

THE COCKPIT

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHISLEHURST RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED 1934 Membership 3,500

REGISTERED WITH THE CIVIC TRUST

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

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PLANNING

A report on decisions and development proposals

It is very heartening to see that the policies consistently pursued by the CRA to safeguard the unique character and beauty of Chislehurst are increasingly influencing our local decision makers. In this way the CRA is helping to preserve the Green Belt, to uphold the requirements of the Conservation Area policy, and to protect trees and our environment generally.

Beaverwood

The CRA made strong representations against recent planning applications for developments in Green Belt land in the Beaverwood area. In one case a Public Inquiry turned down a private hospital, and in another a two-storey building extension to an already large building was turned down on appeal.

Sunnymead

The Development Control Committee, undoubtedly influenced by the CRA views backed by firmly expressed local opinion, rejected the LBB's Policy & Resources Committee's proposal to sell Sunnymead as existing offices, with planning permission for another building of similar size for additional offices alongside.

Sunnymead is clearly within an area zoned as residential, and the DCC's decision accorded with good planning principles as laid down in the LBB's own zoning maps, and Appraisal Area Report. For them to have acted otherwise would have been totally inconsistent.

Scadbury

There is before us now the proposal to develop Green Belt land at Scadbury: a private hospital and a golf course have been suggested.

While we do not oppose private hospitals, we will maintain our clearly stated position of opposing any developments that would have the effect of urbanising the Green Belt through an increase of buildings and traffic, and because they create unwanted precedents for the future. Currently within the LBB there are two extant planning permissions for hospitals,

which have not been implemented. It is therefore questionable as to whether a genuine need exists for such a development.

The CRA is seeking the views of its members and especially those most likely to be affected by the Scadbury proposals. The Golf Course may be acceptable, but in our view the hospital building is not.

Back Land Development

The CRA's stand against undesirable backland development has recently been upheld at two Appeals. The first was for a dwelling at the rear of a property in Oakwood Close, which, if allowed, would have been detrimental to the privacy and amenities of nearby residents of this attractive area. The second was for a development at the rear of Rosemount Cottage, Cricket Ground Road. This garden adjoins National Trust land, which is also in the Green Belt, and is part of a very pleasant landscape. The LBB Inspector's report, echoed the CRA's view on these points, and firmly dismissed the Appeal.

Cromlix Site

Building development has now started, and it is proposed that Cromlix itself should now be demolished to make way for four extra houses. The developers have reached agreement with the National Trust for the discharge of surface water to take place into a specially constructed pond in nearby Birch Wood.

New LBB Officers

The LBB officers who had recommended for approval the proposed developments at Beaverwood, in backland, and at The Cedars, were part of the Town Hall staff prior to the recent reorganisation.

Our introductory meeting with the new officers, gives us good reason to believe that they share CRA's concern for the future of Chislehurst, and that this will be reflected when they consider future planning applications.

Advice to Residents

To find out how you could be affected by new planning proposals, you can refer to the LBB's weekly planning lists available in the Library.

To make your views known you should write to the Architect/Planner, LBB, Town Hall, Beckenham. Copies of your letter should also be sent to your own Ward Councillor, and to Councillor Reeves, (Chairman of the LBB's Conservation Area Advisory Committee) and, of course, to the CRA.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Report of the AGM

by A. T. C. Jones, Chairman

'A brisk, business-like meeting' was the general verdict on the AGM held at the Methodist Church Hall on 29th April. Having dispensed fairly quickly with the formalities of the early part of the agenda, we were able to afford more time to members to put questions either to the Committee or to elected representatives. We were pleased to welcome Mr. Roger Sims, our local MP, GLC Councillor Mrs. Joan Wykes, and our LBB Councillor, Christopher Reeves, all of whom readily responded to questions on a variety of problems. Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs. Joan Bryant and Councillor Edward Myatt, both having local government commitments. Councillor Mrs. Moir attended as a CRA member.

