



Rudgwick Preservation Society Newsletter

Chairman's Report

In the autumn newsletter, we issued a warning about the increasing pressures for development in the countryside and the need to protect the rural character of Rudgwick. Since then, there have been several new initiatives that we need to consider very carefully.

First, although the County's Structure Plan is still awaiting the Secretary of State's approval, we have already received the District Council's Consultative Document for the North Horsham Local Plan, dealing with the need for approximately 2,000 dwellings within the area. It is envisaged that while most of these will be provided in the 250 acres south of the new Horsham northern by-pass, there will be continuing development at Southwater at the rate of 220 dwellings per annum and, subject to approval for a by-pass, at Billingshurst. In addition, further small-scale development is planned for several villages, including 40 dwellings on two sites in Rudgwick.

The plan for the Buckhurst site proposes the demolition of the house and Talon's garage and their replacement by 30 dwellings of various sizes, an alternative garage, a small car park, open space and some other 'community requirements'. The remaining 10 dwellings are planned to 'round off' the end of Pondfield Road in similar style to those already there, and there would be a children's play area on the higher ground beyond Pondfield Road as promised in the Interim Statement of 1981. What is proposed is not unreasonable,

although the Society has reserved the right to comment on the design briefs in the next phase of consultation in the second half of the year.

Second, it must be realized that the local plan is part of a strategic plan for the South East. What would be helpful would be a national plan to regenerate the North and the Midlands so that the drift to the South East and the consequent pressures on housing would be arrested. The Society has written in this vein to the Secretary of State for the Environment and to Sir Peter Hordern, who has sent an encouraging reply.

Third, there is the probable restriction on agricultural products by the EEC to cure the overproduction caused by the common agricultural policy, to the extent that 2,000,000 acres of farmland may go out of production. 'The Observer' reported that the Government planned to remove the presumption against house building on agricultural land and to pay farmers to plant thousands more acres of conifers. Green belts, national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty would still be protected and

Annual General Meeting

Monday, 27 April 1987;
Rudgwick Village Hall,
Bucks Green, 7.30pm
Followed by (at 8.30pm):
'Earlier Echoes of Rudgwick'
in which Malcolm Francis
presents a sequel to his
previous talk All are welcome

'discordant development' in 'good countryside' would be discouraged. Such vague guidelines will need to be clarified if planning proposals are to be properly submitted and, if necessary, contested. Both the Council for the Protection of Rural England and Sir Peter Hordern support this view.

Fourth, the Government has published a consultative paper 'The Future of Development Plans'. This proposes the abolition of County Structure Plans, that District Councils would be single-tier planning authorities for their own areas and that their plans, although having to be within general County policy, would no longer require approval by the Secretary of State or involve the County authority except as an objector at a district planning hearing. This hardly seems logical as the County will continue to control highways and other general infrastructure matters. The changes will, it is hoped, cure the inordinate delays in putting structure plans into operation, which seem largely the Governments's fault, but the Society feels this is unlikely and that a proper balance in planning matters should be maintained, which cannot be the case if Districts are able to plan without the need to consult one another and without there being a general review of planning within the County. This is only one of the dramatic changes proposed by the Government that seem to be hasty, alarming expedients.

NALDRETT BARN

While compiling this report, an application has been received to convert this barn into a 'dwelling and workshop with general back-up facilities'. The applicant has obtained listed building status for the barn from the DOE. It follows that since the building is now protected, in

the absence of an agricultural use, some other use must be found to preserve it. In 1984, application to convert it into three dwellings was refused by the Inspector on appeal. He emphasized that the site was in unspoilt countryside. The barn, although on a private road, is a public bridleway and footpath leading to Downslink, an important bridleway converted from the old railway, and to a designated nature trail. The approach from Mill Cottages onwards is merely an unmade country lane about nine feet wide, quite unsuited to commercial traffic. We shall strenuously oppose this application, and suggest that alternative plans for a residential conversion, with a maximum of two houses, might be acceptable.

900th ANNIVERSARY OF DOMESDAY BOOK; BARN SURVEY

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings celebrated the 900th anniversary of the Domesday Book by surveying the traditional barns of England. The Society, in the person of the Chairman, undertook and completed the work in Rudgwick. Some of the barns were already 'listed', and several were found that deserved to be; two had been brought from outside, carefully re-erected next to existing listed buildings and put to excellent uses. As a by-product of the survey, several other 'listable' buildings were discovered.

William Morris, founder of the SPAB in 1877, wrote:

'It has been truly said that these old buildings don't belong to us only: that they belonged to our forefathers and they will belong to our descendants unless we play them false. They are not in any sense our property, to do as we like with them. We are only trustees for those that come after us.'

