

NEWSLETTER No. 12

MARCH 1977

THAT CERTAIN FEELING

by David L. Porter

"A message from the President" sounds either pompous or a matter regarding a letter from a professional peanut grower, so I have given a title to this short note.

A certain feeling has been around for some time - perhaps you have felt it. It is not exactly that of middle age, or ennui, or being "browned off", but of lack of direction, of "That'll do", of "Let's have it now".

I'm sure I have it or suffer from it like many other people and I have thought about it, talked about it, taken iron pills, decided to drink less and/or go on a diet. I was particularly reminded of this feeling when Doug Cater-Smith fell ill, and as we all know to our loss has since died.

About twelve years ago he and I were talking, and as usual it was pretty animated. We were discussing how to set the world to rights, how to get a good Government, how to encourage those in Mottingham to join the Association - in fact all the chit-chat and argument men and women love. He said: "It's all going to pot. All the standards are going, youngsters are worse than we were, there is no value in money, porn is everywhere". I'm sure he would forgive me for some slight inaccuracies, but that was the gist of it. I replied: "Oh, I don't think so, you are exaggerating", but I wonder who was right?

There is a certain feeling, and it seems everywhere - or in most places. Have we all got a bit of it?

A weekend a short time ago Jean and I went to a reunion of my old Royal Air Force Group. It was held at a R.A.F. aerodrome, where we had dinner, wine and stayed the night - eighty or more of us - old and serving members who were our hosts.

Strange, there was no feeling of middle age, "couldn't care less" or lack of direction. There was, however, "that certain feeling" of friendship, trust, direction and dedication in the widest possible sense. Every minute was enjoyed in humour and conversation - not only of the older times, but of the future too. I wonder if I can keep this up for the next

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year? I wonder if we can all keep it up? But I suppose as the flesh is weak it will fade a bit at least.

Feelings about Associations fluctuate as do our feelings (or perhaps to be truthful, mine) about the Residents' Association. It is difficult to keep it up all the time. But Doug Cater-Smith's feelings never flagged. Argumentative, yes, but he was often right, and I and the Association have much to thank him for. I will always remember that conversation. Can we hope to replace him? We can try, but I don't think we ever will.

WE NEED A COMMUNITY CENTRE

by Marie Davies, Association Treasurer

As an Association representing Mottingham I feel that we should be contributing more to the social and welfare needs of our community, embracing all age groups.

Why not consider a Community Centre? During the daytime this could be utilised as a playgroup centre, child welfare centre, chiropody service for senior citizens, family planning advice bureau, and so on.

I feel particularly strongly concerning the youth of Mottingham and the lack of facilities at the present time. Parents - broach the subject with your children and let us have your ideas regarding the types of activities your families would care to participate in. I am sure that many members would welcome a weekly game of whist or bridge, the occasional social evening, musical evening, debates, and so on.

Now comes the crunch: where are these activities to be held? We have four excellent councillors on our committee who could not resist this cri de coeur. Surely somewhere in Mottingham there must be a suitable site or building?

Please come along to the Annual General Meeting on the 26th April and let us have your views. With over 1,400 members of the Association the ideas should come flooding in. Let's be a community - not just numbers in our little wooden boxes.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Mottingham Residents' Association will be held on Tuesday, the 26th April, 1977, at 8.00 p.m. in the Maryfield Hall, Leysdown Road, Mottingham, S.E. 9.

The second half of the meeting will again be devoted to a QUIZ when our local Councillors from the London Boroughs of Bromley and Greenwich will answer questions from members on matters of local interest. This proved to be very popular at last year's Annual General Meeting, so we are again providing the opportunity for members to question our local Councillors.

Please make an effort to attend this important meeting: it is the members of the Association who decide its policy, and it will be of great assistance to the elected officers and members of the Executive Committee to have your views.

Signed: Margaret Gardner,
Hon. Secretary.

