

BVRA **newsheet**

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

Vol: 20 No. 1 January 2004

I hope you enjoyed a pleasant Christmas and should like to extend to all our members Best Wishes for the New Year. We pray that 2004 will be more peaceful for our country, and that a sense of tranquility will prevail in our community.

A great deal has happened in Banstead Village during the past year, and much lies in store just round the corner, about which we will try hard to keep you informed through our regular NewsSheet.

We greatly value your continued support and encouragement in our efforts to maintain and improve our quality of life, and welcome any feedback on issues which are of concern to you.

Chairman

COMMITTEE NEWS

I have to report that John Quick has resigned from the Executive Committee for personal reasons. We thank him for his contribution to our debates and wish him well. In addition, Phillip Gilmore has been unable to take his place on the committee due to personal circumstances.

These resignations leave a number of vacancies. We are always delighted to welcome new committee members, and if you are interested in local affairs please do not hesitate to come forward. We are an independent, non-political organisation with a membership of almost 2,000 households in Banstead Village. Please give me a call to find out more.

I am disappointed that my earlier appeal to the High Street retailers and business community has not evoked any response. Since the Chamber of Commerce was wound up several years ago BVRA has endeavoured to represent their interests, and responsibility for this has been shouldered by Ron Phillips of Maximes. He is deserving of some support and I hope that someone in the High Street will feel able to come forward. I will be pleased to call on you to explain what we are seeking to do and what is involved.

Chairman BH 357463

THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE

I am sure members will have read in the local press about the uncertainties facing the future of Epsom Hospital, which is causing great concern.

In the **short term** problems are being experienced in providing patient care at **night**, particularly in the Accident and Emergency Department. For example, there is only one Consultant available to provide cover for both Epsom and St Helier hospitals at present. With the shortage of senior specialist staff such as Anaesthetists and Radiographers, performing emergency operations at night has given rise to major problems.

The introduction of the European Working Time Directive in August 2004 means that clinicians will work fewer hours and the hospital will therefore require additional staff to provide a minimum level of cover. Present uncertainties about the future of the NHS Trust is affecting its ability to attract and retain qualified staff - a nationwide shortage so we are told.

Turning now to the **long term** there are proposals to create a single critical care hospital within the next 5-10 years. This will be either a purpose-built hospital on a new site or the refurbishment of an existing hospital (Epsom or St Helier). In addition it is envisaged that a network

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of local care centres will be established which would deliver outpatient, diagnostic, day surgery, intermediate care and rehabilitation services.

Our Chairman has written to the Chief Executive of the NHS Trust, Ms Lorraine Clifton, expressing concern at the lack of information and consultation about the proposed changes and requesting that a public meeting be held in Banstead Village so that we can be properly informed. We plan to invite Ms Clifton to speak to us at our Annual General Meeting on May 20 2004 when plans may have reached a more advanced stage. A date for your diary!

Meanwhile if you wish to give voice to your concerns you can write to Ms Lorraine Clifton, Chief Executive, Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust, St Helier Hospital, Wrythe Lane, Carshalton SM5 1AA, sending a copy of your letter to our MP - Crispin Blunt, House of Commons, London SW1 0AA.

Peter McLaren BH 357463

PLANNING MATTERS

1. Applications: We have examined more than 150 planning applications in 2003, nearly all minor and quite unexceptionable, but five are worth reporting individually.

The Belvedere House Public Inquiry. There have been two more twists in this story since our April NewsSheet. It has been running now for more than four years and takes up six inches in our files. For this inquiry the applicant and the Council joined forces to defend their proposal for 24 apartments for sale on the open market instead of the 60-bed care home for which planning permission had been given in 1999 and renewed in 2003.

The Borough Registry Officer misinformed us in August that any representations to this inquiry had to reach the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol by 17 September (an impossible date for us); otherwise they would not be passed to the inspector. So we were surprised to learn much later that the inspector would see written representations up to the date of the inquiry.

The second twist was when Councillor Brian Cowle mentioned that he had had a phone call from a professional man interested in the

possibility of building a nursing home on the site and that he intended to appear at the inquiry. But no one could tell us his name, although it turned out that he had telephoned the planning officer in the summer. It took us until 16 November to track him down and we met him on the 19th, just six days before the inquiry.

