

THE COCKPIT

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHISLEHURST RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1934

The Cockpit, on Chislehurst Common, has been the traditional meeting place for Chislehurst people on all great occasions from time immemorial.

CHAIRMAN

A. T. C. JONES

VICE-CHAIRMAN

H. B. BLANDFORD-BAKER

TREASURER

W. A. PAGE

SECRETARY

A. L. DRAGE

4 Stainmore Close,
Chislehurst, Kent

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PROGRESS, REGRESS OR INERTIA. The custom of reporting progress in the autumn issue on various activities engaging the Committee is continued below.

SUMMER HILL FOOTBRIDGE. Work has now started and is expected to finish about July 1978. The cost, well over £200,000. The plans show stepped ramps which prevent, or make difficult, its use to people with prams and wheelchairs. This against the simple road crossing with central refuge islands and pre-direction markings all at a cost of about £2,000, advocated by CRA.

LOOP ROAD/ASHFIELD LANE JUNCTION. We previously reported that the Department of the Environment had declined Bromley Council's belated support of our proposal to change the 'Give Way' signs to 'Stop' signs, at very nominal cost, as an experiment. Now Bromley Council are considering installing bollards subject to the Commons Conservators surrendering sufficient land to widen the junction. The cost, upwards of £7,100. This after they have rejected two other schemes at £6,000 and £7,000 respectively—on account of cost! What next?

73/87 HIGH STREET — DEVELOPMENT. We reported in March that we were awaiting a meeting with Councillors and Officers to urge them to use their powers to require the owners to clean, seal and enclose the site. At that meeting agreement was reached to our request and the owners undertook certain works agreed by the Council without use of their statutory powers. It was stated that development would commence 'later this year' and a complete clean-up then, would be premature as well as depriving the area of seasonal vegetation soon to be removed anyway. What next?

WIDTH RESTRICTION BARRIERS AND OLD HILL. The barriers referred to in our last issue have been installed and one has been removed! This operation starting as it did from comparatively small beginnings, has assumed a complicated undertaking no more certain of satisfying the original complaints than the previous unsuccessful attempts, but at mounting and avoidable costs. The Committee have spent much time and effort trying to establish what

is fact and what conjecture. It transpires that various Authorities and others have rights and responsibilities and we are not convinced that there has been reasonable exchange of information which could have prevented some very costly mistakes. In the hope that we can contribute somewhat to preventing further errors in this matter the usual vigilance is being exercised and we await replies from the Council, to further enquiries about the new proposals, in which five instead of three barriers are planned. Public advertisements are due to be published in the local press to which the public may respond. These announce the making of a traffic order to permit new barriers and provide the last opportunity for you to express your views.

BUS TERMINUS—Adelaide etc, roads. The 1977 AGM accepted a remit from the Local Road Committee to assist them in their eight-year-old struggle to abate this public nuisance. The well prepared diary of events included exceptionally well presented suggestions for solutions which apparently none of the five or more Authorities thought unreasonable but on which no positive action has been taken. As in the case of the above paragraph a notable pre-occupation of the Authorities is to 'pass the buck' from one to another. This has been borne by the complainants with extreme patience forcing them to cover ground more than once, again with no positive result. We have now represented successfully that the two meetings of different parties suggested by the Authorities, be re-arranged to one meeting only with all parties present. It is thought that with goodwill all the difficulties should be capable of solutions to abate the nuisance without creating another, but perhaps providing a much needed service, elsewhere. Meanwhile we have informed Bromley Borough Council that as the Local Authority responsible for the administration of the Borough and its citizens, it is to them we look in the final resort to negotiate a solution, CRA supporting them in whatever way is open to us.

DO YOU KNOW . . .

BROMLEY CONSUMERS' GROUP (to whom CRA is affiliated).

Do you know—The limit on mark-up prices of coffee? There is a Code of Practice for mail order

firms? The amounts and conditions of grants for home improvements? About the Office of Fair Trading? You as an individual may join the BCG—Membership Secretary, 33 Rochester Avenue, Bromley. These are only some of the items covered by Bromley & District Consumers' Group. Phone 460-1816 for the answers.

BROMLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Do you know—The Council issue free, an Information Handbook containing much useful information and many addresses and phone numbers? It is revised periodically and if it does not contain the information you want, it gives the address of the Authority, statutory and voluntary from which the information is obtainable. Copies can be obtained from the Council's Information Office at Bromley Town Hall. Phone 464-3333.

