



***We wish all our Members health and happiness
and good news from the KIG front in 2008***

The Society's Future - YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!

(Note from Brian Clifford, Chairman)

In my letter of 6 November I advised members that David Cockerham had resigned as Vice Chairman and Secretary of the Society for personal and family reasons. We understand David's decision and we wish him well.

A final decision will be made by your committee in the spring, but members have to be aware that because only one or two of our 1299 members responded to the appeal in that letter for five volunteers to take over David's roles, **we sadly do not anticipate that the Society will be able to continue its work beyond the next AGM in May 2008**

I advised the Committee last May that this would be my last year as Chairman as I need to concentrate on my other responsibilities. I shall remain a member of the STOPKIG.ORG steering committee as long as I can make a useful contribution to that vitally important battle.

David Cockerham's contribution to every aspect of the work of the Society has been immense, including helping to prevent the Society winding up in 2005, then building membership, working on a wide range of planning issues, publishing the newsletter, and general administration. With our hard working team of Road Stewards he has been able to keep members informed about the main issues affecting or threatening our village.

It was an enormous advantage that when KIG reared its head the Society had been re-invigorated and was ready to play an important role in opposing this appalling proposal. It is that state of readiness to continue to fight on behalf of Bearsted and Thurnham residents against future threats that will be the biggest casualty if the Society ceases to exist.

The situation can still be saved if others come forward to join the team and take on the roles of Society Secretary, Newsletter Editor and Planning Secretary. If the positions are filled the workload for each will not be burdensome. Help is available in the early stages. For information on what is involved please contact me on 01622-739952.

It is anticipated that the Footpath Group will in any event continue with its walk programme and monitoring of footpaths.

KIG Update

STOPKIG.ORG continues its fight on many fronts under Richard Horton's vigorous leadership. Highly successful and well attended meetings were held with over 600 people at Invicta Grammar School on 6 July sponsored by Kent County Council, and a similar number on 30 November at the Ramada Hotel sponsored by Kent-Maidstone Local Board. Our thanks to the many Society members who so effectively registered their opposition to the development.

As our Chairman was abroad Alan Thomas stepped in very effectively to speak on behalf of the Society at the Ramada Hotel meeting, identifying relevant points not made by the other speakers including his impressions following a meeting he had with the Managing Director of AXA Real Estate Investment Managers, the drivers of the KIG development application. Alan is also Vice Chairman of the STOPKIG.ORG steering committee.

The Society has tried to keep members informed at all stages, and has played its part within STOPKIG.ORG, with radio and television interviews and with articles in Kent Messenger. We would like to see more STOPKIG.ORG posters around the village to remind everyone that the anguish caused by this application has not in any way weakened. They are still available at Bearsted News on the Ashford Road and at Taylors on the Green. Kent Messenger also still has a supply of car stickers.

STOPKIG.ORG and CPRE(Campaign to Protect Rural England) successfully manned a stand in the Chequers Centre for three days to raise awareness and sign on more supporters for the STOPKIG campaign. The two organisations have also held joint meetings to identify common areas of policy and to pool expertise. An excellent 'Battle of Maidstone' piece identifying the KIG issues appears on the front page of the CPRE's autumn publication. This includes statements by Felicity Simpson who is Chairman of CPRE Maidstone and a member of the Society Committee.

AXA/KIG's application for planning permission was registered with the Borough on 30 October under reference MA/07/2092. We are advised that *'The principal Planning Officer Rob Jarman is heading an in-house team of 15 planning, environmental health, landscape, transport and legal experts. He is also receiving expert advice from other agencies including KCC and Highways, the Environmental Agency, English Heritage, Natural England and external consultants employed by the Council. It has until 13 February 2008 to determine the application unless the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government calls it in. If the Borough refuses the application the applicant can appeal to the Secretary of State'*.

The previous Maidstone Borough Council designated large parts of the Special Landscape Area (SLA) between Thurnham Lane and Hollingbourne as an area of search for development sites in the draft Core Strategy of its new Local Development Framework. It then conducted a consultation process which, although considered by this Society and many others to be deeply flawed, clearly demonstrated massive opposition to development in the SLA. The worst fears of Bearsted and Thurnham residents were confirmed when Axa sought to justify its proposal to locate KIG in the SLA on the ground that the draft Core Strategy had accepted the principle of development in the area.