He is Brian Follwell and he is indeed a professional consultant to care home operators. He explained that the previous and present owners of the site had had preliminary offers from some care home operators in 1999, 2000 and 2003. Those offers complied with the Local Plan requirements for protecting the Green Belt, whereas the application for 24 apartments did not, as the applicant admitted.

The reason for the successive owners not pursuing those offers was not that there was no demand for a care home, as we had been led to believe, but that the price offered for the site was less than the owners (with housing for the open market in their sights) were prepared to accept. In other words it was a purely commercial decision. But the Planning Committee were not told of any such interest when they accepted the planning officer's recommendation to grant permission for the apartments.

That revelation opened up a new possibility that we had not envisaged: that the inspector might be persuaded to refuse the application, not for any of the reasons listed in the Inspectorate's concerns about 'development potential', 'affordable housing' and so on, but to induce the owners to allow the construction of a 60-bed care home, for which they had applied and been granted planning permission and which would cater for local people in need.

So we put together a six-page submission on those lines and dispatched it on the 20th by fax and the Royal Mail 'Special Delivery 9.00am'. It arrived OK but the Inspectorate just sat on it over the weekend until we chased them up on the Monday - the day before the inquiry. They then said they had received it and had sent it on to the inspector, but in fact they did not pass it to the inspector until after the inquiry.

Thus our first task when the inquiry opened on 25 November was to persuade a sceptical inspector, first that the Reigate registry officer had misled us

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but we had made our written submission as soon as we had learned that it would be heeded, and then that the Inspectorate had fallen down on passing it to her. She kindly interrupted the proceedings to enable the applicant's representative, Roger Rippon, the planning officer, Hamish Watson, and herself to read our submission.

A very inauspicious start to a difficult inquiry. Mr Rippon tried to imply that we had made up our submission before meeting Mr Follwell but had delayed it to the last moment to confuse the issues. The inspector said very little but Mr Rippon is undoubtedly a very clever advocate, which we are not. And our case was not helped by the Banstead Society's unfortunate earlier support for the application to the Planning Committee. Mr Rippon was similarly adversarial to Mr Follwell and tried to impugn his motives.

We have no idea what the inspector will make of such a muddle. We can but wait for her report, which she expected would be published early in January. The agony will not then cease, however, because her report must go to the 'First Secretary of State' (John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister), who is quite capable of reversing her recommendation. The redevelopment of the old Queen Elizabeth's hospital was held up for a couple of years by his Department. So continue to watch this space, but we cannot say for how many more issues of our NewsSheet.

4-5 Avenue Road. This is an application to pull down two old semi-detached, Victorian houses and build a four-storey block of ten two-bedroom flats, involving closing the vehicle access to one of the existing houses to make space for the flats. In our view the building would be too big for the site and the car parking behind it would disturb the neighbours in Tyrolean Court. Moreover one of the sight lines for vehicles departing from the remaining access would be obscured by a large healthy lime tree in the grass verge, so it would have to be felled.

Avenue Road is normally lined with parked cars all day on the recreation ground side, so any vehicle outside the new building would completely block the road. The problem exists already but there would probably be five times as many cars on the developed site and the refuse collection truck would take much longer to load, during which

period ambulances and fire engines would not be able to pass.

We objected on those lines and we have just heard that the application has been refused, which is satisfactory as far as it goes. But if the applicants go to appeal, the Council cannot advance objections they have not stated in their refusal.

The main missing objection is the access from, and blocking of, Avenue Road, but this is a highways matter which is the responsibility of Surrey County Council, upon whose advice the Reigate planners must rely. We believe that Surrey raised concerns on these issues but they were not included in the decision notice. We deplore the omission of such significant reasons for refusal, since this has been a source of weakness in fighting recent appeals.

David Rudd BH 356427

Victoria Hotel. Readers will have noticed the extensive alterations which this building is undergoing. They are without the benefit of any planning permission. Two applications have been put in and amended a couple of times and we have objected to some features, notably: the size and appearance of the proposed single-storey extension; the dangerous delivery arrangements (vans stopping on the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and reversing into the site!). Surrey highways engineers did not pick this point up initially, but are, at our request, looking into it in view of the significance of this crossing to so many people - including the young and other vulnerable groups); and to the works proceeding without planning permission and therefore without the control of planning conditions. Informal talks may lead to a compromise of some sort in the end, but developers have learned to their advantage that, once they have built something in this area, they are almost never forced to pull it down again - although they might have been refused planning permission if they had waited for it.