A G E N D A

1. Opening of Meeting by the President.
2. Adoption of Minutes of Last A.G.M. (27/4/76).
(Precis of Minutes available at meeting).
3. Chairman's Report: To Receive & Approve.
4. Hon. Treasurer's Report: To Receive & Approve.
5. Election of Officers:-
 - (a) President
 - (b) Hon. Secretary
 - (c) Hon. Treasurer
 - (d) Executive Committee
 - (e) Hon. Auditor
6. Determination of Membership Subscription.
7. Appointment of Road Stewards.
8. Any Other Business.

ALBERT ROAD STORY by Councillor Ron Huzzard

Two proposed changes affecting Albert Road were the subject of a Planning Enquiry held at Bromley Town Hall on 5th January. The inspector dealt with them in two parts:-

- (1) Bromley's case for a compulsory purchase order allowing the decaying houses on the south side to be demolished. These old houses are privately rented and have been condemned by the Environmental Health Officer. Bromley wishes to build some new houses in their place with the correct depth of front and rear gardens. To create a suitable site some land held by the Prince of Wales and Palmers Bros. is being sought.
- (2) The appeal of Palmers Bros. against Bromley's rejection of their plan to build a three storey block at the bottom of Albert Road to include a new MOT vehicle test station and two maisonettes.

There was a good attendance by tenants of 2 to 12 Albert Road and by the owner-occupiers on the north side. Mr. Palmer presented his own case for modernising his vehicle testing facilities.

The inspector indicated that a decision by him was unlikely in under six months. However, there are some immediate issues that require attention and Councillor Macdonald and I have already taken these up with the Chief Executive of Bromley Council. These are:-

- The tenants of 2 to 12 Albert Road need some assurance from Bromley on how, where and when they are likely to be re-housed if the compulsory purchase order is granted. Many have lived in Mottingham for a long time and most wish to live locally. They fear having to endure another winter in these old houses.

The obvious answer is for Bromley to reach agreement with the GLC to see if some of the new Geffery Homes flats or houses could be offered. The inspector in fact made this suggestion.

- Bromley has no plans for developing the land at the top of Albert Road next to the Prince of Wales which has become a parking ground for heavy lorries and a waste dump - surely Mottingham's worst eyesore. Discussion of this was outside the terms of the enquiry but ideally any development of the south side of Albert Road should embrace the corner site.

This problem worries many owner-occupiers of the new houses.

- The new housing plans for the south side depend on an exchange of land in which the garden of the Prince of Wales becomes available to Bromley while the pub gets the site of 1 to 6 Albert Road. It is not clear how much agreement has been reached. If and when the compulsory purchase order is granted and the houses demolished, the Prince of Wales should tidy up the site of 1 to 6, grass it over and fence it off in an attractive style. Unless this is done it could become another dump ground.

At the enquiry it seemed to me that opinions were divided over Palmers Bros. plan, but there was a clear wish to see no additional traffic down Albert Road arising from any modernisation of the the vehicle test centre.

While we await the inspector's findings, both the tenants and and the owner-occupiers have problems that we are doing our best to deal with in our approaches to Bromley's officers.

F. D. CATER-SMITH

by Graham Jenkins

As has been reported elsewhere, Doug Cater-Smith, a past Chairman of the Association, died in hospital on Thursday, 3rd March 1977. We extend our deepest sympathy to Joan and the family.

I would not wish to eulogise on his many achievements for the Association but rather give a comment or two about the man himself. Doug was a contentious and abrasive fighter who injected life into the Association when it was most needed. My contacts with him in the Horticultural Society, in the local hostelry as well as in the Association have brought as many conflicts as congenial agreements. Indeed I suspect that anyone who agreed with Doug on every subject would not be counted a friend.

His courageous fighting qualities were never more dramatically displayed than during his illness. Despite great pain, he still retained his ebullient and provocative outlook.

The Association has lost a great stalwart who always tempered his incisiveness with a conciliatory compassion.

Farewell Doug: your deeds will live after you.

MERRY MOTTINGHAM

That's what the Eltham District Times called us back in 1910. With Jubilee and Mottingham Week celebrations now being planned, let's hope we can still live up to that reputation. Some people have been heard saying "what are they doing about it?" so we offer here a round-up of what "they" are doing, and what you and I should be doing.