The new Maidstone Borough Council elected last May has since launched a review of the draft Core Strategy and has said that there will be a fresh public consultation in 2008 before it is finalised. Meanwhile the KIG application will have to be determined by 14 February on the basis of the current Maidstone Local Plan 2000 which remains in force until the new Local Development Framework is finalised, and which quite clearly states that there should be a presumption against development in the Special Landscape Area. This Society is strongly of the view that the application should be refused on that basis, and that the Core Strategy review should be expedited so that it can be completed before any appeal by AXA against a refusal of the KIG application is heard.

AXA/KIG Traffic/Highway Safety Assessment

The following is a sample of the working comments prepared by the STOPKIG.ORG Research and Analysis team on the Traffic/Highway Safety Assessment submitted by AXA/KIG's hired consultants with their planning application:

- The traffic assessment report is woefully inadequate and is based on out of date data and covers too small an area of Maidstone.
- There are numerous errors - e.g. the accident data and traffic survey is three and a half years out of date
- During construction they have ignored the fact that workers will drive to and from the site
- Workers are shown as using buses and trains between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. which do not exist
- They have assumed KCC will improve the A20 Willington Street junction in 2008 at the start of the proposed construction programme. This cannot happen as KCC has sold the land needed for the junction improvement
- KIG has not designated enough parking given the 3,500 employees and the lack of public transport, particularly at night
- KIG has not given any indication of how much lorry parking will be provided and there is concern there will not be enough given European restrictions on driving hours, or any blockages on the motorway or at the Channel Crossings.

Lorry Parking and Holding

The parking and holding of lorries when they are waiting for loading or unloading time slots is of major concern at any large warehousing or road/rail interchange facility. This is an issue of major importance for the whole surrounding area, but does not appear to have been addressed in the KIG planning application.

Slade Green Road/Rail Interchange Facility Appeal Upheld

Some members may have been aware that Bexley and Dartford Councils had refused a planning application for another road/rail interchange facility on a site at Howbury Marshes, Slade Green, Bexley. The developer, the American Company Prologis Development Limited, appealed against that decision. Following a public inquiry the Government's Planning Inspector has now found for the developer. The site is about half the size of that proposed for KIG, but is comparable if the additional warehousing and offices proposed for the latter are excluded. Although

the site is mainly open pasture within the Green Belt, it already has on it a building which is in commercial use, and it immediately adjoins a land refill site, a waste depot and the existing Slade Green rail depot. It also has a local labour force and, being near the M25 and on the North Kent rail line, is capable of meeting the rail interchange criteria. Kent County Council supported the application, considering the site to be suitable for the purpose.

Given the extra costs and delays involved in the additional handling, it remains highly questionable whether European suppliers will switch to rail containers at either location in place of their normal means of delivery by truck direct to customers, but the case for KIG is far flimsier than that for Slade Green, and the case for KIG in addition to Slade Green is non-existent. The Slade Green approval is therefore another battle won in the war against KIG. No one should assume though that the war is over. AXA is not interested in the viability of the road/rail interchange concept, only in the vast profits it will make by converting cheap farming land into valuable development land with planning permission for warehouses and offices. It has shown itself determined to force KIG through against all opposition and will use every means at its disposal to influence and/or intimidate politicians and officials.

Should it eventually be refused the KIG proposal will not be the end of the threat to this site. For all the reasons identified by this Society, STOPKIG.ORG and CPRE, we will need to continue, together with our Kent County Council representatives, our member of Parliament and all those who spoke so eloquently at the two rally meetings, to maintain the pressure on our borough council to ensure that this area remains a Special Landscape Area.

STOPKIG.ORG Funding

Contributions to STOPKIG.ORG have been slow coming in. The Society Committee voted at its October meeting to provide £1,000 to help meet some of the current costs.

Bearsted Woodland Trust Young Peoples Activity Area.

The Society is delighted that through the generosity of the Bearsted Woodland Trust and with the considerable help of the founder Trustees, the months of concern over the proposed Multi-Games Area on the Elizabeth Harvie Field is now history. The area opposite the Bowls Club now being leased to the Parish by the Trust is being prepared for the under-12's football pitch and the proposed Play Area. This initiative should greatly enhance the facilities available for the young people of the village.

The success of the Trust in winning the People's Millions award showed the massive support for their work, the team's communication skills in galvanising the telephone call, and the sheer merit of what the Bearsted Woodland Trust has achieved. The new bridge built by the Ghurkhas across the Lilk stream linking the main Trust area to Gore Meadow is now complete and the new approach path is in the course of construction.

The Society was delighted to note the 'Mynn' award made by the Parish Council to Peter Willson, Vice Chairman of the Trust, in acknowledgement of his tireless and selfless work with the Bearsted Woodland Trust for the benefit of all residents.

