

ROY HOPPER

THE COCKPIT

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHISLEHURST SOCIETY
(formerly the Chislehurst Residents' Association)

FOUNDED 1934 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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High Street Parking Squeeze

— what is the Council up to?

The High Street parking crisis described in our last issue has worsened. At that time there was still a hope that Bromley Council would refuse planning permission to build on the Red Cross car-park. It was hoped also that the council would deny permission to put new housing on the Coolings Nursery site in Willow Grove, which could have made an ideal alternative parking area. **In the event, the Council granted permission for building on both sites.** So shops and offices may in due course replace shoppers' cars on the present Red Cross car-park; building operations have already started at the Coolings site, the only alternative place for a car-park.

We understand that the Council is now reviewing the future of parking for the Chislehurst High Street shopping area and we trust that they will in due course make a public statement on the matter. **Plans to introduce charges for parking** in Chislehurst are once more under active consideration.

Ward councillor denied a hearing

The planning decisions which led to the present situation are obviously of great significance for the prosperity of the Chislehurst shopping area. It is a pity therefore that we could not feel happy with the way in which they were reached. In the case of the Red Cross car-park, one of our ward councillors, Councillor Katy Boughey, who had intended to speak and vote against the proposed permission, was deprived of the opportunity to do so. Before going on holiday she had made arrangements for the decisive meeting on the case not to take place until after her return. Instead, she found on coming back that the meeting had been held and the matter settled in her absence. In the case of the Coolings site, councillors at the deciding meeting were not given the views of the Advisory Panel on Conservation Areas, who were opposed to the design of the proposed housing. Before the meeting councillors were given much data on the case in writing but were told that the Panel's views would be given verbally at the meeting. They were not. Your Society does not normally comment on the way planning decisions are arrived at, but in these important cases comment appears justified.

Council slow to act

As we remarked in the last issue, the present parking crisis has its roots in the failure of Bromley Council over twenty years to prepare a plan for the High Street area. Intensive efforts by your Society to persuade the Council to agree to provide a plan (a "scheme of enhancement" in the words of the statute) at *some* time in the future have gone on for several months and are continuing. It may be some months yet before we receive a final answer.

AGM 1992

Wednesday 29th April at 8pm

As usual, the venue will be the Methodist church hall in Prince Imperial Road, Chislehurst.

We greatly value the attendance of members and we hope that as many of you as possible will come. There will be time set aside for members' questions and comments — indeed, we intend to make more time available for this purpose than in recent years. The Chislehurst Society belongs to our members and needs **your** active involvement. In the past, we have usually had at least one of our ward councillors in attendance and they too are happy to answer questions and take note of members' views. Our ward councillors and our MP will again be invited this year. Our most important invitation, as ever, is this one — to **YOU**. Please make a note of the date!

'The Cedars' — still under threat

Members may remember the article on the history and present peril of 'The Cedars' in our February issue. This lovely old house lies in the triangle of land where Old Hill meets Camden Park Road and its large garden forms an important open space link between the Common adjacent to

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the cricket ground and the golf course (both of which are in the Green Belt).

The house itself has deteriorated in recent years and now a large portion of the garden has apparently been sold; the owner wants to build a new house on it. Planning application 91.2619 details a five bedroom house (plus nurseries, reception rooms, etc.) with integral double garage.

Your Society has objected to these plans and urges members to do likewise. The Council's own Chislehurst Conservation Area Policy Statement requires that buildings in the grounds of large houses on the periphery of the Common should be ancillary in scale, comparable to stables and lodges for instance. Indeed, the Policy also states that **around Camden Park there will be a general presumption against new development so that the open nature of the area can be preserved.** The garden forms a sizable area of open space which should not be gobbled up in this manner. Allowing a large house to be built there might set a very unfortunate precedent.

SEE STOP PRESS ON PAGE 4

SOCIETY GROWS AND GROWS!

Thanks to the dedication and hard work of our road stewards, led by the indefatigable Mr Godfrey, your Society now has a larger membership than ever — about 4500 people, in fact. The last issue of *The Cockpit* had to be reprinted to satisfy the sudden increase in demand and this issue has a record print run of 4000 copies.

