

THE YATELEY SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT 1982

1. Chairman's Review

As we conclude a second full year it is useful to pause briefly to look back at the beginnings of the Society and to consider whether progress has matched expectations. It all started in the autumn of 1979 when a small group came together to study the village and its interesting features. Out of that grew a Society concerned not only to research but also to protect and enhance the environment of Yateley. It was something of an experiment in community development and participation. This initiative I would say has paid off handsomely. A considerable number of people have been actively involved in their community, and its future direction, in a way they might not otherwise have been. If it is the quality of life that we are basically concerned with then the best way to safeguard it is to have informed, involved and caring people in the community. Our new Secretary of State for the Environment, Tom King, has said as much himself. Indeed, that must remain our fundamental aim.

I have little doubt that the Society is fulfilling a need and has a definite role to play in the community. Its diverse programme of activities testifies to the high level of interest among members. Similarly, the Society is well regarded from the outside. It has acquired a good reputation for putting forward well thought out responses to events and developments as they happen.

This Report for 1982 is a good indicator of the pattern emerging for the Society. That is of gathering information and identifying sources of material on the history and natural history of this area. Much of the research is becoming available as published papers and more will be completed next year. All of this is essential to an understanding of how Yateley has developed and how it might in the future.

The next phase must be to ensure that we make a maximum impact on policy making in Yateley. Our participation in several public inquiries this year, and the exhibition funded by the Department of the Environment are all part of this. 1983 will see the completion of the District Plan consultations and the results of the various planning appeals. Occupying as we do a position at the forefront of these battles, our responsibilities to ensure an effective campaign for Yateley will be greater than ever.

Lidward Jowett

2. Lecture Programme

Once again the lecture programme ranged over a wide field and it is hoped that members are now coming to the lectures as a matter of habit.

The subjects in the spring were Wildlife comes to Town by Lyndis Cole and The Commonlands of England by Duncan Mackay, followed by two of our members Jean McIlwaine and Geof Hoare on Local Yateley Families and St Peter's Church. The latter was in place of Diana Coldicott who was unable to come and speak on Local History from Wills and Inventories, but who later spoke to the Local History Group.

The autumn programme comprised The History of the Basingstoke Canal by David Gerry and Planning - Friend or Foe? by Tony Long, Assistant Secretary of CPRE. Tony Long was an excellent substitute for John Young of The Times who was due to speak on the English Country House in the 1980s but was ill at the time. Then came the highlight lecture by Lord Melchett on A Conservationist in Parliament Today. This attracted an audience of some 200, not only members but also guests from a variety of local organisations. The event was useful in making contacts for the Society and in considering conservation issues within the political and Parliamentary framework.

The Society hope to maintain the very high standard of public lectures next year, and the programme will be notified in the Newsletter.

3. Planning

1982 has been a busy year for the Planning team, with representation at two major Public Inquiries: an application by Charles Church for a large housing development at Hill Farm, bordering Yateley and Darby Green, and an application by Heron Homesteads to build an estate at Monteagle Farm on the western edge of Yateley. At the first our case against the proposed scheme was assisted by CPRE who supplied an expert from the national office to challenge the arguments of the appellant. At the second Inquiry the Society obtained the help of the Town and Country Planning Association in preparing our submission and the case was presented by the Chairman who called two witnesses in support of a refusal of planning permission.

Responding to the Hart District Plan and working with the Public Relations team in mounting an Exhibition on 'The Development of Yateley - Whose Town is it Anyway?' also involved a great deal of effort. The Exhibition is concerned with reviewing environmental and urban issues covering past policies and future developments. It will be followed by a Booklet summarising the views received from the public on the Exhibition. This was made possible by a special grant of almost £1,000 from the DoE and a further grant of £500 from Johnson Wax.

These key activities have established the Society as a responsible consultative body in local affairs. A number of smaller but no less important representations were also made on items such as the sewer constructions at Yateley Green and Hall Lane, Roundabout construction on

the junction of Hall Lane and Reading Road, and the proposed sale for residential development of Manor Park Infants School.