Planning Notes

Since we have been very pre-occupied with KIG it is just as well that other recent planning applications (see page 6) appear not to have raised issues of major concern to residents.

The original planning permission for the development of the lower **Snowfield** site within the Bearsted Green Conservation area provided for the restoration and extension of the old cow shed, the restoration of the Coach House, and the construction of two new houses behind the Coach House.

The developers subsequently applied for permission to completely rebuild the cow shed when it proved impossible to prevent its collapse after restoration work began. This is regrettable, but the design of the new structure appears to be more or less as originally proposed. The rest of the development is unchanged, and its overall appearance from the Green should not be significantly different.

A second planning application for the **Lipscomb Volvo** site has been approved and the appeal lodged by the developers against the refusal of their first application has been withdrawn. The Society was not critical of the design of either application, but considered the provision of only one parking space per dwelling to be entirely inadequate and likely to make the already difficult parking problems in the area even worse. We lobbied unsuccessfully on the basis of the criteria set out in the Environmental Responsibility and Social Inclusion section in the South East Plan namely:

- *design works well when developments are realistic about the need to accommodate car parking*
- *the health and survival of small retailers in towns that are not primarily retail destinations is highly dependent on convenience and available parking. Care needs to be taken not to discourage visits while at the same time minimising car useage and prioritising the needs of pedestrians where possible.*

Despite this clear recognition at regional level that parking standards set out in central government Planning Policy Statements (PPS) need to be applied flexibly to meet demonstrably sensible local parking needs, Maidstone Borough Council appears to be determined to follow PPS to the letter even when it is likely to do far more harm than good.

Drop Kerbs

Detailed research on the absence of drop kerbs in many parts of Bearsted, undertaken by Society Committee Members Joan Brown on behalf of the elderly and disabled and Tracey Shelley on behalf of mothers with pushchairs, and submitted to the Parish Council and KCC on CD and hard copy, is we are assured, receiving recognition. We have reason to be hopeful that some progress will be made before long in some locations.

Recent New Planning Applications

Reference	Location	Description
TA/0003/08	Eylesden Court	Removal of one cypress tree within conservation area
MA/08/0012	31 Whiteheads Lane	Single storey side extension
MA/07/2516	1 Gault Close	2-storey side extension and attached single storey garage
MA/07/2621	72 Birling Avenue	Ground floor rear extension
MA/07/2572	179 Ashford Road	2-storey rear extension
MA/07/2495	2 Tydeman Road	Erection of 2-storey end of terrace dwelling
TA/0175/07	Eylesden Court	30% reduction of 1 Horse Chestnut, shaping/felling of 4 Cypress trees all subject to a TPO No. 24 of 1996
MA/07/2507	9 Roseacre Lane	Conversion of roof space - certificate of lawfulness
MA/07/2392	2 Yeoman Lane	2-storey rear and side extension, side garage and single storey rear extension
MA/07/2349	8 Madginford Road	Single storey side and rear extension
MA/07/2360	31 Sandy Mount	First floor front extension
MA/07/2337	1 Caring Lane	One new building on adjoining land
MA/07/2324	57A Ashford Road	Garage Extension
MA/07/2245	25 Bodsham Crescent	2-storey side and rear extension and 1 storey rear extension
MA/07/2154	1 Fauchons Close	2-storey side and rear extension
MA/07/2258	Mote Hall, Church Lane	Reconstruction and extension of garage and store
MA/07/2205	90 Birling Avenue	Single storey rear extension
MA/07/2162	19/21 Spot Lane	Single storey front extension across both properties
MA/07/2098	Little Dane Thurnham Lane	Change of use from part nursery school/part residential to full residential