It was particularly pleasing that Mrs. Newport Gwilt, Chairman of the Chislehurst Chamber of Commerce, and Mr. Clifford Russell, Chairman of the local branch of Men of Kent and Kentish Men, were able to accept our invitation and to participate in the proceedings. Unfortunately, Mr. Dick Ellis, Chairman of the Commons Conservators, was unable to be present.

Parking

In the Committee Report, particular reference was made to the increasing traffic and parking problems following the opening of the supermarket. The local authority and the police were asked to give urgent consideration to improving both traffic and pedestrian facilities in the area of Willow Grove and the High Street. At a later stage in the meeting, Councillor Reeves gave an assurance that discussions were already in progress regarding pedestrian crossings. Incidentally, we still await the outcome of the deliberations on the plan for a one-way system submitted by the Conservators last year.

Recent problems

The attention of members was also drawn to two other problems of recent origin. The Committee has received a number of complaints concerning the practice of newcomers to Chislehurst to use their premises as bases for carrying out car repairs on a commercial level or for second-hand car trading. Members are asked to report instances of this kind to the Chief Architect/Planner at the Town Hall, Church Avenue, Beckenham. Other newcomers to the area seem intent on decimating the tree population which so many of us cherish. It is difficult to understand the mentality of people who pursue these activities. One assumes that they came to live here because of the very pleasant surroundings, which they now try to spoil.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 1981/82

An encouraging feature of the AGM was the election of three new members to the Executive Committee: Brian Platt, one of our Road Stewards in Lower Camden, who represented the objections of local residents to the renewal of the music licence of the Bickley Arms, when the hearing was held at County Hall in March. Keith Catchpole of Chislehurst Road had recently taken over the Road Steward's duties in his immediate area. David Howard of Old Hill is a civil engineer whose training and experience will be most welcome in consideration of highway matters.

The Officers and Committee elected were:

Chairman: A. T. C. Jones

Vice-Chairman: H. Blandford-Baker

Secretary: Miss S. Spence

Treasurer: W. A. Page

Committee: A. W. Coles, K. Catchpole, D. Howard, G. Payne, B. Platt, P. A. Turner, C. Weniger, P. Young

in addition to those already serving:

H. T. G. Brown, C. M. Dunn, J. Kinsella,

A. R. Turner, T. Turner.

Mesdames N. Comport, and P. Howley will continue to assist the Committee as co-opted members

Auditor: F. W. Baker

Editor 'The Cockpit': P. A. Turner

APPOINTMENT OF NEW SUB-COMMITTEES

At the Executive Committee meeting following the AGM these Sub-Committees were set up:

Planning: T. Turner, J. Kinsella, G. Payne, C. Weniger, P. Young

Conservation: C. M. Dunn, H. Blandford-Baker

Trees: C. Weniger, T. Turner, Miss N. Comport

Road Safety and Highways: P. Young, D. Howard

Publicity: P. A. Turner, B. Platt, K. Catchpole, Miss S. Spence

Social: A. T. C. Jones, T. Brown, Mrs. R. Brown, Mrs. D. Oblath, Mrs. J. Jones, Miss N. Comport, Miss P. Howley

Flooding: The Kyd Brook Liaison Committee is a co-opted Committee fully supported by the CRA. Its Chislehurst Chairman is A. R. Turner, a member of the CRA Executive.

PARKING

The dangerous and inconsiderate parking of cars, especially in Elmstead Lane, around our local pubs, and increasingly on footpaths, continues to be a problem of major concern to many of our members. We have frequently pressed the GLC and the LBB for action, approached the local police, and even offered CRA help—but the sad truth is that laws, regulations and yellow lines are only as effective as the means of enforcing them—and currently manpower is not available either in the form of police or traffic wardens to improve the situation. Members should not hesitate to make their views known to the GLC in the hope that ultimately the means will be found to improve the situation.

