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2005

# THE NEWSLETTER

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## DORRIDGE & DISTRICT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Chairman: DAVID GLANFIELD ~ 779635 • Secretary: MALCOLM SHEPHERD ~ 773374 • Editor: PETER RADNALL ~ 770633  
e-mail address: [info@Dorridge.org.uk](mailto:info@Dorridge.org.uk)

### WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES!

This time last year we devoted a large part of the Autumn Newsletter to Police issues. One of the main causes of concern was the level of anti-social behaviour and the Newsletter contained a depressing catalogue of horrors visited upon the Village Centre by our own young people. Twelve months on it is very pleasing to note that Dorridge is now much less afflicted at weekends. Litter is less of a problem, there appears to be less vandalism, and we have had reports from residents and traders that they have noticed the improvement in the situation. We believe that this is largely the result of the changes to policing in the Rural Sector, whereby a team of officers is dedicated to a specific area, in our case Knowle, Dorridge and Hockley Heath. Sergeant Ann Strachan and her colleagues were very active in Dorridge throughout the Autumn and beyond April of this year implementing 'Operation Robroy', which targeted anti-social behaviour in a positive and sometimes very vigorous way. Arrests were made, parents were written to, and young people were given firm warnings on the streets that bad behaviour would not be tolerated. At the same time links with Arden School were strengthened, and we all continued our efforts to find ways of improving facilities for our younger residents. This Association is proud of the facilities already in place in Bentley Heath and members are exploring the possibilities of adding to these as well as perhaps providing something different elsewhere.

### MORE POLICE NEWS

Recent Staff changes in the Solihull Force have seen Ann Strachan leave the 'Dorridge Squad' to become

the Rural Sector's Community Police Officer. We welcome Sergeant King in her place and look forward to meeting him. However Ann will continue to attend DDRA Committee Meetings and residents can still use her as their first point of contact with the Police. You can reach her by phone on 0121 712 6123 or e-mail [a.strachan@west-midlands.police.uk](mailto:a.strachan@west-midlands.police.uk). If there is an emergency or you believe police attendance is urgently required you should of course call 999. The monthly surgery, held at Knowle Library by Sgt Strachan will continue on September 1st from 12.00 to 2.00pm. (See article below)

We also welcome Inspector Neil Corrigan, who takes overall charge of the Rural Sector.

DDRA Committee Members attending the Police Consultation Forum and the Police Rural Assembly meetings report healthy trends in crime figures. In the first quarter of this year there were only 5 house burglaries and 10 cars stolen on our patch. As there are some 3800 homes in Dorridge and Bentley Heath alone this shows a very low level of crime against the individual, and we have used our Notice Boards in Dorridge and Bentley Heath to publicly acknowledge our gratitude to our local officers in their efforts to provide and maintain a safe environment for us all. Incidentally, the highest crime figure is for thefts from motor vehicles. A fair number of these are from cars belonging to business people visiting the area and parking at the NEC or outside hotels, pubs etc., but of course we can help to make sure our own stuff isn't nicked by not leaving things on view inside our cars. Sound advice, oft repeated but still, it appears, forgotten when it matters.



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## POLICING THE NEEDS OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY

The Police Rural Sector is committed to helping to build safer communities and has a number of measures to achieve this. Sgt Strachan will focus on community reassurance and will hold police surgeries across the sector to improve accessibility and provide the public with a better opportunity to voice concerns and opinions. Sgt Strachan said : "It is often low-level issues that can have the greatest effect on an individual's quality of life, and the surgeries will allow people to discuss such issues face-to-face with a Police Officer who knows their area. The Police need to know of such concerns and I would encourage people to come in and talk in confidence about issues affecting them or others. Recorded levels of crime are falling but people's fear of crime is still apparent. I hope the community reassurance strategy will reduce that fear and allow people to feel safer in their communities".

Surgeries for our area will be held in Knowle library as follows :

First Thursday of every month - 12.00 - 2.00pm

1 September, 6 October, 3 November, 1 December

## DORRIDGE TO LONDON THE PRETTY WAY

As most of you are aware by now the excellent train service that residents enjoy to London has of late become an epic journey due to the tunnel collapse at Gerrards Cross, courtesy of Tesco's. Fortunately there were no trains in the tunnel at the time, and thanks to the quick thinking by a Chiltern train driver at Gerrards Cross who telephoned the signal box all trains were stopped.

Only 23 metres of the tunnel were affected, construction having taken place in sections, but over 1000 tonnes of soil were deposited onto the line. Removing this debris and checking the remaining parts of the tunnel has been quite a task. However it

is hoped that the work will be completed by mid-August and the normal timetable reinstated. The present timetable is based on one train per hour and the journey takes an extra 45 minutes as the train has to travel via Aylesbury, giving travellers an opportunity to view scenic delights hitherto hidden from them.

It is only when you lose a reliable and relatively inexpensive service that you realise its benefits. The alternative route, using Birmingham International, is faster but 50% more expensive, involves a 20 minute drive and double the parking fee. Mid-August can't come soon enough!

## THE HP TRIP -what about next year?

There was a huge and rapid response to our announcement of a trip to the Houses of Parliament and we are very sorry that so many of you had to be disappointed. MPs can only have a limited number of Visitor Passes and it seems that we have pretty well filled Caroline Spelman's quota. However, we will do it again, and those who didn't make it this year will be at the top of the list for next year. Incidentally, if anyone has ideas about other trips we might try we would be only too glad to hear from you.