Street Parties

"The last time we had a street party was at the Coronation", said one Devonshire Road resident. "I can remember my son out there in fancy dress, blowing a wooden trumpet". (He is now married with a family of his own).

- Well, Devonshire Road is having a party again, on Jubilee Day, 7th June. There is also a super party being planned the same day in Dorset Road for the children of Court Farm Road, Dorset Road, Portland Crescent, Mottingham Gardens and Mottingham Lane.

- News has also reached the editor of two parties being planned on the Coldharbour estate and two on the Mottingham estate.

- What are "they" doing about it? This is entirely a matter for your own initiative and imagination in getting together to organise a party, certainly as far as Bromley is concerned.

If you live in Bromley you need to get permission from the Chief Executive, at Bromley Town Hall. Write giving details of the date, time, place and what sort of party it will be (for children, with dancing and so on). You will also have to indemnify the Council to the extent of £250,000 liability, which means taking out an insurance policy costing between £2 and £7. There are a number of rules about which you will be informed by the Borough Engineer.

Greenwich Borough has produced a leaflet "Organising a street party" which is filled with useful advice, important addresses and so on. Various kinds of help, including financial aid, are available in some circumstances. The Engineering Directorate of Greenwich has also produced some guidance on the things you must do in order to satisfy the Police, and there is an application form that you can use. All this is available from the Town Hall or Information Office.

If you are thinking of organising a party for your road

and are wondering how others have set about it you could talk to Joan Huxley at 71, Court Farm Road, or to Devonshire Road residents Janet O'Mahoney at 25 or Jackie Gears at 27.

Bunting

This is a deadly serious matter of village politics, which could lead to rioting and executions in front of the Porcupine to judge from the feelings it arouses. "What are they doing about bunting?" "If it's no better than we had at the last Mottingham Week it would be best to have none at all". That - or words to that effect - is what a lot of people have been saying.

From a relentless search after the facts, the following appears to be the present situation:-

- For Jubilee celebrations, street parties and so on before Mottingham Week it is up to people to organise their own decorations. Street party groups are working on this one, and most residents could afford a flag or a bit of bunting to put outside the house.
- For Mottingham Week itself the various organisations involved are arranging their own decorations as necessary. The Fete Committee is supplementing stallholders' own efforts with bunting around the field.
- The biggest uncertainty is over the decoration of Mottingham Road through the village itself, which is on the procession route to the Fete and the place where the strongest impression can be given to passers-by that Mottingham is being merry.

Mottingham Road is in Bromley Borough, which has decided to spend only £2,000 on the entire Jubilee celebrations. Of this £600 is to be spent on bunting for use at the various Jubilee celebrations around the Borough. This will amount to nearly 200 40-foot lengths of bunting - more than enough for Mottingham Village. The only trouble is that four other parts of the Borough may well be claiming the bunting for the week leading up to and including the beginning of Mottingham Week.

It looks as though the Mottingham Week committee and the local shopkeepers ought to get together to make absolutely sure there is not a repeat of the fiasco we had last time.

Some enthusiastic senior citizens are making bunting for general use and would welcome supplies of materials. If you have any pieces of material suitable for bunting, please

rush them along to Mrs. Smith at Evelyn Court in the village; Les Kempton at 39 Wynford Way for the Coldharbour Community Centre; or Colin Knope at 306 Beaconsfield Road for the Oxford House Day Centre. You can also buy bunting and flags. There are some details in the Greenwich Borough Booklet - "Organising a street party". Diane Kirk, our Chairman, also has details. She is at 10 Scotsdale Close, Orpington.

LIFELINES

by the Editor

The Mottingham Residents' Association is not just a small committee of dedicated people. It is the vast majority of people who live in the Parish of Mottingham.

It is not a group of self-centred ratepayers, interested only in getting the maximum service from local authorities for a bare minimum of expenditure. The Association includes people with a very wide range of interests and is concerned with maintaining and improving all aspects of the quality of life in Mottingham.

