

BVRA news sheet

from the Banstead Village Residents' Association

Vol: 13 No. 1 January 1997

I trust that you all had an enjoyable Christmas. On behalf of the Executive Committee may I wish all our members a Happy New Year and hope that peace and tranquillity will prevail in 1997 and that your hopes for the future will be realised.

In May 1997 we celebrate the Golden Anniversary of our foundation. The association has come a long way in those 50 years, thanks to the support and encouragement we have received from you, our members. Our present standing in the community is something of which we can all be justly proud.

The growth in our membership, particularly in recent years, is a clear indication of the sense of commitment felt by our local community and enhances the influence which can be brought to bear on local issues by the Association.

This NewsSheet contains a number of articles by members of the Committee covering matters of local concern which it is hoped will raise awareness of those issues which affect our quality of life and our purses!

Peter McLaren

Committee News

It is with much regret that we report the resignation as from next May of our Hon. Secretary, Joanna El-Batal, due to family commitments. We shall be sorry to lose her excellent services and extend our thanks for her considerable contribution to the work of the Association.

We urgently need a public-spirited person to come forward and offer himself/herself to help us carry on with our work. Hopefully there is someone out there with keyboard skills, time and energy who is able to undertake a range of tasks.

Briefly summarised these include:

- Preparation and distribution (by post) of agendas and minutes of Executive Committee meetings which are held every month (on the last Tuesday at 7.30p.m.);
- Arrange and book hall for meetings of sub-groups, as required.

NB. All expenses are paid by the Association.

If you are willing to help please contact the Chairman, Peter McLaren (Tel: 757463) for further information. A very warm welcome awaits you.

Peter McLaren

High Street Initiative

1. THAT ROUNDABOUT!

Having endured some immense traffic jams during the reconstruction of the roundabout at the junction of Park Road and the High Street, let us reflect on what we have achieved:

- The War Memorial is revealed from behind years of grime to be an elegant piece of stonework (albeit with some of the inscriptions being not as legible as they might be);
- The Memorial has become a more prominent and important feature of the High Street. This should be enhanced further sometime in 1997 with the implementation of some simple landscaping and additional paving;
- Additional footways around the junction and refuges in the three roads make life easier for pedestrians;
- The previous, dangerous converted T-junction has been replaced with a "proper" roundabout.

But, oh dear! What have we got in the middle of the roundabout? We have gone from the sublime (a blob of paint) to the ridiculous (vast concentric circles of tarmac and cobbles). The original design for the roundabout was drawn up by the Banstead High Street Steering Group (of which BVRA is a member) and accepted by the Borough Council (who undertake the construction). This design envisaged the central island being a low, cobbled "dome" of about 8 metres diameter, deliberately sized so that car traffic would travel readily around the island in a far more disciplined manner than with the previous junction. The cobbled dome would allow right turning lorries and buses to run onto the island if necessary. Then the Safety Audit Team at the County Council got their hands on it! They stipulated that the island should be doubled in area (because, they say, the traffic needs slowing down more), and this is what we have now got. Unfortunately no-one in either the Borough or the County Councils bothered to tell the Steering Group about this change. So the Group, as the representatives of the local community, had no opportunity to try and convince the highway engineers that the original design should be reinstated. Our partnership with the local authority looks distinctly one-sided at times! We shall be monitoring the way in which drivers use the new roundabout, and particularly whether cars pass round the island or are tempted to cut across the middle.

3. FUTURE PLANS

So, what is coming next? Activity on the High Street in the early part of 1997 will focus on the central part of the village, with improvements to the frontage of the Church Institute and the construction of a properly sized parking bay on the north side of the High Street, opposite the Church Orchard.

The work at the Institute will include removal of the unsightly hedge obscuring the front of the building, repair of the brick wall alongside the footway, construction of a new set of steps at the front of the building and removal of the steep and untidy ramp at the side of the Institute. Access for the disabled will continue to be via The Orchard entrance. The aim of all this is to open up the Institute frontage so that it becomes once more an attractive feature in our High Street scene.