Fairholme Farm, Croydon Lane. The owner wanted to use an area - previously the car park for the former riding stables - as a base for a skip-hire business. But this use would be contrary to both the Surrey Structure Plan and the Borough Plan as the site is in the Green Belt and we objected. As the use had already commenced

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planning permission was refused and an enforcement notice served. The owner has now appealed against that decision and we have written to the planning inspectorate in support of the Council's action.

Courtlands Farm, Park Road. Two applications were submitted, the lesser one for the conversion of some existing buildings into 4 dwellings and a maintenance office and a more significant one for 76 new dwellings.

This site is also in the green belt and contains, nearly unchanged, a major former ammunition dump that was used to supply the whole of London in World War II. Amazingly English Heritage were unaware of its existence, but have now indicated that it is of national significance and are seeking to have it preserved. We objected to both applications on several points of policy that would have been breached.

Both applications have been refused, but experience tells us that this is not always the end of the matter!

2. Residents' Associations Forum. The Borough Council invited representatives of the 53 residents' associations in the Borough to the inaugural meeting at Reigate on 27th November. Councillor Kay, the portfolio holder for planning, explained to the representatives of the 20 associations that turned up that the intention of the forum was to meet periodically to discuss a range of planning related issues of interest to us all. This initiative is warmly welcomed, and we hope that it will provide an opportunity for better understanding and communication - in both directions!

Guy Davies, head of development control, gave us an insight into a number of matters of current, and impending, importance. Of particular note were:-

- the constraints imposed on our planners by the hierarchy of planning authorities. At the top stands Europe, giving direction on major strategic issues; then England - in particular the deputy prime minister's office promotes legislation, administers the planning inspectorate, issues policy guidance in the form of PPG's, and reviews the regional county and local plans to ensure compliance; then SEERA (the unelected South East England Regional Assembly), which is increasingly involved in "calling in" planning decisions to examine, for instance, whether they comply with the government's insistence on increased housing

densities; then there is the Surrey County Council, which is currently revising its county plan; and only then do we come to Reigate & Banstead, who administer development control within the framework of the Borough Plan. This does, of course, have to comply with all the higher layers of control. Where it does not, there is the opportunity for a planning inspector to over-ride the council's decisions. It is for that reason that we will continue to press for the adoption of a density policy that has regard to the dictates of PPG 3, and the lack of which has been criticised by planning inspectors;

- the impact of PPG 3 on density of new developments, particularly the increased incidence of redevelopment of large plots, including more back-land development;
- the impact of PPG 3 and PPG 13, which severely limit the number of parking spaces to be provided in new developments, and the increased reliance on on-street parking. It is apparent that the obvious adverse effects are already being felt in some areas, especially in and adjoining town centres;
- the Council's decision to allow members of the public to address the planning committee on major applications, or ones that have provoked a significant number of responses. It is likely that they will encourage a spokesman to speak, rather than have a large number of people make broadly the same comments;
- the Council's re-organisation of its planning department. This has already resulted in some improvements in performance, partly as a result of additional staff. Also in this area staffing levels in the planning enforcement team have been increased and a new enforcement strategy has been adopted for consultation. We will look for a significant increase in the exercise of powers by, and effectiveness of, that service;
- and finally, we were informed that we are to have the "pleasure" of a new planning and compensation bill this spring/summer.

It is the Council's intention to call these meetings every few months; however, it may prove difficult to get a reasonable balance between the available officer time and the volume of matters of concern to all the participating residents' associations if they are to be worthwhile!

Mike Sawyer BH 355454

BANSTEAD VILLAGE SIGNS

I am pleased to inform you that both signs have

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now been erected by Surrey County Council, together with the brass commemorative plaques. These have been fixed to oak posts kindly supplied by the Downlands Countryside Management Project.