The consequence of rising membership, of course, is an increased need for road stewards to look after members. Road stewardship is an active role in the community, distributing *Cockpits* about three times a year, collecting annual subscriptions and generally keeping members in touch with your Society's committee. More details are available from Mr Godfrey or from Mrs Joy Jones, the Membership secretary. Letters can be sent c/o the editor (address on page 1).

£20,000

— THE FINE FOR TREE FELLING

The current issue of *Rabbit*, the broadsheet of Bromley Council's Environment Group, includes an item on recently updated legislation concerning protected trees and trees in Conservation Areas.

At last the government has given some teeth to the laws protecting trees. As from September 25th 1990 fines for illegal felling of protected trees increased from £2,000 to £20,000. This should now be a deterrent for the most unscrupulous owners and contractors. The fines relate to trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders **and all trees growing in Conservation Areas.** The Council can tell you if your tree is protected, and if it is, can give advice and explain procedures. Telephone Coral Gibson on 081-313 4516. Remember to ask before doing anything to your tree, as **consent may be needed for surgery** as well as felling; a phone call could be a lot cheaper than a fine!

If Miss Gibson is not available, especially relevant at weekends, her answering machine message gives an emergency number should you wish to report and stop any unauthorised felling.

Tree Wardens Needed

Anyone interested in extending their interest in tree care and protection may wish to become a 'Tree Warden'. The Tree Council launched this scheme last year, sponsored by British Gas, the aim being to involve the community in conserving and enhancing their local trees and woods. You don't have to be an expert to become a tree warden, just an enthusiast! Training is provided, and Miss Gibson is the person to contact.

In the merry month of May . . .

. . . your Society will be hosting our first social of the year. The venue will again be the popular 'Foxbury' in Kemnal Road — new members, especially, may not have had the opportunity to visit this splendid old house, once the home of the Tiarks family. You are warmly recommended to join us there **on Friday 8th May from 7.30–11pm.** A delicious and, as always, generous buffet is promised with the pay-bar open throughout the evening. Tickets priced at £7 each will be available from the chairman of the social sub-committee on **467 2796.** Numbers are limited and demand is always high so please apply early.

DEMOCRACY OR DELEGATION?

There have been recent moves by the L.B. Bromley Council to delegate further powers to its planning department to determine a wider range of planning applications rather than continue to have these dealt with by the councillors of the planning committees. This means that even greater care will be needed to keep undesirable development at bay. A large number of minor proposals are, of course, quite reasonably dealt with under 'delegated powers'. So far this system has been safeguarded by the proviso that when objections are received regarding applications that would otherwise be determined by a planning officer, they will instead be considered by the elected members of the Council. From now on, however, objections alone will not be sufficient to prevent an application from being dealt with under delegated powers. It will now also be essential for objections to be sent to a councillor in order to persuade him or her in turn to convince the chief planner that the matter should not be dealt with under delegated powers but by a committee in a democratic and publicly accountable way. In order to achieve this, objectors will need to find out if it is intended that an application is to be dealt with under delegation. This may not be easy to establish and could mean making several enquiries within just two weeks between publication of the details of an application and the day when the chief planner will decide whether it will be dealt with under delegated powers.

A matter of judgement

In making the case for further delegation, it has been stated by the Council that this will be an 'improvement' on the present system and allow councillors to devote more time to 'more important applications and policy matters. In support of this argument, it has been further stated that as most of the planning applications which have appeared before planning committees as 'recommended for approval' have in fact been approved, they could well have been

decided under delegated powers. In Chislehurst, however, there have been numerous applications for development which the Council's planning department have recommended for approval, yet which, following representations by the Chislehurst Society and individual residents, have been rejected by the planning committees. In most cases these refusals have been upheld by the D.O.E. appeal inspectors. Clearly, then, there is a risk that further delegation — particularly in view of the reasons advocated — will mean that developments which may well have been refused by the Council's planning committees, might be granted permission.

It is the intention of the Council that the new 'improved' scheme of delegation will be monitored and will be reviewed in September this year, but such a review will not undo decisions subsequently seen as mistakes. In any case, with the sharp fall in the numbers of planning applications submitted during the present economic climate, would it be right to decide that an apparent success of the scheme during this period would be justification for it to continue? Let us hope that the dictum 'improvement means deterioration' does not prove to be the case with extended delegated powers.

Councillor Katy Boughey is Chislehurst's ward member on the Council's Development Control Committee. Copies of letters of objection to planning applications should be addressed to her c/o the Civic Centre, Rochester Avenue, Bromley.