His words apply to all the enduring beauties of the countryside and are echoed by the Secretary of State for the Environment in a letter to the Chairman of the South East Regional Planning Committee when he says under guidelines for sites:

'The aim is to accommodate it (housing) in ways that enhance rather than detract from, the quality of the environment..... Local planning authorities can do

a great deal to moderate its impact by the careful selection of sites well integrated with existing developments, and by ensuring, through the proper exercise of development control, that layout and landscaping are carefully considered and well conceived.'

If planners can be persuaded to live up to these ideals, necessary development, both generally and in Rudgwick, can be acceptable. Stan Smith

Restoring old buildings

Philip Venning

The past 15 years will probably be mourned as a period when more expensive and unnecessary damage was done to old buildings than at any time since the 19th century. Sadly, in so many cases, it has been the result of misdirected enthusiasm for old buildings, and too much money to spend on them, rather than the other way round.

AMATEUR BOOM

The great amateur boom in doing up one's own house has of course rescued thousands of old buildings from decay, but it has been at a terrible cost to our rich and varied architectural heritage; many buildings have been permanently crippled. The chilling phrase 'fully modernised' in the estate agent's blurb so often means lovingly butchered.

COWBOYS

Of course, many of the worst horrors have been the work of cowboys, who have done a quick tarting-up job and taken their easy profit. But too many owners spend months of thought, anxiety and care, not to mention a great

deal of money, proudly stripping a property of much of its genuine historical character. They point to a few 'period features' that have survived the onslaught, and believe that this is evidence of a sensitive approach.

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

The problem has been most acute in the south-east, where money tends to be in greater supply than a real knowledge or understanding of old buildings and what makes them worth living in. Listing buildings of architectural or historic interest should be one way of protecting old buildings from the most damaging work, but too often owners do not realize that listed building consent is needed even for fairly minor changes. It is a common fallacy that listing applies only to the exterior of buildings and that one can do what one likes with the inside.

Neither do owners of listed buildings generally realize that there is a legal obligation on them to ensure that the building does not reach a state of serious decay and that where a listed

building is badly neglected, the local planning authority has powers to insist on repairs being done.

EXCESSIVE RESTORATION

We can all wander round the historic towns and villages of Sussex and groan at the mock bow windows with bulis-eye glass, neo-Georgian front doors, and all the wrongly proportioned and cheaply made products of the off-the-peg joinery trade. But there is a much wider and more insidious problem: too many houses have been over-restored to the point where they are almost indistinguishable from a new building constructed in a traditional style. All the qualities that age has brought, the mellowing of surfaces, the worn and uneven textures and shapes, the sometimes haphazard alterations accumulated over many generations, have been ruthlessly swept away - all lines have been made straight; all angles have been made into right angles; all indications of historical development have been obliterated; original fabric has been stripped out and replaced. A fierce uniformity has been imposed, and an erroneous attempt to 'get it back to the original' has killed much of the building's vitality. The result is a crude and meaningless fake.

HOW FAR SHOULD ONE GO?

How far one should go in renovating a house is the oldest and most difficult question of all. Clearly, many of the attractive qualities of old buildings are actually evidence of structural or other failures. A sagging roof, for example, looks picturesque but may be in that state because the purlins have failed. Similarly, bulging plaster may mean that the laths behind are rotten.

For the conscientious owner, keen

to do a thorough job, it is perfectly natural to conclude that the more one has done, the better the result. Paradoxically, this may well be the fastest way to injure the building.

INFLUENTIAL GUIDE

Perhaps the most influential guide as to how far one should go was written more than 100 years ago by William Morris, when he set up with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) with the express purpose of discouraging over-restoration. His targets were the Victorian architects who were reconstructing Mediaeval churches in their own notion of Gothic architecture. But his approach is applicable to any old building - from pig sty to stately home - and remains the guiding principle of the SPAB to this day.

SPAB MANIFESTO

In the SPAB manifesto, Morris pleads with anyone responsible for an old building 'to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof by such means as are obviously meant for support or covering, and show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the building as it stands'.

REPAIR RATHER THAN RESTORE

The above is not intended to be a detailed blueprint for what one should do in any particular case. It is, however, an approach - in essence that one should do as little as one needs to ensure the survival and stability of the building. In practice, this means that it is always better to 'repair' a building than to 'restore' it. Perhaps an example would make this rather odd distinction easier to understand.

COMMONEST PROBLEMS

One of the commonest problems is the sash window that is rotten along the bottom. The insensitive owner would rip it out and insert a new window and frame from the DIY shop. The more careful owner would go along to a joinery workshop and order an exact copy; neither, however, may be necessary or desirable. It would be far better, if possible, to get a carpenter to repair the old window - to cut out only that part that is rotten and splice in new wood only where it is needed. This way, one could keep around 80 per cent of a Georgian window, with its original history and character - and with luck its original glass - and it may even save money. The same approach can be applied to front doors, floor boards, architraves and all the other timber round the house - and indeed to virtually all other elements. Bulging ceilings, decayed beam ends, and faulty roofs can often be repaired rather than stripped out and replaced.