BROMLEY COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

Do you know—That the purpose of CHC's is to represent the interests of local people in relation to the National Health Service? Their Secretary has subscribed the following information from which you will see it is open to you to attend their meetings and to put any questions to them (preferably beforehand).

CHC's set up by Act of Parliament are Statutory Bodies governed by regulations. Bromley CHC has 29 members, 15 appointed by the Borough Council, ten by various voluntary organisations in the Borough, four by the Regional Health Authority one of whom is from the local trades council.

This organisation makes representations to the body responsible for the organisation and management of the local health service, namely Bromley Area Health Authority, about the way the service works in the Borough; and to make recommendations for change and improvement where such is indicated. It is important that the CHC become aware of problems met by those using the service, for only by such means can suggestions be made to remedy deficiencies or shortcomings.

If you have any suggestions to make about health service matters they should be addressed to the Secretary, CHC, Lennard Hospital, Lennard Road, Bromley, Kent. Not every matter will be capable of a ready solution at a time like this when money is in such comparative short supply.

The meetings listed below are open to the public when they may put questions. All meetings commence at 7.30pm.

- Thursday, December 15th 1977, Lennard Hospital, Lennard Road, Bromley.
- Thursday, February 2nd 1978, Bertha James Day Centre, Masons Hill, Bromley.
- Wednesday, March 8th, Lennard Hospital.
- Tuesday, April 4th, Adams Hall, West Wickham.
- Tuesday, May 2nd, Cane Hill Hospital, Coulsdon, Surrey.
- Tuesday, June 6th, Melvin Hall, Penge.
- Monday, July 3rd, Small Civic Hall, Orpington.
- Tuesday, September 5th, Lennard Hospital.
- Monday, October 2nd, Hornbrook House, High Street, Chislehurst.
- Tuesday, November 7th, Old Council Hall, Beckenham.
- Thursday, December 4th, Lennard Hospital.

THE CIVIC TRUST

Do you know—This association is registered with the Civic Trust, thereby recognised as the local amenity society for Chislehurst. Their survey carried out

last year shows us as ninth largest in the UK Top Twenty (the largest being the 'Friends of the Lake District') and the fourth largest of any society in Greater London.

South East England has 30 per cent of the UK population but 53 per cent of amenity societies members—presumably because here the pressures on the environment are strongest. Even so only eight or nine people in every 1,000 belong to an amenity society compared with, for instance, 12 or 13 belonging to the Consumers' Association.

Our own annual income per member is 20p. In Northumberland and West Yorkshire it is more than £5, and in the Highlands and Grampian regions it is more than £10. We must necessarily concentrate therefore on a protectionist role whereas the richer societies can do much more, even purchasing and restoring listed buildings, etc.

Of societies registered with the Civic Trust there is a bewildering range of no less than 85 different titles. The Trust would like 'Residents Associations' in particular to consider whether their title does not have a rather inward looking and defensive flavour. It favours 'Civic Society' or 'Amenity Society'.

Retired people provide societies with 24 per cent of all chairmen and hon secretaries. Of those officers not retired 8 per cent are housewives. While a few societies employ full or part-time paid secretaries, the vast majority like ours depends entirely on voluntary effort.

Do you think the above facts indicate we should give more thought to—1. Increasing still further our membership? 2. Increasing our subscription? And by how much? 3. Changing our name?

Your views and constructive suggestions or offers of help would be welcomed. Please write what you think to our secretary.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Many people move into Chislehurst in order to fulfill an ambition to fell a tree and to make Chislehurst indistinguishable from surrounding trees-less areas! Before deciding on the accuracy or otherwise of this statement, ponder on the number of trees left standing on post-war developments—despite tree preservation orders—and the number of weekends in the year that the deathly din of a chain saw CANNOT be heard.

APPEAL FROM THE CHAIRMAN

At the time of going to press we learn that Mr Fred Snocken, our Road Steward Liaison Officer, has to give up his duties as a result of his wife's recent illness. The Committee wishes to place on record its appreciation of his services in this particularly valuable role and to extend to Mrs Snocken best wishes for a speedy recovery to good health.