Call Pam Nunn on 77 2806.

## BEEN CAUGHT IN OUR WEB YET?

It's at [www.Dorridge.org.uk](http://www.Dorridge.org.uk) and it tells you everything you need to know about DDRA, its Officers, who does what, how to contact us and so on, as well as masses of information about our area, news of Planning Applications, and much more. And, of course, you can use it to give us your thoughts about the area we live in and express any concerns you may have. Go on, give it a try!

## IMAGE IS EVERYTHING ISN'T IT?

....and we're not sure DDRA has one! We often ask for residents to get in touch with us to register concerns - already mentioned in this Newsletter - tell

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us what's going on around our area, comment on our actions, report encouraging news about our younger residents and so on. SILENCE. We rarely hear from anyone, (although we did receive one e-mail after the article about Cameron House in the last Newsletter).

In pondering this we can only conclude that the most likely reason is our public profile, or the lack of it, and at our last Committee meeting one of our newer members agreed to look into ways of making residents more aware of our presence, our work, and our aspirations for the district. One way might be to have more involvement in local events, another might be to strengthen our communication with residents throughout the area. And you may have your own ideas. If you do, get in touch with our Secretary, Malcolm Shepherd, Tel 77 3374, or e-mail: [info@Dorridge.org.uk](mailto:info@Dorridge.org.uk). We look forward to hearing from you and, as we get into our stride, you may hear more from us.

### NEVERTHELESS....

Somebody did nominate DDRA for a B93 Award in the Category of 'Best New Development' for our work in establishing the Play and Leisure Area at Bentley Heath Recreation Ground and we were delighted to receive a Runners-Up Certificate.

### TALKING OF IMPROVEMENTS....

There is still work to be done. Our landscaper has some interesting plans for the patch opposite the shops on Station Approach and we have applied for a grant to help us with this and other plots in the village centre. In fact we have already received a donation from Chiltern Railways, for which we are extremely grateful. Negotiations with the management agency for Forest Court will enable us to take responsibility for the external gardens there, and we will also maintain the triangle of land beside the railway bridge. Meanwhile, we hope you have noticed the splendid work done by Committee

members in installing baskets along the railing at the edge of the station platform and planting up and maintaining the tubs on the platforms themselves. The Britain in Bloom judges spent quite a little while in Dorridge on July 21 and declared themselves well satisfied with what they saw. While we do not expect to win anything this year our plans for future development could stand us in good stead next time around. The Council has again done us proud by setting up all the hanging baskets and planting the bed around the Christmas Tree, and the final elements of the Dorridge Action Plan should soon be in hand. We would still like to do something in Bentley Heath and will shortly be talking to the Council about the feasibility of establishing some Christmas lights and increasing floral displays. And finally, the spinney at the corner of Avenue Road and Dorridge Road. We have met the Council's ecologist on site and agreed that little intervention is required. We intend simply to have the edges bordering the footpaths trimmed, and carry out annual clearance of some, but not all, of the invasive bramble where it threatens healthy development of other species.


### GOT SOMETHING TO SHOUT ABOUT?

Our display unit in Arden Square (on the corner, by the Christmas Tree) is available to local clubs, societies and organisations wishing to publicise events. If you have a play, concert, Open Day or whatever, and want to tell the world, tell Dave Carter first, on 77 0749, and he'll arrange to display your notice for the modest fee of £10 for up to one month.

### PLANNING NEWS

Currently there are appeals outstanding on two applications to demolish 1 Spring Coppice Drive and develop the site, but by now you will know that the proposals for Paddock Drive were unanimously rejected. Congratulations once again to the locals

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who worked tirelessly to prepare their case. Perhaps it is worth saying again that we are not against new building on our patch, but we are strongly against the destruction of perfectly good family homes which could form part of people's climb up the property ladder, or better still, a place for them to settle for the foreseeable future. Moreover, where these important components of the local housing stock are destroyed, they are replaced with large and expensive dwellings or apartments whose price puts them beyond the reach of younger buyers or the elderly seeking to downsize. Further concerns are that trees and 'greenspace' are lost, habitats destroyed, flood risk exacerbated and population density increased, placing greater pressure on local services, roads etc.

**AND A COUPLE OF SLEEPING TIGERS**

MSA and BIA. Not much has been heard recently about proposals to build a Motorway Service Area at either Catherine-de-Barnes or Monkspath, and there is a similar silence surrounding the second runway at

Birmingham International Airport. However we have not forgotten the threats and stand ready to act alongside other residents' associations and local action groups whenever the issues become 'live' again.

**IN FOR A PENNY, IN FOR A....**

You must know what's coming if you have read earlier Newsletters. Yes, it's the request for your membership subscription if you haven't already paid us one. £1 is all we ask and you can deliver it to any of the addresses at the end of this edition.

**OR EVEN....**

Come and see us at Dorridge Day on September 17. We'll be there as usual, running the Coconut Shy - very popular with the little ones, and even more popular with their competitive Dads - and right next door you can learn all about our activities - **AND PAY US YOUR SUBSCRIPTION!!**

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