COURAGE REQUIRED!

Anyone wishing to pursue this course has to be courageous - there are some formidable obstacles to be overcome. Initially, there is a natural fear that the process is merely one of 'botching', and indeed it may be if it is not carried out by someone who at least understands what they are doing.

In addition, one will be up against an army of professionals who generally know little about old buildings. Many architects and surveyors are at sea with old buildings, although they may pretend otherwise. Building societies and timber-treatment firms may make unrealistic demands, and inflexible building inspectors may be unrelenting in enforcing building regulations.

Many builders will be overcautious about the ability of some parts of the structure to carry on doing the job they have been doing for hundreds of years, and unless instructed otherwise will be guided by the spirit level and modern building practices.

One of the most pervasive of faults is the repointing of old buildings, normally carried out in a hard cement mortar (when lime ought to be used), and often in an ugly and destructive way. Ribbon pointing of stone walls is inexplicably fashionable.

COPING WITH BEWILDERING PRESSURES

How should the house owner cope with all these bewildering pressures? Perhaps the over-simple answer is to join the SPAB! In many ways, the SPAB is the obvious society for anyone seriously interested in repairing old buildings. Its present membership is a mixture of professionals, including architects, structural engineers, and others, and a large group of owners and other people keen to support the Society's work.

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

Right from the start, the Society has been concerned with how old buildings of every sort should be repaired, so it has built up a unique technical expertise. It publishes technical pamphlets - for example on how one should repoint an old building - discusses and evaluates new techniques and materials that may be suitable for old buildings, organizes visits, courses and lectures and issues a regular newsletter. The Society also campaigns to save threatened buildings - it has to be notified of very application to demolish or partly demolish a listed building - and can often make constructive suggestions as to how a building that appears past

saving could in fact be rescued. To support this work, the Society publishes a quarterly list of historic buildings in need of repair that are for sale; circulation of the list is restricted to members of the Society only.

The Society is very keen to widen its membership and to increase its effectiveness. Further information can be obtained from the SPAB at 37 Spital Square, London E1 6DY, Tel 01 377 1644.

BARNS CAMPAIGN

Owing to social and economic changes in British agriculture since the 1920s, traditional farm buildings have suffered from under-use and neglect. In 1980, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings therefore

decided to take a number of initiatives to draw attention to the fate of the English barn. One aspect of this campaign culminated in a nation-wide seminar held at Lains Barn, Oxfordshire. A series of experts presented papers representing every kind of interest; the gist of the conference has been published in The SPAB Barns Book.

Another aspect of the campaign took the form of a national survey of traditionally built barns in England and Wales. Thousands of volunteers have been working to obtain a record of all the barns in their parishes. The survey ended in December 1986, and information is now being received and analysed. The results will be published at the opening of a European conference the SPAB is holding in September 1987.

Please shut the gate!

Chris Griffin

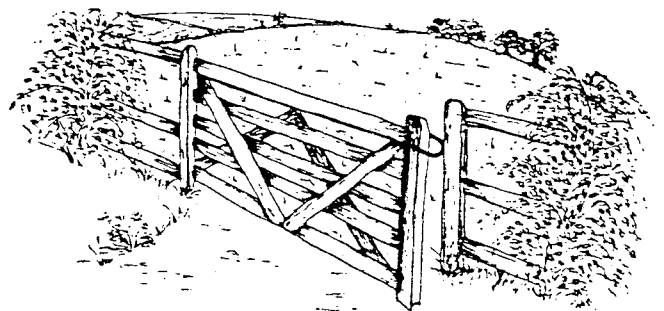
PLEASE SHUT THE GATE!

How important are these or similar words which form part of the country code and are also often seen on signs in the countryside? I hope the following story will convince you that the answer is very important.

One morning last spring, the cows, all 240 of them, were in the furthest fields, over one mile from the farm. I decided that to save time at 5 o'clock in the morning, I would drive by public road to the cows' field, with my assistant cowman; he would take the car back while I drove the herd to the farm.