This work is being funded entirely by the local community, including contributions from the BVRA, from local businesses, from the proceeds of the 1995 Banstead Village week and from the Church. We will be ensuring that controls are in place to make sure the work carried out is of good quality and in accordance with the agreed design!

Construction of the new parking bay is due to take place in March, and, we have been assured, will be swiftly followed by the introduction of one hour limited waiting in the new bay. (Currently, this part of the High Street has a No Waiting restriction which is widely ignored). At the same time, some of the other yellow lines that presently litter the High Street will, as if by magic, turn to white to indicate formal parking areas. The aim is to have yellow lines only in those areas where parking is positively dangerous, such as around the corners of the side roads, and to actively encourage people to park legally and sensibly in properly defined parking bays along the remainder of the High Street. We hope to include more about these changes in our next NewsSheet.

Tony Ford

New Banstead Civic Offices

You may recall that in our September '96 NewsSheet we reported that the Borough Council was planning to spend about £6 million of council taxpayers' money on a grandiose scheme to extend and develop the Town Hall in Reigate as part of its policy of centralisation. To help pay for this, the Council proposes to sell off the Council House in Brighton Road which is expected to raise around £1.6 million.

As many of you will know, the Borough Council organised a public meeting held on November 25th 1996 at the Day Centre, at which it was supposed to present its draft proposals for new Civic Offices in Banstead. The Day Centre was packed to the rafters, with standing room only. Although the plans on display were not discussed in detail, the crowded meeting clearly demonstrated the unsuitability of the Day Centre for large public gatherings - people at the back could neither see nor hear what was going on!

What emerged from the meeting?

- The cost of the proposed new Civic Offices in Banstead was put at around £350,000;
- For this we would be provided with an extension to the existing Day Centre which would accommodate an enhanced Help Shop facility, a Citizens Advice Bureau office and a small meeting room for public use of about 42 sq. metres;
- It was thought that about one-third of the spaces in the Horseshoe public car park would be lost as a result of this development;
- A number of trees/shrubs would have to be removed.

You may think this is somewhat vague! This is largely due to the fact that the drawings on public display prior to the meeting did not show any measurements of the proposed building. Furthermore, the site plan we obtained did not provide a firm indication of the extent of encroachment into the car park, nor where a new access to it would be built.

The Borough Council states that this proposal was drawn up in light of the consultation process carried out with community groups early in 1996. To the best of our knowledge the results of this exercise have not been published, and we have asked the Council for a copy of the report.

BVRA has taken the view that -

- The Council's plans in their present form are inadequate and unacceptable in that they do not meet the various aspirations and needs of the local community;
- The validity of the Council's cost benefit analysis which, it claims, will save the council taxpayer £250,000 per annum by virtue of its centralisation policy, is questionable;
- A consensus has yet to be reached about the nature of the new facility in Banstead and while there is still time the whole matter should be examined afresh by all parties concerned, including residents and amenity groups so that their wishes can be taken into account.

We have written to the Borough Solicitor asking for the whole matter of the provision of new Civic Offices be re-examined, taking into account the views expressed at the recent public meeting, and seeking a definitive statement on how the matter will be taken forward.

Peter McLaren

Buses for Banstead

Many months ago we were told that the 80 bus route, one of our links with Sutton, was to stop running to Banstead. We did at that time obtain a guarantee that there would be a replacement. Back in early September we got sight of a report from Surrey County Council outlining the new proposed routes:

- S1 would replace the 80
- Routes 420/422 would remain
- New routes S6 and S7 would start.

We were guaranteed more buses between Banstead and Sutton, a new direct link from Banstead to Ewell and North East Surrey College, a better service for Nork Way. All of this we applauded as it encouraged more people to use buses. However, we were concerned when we saw the roads to be used by route S6. The proposal was to come up the A217, left into Winkworth Road, right into Wilmot Way and then right into the High Street. We wrote to the operators, Epsom Buses, on September 16th pointing out our concerns. We made the following objections:

- Parked cars at the north end of Wilmot Way mean the bus would not be able to get through;
- With the bellmouth work at the south end of the road, access into the High Street would be very difficult;
- The road becomes impassable in winter when there is frost or ice;
- The road surface is already unacceptable and using Wilmot Way as a bus route would mean a rapid deterioration of the surface;
- This is a residential road and unsuitable for buses.

