

Mottingham Residents' Association

NEWSLETTER No. 16

MARCH 1980

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

Graham Jenkins

By the time this newsletter reaches you, we shall all know the worst about rate increases. Deteriorating services, it seems, cost substantially more to run than efficient ones.

Despite London Transport's claim that bus services are improving under their new district organisation, they are still woefully inadequate. The recent unofficial strike action has not helped the situation, although I suspect a number of us have resigned ourselves to seeking alternative forms of transport, which although less convenient are far more reliable. You will have an opportunity to put your questions and express your views to a London Transport representative at the Association's AGM on 22 April.

Without doubt you will be told that this is all due to the malaise of inflation. It is of utmost importance, therefore, that one examines both Government and Local Government spending on the criterion of value for money. It seems absurd that capital resources which have been funded by taxpayers and ratepayers should lie unused when there is a real and urgent demand for the services they could provide.

Further, administrative egoism dictates that the Thames Water Authority levy a separate demand to occupiers rather than include its precept within the general rate demand. This may provide more work for the Post Office but it is clearly administratively inefficient. This view is substantiated by recent reports that the domestic water rate will double.

All of this must sound like unalloyed gloom and despond. There is however one bright spot on the grim and foreboding horizon. At the Association's AGM the level of subscription for next year will be fixed. You can be certain that this, at least, will be good value for money.

I look forward to seeing you there and hearing your views.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Nottingham Residents' Association will be held on Tuesday, 22 April 1980, at 8.00 p.m. in the Maryfield Hall, Leysdown Road, Nottingham, SE9, when your presence is earnestly requested. This is the opportunity for members to express their views which in turn help the elected officers and members of the executive committee to decide on policy for the year ahead.

The second half of the meeting will be devoted to transport and its problems. We are fortunate in obtaining the attendance of Mr Dixon, the Selkent District Manager and Mr J. S. Wagstaff, the Senior Public Relations Assistant (South) of London Transport. Mr Wagstaff will be giving a short talk about 'London Transport present and future', illustrated with slides. Local bus problems will be discussed by Mr Dixon, and both visitors will be prepared to answer questions. We are sure that our members will find this subject of great interest.

Margaret Gardner, Honorary Secretary

A G E N D A

1. Opening of meeting by the President
2. Adoption of Minutes of the last AGM (24/4/79)
(Precis of Minutes available at meeting)
3. Chairman's report: to receive and approve
4. Hon. Treasurer's report: to receive and 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. Membership report and appointment of road stewards
8. Any other business

How we escaped the motorway desert

Lewis Bannister

In the early sixties and soon after our return from East Africa to Eltham Park, there were plans to build three roads to circle London and divert traffic from residential and shopping streets. The plan caused - and is still causing - great concern to residents of the affected areas and environs. I said at the time that it was not likely that many actual works could be started for 15-20 years, as it was not uncommon for major road schemes in the Metropolis to take 30 years from drawing board to commencement on site.

At that time a road was planned to connect with the southern end of the Blackwall Tunnel which was to be part of the Inner London 'Box' Route (Ringway 1). Also proposed was a South Orbital Route (Ringway 2) as a replacement for the South Circular Road. Finally there was Ringway 3, following the approximate line of the M25, which the appropriate Ministries and Departments have been determined to build by the process of constructing short sections at a time. I suspect the overall route was never given great publicity.

This route, which will ultimately link the Dartford Tunnel to Heathrow, has some merit in keeping heavy traffic on the fringe of Greater London. Conservationists argue strongly, however, that it is a heavy price to pay in loss of countryside amenities, just as there was heavy opposition to the Inner Box route and the loss of homes which would have occurred.

in the early stages there were, at one time or another, three possible routes for the A2 Relief Road (to have been part of Ringway 2) which resulted in much blight of pleasant residential areas in the district.