If it is to be lively and useful, there must be a simple organisation to allow people to meet and talk over ideas and problems. There need to be meetings which everybody can attend - don't forget the next one on 26th April. There must be a committee, some regular means of communication such as this Newsletter, a small income to cover expenses, and a team of people willing to keep the lines of communication open by delivering Newsletters, collecting subscriptions and, as appropriate, keeping the committee informed of what the wider membership is thinking.

There is a growing danger of this vital road representatives network breaking down. Several people have recently given up this job, and Reg Cambridge who has given so much to organising this side of our work in recent years is unable to continue for family reasons.

The need is now urgent for volunteers to take on this interesting, important and not too onerous task of road representative; and at the AGM it will be important to find somebody who can lead, encourage and chivvy the representatives and be their link with the committee.

Please speak to any of the committee if you feel you can help, or contact me, Jack Hollingum, at 33 Devonshire Road, SE9 4QP, 'phone 357 5856.

DON'T CLOSE OUR HOSPITAL

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by Councillor Wendy Mitchell

Eltham and Mottingham Hospital was founded in 1880, the money to build it being raised by public subscription. Many of its present facilities have been provided over the years by the local people - a very good example of this generosity is the physiotherapy department.

The convenience and economy of a local hospital like this should never be underestimated. It provides general practitioner beds, minor surgical beds, outpatient facilities, radiography and physiotherapy, and a casualty unit for minor accidents. It is especially important in this area, where transport services to other hospitals are far from adequate for patients, relatives and visitors.

Closing the inpatient and casualty facilities at this hospital would have far-reaching effects, not least the longer waiting lists at other hospitals which would inevitably cause hardship and perhaps pain.

Proposals for the closure of this hospital - and, incidentally for the closure of the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies and St. Nicholas' Hospital are being made by the Area Health Authority. This Authority was set up a few years ago with others throughout the country to manage and oversee the health services of their respective areas. At the same time hospital management committees were axed.

The Greenwich and Bexley Area Health Authority have been told they are overbedded and overspent, and consequently economies must be made.

I do not quarrel with the need for economies, though there are other ways of financing our Health Service which I feel have not been investigated fully. But I do deplore the decision to close Eltham and Mottingham Hospital.

Our hospital has always provided a local service to an area with its quota of incapacitated and elderly people needing limited hospitalisation under the care of a general practitioner on occasions when sufficient home care cannot be provided and when the full range of sophisticated equipment and treatment at a costly district general hospital is not required. It provides a peaceful convalescence for those

who have had major operations at the noisier and busier general hospitals.

Its consultant operating facilities reduce the waiting list for what are often termed "non-urgent" but painful conditions. In fact one could say that the Iltham and Mottingham hospital and many others like it improve the quality of life.

I firmly believe it is essential to keep a small casualty unit in Eltham for dealing with minor accidents and dressings. We have four comprehensive schools and a number of primary schools on the doorstep. We have a considerable number of shops and business premises for whom a minor casualty service provides fast treatment - as against a difficult journey to the already overburdened Brock casualty department with frequently a very long time spent waiting to be seen.

The staff of the hospital formed an action group last year, and they and local people have joined together in a determined fight to prevent the closure of the hospital. A march and rally held last year attracted many people; and in November two coach loads of staff from the hospital and local organisations presented a petition of 16,000 signatures to Peter Bottomley at the House of Commons, hoping the Secretary of State will intervene and prevent the closure.

The action group, led by two Sisters from the hospital, Anne Harwood and Rose Gibbs, are raising money to take legal action to prevent the closure if other means fail. If, however, no legal action is necessary the money, which already amounts to £700, will be used for the benefit of the patients.

Many people have written to the action group and to Peter Bottomley expressing their support for this very valuable asset - their hospital.

Good health is vitally important to every one of us. Closure of hospitals will inevitably lead to a deterioration in the efficiency and adequacy of Health Service care, with longer waiting lists, longer clinic and casualty department waiting times and overburdening of the remaining hospitals.