FIGHT VANDALISM

Residents' views upheld over discos at Bickley Arms, and the Caves

News came in April that the Bickley Arms, off Station Approach, had shut down its controversial disco for a 'cooling-off' period. This surprise move by the pub followed only days after a GLC public hearing at County Hall, Westminster—the scene of a bitter fight between the Association and the pub's owners, Courage Ltd., part of the Imperial Group.

Chislehurst people packed the enquiry, overflowing from the public gallery into the hall below. They heard the Association object on their behalf to the pub's disco licence and many later gave evidence—citing cases of violence, vandalism and indecent exposure. The police too gave evidence, reporting on the high crime rate in the area and the existence of four 'paths of destruction' that radiate for miles from a point near Chislehurst Station. They also described visits made to the disco, where they had observed rowdy behaviour and under-age drinking.

In reply, Courage agreed that Chislehurst suffered badly at weekends from vandalism and public disturbance; much of the trouble coming from youngsters under the age of 18. However, the brewers protested strongly that the disco itself was blameless—the real trouble, they claimed, arose from youngsters at functions at Chislehurst Caves, who had stocked up with drink beforehand at off-licences along the way. Indeed, one witness for Courage astonished everyone by saying that, one evening last year, he had seen 200 rowdy youths crowd outside a nearby branch of Unwins, before making their way across to the Caves.

At the end of the day-long hearing, the GLC renewed the disco licence for this year, but imposed strict, new conditions. These were:-

- * Discos must now end at 10.30 p.m. instead of 11.00 p.m.
- * No more than 120 youngsters can be allowed in.
- * Stricter supervision by uniformed stewards, checking the ages of youths and frisking them for weapons.
- * A phone-in system for residents, enabling them to call the pub in the event of late-night trouble.

Since the closure of the disco in April, and later the restrictions on the use of the Caves for similar activities, the late-night trouble has evaporated, leaving a large part of Chislehurst peaceful at weekends.

The latest news is that Courage will not proceed with their appeal against the GLC's decision, in a bid to claim back the original hours of the licence. Instead the brewers will follow Roger Sims's advice and arrange a discussion meeting with all interested parties.

We will continue to do all in our power to ensure that the interests of local residents are respected.

TREES

'When the Oak comes down Then sinks the town'

A report by C. Weniger

Your Tree Preservation sub-committee would like to thank all those Road Stewards who have assisted us in trying to stem the inroads being made on our tree cover in Chislehurst. From the many communications we have had it is abundantly clear that our 'ears and eyes' are in good order. It is also apparent that members of the public are now beginning to realise with ever-growing awareness the many functions of woodlands and their vegetation. Today we know how important trees and woods are in water management, and areas of Chislehurst, which are flood-prone, have every reason to be concerned with these facts.

The importance of commons and woodlands for man's health and recreation cannot be over-stated and trees are vital from the aesthetic viewpoint, refreshing both the eye and the spirit. Think how uninteresting the landscape of Chislehurst would be without its magnificent trees. We do therefore seek your further assistance to help to protect, and, if possible, increase the greenery in our area.

Specialists wanted

We ask again that if any of our members have specialist knowledge of trees, would they please contact us and perhaps consider joining our sub-committee or act in an advisory capacity to help us preserve our landscape.

ADVISORY LEAFLETS

A new CRA service

The CRA is looking into the possibility of publishing a series of Advisory Leaflets; these would have three objectives:

- (i) To publicise the policies and work of the Association in relation to the important local issues.
- (ii) To advise individuals on the action they can take when facing problems such as vandalism, and undesirable developments.
- (iii) To attract new members.

The first leaflet will be published this year if money allows; but to provide a wider range of services will require additional income—from an enlarged membership, from an increase in our very modest subscriptions, from selling advertising space in 'The Cockpit', or from donations.

All these means are under investigation to find the best way of financing our plans to extend our future activities.