A GENEROUS BENEFACTOR

Thanks to the energetic efforts of Mr Charles Dunn and his colleagues on your Society's fund raising sub-committee, a special fund has been established with the aim of purchasing a permanent headquarters building. This would house facilities for members and for other local associations.

We are delighted to announce that Mr Henry Tiarks has generously responded to our last appeal with a donation of one thousand pounds. We thank Mr Tiarks, on behalf of all our members, for this wonderful boost to our cause. The Tiarks family, whose old home 'Foxbury' is known to many members, are certainly not forgotten in Chislehurst; it is good to know that the Tiarks family still remember and love Chislehurst.

THE CHISLEHURST SOCIETY AT THE LONDON FORUM

Your Society is a member of a London-wide organisation of residents' associations, the London Forum. Our permanent representative is Mr Kenneth Leary. At the Forum's last meeting, which was held in Westminster Cathedral Conference Hall on 16th November, Mrs Joy Jones and Mr Bruce Hurn were invited to attend and speak on two specific matters. Mrs Jones tackled the issue of membership.

"The Chislehurst Society started life in 1934 as the Ratepayers' Association, under the chairmanship of the late Tom Bushell, our local historian and author. It then became the Chislehurst Residents' Association and is now the Chislehurst Society. We are a non-political and non-sectarian organisation.

"There are fifteen and a half thousand people in Chislehurst and six and a half thousand households. Thanks

to our wonderful road stewards, who number seventy-five, we have a membership of four and a half thousand.

"The personal approach is the answer to membership. Each new road steward receives a hand-written letter from me welcoming him or her to the post.

"So that nobody in Chislehurst is deterred from joining the Society on financial grounds we keep our subscriptions low; for example, £3 per household and £1.50 per household for retired members. We have charitable status.

"We hold two socials a year for members and one for road stewards. Many of our members are retired people who welcome the chance to get to know other members.

"If there is a particular problem in our area, the membership rises: witness the Channel Tunnel Rail Link which frightened many people and threatened many homes. When it was suggested that part of Chislehurst be moved to the Borough of Greenwich, a large number — about 175 — of new members sought the help of the Society, thanks to the efforts of our membership liaison officer who does sterling work in this connection.

"We have the support of our local librarian, our councillors and our MP, who all say that they appreciate the help and advice that they receive from the Society.

"One must bear in mind that Chislehurst with its lovely Commons and woods is unique so near London and has a great deal worth saving and our members appreciate this."

Your vice chairman, Mr Bruce Hurn, described affiliation arrangements for local schools and the area's College of Design. Every educational institution in Chislehurst is now affiliated to your Society. The talk covered liaison between the schools and your Society; pupils' reports on their environmental activities and illustrated talks given to sixth formers, at a school's request, by executive committee members. Mr Hurn also explained the aims and structure of the Alun Jones award scheme for environmental studies; prizes were awarded for the first time in 1991. An interesting and exciting variety of local studies had been submitted for these awards — all entries were exhibited in Chislehurst Library and later in Barclays Bank and Bromley Civic Centre. Barclays' local branch will be sponsoring the awards for a second time in 1992.

Mrs Jones, Mr Hurn and speakers from two other amenity societies were introduced by Mr Martin Bradshaw, director of The Civic Trust.

The Green Belt — Minister's view

In addressing the AGM of the London Green Belt Council, to which the Chislehurst Society is affiliated, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, Mr Tim Yeo, MP, emphasised the Government's continuing commitment to the principle of Green Belts, which he linked with its commitment to the planning system as a whole as a means of resolving the conflicts about land-use and development inevitable in so densely populated a country.

Within Green Belts, which form an intrinsic part of the planning system, the balance is very much weighted against inappropriate development, the Minister argued. Most types of development *are* inappropriate in Green Belts, with the onus being very much on developers to demonstrate "very special circumstances" to justify development not normally considered appropriate; and such circumstances, the Minister remarked, were not easily demonstrated. Green Belts now amount to some 3.8 million acres in England — about 12% of the land area — while the Metropolitan Green Belt covers 1.2 million acres.