The loss of Mr Snocken's services reminds us of the importance the Committee attaches to the activities of our Road Stewards on behalf of the Association. Without their vital contribution the Association would fail to function effectively. They are responsible for collecting subscriptions, and, in mentioning this, may I appeal to all members to

make the Road Stewards' task easier by slipping annual subscriptions together with subscriber's name through their letterboxes each January when subscriptions are due. It is very discouraging to our Road Stewards when they have to call repeatedly at members' doors only to find that there is no reply. Imagine yourselves involved in this situation which can be repeated dozens of times if the road to be covered is a long one. Let your New Year resolution be: 'I shall pay my subscription promptly in January, and I shall deliver it to my Road Steward'. The word 'promptly' needs emphasising because increasingly we are working on a very tight margin. We have tried to avoid following the inflationary pattern and have kept our subscriptions pegged for some time, but the wider our sphere of work extends—and we are now covering the expenses of the Lower Camden Flood Committee—the greater the strain on our finances. If every road in Chislehurst had full membership, our funds would be more than adequate. This, however, calls for more Road Stewards for there are many roads still not covered. At this point I appeal for residents to come forward to fill the vacancies. You will find gaps in the Road Stewards' list in this issue. If you have friends living in roads which are not covered, please appeal to them to volunteer or to find volunteers so that we may increase our membership and, consequently, our finances.

The other important task discharged by our Road Stewards is that of delivering *The Cockpit* to members. Too long this has been a one-way traffic. We shall be very pleased to welcome letters, articles or observations from our Road Stewards and members.

It is a source of regret to us that recently we have been unable to produce more than two issues a year. Increasing costs have circumscribed our ambitions, but even if we had sufficient money the Secretary and I would need to find the time to edit the increased number of issues. Is there an aspiring *The Cockpit* editor in Chislehurst? Until we can step up production we advise you to read the *Chislehurst Times* which gives us regular coverage.

We thank our Road Stewards once more for all they do on behalf of the Association.

FLOODING OF THE KYD BROOK

It is not so long ago that the Executive Committee was concerning itself with complaints from members on the Common that their water supply during summer months was inadequate. This summer, or the end of it to be precise, found the Committee involved with the serious flooding in the valley of the Kyd Brook as a result of the torrential down-pour on August 27th. Residents in Gosshill, Merewood, Woodlands, Lower Camden and Lubbock Road were affected, particularly Merewood where there was flooding to a depth of four feet six inches in some houses.

Reaction was quick, and a Lower Camden-Lubbock Road Flood Committee was set up, com-

posed of Mrs D. Oblath, Messrs P. L. Mitchell, G. M. Thomas, and A. R. Turner, with Lt Col Weniger and A. T. C. Jones representing the CRA. At its first meeting it was decided to send out proforma to all affected residents in order to ascertain the extent of damage incurred in each household, and to arrange a public meeting towards the end of September. GLC Councillor Mrs J. Wykes had, in the course of touring the flooded areas, asked for detailed information and for a meeting to be arranged with those who had felt the impact of the flooding.

Two further committee meetings in September were concerned with reports from Colonel Weniger and Mr Tony Turner of their survey of the Kyd Brook back to its source at Darrick Wood, with preparations for the public meeting and with contacting residents in other affected areas.

The public meeting, held at Christchurch Hall on September 27th, attracted a capacity audience and was attended by Mr Roger Sims, our MP, Councillor Mrs J. Wykes, Councillor Reeves, our Deputy Mayor, Councillor Parkinson and three GLC officers from the Engineering and Public Health Departments. Also present were your Chairman (in the chair) and your Secretary, Mr Alex Drage. Colonel Weniger and Mr Tony Turner gave excellent illustrated talks on their survey of the course of the Kyd Brook and of the problems arising therefrom. Mr Thomas then submitted a suggestion that a basin, of adequate dimensions to form a lake, should be created back from Gosshill Road in National Trust land. This could become a control point in time of abnormal flow of the brook. Mr Lee of the GLC explained that the remedial scheme formulated in 1968 has not been completed because of shortage of money. He admitted that the greatest single aggravation to flooding is run-off water from developments alongside the course of the brook. (It is appropriate, at this point, to remark that the CRA Committee has for long indicated to the local council the increasing strain imposed on existing services as a result of unfettered development.) Mr Roger Sims and Councillor Mrs Joan Wykes, in addressing the meeting, affirmed that they would do all in their power to bring about a speedy and satisfactory solution. Members of the audience were now invited to air their grievances and to put questions. The meeting ended with a resolution being passed without dissent, calling for immediate action by the authorities concerned regardless of cost and for a suspension of existing planning consents until flooding risks have been obviated.