Arrangements are also in hand with Reigate & Banstead Borough Council to plant a selection of shrubs round the base of each sign. So ends the Saga of the Signs, originally proposed to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee of 2002, but at least completed in the 50th year since the Coronation! My thanks to the Chairman and all those who have supported me in seeing this project through.

Dennis Woolmer BH 361769

THE HIGH STREET IN THE FUTURE

Whilst our High Street is generally busy and thriving, there are a number of problem areas, such as traffic congestion, parking difficulties and, in places, poor visual appearance or poor maintenance. Some initial thinking is underway on how those problems might be tackled. Also, there is a need to look ahead at potential future pressures and changes. It is anticipated that more detail will be available in the next issue of the NewsSheet. And we are intending to issue a circular requesting feedback on the plans from residents of the Village.

Tony Ford BH 354757

BANSTEAD HISTORY CENTRE

Those with an interest in local and family history will already be aware that the Surrey History Centre (in Woking) provides a repository for the County's archives and historical documents, where they are stored in a secure, temperature controlled environment. Local History Centres have also been established in six other communities in Surrey as partnerships between Surrey County Council (Surrey History Service & Surrey Libraries) and local community organisations and interests.

Now Banstead is to get its own local centre - covering the communities of Banstead, Burgh Heath, Chipstead, Hooley, Kingswood, Lower Kingswood, Netherne-on-the-Hill, Preston, Tadworth, Tattenhams, Walton-on-the-Hill and Woodmansterne.

Since the inaugural meeting held in February, a working group has been actively involved in

planning and preparing for a new local centre to be located in Banstead Library, which is now scheduled to "open for business" on Saturday 14 February 2004. The working group comprises Surrey County Councillors Mrs Diana Bowes and Mrs Angela Fraser, whose support and encouragement have been so important to this project, plus representatives from Surrey Libraries, Surrey History Service and various local community organisations.

If you would like to obtain further details of this project or - importantly - are interested in becoming a volunteer to staff the Banstead History Centre, you can either e-mail: libraries@surreycc.gov.uk, or banstead.history@ntlworld.com, or call in to Banstead Library.

Dennis Woolmer BH 361769

CCTV

From time to time we hear about ways in which the CCTV system, developed and operated in a partnership between the Police and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, helps in deterring or dealing with crime. In a recent case, a call by a member of the public regarding a fight between a number of males was quickly reacted to by the CCTV system. Operators were able to confirm that one male was being held down by another, while another two had gone behind flats on the High Street in Banstead. The incident took place on 11th November at 10.30pm, near the Woolpack public house.

Police officers attended the scene, and CCTV were able to assist in identifying all participants. No further action was taken by police as the situation had calmed down, but the CCTV unit continued to observe the group until they dispersed.

Mike Sawyer BH 355454

CAFFE ITALIA, 49 High Street Banstead

Many of you will have enjoyed a meal at the Caffe Italia, which lends a wonderful continental air to the character of the High Street. However, concerns were voiced by local residents of Wilmot Way and neighbouring flats, when a Notice appeared in the window, stating that Application had been made for a Music & Dancing Public Entertainment Licence. It was felt that this could lead to excessive noise and increased traffic. After approaches from a number of residents we

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wrote to the Licensing Officer suggesting that if such a licence was granted, conditions should be imposed in regard to noise levels and timing.

Subsequently a letter was received from the Senior Licensing Officer stating that Caffè Italia had decided not to proceed with the Application. It should be pointed out that Caffè Italia has a Justices Licence authorising the sale of intoxicating liquor. This permits the licensee to play recorded music or have two musicians/singers at the licensed premises without needing to apply for a public entertainment licence from the Council.

Dennis Woolmer BH 361769

WINKWORTH ROAD

There have been some developments recently in the efforts to tackle road safety problems due to traffic in Winkworth Road.

We reported in our May NewsSheet about the representations that we made to the highway authority (the County Council). We pointed out the problems caused by drivers trying to avoid the peak time queues in Winkworth Road by using the residents' access roads that run parallel to the main road. This not only creates danger for pedestrians, but has caused collisions between vehicles at the junction with Salisbury Road. We made some suggestions for reducing these problems. These are low cost and involve only road markings and signs, so should be relatively quick to implement, but no action has yet resulted.