Time passed on and in the late sixties, having ourselves moved all of three miles from Eltham Park to Mottingham, proposals were revealed for the 'rape' - as it was known - of Eltham and Mottingham. This scheme included the A2 relief road - part of Ringway 2 - which was to come from a new tunnel at Thamesmead to an interchange with the A2 at Falconwood, through Eltham Warren and the Royal Blackheath

golf courses, a fly-over on the Sidcup Road A20 east of the Dutch House public house, and then weaving eastwards to form a replacement for the South Circular Road.

In addition, this scheme included a Kidbrooke Park Link Road from the A20 to the southern approach of the Blackwall tunnel - hence the title of a map published in a local paper at the time - 'Motorway Desert Island SE9'. I was drawn into the Residents' Association when these grandiose schemes - which aroused great controversy here and in many other affected areas - were published. It appears, however, that reason has prevailed over this particular plan.

The current Rochester Way Relief Road scheme - which most people agree is necessary - basically comprises a route from Falconwood through Glenesk Road, Well Hall, to Kidbrooke Park Road, with a new rail/bus interchange at Eltham Well Hall. This was the subject of a GLC report at the end of 1975.

A public inquiry has already been held over this, and another is scheduled for 8 April this year. Even at this late stage it appears that our worthy Borough Council does not seem to be able to agree a common approach over the matter - in spite of the almost inevitable twenty years of 'planning' which have elapsed.

In some of the Continental countries, such important decisions on major routes and their implementation are left to experienced engineers and planners, and there is considerably less 'interference' by party or local politics than we have. On such a matter as this, would it have been better, perhaps, if an alternative method of planning, design, publication and action - including adequate compensation - had been left in the hands of the appropriate Government Department? What do you think?

The saga continues -

So many objections have been received to plans to improve the A20 Sidcup by-pass in the London Boroughs of Bexley and Bromley, that a public inquiry is to be held at Swanley on 13 May.

A YEAR TO CELEBRATE

The Rev. Christopher Byers
President of the Association

1980 is a very special year for Mottingham. There is no Mottingham Week to celebrate, it is true, but we planned it that way. In 1980, not a week but a year of celebration, for this is the centenary year of the parish church of St Andrew.

By now almost every home will have received an outline programme of events. A souvenir brochure is also available giving a history of the parish. This includes some lovely old photographs of Mottingham from Ian Murdoch's extensive collection. As the life of the parish church has always been bound up with the life of the people of Mottingham we are justified in saying that Mottingham celebrates a centenary too. Christianity after all abolishes the old distinctions between the sacred and profane, the holy and the commonplace. The aisle of the church and the village high street are one and the same - or should be.

We have already celebrated on 18 March the actual day when one hundred years ago the church was consecrated. We followed this with a Centenary Dinner in the dining hall of Eltham College, and of course the celebration of the great Easter Festival. But there is still much to come and the programme is being added to almost every week. Here is a reminder of the events that you and your family are invited to attend:

5 May A May Day Fayre in St Andrew's halls and grounds. Stalls and sideshows and the crowning of the May Queen. Strange how Christians keep the old pagan festivals going!

11 May 2 p.m. Beating the bounds of the parish. Meet at the church. Follow the river Quaggy. See Mottingham from the hills by the railway. The walk ends at Fairmount, Mottingham Lane, to celebrate the hundredth birthday of our oldest resident. There hasn't been a centenarian in Mottingham since the days of Farmer Brown.

12 May Help us to collect for Christian Aid. House to house collections for the homeless, the hungry and the refugees of the world.

18 May 7.30 p.m. Centenary concert given by St Andrews

Choir and invited musicians. Performance of music specially commissioned for the occasion.

14 June Auction in St Andrew's Hall for Centenary Appeal. Last time some fascinating items were on sale and over £1 000 was raised.

20 June St Andrew's Church. Concert as part of the Greenwich Festival.

28 June 2 p.m., Rectory garden. 'A vicarage tea party'. Come in Victorian costume for a proverbially polite and refined and genteel occasion complete with croquet on the lawn and cucumber sandwiches.