Footpath Group Walks Programme

Date	Start Time & Place	Route
Saturday 16 February	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond 1.30 p.m. Harrietsham Rail Station	Harrietsham - Goddington Lane - Greenway Court - Pilgrims Way - Highwood - Drakes Lane - Ringlestone Road - Deans Hill - Pilgrims Way - Harrietsham. Distance = 5 miles
Saturday 15 March	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond	Holy Cross Church - Milgate Park Golf Course - Caring Lane - Fulling Mill Farm - Old Mill Road - Leeds Church - Castle Grounds - George Lane - Old Mill Road - Caring Lane - River Len - Golf Course. Distance = 7 miles
Saturday 19 April	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond. 1.30 p.m. Langley, Horseshoes Lane junction with Copperfield Drive	Abbey Wood - Chartway Street - Sutton Valence Castle - Green Sand Way - Chart Sutton Church - Court Farm - Warmlake Road - Plough Wents Road - Firtree Farm - Langley Church - Copperfield Drive. Distance = 5½ miles
Saturday 17 May	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond. 1.30 p.m. at Harrietsham Rail Station	Harrietsham - Bell Farm - Runham Farm - Affers Wood - Wellesley House - Fairbourne Manor Farm - Water Lane - Pollhill - Harrietsham. Distance = 5½miles
Saturday 21 June	1.15 p.m. at Bearsted Green Pond.	Bearsted - Holy Cross Church - Cross A20 - Milgate Park - Caring Lane - Fulling Mill Farm - Back Street - Spot Farm - Stoneacre - Otham Green - Downswood - River Len - A20 - Church Landway - Green. Distance = 5½ miles

Wet Weather may make it necessary for the Walk Leader to change the route. If in doubt telephone Mike Perring, 739109 or Norman King, 736467

Neither the Society nor the Walk Leaders accept any responsibility for any accidents occurring to or caused by any person, animal or dog on our walks. Walkers are urged to be vigilant when crossing or walking on roads, paths, etc. **Dogs are welcome but must be kept on leads and under control at all times.** Adults should be members of the Society, and children should be accompanied by a responsible adult. Walkers need to wear stout footwear, bring adequate wet weather clothing, be prepared to negotiate rough ground, and be able to climb over stiles and up steep slopes. For further details call Mike Perring on 739109.

NB. Extra Walk Leaders are required - please contact Mike Perring or Norman King for further details.



Round The Oasts

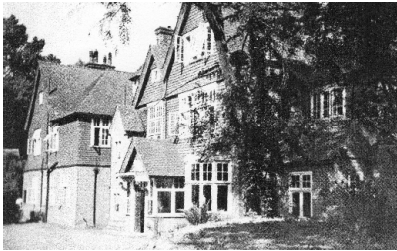
An occasional feature page in which we review interesting aspects of life past and present in and around Bearsted and Thurnham. This piece draws on material by Katherine Kersey and Rosemary Pearce and published in 2005 in 'Bearsted and Thurnham Remembered'; and on material in 'A History of Bearsted and Thurnham' published jointly in 1988 by the Bearsted and District Local History Society and the then Bearsted and Thurnham Residents Association - a forerunner of the Bearsted and Thurnham Society. The Photo is reproduced by courtesy of Holy Cross Church.

St Faiths Home

The demolition during the last two years of St Faiths Home, on the high ground above Yeoman Lane, and the development in its place of 'St Faiths Court' and 'Bearsted Views' now nearing completion, consigns to history the proud record of care associated with the former building .

St Faiths was built around 1870 and was originally called 'The Kulms', which means summit in German and indicates that it stood on some of the highest ground in Bearsted. It was the home of Dr Adams, the medical officer of health for Maidstone. The site is near and of similar height to that of the windmill which is believed once to have stood somewhere on the ridge to the north of St Faiths overlooking the Green (see our April 2006 Newsletter).

By 1930 the house had been renamed Bearsted Court, but was then acquired by St Faiths Home Charity, founded in 1898. Initially used as a place for confinement for unmarried mothers, in 1932 the scope of the Charity's work broadened to include prenatal attention, care during delivery, and post-natal treatment and training in mother craft. A new chapel was also added in 1932.



In 1942 a statue of 'Our Lady and Holy Child' was bought as a parting gift for the Superintendent, Miss Tope. This statue was given to Holy Cross Church on the closure of the home and is today greatly treasured by many in the Holy Cross congregation. It is normally to be seen on the south window ledge next to the pulpit. An iron cross and box of historical documents are also in the possession of the church wardens.

St Faiths Home was an integral part of the village with many exceptionally caring staff and local volunteers supporting the young mothers. With social attitudes changing the home closed in 1981 and until sold for redevelopment was used by Angevin Ltd as a facility for mentally and physically handicapped teenagers.

Further information on the history of St Faiths is available in 'Bearsted and Thurnham Remembered' by Katherine Kersey.

Further information on the history of St Faiths is available in 'Bearsted and Thurnham Remembered' by Katherine Kersey.

Published by the Bearsted and Thurnham Society

*Chairman
Brian Clifford,
Hope Lodge, St Faiths Lane, Bearsted ME14 4JN
Tel: 739952
e-mail:
TheChairman@BearstedAndThurnhamSociety.org*

*Secretary
(Vacant)*

TheSecretary@BearstedAndThurnhamSociety.org