In June, pedestrians were injured after being hit by a motorcycle whilst trying to cross Winkworth Road near to the Salisbury Road junction. County Councillors reacted to this and instructed their officers to investigate the provision of a pedestrian crossing at this point. The sense of "needing to do something" was reinforced by a petition from residents of Winkworth Road and some of the adjoining roads.

Those who are familiar with Winkworth Road will know it has two characters. During peak times, particularly during the school term, traffic is so heavy that long queues form back from both the Sutton Lane roundabout and the Bolters Lane mini-roundabout. A number of drivers "short-cut" along the access roads, through the proposed spot for the pedestrian crossing. Many of those drivers are impatient and travel at an inappropriate speed, posing a significant risk to pedestrians.

Outside peak times, traffic flows continually along Winkworth Road, and although the "short-cutting" is not evident, many drivers travel along the main road at speeds in excess of the 40mph limit. So, the design of a pedestrian crossing needs to take into account both of those situations.

We were so concerned to ensure that this was done that we wrote in September to the County Council specifically to request that they give proper consideration to the issues with the access roads.

The proposed layout for the new crossing was issued at the end of November. Whilst we were delighted to see such progress being made, we were disappointed that the crossing covers only the main road. No consideration seems to have been given to the fact that pedestrians will also have to cross the two access roads. And the presence of the lights will inevitably result in even more drivers short-cutting along the access roads. This will be particularly the case from the Sutton Lane roundabout towards the Salisbury Road junction, as drivers seeing a red light need only make a small detour via the access road to not only avoid the lights but also to try and gain advantage over those drivers who do stop at the lights. And the Salisbury Road junction is where there is a road safety problem, which is where this article started!

We fully support the principle that a pedestrian crossing or some other form of safer crossing arrangement should be provided at this location. This is a logical place for pedestrians to cross because it links the footpath to Commonfield Road with the route to the High Street via Salisbury Road. Although there are not many pedestrians that actually cross here, those that do so are entitled to some better protection from the traffic. And the fact that there are risks with crossing may well be dissuading some people from walking at all. We accept that pedestrians also carry some responsibility to look after their own safety. But if money is to be spent on a new crossing we need to end up with a safer situation than we have now. In our view the proposed scheme does not achieve that. We have made some suggestions to the local authority about other measures they might consider and we are hopeful that suitable revisions to the scheme can be made in the near future so as to not unduly delay progress with getting the crossing

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implemented.

Turning now to another area of concern in Winkworth Road, which is the generally inappropriate speed of traffic on the main road (when there is not a queue, that is!). Why do so many drivers on Winkworth Road abuse the speed limit? And why is overtaking a feature in many of the incidents that have occurred? We think that serious consideration should be given to changing the way that drivers view Winkworth Road. At present, it is in a very wide corridor between the two lines of houses. It has a long sweeping alignment, with what you think is good visibility. Just right for putting your foot down and nipping past that slowcoach!

We have suggested that the road should have a double white line along its full length. And there should be a look at more subtle methods. For example, planting a significant number of trees or substantial lengths of hedging along the grass verges would affect drivers' appreciation of the road and should lead to a reduction in traffic speed. And, if this was done, it would have the additional benefit of improving the overall appearance of this route.

Tony Ford BH 354757

BUS SERVICE 166: Croydon-Banstead-Epsom Hospital

You may be aware that "London Buses" has been experiencing problems with road widths on Route 166, and consequently all journeys are now operating on a diversion from Chipstead Way along Carshalton Road, Croydon Lane and Sutton Lane into Banstead high Street. This means that there is no service along Woodmansterne Street and Woodmansterne Lane. Recent surveys showed that about 40 passenger journeys per day start or finish along this stretch of road, half of which are school journeys covered by Services 408 and 866. These will not be re-routed. "London Buses" will look at introducing bus stops along Carshalton Road and Croydon Lane in line with requests from residents.

Surrey County Council are looking at other possibilities for providing a service along Woodmansterne Lane, but budget constraints make it difficult to implement changes at this time.