With a further Public Inquiry expected in March on the Hart District Plan, 1983 promises to be no less active than the preceding year, and we look forward to extending the role that the Society plays in protecting our environment.

4. Conservation

In the field of practical conservation the Society has made a number of energetic and practical contributions to our environment. In the spring several members helped to clear the ditch beside Mill Lane, and there was a second attack on clearing and draining Footpath 28 near Stroud Pool. Later in the year, after discussions with the Ranger of Yateley Common, a small task force spent an enjoyable afternoon cutting down the scrub and young trees that threatened to overwhelm a wide stretch of heather. We hope to undertake at least one more such task next spring; the Ranger suggested several areas, wet and dry, where our help would be welcomed.

Yateley Town Council also contacted the Society about their future conservation projects; we shall co-operate in the planning of some of these, with Society members helping to list them in order of importance.

Although 1983 is to be the Year of the Tree, our attention was turned towards trees a good deal during the year, particularly those that seemed to be threatened or vulnerable. We have copied onto our own map the numerous Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) current in Yateley, and are updating the map as information becomes available. TPOs are not given very freely and our own applications have not been successful. We twice sought a TPO for the trees bordering Green Lane where a large new estate is being built so close to it that the branches seem likely to tap on the windows. Hart District Council considered that they were not in danger and in any case were mere hedgerow trees, but the resulting public attention that Green Lane has received makes its trees seem a little safer after all. In fact, the Town Council, Hart and Hampshire County Council have included it in their environmental improvement plans and intend to remove some dead wood and plant new trees. We hope that this will not damage its rural character and flora and fauna, and shall maintain a watching brief on developments. The Ecology Group have been mapping Yateley's trees, and this project is described under the Ecology section.

5. Local History

The spring term of 1982 proved to be a turning point for the Local History Group. We had asked the Workers' Educational Association to organise a course on Landscape History on our behalf. Of the 20 participants, 16 were Society members. Dr John Porter, sensing the needs of the Society, broadened the course to include the basic aspects of local history.

By Easter sufficient people had shown interest in attending a tutorial course of 20 tutorials in the 1982-83 academic year that the WEA was encouraged to organise the 'Yateley History Project'. Initially, enrolment was low but numbers continued to rise so that now the course is firmly established into three project groups. Members are expected to do their own original research. This is not daunting under the continued guidance of John Porter, who hopes to publish the results of the first year's work in mid-1983.

In the summer term of 1982 the Society reverted to its normal pattern of fortnightly Thursday evening working sessions. Indexing of the Parish Records continued under Jean McIllwaine as Parish Archivist, whilst a small group worked on the Lay Subsidies from 1570 to 1621. Since these sessions were mainly attended by members who were expected to attend the 'Yateley History Project', it was decided that the History Group would have to attract a different group to its fortnightly meetings in the autumn term. A series of local history 'Starter Talks' were organised to try to tempt out for the evening those 50 or so members who had expressed interest in local history in their application forms but did not regularly attend meetings. Richard Thackrah, lecturer in modern political history at Bramshill, gave the first talk on preparing one's own family tree. Diana Coldicott told us how to look up Wills and Inventories, and Peter Tipton extended his previous talks on researching the history of a house by including his work on the Yateley Land Tax Returns.

This year also saw the birth of two new activities, fund raising and publications. Derek Doherty's booklet Yateley - a Medieval Village and Michael Holroyd's annotated Tithe Map are selling well. Money must be raised for the purchase of historical documents for the researchers to study, in order to produce the publications. Peter and Elizabeth Tipton took part in a car boot sale, and Jean McIllwaine gave talks to other groups, such as the Bracknell Historical Society, and presented her lecturer's fees to Group Funds.