We pointed out that there is an easy alternative, that is, to follow the S7 route to the end of Winkworth Road and then turn into the High Street where there could be more pick-up points.

We had a reply on September 19th stating that the route had been fully investigated and that there was no time in the schedule to go via the Woolpack, that the buses were no bigger than an ambulance and that surely they could get through, that as a bus route, the road would be gritted as a priority route in bad weather.

We had a further letter on October 14th advising us that the routes had been amended and instead of a bus every hour in each direction, we would have only five a day. At this stage we felt we had gone as far as we could. There was no time to arrange a petition.

We hope that in time the drivers themselves will complain and confirm that it is quicker to go via the Woolpack. However, if anyone would like to write to the operators they are:

Steve Whiteway, Epsom Buses, Blenheim Road,
Longmead, Epsom, KT19 9AF.

Roy Gordon

Waste Disposal in Surrey

The County Council held a seminar on waste disposal in October. One speaker explained that the landfill sites within Surrey are not exclusively for use by Surrey residents but must presently accept waste from all over the south of England, especially London. At last Surrey's planners are coming out into the open about the problem of imports, even in public.

Perhaps our nagging over the last four years has had some effect, but the widespread public opposition to the three enormous incinerators which

those planners have proposed for Surrey was probably the main cause of that change of stance. The incinerators were advocated as the only cost-effective means of preserving our landfill sites for a few more years. But under the present free-market system they would enable London to fill those sites at the same rate or even faster and at less cost to London than disposing of its waste where it is generated - with little or no benefit to the people of Surrey.

Now we hear that the Department of the Environment is promoting the creation of regional fora to tackle that problem. Each forum will be made up of the local authorities in the region and the Environment Agency (a Government body). The forum will decide the amounts and types of waste the several authorities in its region will need to deal with and it will apportion additional facilities between them. In other words the Government is moving away from allowing a free market towards physically regulating the disposal of waste, so that it is "disposed of or otherwise managed, in close proximity to the point at which it is generated".

But the County Council announced in October that it is opposed to that intervention. Its Planning Committee considers that "the role of the Environment Agency should not be to dictate to local authorities the provision that they make for waste." Unless the Planning Committee can come up with a rational basis for that objection and a better solution to the problem, it must appear that it prefers to do nothing effective while the imports continue to flood in without any control. For once it seems that the Government may understand the interests of Surrey's people (some of whom live in Banstead) better than the County Council.

David Rudd

Banstead Gardens

Since the last issue of the NewsSheet, a considerable amount of work has been carried out on the site.

The perimeter footpaths have been completed, and these are very durable, being composed of three inches of limestone scalplings, topped with limestone dust. They will be ideal for wheelchairs and buggies.

Some 800 native trees have been planted. Volunteers participating in this activity, from local residents, Greenacre and Aberdour Schools, have been very welcome.

The pond has been excavated, lined, and is now almost full of water. British Gas Transco provided substantial funds towards the cost of the pond. A dipping platform will be constructed, and appropriate pond plants placed in the early spring. The official opening of the pond will take place in the late summer of 1997.

Further tree planting will be carried out next winter, and it is expected that these will be provided by the

Banstead Commons Conservators. To mark our Golden Anniversary next May, BVRA is donating a "hewn" wooden bench, which will be constructed by the Conservators.

The name of the Gardens has been the subject of considerable research by the Banstead History Research Group. In 1680, the site almost certainly belonged to Thomas Puplett, where "three parcels of Arable land were called Leadlands and Boulters Shott..." After much discussion by the Banstead Gardens Steering Group, it was agreed that in future the site will be referred to as:

"BANSTEAD WILDLIFE FIELD".

