message-taking service out of office hours) for help.

The Council cannot remove graffiti from your premises without written consent from you. So, if your graffitist turns out to be the next Basquiat, you cannot blame

them for removing a small fortune from your garden fence!

Consent forms are available via the hotline and there is no charge for removing the graffiti. The Council say that its work-force takes every care not to do further damage during the removal but, none the less, the removal is at the property owner's risk.

ST MARY'S ROSE WINDOW

The Society recently donated £500 towards the restoration of the Rose Window above the altar of St Mary's church in Crown Lane. The window has become so unsafe that it is in imminent danger of falling out. The church would then lose a very beautiful feature, which was once enjoyed by the exiled Emperor Napoleon III (nephew of Bonaparte) and his wife the Empress Eugénie, when the church was their parish church.

The funerals of both the Emperor and his son the Prince Imperial were held in the church in the 1870s, the Prince of Wales and three royal dukes acting as pall bearers for the Prince Imperial. Queen Victoria attended both funerals. Napoleon III's tomb and that of the Prince Imperial, were once within the church, but the Empress, wishing to build a larger memorial chapel than the one that can be seen at St Mary's, and failing to persuade a neighbouring farmer to sell land for the purpose, had the remains disinterred and moved to Hampshire! Memorials to both men can still be seen in the church.

In the graveyard outside lie the remains of Dr West, the founder of Great Ormond Street Hospital, and the daughter of Catherine O'Shea and Charles Parnell, who died in infancy. St Mary's, therefore, is very much part of the history of Chislehurst and it would be tragic to lose such a charming feature as the Rose Window.

The church itself has been raising money and is currently selling Christmas cards featuring the window; work has now begun on the restoration, but the total amount needed, £46,375, has not yet been reached. Concerned members who wish to make a donation should send it to: St Mary's Church, The Presbytery, 28 Crown Lane, BR7 5PL.

Frances Follin

RECORDING OUR SCULPTURAL HERITAGE

The National Recording Project of the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association (PMSA), East London Regional Archive, is looking for volunteers.

The aim is to record and photograph all public monuments, sculpture and three dimensional works of art in the area, that can be seen in or from the street. Eventually, the records will be published on the Internet and on CD-ROM; volumes for Liverpool and Birmingham are already available; the East London volume will include Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich. The project is part-funded by the Heritage Lottery. Volunteers are needed to identify possible sites for inclusion and, later, with making the 'site recording' visit (to describe, measure, assess the condition of and photograph the site).

The University of East London, which is managing the East London Regional Archive for the PMSA, initially wants to attract volunteers to identify possible sites. The organisers would like to divide the whole area into small territories, to be allocated to the volunteers, which they will simply walk around, initially, looking for sites of possible interest. Volunteers are free to suggest the area they would personally like to cover.

The survey will include a great variety of objects that may not be conventionally regarded as 'art' – ornate street lamps or ironwork, for example, mile stones or horse troughs that bear inscriptions, commemorative sculpture (other than war memorials, which are being recorded separately). There are certain exclusions but the survey promises to be very wide ranging. Anyone interested in taking part in this project should contact Roy Hopper via the Society's PO Box.

Frances Follin

CHISLEHURST PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION

In the early 1950s several Chislehurst businessmen started a Trust Fund to provide and maintain a sports field for young people in Chislehurst. Over the years the objectives of the fund have changed but it still exists; interest that accumulates is paid out as grants twice a year.

Any sports club or society run specifically for young people and based in Chislehurst (or whose members live here), or any individual young person living, or engaged in sports, in Chislehurst is eligible to apply.

Recent recipients have included a church youth club, a Scout group, a football club, a riding stables and the Marjorie McClure school, which needed the money for a special sports wheelchair. Individuals have also received grants for yachting, judo and athletics.

If you wish to apply, please send details to The Hon. Sec., CPFA, 1 Furzefield Close, Chislehurst, BR7 5DE.

Chislehurst Report is a publication of the Chislehurst Society (Registered Charity No. 298413)
The Society has some 5000 Members & actively seeks more. Please address enquiries about the Society to:
The Chislehurst Society, PO Box 82, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 5TT