6. Ecology

Projects started last year were extended into 1982. Information continued to be gathered on Yateley Common on plants, birds and insects. The Ecology Group co-operated with members of the Camberley Natural History Society, both in the collecting and retention of records. The Gravel Pit Colonization project came to an end when the site was put up for sale. The Watercourses of Yateley project was part completed and a map of the work displayed at the May Day Fayre. The Fungal Survey went ahead and gathered momentum with two forays held in the autumn and several new species identified. Moth surveying also continued in the spring and summer using the Mercury Vapour trap. Again new species were obtained and a collection of photographs was started in order to assist in the identification of species exhibiting local variations. This method has advantages over the collecting of specimens in that rarities can be included and the photographs themselves do not deteriorate.

An enterprise that the Ecology Group had under consideration for some time was the publication of a map showing Yateley's more notable trees, but that proved to be too ambitious in a town as spreading and tree-lined as ours, and the idea was reduced to a more manageable Tree Walk around Yateley's Conservation Area. It will be in the form of a leaflet pointing out in non-technical terms the more interesting trees one passes, and is well under way. Meanwhile, the original idea has not been abandoned: the tree survey continues slowly and we hope to tie in with the massive long-term National Tree Survey launched in 1975 by The Tree Council, which intends to survey all the trees throughout the country.

7. Walks and Visits

The series of walks and visits begun in 1981 continued during the year. After some experimenting it was decided to hold either a walk or visit on the first Sunday of each month, normally starting at 2.30 pm. There have been ten walks and two visits on Sunday afternoons and three walks on weekday evenings in the summer.

The numbers of participants have varied from 58 on a visit to Elvetham Hall in February and 29 for a walk on Yateley Common in May down to one for another walk on the Common on a very wet afternoon in December. The walks have generally had a theme related to one of the Society's current activities, and particular thanks are due to the leaders who planned them and made them interesting by explaining what was to be seen. A detailed account is made of each event and these are written into the Society's permanent Diary, providing a valuable record for future interest. Articles on particularly notable visits are published in the Newsletter.

8. Social Events

In a new venture for the Society a Barbecue and Barn Dance was held on 17 July in the grounds of Yateley Village Hall. With music provided by the Hampshire Hogs and food cooked outdoors on a fine evening, the event was enjoyed by approximately 90 members and guests.

On the Fifth of November Peter and Elizabeth Tipton once more hosted the Bonfire Night celebrations at Monteagle House. This year the mulled wine and cider were superbly complemented by food prepared to Jacobean recipes. Sixty-eight adults and thirty-five children did not quite manage to fill Monteagle House to the point of overflowing.

For our Christmas function this year we combined a Lecture and Social Event by inviting the Yateley Morris Men to give a display in the Village Hall on 9 December. The Morris Men excelled themselves, since apart from their dancing they showed a talent for singing which deserves to be heard more often. In the second half of the evening a group of Ukrainians staying in Yateley added a different flavour with some Russian and Ukrainian songs.

The Morris Men wasted no time in inviting the young ladies of their party to join them, and even though at times it seemed that all of the 91 guests and 20 Morris Men were dancing at once the Village Hall was left unscathed.

9. Annual General Meeting 1982

At the AGM held on 28 January Major General Llewellyn Brown and Sydney Loader were elected Vice-Presidents. Five Resolutions were unanimously passed by the 60 members present. The Secretary subsequently wrote to the relevant authorities advising them of the Society's concern with these issues. In each case an acknowledgement was received, but since all the matters referred to were of a planning nature no completely positive response was achieved, or expected, except in the case of the Hall Lane Roundabout which is to be started in March 1983. The Resolutions were regarded by the Meeting as an important method for determining Society policy on current issues.

10. Public Relations

The task of providing publicity for lectures and events has continued in the form of entries in the press and posters. Additional publicity was obtained by means of press releases and regular contributions to the Yateley Parish Magazine. Communication with the members has been via the Newsletter, each issue containing an events programme covering about three months. Of necessity the Newsletter must be produced on a tight budget, but nevertheless the Editor has consistently managed to achieve interesting and informative issues.