Following the public meeting an enlarged committee was called, including representatives from Lower Camden back to and including Petts Wood, the objects of the meeting being to co-ordinate policy prior to the meeting called by Councillor Randall, Leader of Bromley Borough Council, and to monitor maintenance, engineering works and planning applications. Spokesmen were elected from the Committee to meet and prepare questions and suggestions for the Town Hall meeting. It is intended that this representative committee should continue in existence until such time as a permanent solution to the Kyd Brook flooding has been completed.

We are extremely grateful to Mrs Dorothy Oblath who has been acting as Secretary to the Flood Committee and who has provided hospitality at each meeting.

Chairman

RATES AND COUNCIL EXPENDITURE. This is another continuing matter of concern. Notwithstanding the Council's pegging of the rate 1977/78 and their declared hope to do so for the year 1978/79, our Rates Sub-Committee continue to meet regularly. The Council's minutes and those of their Spending Committees are examined and any variations increasing their budgeted estimates are monitored. It is apparent that the Council's intention to curtail expenditure is being implemented in principle. However from time to time examples of expensive new capital projects and revenue increases occur. We enquire and object where appropriate and our vigilance on Council spending generally continues.

PLANNING. No issue of *The Cockpit* would be complete without reference to the regular and continuing vigilance on planning and related matters affecting the environment and the amenities of Chislehurst in particular. The weekly lists of planning applications, which we hope are also examined in Chislehurst Library by individual members, receive our close attention. The Borough Planning Officer has kindly provided our Planning Sub-Committee with facilities at Beckenham Town Hall. There applications and plans are examined unhurriedly and in detail. Appropriate observations, suggestions and objections are framed for the Executive Committee's consideration and action. Where possible Road Stewards are alerted to applications which might have impact on members in their 'territories' in particular. We ask again that members aggrieved about applications local to them, write with their objections to the Borough and copy them for our Committee's attention too.

We are pleased to report that in the past year a noticeable improvement in relationship with Councilors has developed and the existing understanding with the Acting Borough Planning Officer and his staff continues.

'CHIS 77'

This entry is contributed by the 'CHIS 77' Committee.

Since the report in the March issue, while detailed drawings and specification for the first phase of the scheme from Hornbrook House to Camden Grove have been prepared and discussed with the Local Authorities, various fund raising events have taken place. These included door-to-door distribution by Scouts of thousands of leaflets with tear-off slips for donations. Special events by the Townswomen's Guilds, a lottery, a musical evening and Saturday

morning street collections. The Committee are grateful to members of the Residents' Association and all other parties who helped to run and support these activities and who responded to the appeal for donations.

In addition appeals were made to individual business houses and generous grants totalling £5,000 were offered by the Civic Trust.

Overall, however, the response has been most disappointing since, apart from the grants which relate to the whole scheme, the money raised amounts to only £2,500. It is realised that the greatest incentive for donors to respond is an actual start on site but the Authorities will not permit it until the funds are secured. With this in mind the Committee approached the Manpower Services Commission seeking sponsorship of the scheme under the Job Creation Programme which would in effect provide a grant which would cover most of the cost of labour. Difficulties were met over this because both GLC and Bromley Council were unwilling to act as sponsors. Despite careful checking by our Committee that the scheme satisfies all the criteria of the JCP an informal approach to them (without a formal application) was turned down. Undeterred, the views of Roger Sims, our Member of Parliament, were sought and he kindly offered to take the matter up with the appropriate Minister. He in turn met our small deputation as recently as October 18th when hope was generated that JCP sponsorship is not entirely ruled out. The Minister's decision is awaited.

Meanwhile, because of the poor local response it was announced in the local Press that fund raising events were suspended and through a 'phone in service' the views of the public were sought. The Committee is forced to the conclusion that their enthusiasm and that of their small band of helpers is not matched by the rest of Chislehurst. Once the Minister's decision is known the Committee plan to meet to decide the next move.

CHISLEHURST MAY QUEEN SOCIETY

We have been asked to publicise a General Meeting—to which all interested people are invited—Thursday, February 9th, 1978 at 8pm at Chislehurst Library, when the Chislehurst May Queen Society will present:

1. Their Constitution, their Report and Accounts for 1977.
2. The May Queen and Prince for 1978.
3. A selection of photographic slides, by Miss P. Bushell, entitled 'Chislehurst and its May Queens'.

The Society also announces a new move to its continuity by the appointment of Miss P. Bushell as Vice-Chairman. Programme sellers for the 1978 celebrations are required. Volunteers are asked to contact their Secretary, Mrs J. Peacock, 5 Alexander Road, Chislehurst (01-467 8301).