What we didn't know was that the evening before, someone had left

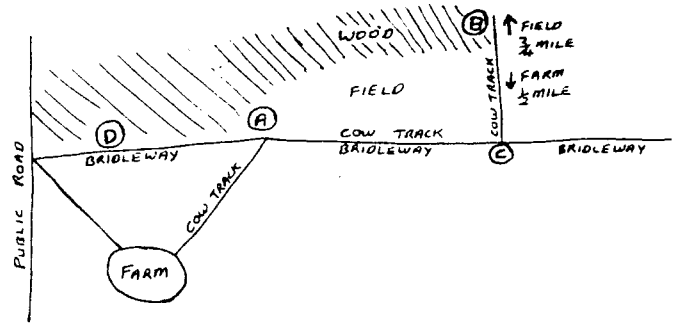
the gate at 'A' (see diagram) four feet open. Now cows, being creatures of habit, the first 80 didn't notice the partly open gate and went, as normal, back to the farm. Then one brighter than average cow found the opening, and off to freedom she galloped. She was followed by many others, bellowing as they went. At this time, I was at 'B', and hearing the commotion, knew something was



wrong. I ran through the wood, and across a field, to arrive at 'A' and shut the gate.

However, by this time 70 cows had escaped, and the remaining 90 behind them were galloping from 'C' to 'A', hoping to get out as well, and the 80 at the farm, on hearing the noise, turned round and went full speed back down the track towards 'A'. My assistant saw these cows turn tail and run off, and realizing that something was wrong, he came back to join me. Seeing 70 cows heading towards the public road, he was fortunately able to get in front of them and turn them. They were now galloping round in circles, in the wood between 'D' and 'A'.

With the gate securely closed, I now had 170 cows (over 90 tons total weight) in head-on confrontation in a ten foot wide track. Can you imagine trying to persuade 170 cows to turn round



and go quietly back to the farm, when they could see 70 of their herd-mates having a grand time skipping like spring lambs in a wood where they had never been before? It took more than an hour to achieve this; I lost my voice; many of the cows got badly cut sides and legs from pushing each other against barbed-wire fences; we started milking nearly two hours late that morning - and all because someone had left a gate slightly open.

So, please shut that gate!

Helping nature

Geoff Ayres

During the winter, a section of railway embankment between Lynwick street and the Health Centre has been cleared in order to promote regeneration of the blackthorn and to allow in daylight. The work was carried out by conservation volunteers from Horsham and Crawley and by members of the British Butterfly Conservation Society. West Sussex County Council were extremely helpful in not only agreeing to the work being carried out on their land, but also in providing most of the the working party. I am most grateful to Countryside Warden John Heathcote, Gary Thomas, Warden of Buchan Country Park and Mr and Mrs Bargman who own part

of the land. Hopefully, when the regeneration has taken place, another section will be cleared.

GLOWWORMS

One resident voiced concern over the effect upon the glowworms he had seen there. Glowworms are insects rather like narrow woodlice. The adult female produces a green light on warm summer evenings. She is flightless and climbs up grass stems to attract the flying males with her light. Glowworms are predators and live solely on snails (gardeners please note!). Their ideal habitat is good snail

country, medium-length vegetation and damp litter. The glowworms should be very pleased about the clearing!

Gruesome feeding habits

The feeding habits of the glowworm are gruesome: the insect bites the fleshy part of the snail, injecting a venom which paralyses the snail and then dissolves it inside its shell. The glowworm sucks the remains from the shell, leaving only the undamaged empty shell.

BUTTERFLIES

Comma butterfly

Tuesday 10 February was an exceptionally fine sunny day which gave rise to my first butterfly sighting of 1987. A Comma butterfly in very good condition flew along a hedgerow in a vain search for nectar. The Comma hibernates as the adult butterfly, mostly among dead leaves in dense thickets. It is most distinctive, having a very ragged edge to its wings. When the wings are closed, it mimics a dead leaf both in shape and in colour. There is a small white mark on the underside of the wings; this is the 'comma' which gives the butterfly its name.

The caterpillars feed upon elm leaves in Rudgwick. The sucker growth from the roots of our dead elms seems to suit them very well. The number of Commas in the village has been artificially



Comma butterfly
(sketch by Lesley Catchpole)



Duke of Burgundy Fritillary
on Dog Rose
(sketch by Lesley Catchpole)

boosted in recent years; I hope to be able to 'tag' this year's releases. In the early years of this century, this butterfly was confined to the Wye Valley; for reasons that are entirely unknown, it has spread over most of England and Wales.

Duke of Burgundy Fritillary

A little butterfly exists, called, rather grandly, the Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, known to entomologists as 'the Duke'. This butterfly is the only representative in Britain of a whole family of butterflies. At one time, when many acres of woodland were coppiced regularly, this little butterfly used the primrose as its foodplant. There are now not enough primroses left for them, and they survive only in a few places on the Downs where there are sufficient cowslips to live on. I hope to reintroduce 'the Duke' to Rudgwick in the near future.

Black Hairstreak

A rare butterfly called the Black Hairstreak has appeared in Rudgwick. This is most surprising, since it has had no help from me! A controversial introduction of this butterfly was made many years ago over the border in Surrey. The colony persisted for decades until accidentally bulldozed by a forester. This was thought to be the end of this colony - or was it?