Channel Tunnel Route

After mentioning the proposed 'eastern route' for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, the Minister explained the Government's wish to explore the development potential of the East Thames Corridor, where the aim would be urban regeneration and the recycling of land. Within the Corridor, Green Belt policy would be accepted as unchanged, along with the need to retain open countryside at large, in any environmental assessment.

The Minister also referred to the recent Planning & Compensation Act, 1991 which, among other changes, reflected the Government's wish for a 'plan-led' system, under which Development Plans, together with national and regional policies, would generally provide the basis for planning decisions at the local level.

SUPPORT FOR SPORT

The Chislehurst Playing Field Association (CPFA) was formed in 1955 by a group of local people with the express aims of providing a sports ground for the use of Chislehurst residents.

This never materialised so the capital was invested and the interest is now distributed by way of **grants to local youth groups involved in sport.**

The trustees are concerned that not enough applications for grants are being made, and they would welcome approaches by any group or individual who might benefit from a grant.

Applications should be made to:— The Secretary, CPFA, 1, Furzefield Close, Chislehurst, Kent.

Who shall be Queen of the May?

Chislehurst May Queen Society will be holding the annual crowning of the May Queen ceremony on Saturday 2nd May. The procession of the May Queen and her retinue will follow the traditional route from Red Hill School to the Common culminating in the crowning at 3pm. There will be the usual children's fancy dress competition. All residents are warmly invited to attend the celebrations.

CARING FOR THE CARERS

If you look after someone, maybe a friend or a relative, and they rely on you, then you are a **Carer**. The Carers Information and Support Service (CISS) is here for you. They have staff working in nine local areas throughout the Borough. The Outreach Worker in this area is June and she can be contacted on 081-297 9022.

CISS want to know what Carers would like **their** service to do and are inviting them to come along to any of the nine meetings they have organised. For details of dates, times and venues please telephone 081-313 9364.

More volunteers are needed by Age Concern's Carers' Support Service to sit with an elderly dependent person for up to three to four hours to give the full-time carer a necessary break. The service is borough-wide and aims to give the carer regular respite.

If you have a few hours a week to spare and would like further information, please contact: Valerie Weston, Carers' Officer, Age Concern Bromley, 28A Beckenham Road, Beckenham BR3 4LS. Tel: 081-663 3711.

CHISLEHURST POT POURRI

Chislehurst Pot Pourri is the intriguing title of an illustrated lecture to be given at Chislehurst public library at **2.30pm on Saturday 7th March**. The event is organised by the Chislehurst and North West Kent branch of The Association of Men of Kent & Kentish Men as their annual Thomas A Bushell Memorial Lecture.

The speakers are Pat and June Bushell who will be showing a fascinating selection of colour slides taken by themselves and their father over the last thirty years. Everyone is very welcome to attend what promises to be an interesting and informative talk.

A HELPING HAND

The Trustees of the Lund and Warwick Charity invite applications from persons resident in the Parish of Chislehurst (as constituted in 1927, which includes parts of Sidcup).

Such persons must be under 25 years of age and in the opinion of the Trustees in need of financial assistance for advancement in life in either or both of the following ways:—

(1) in preparing for, entering upon or engaging in any profession, trade, occupation or service; help could be given in providing outfits, tools or equipment, or by paying fees, travelling or maintenance expenses, or by such other means for their advancement in life or to enable them to earn their living as the Trustees think fit;

(2) in otherwise promoting the education (including social and physical training) of such persons.

Applications should be made to the Clerk to the Trustees, (Dr J. W. Fox), Marlow House, 3 Camden Park Road, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 5HE.

What are we here for?

An excerpt from our Constitution

The Society is established for the public benefit for the following purposes in the area comprising Chislehurst which area shall hereinafter be referred to as "the area of benefit".

- (i) To promote high standards of planning and architecture in or affecting the area of benefit.
- (ii) To educate the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area of benefit.
- (iii) To secure the preservation protection development and improvement of features of historic, environmental or public interest in the area of benefit.

Do you think your Society is effective? Are we doing enough? If not — we need **your** ideas and **your** help to fulfil our purpose. Why not write an article for *The Cockpit*, write to the Council about one of the issues raised in this edition or come forward to join our road stewards. Help your Society to make things happen!

STOP PRESS — 'THE CEDARS'

Since going to press we have had the very good news that the Council has refused the application for permission to build in 'The Cedars' garden. The Planning Committee were unanimous in this very wise decision.