As a wildlife area, and one that will be popular with children, members of the public will be asked not to bring their dogs on to the site.

Dennis Woolmer

Crossovers in Residential Roads

In some roads in the Banstead Village ward, the frontage of the houses is only 2 or 3 metres away from the footway - just enough space to pave over the front garden, pay the Council to lower the kerb and then drive across the footway to park parallel to the road. What's more there is still a parking space alongside the lowered kerb. As a result, garden fences and walls come down and pedestrians on the footway end up walking between cars. The overall effect, particularly if a number of residents do this is to increase the number of cars in already congested roads and to lose the intimacy and attractiveness of individual front gardens, replacing them with bland expanses of tarmac.

The Association has been in contact with the Council to see what constraints there are on this sort of change. We have spoken to the Highways Dept. (who are the ones who install the lowered kerbs, or crossovers, as they are called). They say that unless there are specific road safety concerns (for example, the crossover being located on a bend in the road) there is no reason why they should deny a request for a new crossover. We have also spoken to the Planning Dept. In their letter they "sympathise with the concern which has been expressed locally about the impact which such works can have on the appearance of the streetscene", but say "there is really no means by which they can be controlled by the Borough Council". It remains therefore in the hands of each resident, if considering such a change. Whilst it may allow the individual to enjoy the use of an extra car, it also depletes the attractiveness of our village for everyone.

Tony Ford

Flooding in Garratts Lane and the Horseshoe

The Council's contractors found that the blockage in the rainwater gully which was causing floods at the corner of Garratts Lane and Bolters Lane (as reported in our last two issues) was not in the foundations of a lamp post but in another part of the gully. They

removed it with some difficulty. A few weeks later there was a deep flood after a heavy shower, but it was due to leaves blocking the drain covers. The Council cleared the leaves away quickly and the water drained away immediately.

We are keeping our fingers crossed, but it seems as though the Council has at last solved this very long-standing problem. We are grateful. We can live with the leaves because we like the trees.

There has also been some flooding in the Horseshoe, opposite the Help Shop. Members who live nearby may know more about it. The road belongs to Surrey County Council, which is therefore responsible for dealing with the flooding. It has authorised the Borough Services Department "to spend some money on that". We wish the Department well and await developments.

There may be flooding elsewhere in the village from time to time, especially at this time of year due to leaves blocking the drain covers. If you are seriously inconvenienced, please report the nuisance to the Help Shop (in the Horseshoe) - in person or by telephone or in writing, for which they will provide a form.

David Rudd

Pavement Parking outside Dillons

In the last NewsSheet, I reported on this problem and what we had been trying to do to eliminate it. The observant among you will by now have seen that places have been marked on the pavement for the siting of additional bollards to stop the problem once and for all. The Council expect to install these bollards within the next few weeks.

Chris Penfold

Environmental and Transport Strategies

If you have managed to find a copy of the latest edition of the Borough Times, you may have read that the Council has prepared draft documents describing the above. By my attendance at the Reigate and Banstead Environmental Forum I have been able to obtain early copies of the drafts and am leading Sub-Groups of your Committee studying them and preparing comments on them to send back to the Council. That we are doing this does not preclude residents from sending in their own comments. If you wish to do so, go to the Help Shop where you can either study the documents yourself or ask for copies. Comments need to be sent in by January 31st.

Chris Penfold

New Use for "Lo-Cost"?

Planning permission has recently been given for the conversion of the vacant, former "Lo-Cost" store at the western end of the High Street into a Pizza Express restaurant. Whilst obtaining planning permission does not always mean that the new use will actually happen we look forward to some activity there to rectify the present downtrodden appearance of that block.

Tony Ford

Banstead Volunteer Bureau

Have you felt that you would like to do voluntary work of some kind locally but you don't know what sort of work is needed or quite what would suit you? If so, the Banstead Volunteer Bureau may be able to help. They have a list of 52 organisations (at the time of writing) which are looking for volunteers to do all manner of things - visiting, shopping, looking after old people, fund raising, first aid, driving, using word processors and many others. They can answer your questions before giving your name to any organisation.

