

Beaconsfield Society

Newsletter - Summer 1999

Dear Member,

I hope you are enjoying the summer. You may have heard that my family is planning to move from Beaconsfield this year. Your Committee has therefore appointed Dr Les Davies, former Town Mayor, as Deputy Chairman of the Society to take over my duties should we move before the autumn AGM.

For Your Diary

Heritage Day Walk - 2.30pm Sunday September 12

There will be a guided walk for Members and friends through Holtspur Bank Nature Reserve starting at 2.30. Meeting Point: the Scout Hut in Cherry Tree Road just off Holtspur Top Lane. It promises to be a fascinating afternoon, from butterflies and dormice to orchids.

Bucks Berks Oxon Big Band Concert - 7.45pm Friday October 15

One of your Committee, Peter Richards, is helping to organise this year's concert at the Beacon Centre in aid of the Motor Neurone Disease Association. Last year's concert sold out well in advance so please telephone Peter if you would like tickets on 672937.

Society AGM - 8.00pm Wednesday October 27 Town Council Chambers

As usual, the brisk formal agenda will be followed by time for a drink and a chat and then the Guest Speaker. I am delighted that this year the CO of the Defence School of Languages, Commander Simon Airey RN, has agreed to give us an illustrated talk about Wilton Park past and present. We hope you will be able to join us.



German PoWs at Wilton Park Beaconsfield in 1946. (The lecturer was my father)

Spring Activities

The Society's photography competition "A Week in the Life of Beaconsfield 1 - 7 May" attracted almost 100 entries. These were judged by local artist and designer Trevor Crompton and photographers from the Bucks Free Press and Advertiser. The winner, Society Member Mrs Collard of Gregories Road, generously donated her £75 first prize to a local cub pack. A selection of 30 of the best entries, enlarged thanks to the kindness of Boots and Listers, was displayed at Awareness Day and then at the Library for two weeks. If you missed them, they will be on display again at the AGM in October (see above).

The Beaconsfield Society Awareness Day on June 10th was well attended. This year some 32 local organisations took part and for the first time the WI provided very welcome refreshments. The "A Week in the Life of Beaconsfield" photo display attracted a lot of attention (and several new members) and your Committee plans to run a similar competition to mark the year 2000.

Our Town

The Cinema The latest application to demolish the cinema ("Zoom") and redevelop the site for shops was rejected by South Bucks District Council on 2nd June on the grounds that it would result in the loss of a valuable leisure and recreational amenity, the use of which enhances the vitality of the New Town. The objections raised by the Beaconsfield Society were quoted extensively in the rationale for rejection.

Relocation of the District Council South Bucks DC is exploring the possibility of re-locating to Beaconsfield. One possible site being considered is that of the first house on the right in Burkes Road, until recently occupied by Social Services. At a public meeting in the Council Chambers, the Council's Chief Executive gave assurances that the plan would not go ahead unless it incorporated its own car-parking for staff and visitors. Essential: 150 staff relocating would surely mean about 150 extra cars.

St Michaels Green Although it looks a mess at the moment, the Trees and Town Group led a heavy work party in May, digging in manure to condition the soil in the eight corner beds ready for autumn planting. **Waitrose roundabout** The silver birch planted in the middle has died of thirst. The sponsors, McBride Holdings plc have promised to replace. **Roadside trees** Due to administrative ping-pong between Town and County councils, the planned tree planting in Warwick Road missed the spring and should now take place in the autumn. **Street name-signs** If you are aware of a damaged or vandalised street name-sign, a helpful Mr Ellis at South Bucks District Council (01753 533333) will arrange replacement.

M40 Beaconsfield Services Your Society has objected to an application to build a motorway service area including picnic area and overnight accommodation on land south east of Junction 2 (Beaconsfield) of the M40. The M40 and M25 certainly need motorway services but we feel they should be motorway-specific services, not a service area to be shared with the A355. The increased traffic, the extra light and noise pollution and the encroachment onto green-belt land make the plan unacceptable. Personally, I feel the operators should pay for their own access infrastructure, not clog up ours. If you too want to object, please write to the Chief Planning Officer at SBDC, Windsor Road, Slough SL1 2HN quoting reference is 99/00723/OUT.

Housing developments At the beginning of July, I represented the Society at a meeting in Slough to discuss the District Council's Draft Housing Strategy for 1999 - 2002. Among the problems discussed was the severe shortage in our district of both low cost housing and of smaller houses suitable for older people wishing to move from larger family homes. The cause is clear: most of South Bucks District is green belt so we have what is described as "land-famine".

When building land does become available, it costs more than housing associations are allowed to spend. Meanwhile private developers can afford it but only if they build very grand houses. The result is that the young, those on more modest incomes and the elderly are being priced out of our town. This is, of course, not a new problem for our community but it is a growing one.

One attempt to overcome the problem is the recently adopted policy of forcing builders to incorporate a certain amount of social housing in any development of 15 or more new homes. **The Oakdene Site.** Phase 2 plans 31 houses with garaging and parking for 150+ cars. It escapes the social housing provision because it received outline approval prior to the adoption of the policy. **The Butlers Court Site,** a plan to build 59 homes, does include fifteen "affordable houses". The other large potential development site, **Bon Secours** in Candlemas Lane (how sad to be losing the nuns), should fall within the policy. The danger is that the land is developed little by little, keeping the number of houses per planning application below the 15-home threshold.

Bulldoze one, build three. Many members find this trend alarming. Another recent District Council policy adopted at the end of March may slow this down. Certain areas have been designated Residential Areas of Exceptional Character or RAECs. There are now two RAECs or "pink areas" on the map of Beaconsfield: a large one extending over much of the Burkes Road - Gregories Road - Stratton Road area, and a smaller one in Penn Road. Any new building will have to be in keeping with the density and character of the surrounding area. The new policy is about to be tested at Appeal following the Council's refusal to permit a plan in the Stratton Road/Burgess Wood Grove area to demolish two and build five houses.

Finally

We have been asked to communicate a new local policy called DUMP. This asks us to Dispose of Unwanted Medicines and Pills by returning them to any pharmacist rather than flushing them into the river system or mixing them with household waste.

Our sincere thanks for your continued support, and please do let us know if there are any local issues you feel the Beaconsfield Society should raise with the relevant authorities.

Martin Roundell Greene
Chairman
August 1999

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