It is essential that we all continue our fight to retain our local Eltham and Mottingham Hospital to provide those facilities we originally needed when it was built at the beginning of the century and which, with a greater population, are even more important to-day.

IN BRIEF

Threat to Village Shops. Leases of shops in Mottingham Village are having to be renewed at more than double the rate of the past seven year period, and the lease for many shopkeepers has been reduced to five years. Some shopkeepers have already decided that it is too expensive and have given up their tenancies, and it is believed that some others may follow them in the near future.

Community Service Project. The younger generation have just launched an exciting project to bring together young and old in Mottingham. There are lots of elderly and housebound people in Mottingham who would welcome the friendly help of young people with gardening, shopping, decorating and other jobs. And it seems there are many young people in Mottingham who are only too pleased to discover that they can be of help.

The Mottingham Community Service Project held its second meeting on 7th March, when the support of many local youth organisations was pledged. If you want to help or be helped, contact Alice Nixey, the Secretary, at 5 Bilsby Grove, 857 2474.

Hotel for Mottingham? Outline planning consent has been sought for a 64-bedroom hotel to be built in Court Road near Mottingham Station, on the plot of land between Station Approach and Middle Park. A spokesman for the architects, John Gill Associates, told Mottingham News that the design is for an L-shaped building with a four-storey bedroom block facing Middle Park and the dining and lounge areas fronting on Court Road. Behind it is a parking and service area with access from Station Approach.

The architects have made application on behalf of Roundbake Ltd., and it is thought that the hotel might primarily look to tourist business, being easy of access from the A20 and the A2/M2. There are thought to be no comparable hotels in the neighbourhood.

Health Centre. Councillor Ray Martin reports that the proposal for a health centre on Coldharbour has now been approved by the Area Health Authority, though it is not likely to be established in the near future, since higher priority is given to the setting up of some other centres. Possible sites are in Altash Way and near the Coldharbour Community Centre.

Playgroup at Mottingham Infants' School. The pre-school playgroup

which up to Christmas 1976 used the Mottingham Community Centre in Kimmeridge Road, began from January to use one of the Classrooms at Mottingham Infants' School, reports Councillor Ron Huzzard. Local councillors have been pressing Bromley Council to commence nursery education in Mottingham's primary schools and while welcoming the utilisation of spare classrooms will continue their fight for nursery classes at an appropriate time.

History of Mottingham. Our Mottingham Librarian, Winifred Parkinson, is working against the clock to complete an illustrated history of Mottingham, which Bromley Borough hopes to publish and have on sale in time for Mottingham Week in June.

Dorset Road Parking - Bromley Council is to consider complaints about parking in Dorset Road. The hazard to motorists from parking on both sides of this narrow road was pointed out at the last meeting of this Association's committee, and the headmistress of Dorset Road school has complained about parking in the "box" outside the school which has created difficulties for the school meals van.

Councillors' Surgery. Bromley's Mottingham Councillors, Ron Huzzard and Alistair Macdonald, now hold a "Surgery" to deal with local problems every Saturday morning from 10 to 12 at Mottingham Community Centre. A telephone call to either 467 5367 or 357 8219 will indicate which Councillor is in attendance.

Eltham College Midsummer fair. Some say its the finest Fair in the district. It has attracted many thousands to the College in past years. The Fair, which is staged by the Eltham College Parents' Association, the Friends of Eltham College and the Old Elthamians, comes round every second year, and this year it is on Saturday, 9th July.

CHARITY BALL. Bromley is organising a charity ball in aid of the Queen's Jubilee Fund. It is to be held on 1st June at Tiffany's in Purley, with dancing from 8.0 till 1.0, cabaret and prizes. Tickets are £4.75, and you can book tables of 10 at £47.50 from the Information Officer, 464 3333 X 3265.

Eltham Plan - Final version of the Plan for central Eltham is expected soon. Account has been taken of representations from local residents' associations. More ambitious proposals such as tall buildings are believed to have been dropped.