Three special tasks were undertaken in 1982. These were the May Fayre exhibition, the 'DoE' Exhibition and publicity for the Lord Melchett lecture.

The May Fayre exhibition Our View of Yateley, set out with maps and pictures to interest people in their surroundings. It was our first opportunity to use the exhibition boards and materials purchased with the grant from the DoE.

The Exhibition Whose Town is it Anyway? was intended as one of a sequence of exhibitions concerning planning in Yateley, in this case showing possible futures for the town.

The Lord Melchett lecture, because of the relevance of the topic and importance of the speaker, called for extra publicity and telephone canvassing, together with the sending out of leaflets and tickets; this was undertaken with gratifying results.

Plans for 1983 include the next stage in the Exhibitions and a recruiting drive; to this end Geof Hoare was appointed towards the end of the year to the new post of Membership Secretary.

11. Press and the Media

Starting with the full report of our AGM in the Yateley News and The Reading Mercury in January, The Yateley Society had, on the whole, a 'good press' in 1982.

Many of our events were featured in the Yateley News and, in particular, in the Star, the free weekly that almost everyone seems to read. Even when it has been only a diary mention, a press notice has often attracted new people along to walks and talks - again particularly from among Star readers: their article on the 'Study of Yateley' six-week course was largely influential in swelling the numbers at the Frogmore Centre in January. The publicity gained from keeping the local newspapers and the two Community Centre publications in touch with our activities has therefore proved to be worthwhile.

Some of the events which the Society felt to be newsworthy, such as Lord Melchett coming to Yateley as a guest speaker in October were not given as much coverage as we would have liked (the press release was in fact circulated to 12 local papers and local radio). However, from the number of times the Society has been quoted during the year on local environmental issues it is obviously considered to be an influential and respected body by the local media.

12. External Relations

The Society is registered as a charity and is also registered with the Civic Trust, receiving the bi-monthly Heritage News.

Our subscription to the Council for Environmental Conservation (CoEnCo) for their monthly publication habitat continued, as did our affiliation locally to the Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society. New affiliations for the Society this year are, on the national level, The Commons, Open Spaces & Footpaths Preservation Society, and locally to the Old Houses Group of the Hampshire Field Club and the Hart & Rushmoor branch of CPRE.

The Society co-operated with the Yateley Residents' Association on matters of mutual interest, and informal links with other local societies in Bagshot, Camberley, Finchampstead and Fleet have been maintained.

The Society has established itself as a respected, non-political organisation, which has resulted in requests for information and assistance from other bodies. Examples of this included a request for advice on planning matters from the Rede Action Group in Kent; the organisation of the public meeting on the development of Blackbushe at the request of British Car Auctions Ltd; and a request from Yateley Town Council for advice on conservation.

16 January 1983

THE YATELEY SOCIETY

VICE-PRESIDENTS - Sydney Loader, Major General LL. Brown.

Chairman - Edward Dawson

Vice Chairman - Gordon Peake

Hon. Secretary - John Barker

Hon. Treasurer - Richard Earnshaw

Members 1) Edward Brooks

2) Susan Dawson

3) Geoff. Hoare

4) Tony Hocking

5) Micheal Holroyd

6) Jean McIlwaine

7) Valerie Kerslake

8) John Preedy

Membership Secretary - Geoff Hoare

Social Secretary - Maise Hoare

Workshop Co Ordinator - Pat Tattersal

Librarian/Archivist - Mary Hocking

Map Archivist - Micheal Holroyd

Planning Officer - Edward Brooks

Conservation Officer - Valerie Kerslake

Press Officer - Margaret Taylor*

Publicity Officer - Tony Hocking

Newsletter Editor - Elizabeth Tipton*

Distribution Manager - Ron Hayett

Diary Co ordinator - Jean McIlwaine

Project Leaders: Conservation- Valerie Kerslake

Ecology - Susan Dawson

History - Peter Tipton

Commons and Rights of Way Officer - Micheal Holroyd

*these are co opted members