The Bureau operates from the Help Shop (in the Horseshoe) every Thursday from 9 am. to 1 pm, or you can phone them on 373124, which has an answering machine.

David Rudd

Voluntary Service of an unusual kind

The work of a prison's Board of Visitors is challenging, wide-ranging and calls for discretion and a sensitive understanding of all aspects of a prison establishment, prisoners, staff and management. In short, it represents an unusual kind of voluntary service.

A Board of Visitors is an independent watchdog body which monitors the state of a prison

establishment, particularly the treatment of prisoners. The Board advises the Home Secretary of any matter of its concern about the establishment. To effectively discharge their responsibilities, members should be able to commit themselves to giving a certain amount of time on a regular basis.

From time to time, vacancies occur at our two local prisons, HMP Downview and HMP High Down. If you would like to know more about membership of a Board of Visitors, why don't you contact Peter McLaren (Tel: 357463) who will be pleased to answer your questions.

Peter McLaren

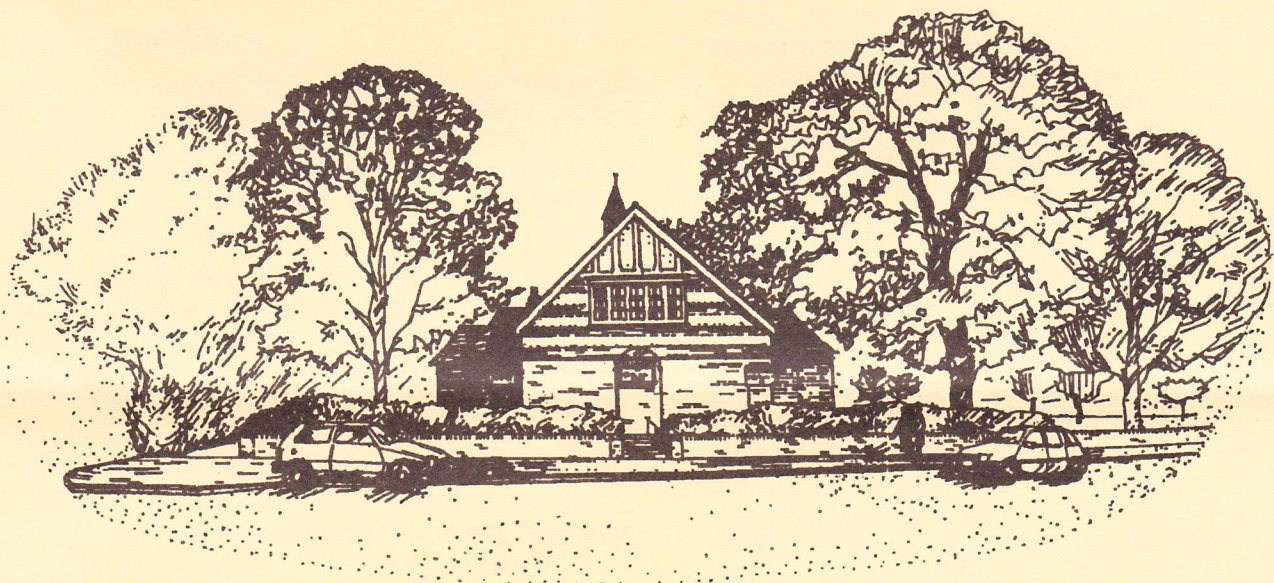
A date for your diary

Please help us celebrate our 50th Anniversary by coming to our Annual General Meeting to be held on Wednesday, May 7th 1997 at 8.00 pm. You will receive your usual invitation in April.

Final Call for Subscriptions

The Association's financial year ends on January 31st 1997. Would Road Stewards please let me have membership subscriptions by Thursday, January 30th at the very latest so that the money may be banked the following day. Many thanks for your help.

Peter McLaren



ARTIST'S IMPRESSION OF THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS
TO THE FRONT OF THE CHURCH INSTITUTE