For further information, contact David Hurdle, Transport Initiatives Officer on 01737 276210 or

e-mail: david.hurdle@reigate-banstead.gov.uk.
Dennis Woolmer BH 361769

BANSTEAD COMMONS

Banstead Downs, Park Downs, Burgh Heath and Banstead Heath together form the Banstead Commons. They are owned by the Council but managed by the Banstead Commons Conservators under the original 1893 Act of Parliament to ensure their preservation and free access for the public. English Nature has designated most of Banstead Downs and all of Park Downs as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Sadly an increasing amount of the Conservators' time and resources is being taken up with the need to clear rubbish - fly-tipping, dumped cars, garden rubbish and so on. Not only are these anti-social actions a burden to the Conservators, they also adversely affect the wildlife habitat and the enjoyment of visitors. It seems that many people do not understand that the dumping of rubbish over the garden fence, even grass and hedge clippings is an offence just as serious as fly-tipping by "cowboys".

While the Conservators' staff attempt to identify and deal amicably with those responsible for any tipping, they would appreciate more help from the public, both in refraining from contributing to the problem and in providing them, or the police, with details to identify the culprits. If "friendly persuasion" fails, tipping can result in fines of up to £2,500 (£20,000 in the SSSI's) being imposed!

This winter the current "crop" of rubbish will be cleared and more positive action taken to identify the perpetrators. If you can help, please contact **Tony Rosier**, Clerk to the Conservators on **01372 457741**.

HIGHWAY SNIPPETS

The County Council's programme of work in the next few months includes three items of interest to Banstead. So watch out for the following:

1. Resurfacing of Wilmot Way (planned for February)
2. Erection of a crash barrier along the central reserve of the A217 between Banstead crossroads and Belmont (planned for March / April)

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3. In March, publicity about the forthcoming handover of parking enforcement from the police to the local authority, what the Council is planning to do and what difference it is expected to make.

Tony Ford BH 354757

HIGH HEDGES

The Government has introduced an amendment to the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill in which local authorities will be given power to intervene in "high hedges" disputes. The provision will apply to a hedge comprising two or more evergreen trees or shrubs more than 2 metres (6.5 feet) in height. If the bill has passed through both the Houses of Commons and Lords it could become law by the end of December 2003.

Peter McLaren BH 357463

THE BANSTEAD CENTRE

Many will already know the centre, which is in The Horseshoe, off Bolters Lane. Indeed this is where our AGM's are now held. The centre manager has asked us to bring to your attention the range of facilities that are available. In the main it caters for those who are 50+ and enjoy being active. It offers a range of activities that include Tai Chi, table tennis, dancing, keep-fit and special events, and offers a varied snack and lunch menu, hairdressing, facials, manicures and reflexology. There are several sizes of rooms for hire - the new Lambert Room during the day and all areas in the evenings and at weekends.

BH 361712

SURREY CYCLE ROUTES

Surrey County Council is consulting on a proposed new cycle route through Banstead, which is intended to link with other cycle routes through the county. Unfortunately details of these proposals were not readily available when this NewsSheet went to print, but it is believed that

part of the proposal is for a combined footpath and cycle track from Park Road through the edge of the cricket ground, along Court Road and then along Garretts Lane, where it is to cross the A 217.

Closing date for comments to David Curl, Surrey County Council, is January 2004. It is hoped that a copy of the plan will be sent to your editor for anyone locally to see and comment on.

Mike Sawyer BH 355454

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I have been asked by members to draw attention to these recent occurrences:

Cowboy Repairers

Rogues insisting on replacing "supposed" missing tiles on roofs are exploiting the vulnerability of elderly people in Banstead Village. We can demonstrate neighbourliness by keeping an eye open for the elderly in our community and report any such incidents to **Banstead Police Station (tel: 01737 236272)**

Emergency Services

On the last Sunday in November there was an incident in Commonfield Road necessitating the attendance of fire engines and an ambulance, both of which experienced great difficulty and delay in reaching the scene due to parked cars. The Fire Brigade has asked that we appeal to residents to make sure, when parking your vehicle, there is enough room for a fire engine to get through, and not to obstruct a fire hydrant. Time lost due to congestion can mean the difference between life and death!

Peter McLaren BH 357463

FINAL CALL FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS

There are still a number of membership subscriptions outstanding for the year ending January 31 2004. Please may I ask Road Stewards to let the Treasurer have their subscriptions and receipt books **no later than Thursday January 29th 2004** so that cash can be paid into the bank the following day.

Peter McLaren BH 357463