29 June 2 p.m. Cricket Match. A St Andrew's XI v. a School XI. Come and cheer on your local heroes.

4 July Flower Festival in St Andrew's Church. Opens on Friday evening, all day Saturday except between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m., and on Sunday afternoon. Theme - 'One Hundred Years'.

6 July 6.30 p.m. United Service for Centenary Year. All the local churches taking part.

19 July 7 p.m. Garden Party at 26 Camden Park Road, Chislehurst.

11 October 8 p.m. Old Time Music Hall in St Andrew's Church.

30 November The year ends with a St Andrew's Day visit to Rochester Cathedral for a service at 3.15 p.m. It was St Andrew's Priory Rochester which held the tithes of Mottingham for many hundreds of years. The preacher will be Dick Third, once a member of staff in the parish and now Bishop of Maidstone.

During the Autumn there will be several other events planned. The Mayor Elect of Greenwich has let it be known that she wishes the civic service for the Borough to be held in St Andrew's Church during her year of office. This will be a great honour for us and a further assurance that Mottingham stays on the map. Now for the next hundred years!

LIBRARY MORE POPULAR

The year ending this March may prove to have been the busiest in our local library's nine-year history, according to Winifred Parkinson, Mottingham Librarian. Issues of books in the year are expected to total not far short of 119 000. This is easily the highest total since the first year, 1970-71, when issues were 118 928.

The library went through a difficult period in the middle of the decade. By 1974-5 issues had fallen to 105 845, and the following year the library was closed on Mondays, despite protests from this Association. Nevertheless, the rate of borrowing increased again slowly, and the past year has seen a substantial improvement.

No doubt restoring the Monday opening has helped, and the improved entrance hall has added to the attractiveness of the building. Miss Parkinson also points out that additional housing in the area must have been a factor, and she has put a lot of work into bringing the library service to the attention of newcomers to Mottingham.

Classes are picking up again, and the junior library is being used to a greater extent - particularly as the library now admits paperbacks for reasons of economy. Human perversity being what it is, paperbacks seem to suit the mood of the day, and are a popular feature of the adult as well as of the junior library. Soon children will be sporting badges - 5p each - and advertising their membership of the library.

Our village library has become a useful and popular centre in the life of Mottingham, for which we owe much to the enthusiasm of Winifred Parkinson and her team. Now, as it approaches its tenth year, many would welcome a strengthening of its service to include records and cassettes.

IN BRIEF

Repulse of the juggernauts. Mottingham Station forecourt has been used increasingly over the last few months as an overnight parking place for large lorries which have made it difficult for cars to enter or leave during the evening. The

Association received a number of complaints, and first approached Greenwich Council, which said that as the lorries only parked there occasionally this did not constitute a change of use of the forecourt. However, an approach to British Rail has produced a more positive response. Lorry parking has been forbidden in the station forecourt since 29 February.

Another Mottingham history. The St Andrew's centenary has inspired another local history to put alongside that written in 1977 by our librarian, Winifred Parkinson. Elizabeth Horsman, a local school teacher and young mother, has written a vivid account of the coming of the parish church to Mottingham and its development and place in the life of the area.

It is especially interesting in making real to us the character of the indomitable first Rector of Mottingham, G. B. P. Viner, and the battles he fought, first to get a site for the new church, and then to raise the money for its building. He lost the fight against some local interests to have it built at the heart of the old village at the meeting of Mottingham Road, Grove Park Road, Court Farm Road and Mottingham Lane - though the present site is more spacious. Local people were also pessimistic about raising the £2 000-£3 000 needed for the first stage of the new building, and in fact raised only about £750. Nevertheless, Viner managed to bring the total up to £2 500 with contributions from his personal friends.

The book includes some comments from past rectors and a postscript from the Rev. Christopher Byers. It costs £1 and is obtainable from St Andrew's or from Mottingham Library.

Waiting for Greenwich. The projected meeting between Bromley, Greenwich and Lewisham boroughs to review traffic and parking problems in Mottingham - raised last year by this Association - is still held up by Greenwich, which has still to decide whether it even wants to participate. That preliminary decision is due to be taken at a meeting of the Works Committee early in April.