CHISLEHURST NEWS IN BRIEF

THE WAR MEMORIAL

The LBB has advised us that renovations to the War Memorial cannot be undertaken at this time because of the economic situation. We are very disappointed at the LBB's attitude in postponing indefinitely any plans to undertake this work and have made our own views known in the strongest terms. Those whose relatives and friends are commemorated on the Memorial may also wish to make their views known to the LBB.

ROYAL PARADE

We are pleased to see that the redevelopment of the Oakeshotts site has taken into account the views of local residents, as voiced by the CRA. We hope that the attractive new shopping precinct and cafe will be successful.

EMPTY OFFICES IN CHISLEHURST

20,000 square feet of office space remains empty over the Sainsburys building in the High Street. Some time ago we asked the LBB if rates have been paid on this part of the controversial development; an answer is awaited.

This 20,000 square feet remains as a monumental reminder that office space is not only undesirable, but also not required.

JOHN EASDEN

Master Craftsman

One of Chislehurst's real 'characters', John Easden, who died earlier this year, was a long-standing CRA member, and we shall sadly miss him.

The business he founded in East Chislehurst will remain in the family under his son's control.

SOCIAL EVENING

Our social evening at Graham Chiesman House on 27th May was well attended, and a most enjoyable one. We were able to welcome some new members and introduce them to those of longer standing. Judging by the comments at the end of the evening and by the letters of appreciation received shortly after, the occasion was a very happy one.

The function having been organised primarily to show appreciation of the excellent work done by our road stewards, and to those unable to be present because of holiday commitments, we extend our thanks for their contribution to the Association throughout the year.

Our guests included Mr. Roger Sims, MP, and Mrs. Sims, Councillor Christopher Reeves and Mrs. Reeves and Mr. John Gibbs, Chairman of Sundridge Residents' Association, and Mrs. Gibbs.

The members of the Social Sub-Committee deserve our very warm thanks for their work in making the occasion such a success, and to other members who cheerfully volunteered help at the end of the evening.

FLOOD LIAISON COMMITTEE

A report by A. R. Turner

Chairman, Chislehurst Area Kyd Brook Flood Liaison Committee

At this time of each year the Kyd Brook Flood Liaison Committee, whose responsibility covers the Kyd Brook course from Farnborough to Sundridge, increases its watch on the river course to ensure that in the event of sudden or prolonged storms there is ample clearway for high-water flow. We closely inspect the many culverts to ensure that the Kyd Brook can flow quickly away and into the Ravensbourne on its way through Catford, Lewisham and West Greenwich where it flows into the Thames.

However, if along this route the flow is seriously impeded, what would be the affect along the Kyd Brook course in Chislehurst? Those of us who were flooded in the 1968 disaster will recall how a prolonged rainfall filled the watercourse; the rate of flow slowing down until the river appeared to stop flowing before bursting its banks and flooding the homes of many residents.

It is not widely known that earlier, along the entire course of the Ravensbourne, this had been the sequence of events, because of the rising Thames tide when the outflow at Greenwich was impeded. This caused the Ravensbourne to build-back and flood upstream, first in Lewisham, then Catford, Bromley and Chislehurst where flood depths of over 6-feet were attained in 40 minutes, this level not subsiding until some 18 hours later.

What of the future? Could these events occur again? This depends on a number of factors, such as the adverse weather conditions forecast for 1982 onwards and if the expected upsurge tides in the Thames occur before the Thames Barrier at Woolwich is operational. However, even if the Barrier is in operation against up-surge tides, we must not be lulled into a false sense of security for the natural downstream flow of the Thames will continue and, should intensive rainfall also be taking place, there will still be a degree of build-back from the upstream side of the Barrier. This will create a higher river level past Greenwich, thus affecting the outflow of the Ravensbourne. Depending upon the nature of the tides and/or rainfall, we may once again find ourselves in a 1968 type of situation.

LATE NEWS

The Cedars—Appeal decision

The proposed development of a private Hospital/Nursing Home at The Cedars has been rejected by the D. of E. Inspector, in line with CRA representations (The Cockpit, August 1980).
