

continued from cover

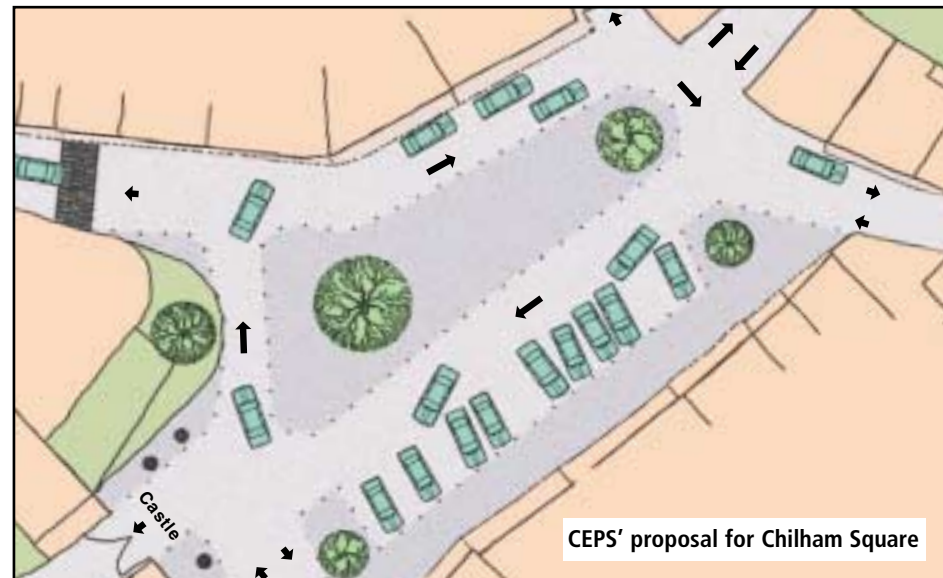
the traffic lanes round it in order to slow the cars. It is hoped that this area will (i) enable people to sit in comfort and enjoy the view, (ii) restore its historic connection between the Castle and Church, (iii) provide a better place for wedding and funeral groups to assemble, and finally, (iv) enable revenue-generating ventures, such as farmers' markets or fun events to be held, without removing all the cars from the Square.

The north side has been left as at present for owners to park in front of their own houses.

Taylor's Hill is presently suffering badly from vibration, fumes and speeding vehicles and life is becoming intolerable for residents. It was thought that access to Taylor's Hill should be down one way only (i) to prevent the casual and aimless access of cars not intending to stay, (ii) to prevent walkers (changing their boots) leaving their cars all day in the Square, (iii) access of heavy goods vehicles either lost or cutting through the Square.

Finally, and most importantly, the resurfacing of the Square must be carried out with English Heritage approval. A scheme analogous to Chilham is that at Battle Abbey. It has restored the ancient entrance from a car park and improved its surface with fine graded gravel bonded to the tarmac. It is natural looking and effective and was approved by English Heritage.

? Do you have any comments to make on CEPS' proposal for Chilham Square? Please let us know.



How it could be: CEPS' proposal for improving the Square

CEPS' proposal for the Square

The Society's "proposal for the improvement of the appearance, order and enjoyment of the unique and beautiful urban space that is Chilham Square" was submitted to the Development Services Directorate of Kent County Council in December 2002.

It lays out the following aims:

1. Safe unrestricted access at all times for emergency services.
2. Rationalised parking.

3. Reduction of speeding and 'rogue' parking by traffic calming measures, road layout and restricted access.
4. Improved appearance of the surface of the Square, and its street furniture. Adjoining street surfaces to be improved at the same time.
5. To have a central feature, preferably a tree, to provide shade and scale.
6. Safe places for pedestrians and children. Pleasant spaces to assemble for weddings, funerals, etc.
7. No yellow or white lines. Minimal signs, if any.

continued from cover

CEPS sent out leaflets and canvassed opinions in and around the Square, and held a well-attended workshop, where all complaints and problems were considered. A scheme was selected to be sent to the Parish Council. It was displayed at the Parish Design Workshop (see 'Parish Design Statement' on page 3) in an unofficial capacity, but not commented on.



The Parish Council acknowledged the submission of the CEPS' proposal but have delayed its consideration until after the new Parish Council is convened in May.

In the meantime, CEPS has sent the proposal to Ashford Borough Council Development Services Directorate where the Ashford Local Plan is now being discussed.

The Orchid

Members of CEPS may be interested in 'The Orchid', the free newspaper of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Kent Downs was designated an AONB in 1968 and covers about a quarter of Kent, including 137 parishes. The Orchid contains items dealing with the conservation, archaeology and environment of this valuable area. The current issue profiles some of the many different organisations concerned with looking after this landscape. CEPS members may be particularly interested in the regular feature on the North Downs Way National Trail.

The Orchid is published twice a year, in spring and autumn, and copies can be obtained from: Kent Downs AONB Office, Invicta House, Sessions Square, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XX.



Credits

CEPS Committee

President:	Anthony Babington Thydon Cottage The Street Chilham
Chairman:	Helen Kirwan Heron Manor Mountain Street Chilham
Vice Chairman:	Diana Holbrook Castle Oak School Hill Chilham
Secretary:	Valerie Howe 12 Mountain Street Chilham
Treasurer:	Francisca Perrett The Old Vicarage The Square Chilham

If you have comments on any of the items in this newsletter or you wish to submit an article to future newsletters, please send your contributions to the Secretary, Valerie Howe, at the address shown.

Unless otherwise attributed, all articles in this newsletter were written by members of the committee.

Call to action

Find enclosed an action sheet on the danger caused by motorbikes on the North Downs Way and Kings' Wood.



ceps news

1 March 2003

The newsletter for the Chilham Environmental Protection Society

Chilham Square – time for change?

Looking at these pictures of Chilham Square, it is probably not difficult to guess which image most of us prefer. Sadly nowadays, the scene below is all too familiar.

Today there is nowhere in the Square to sit quietly and enjoy the space and beauty of the surroundings or to walk safely with small children. This unique and beautiful space has been transformed into a car park and a 'rat run' for commuter traffic. Apart from spoiling the look of the Square, the dominance of cars has produced several other problems affecting both people and property. At times, thoughtless and dangerous parking has compromised access of emergency vehicles, while pedestrians are in danger every day from speeding commuter traffic using the Square as a short cut between the A28 and A252. Cars parking close to houses, leaving their engines running, cause vibration to the mediaeval buildings and fill these homes with stinking fumes.

In addition, the Square now has an ugly and patched surface and neglected and inappropriate street furniture.

Chilham Square, often described as one of the most beautiful village squares in the country, is becoming an uninviting and, at times, rather dangerous environment, from which declining numbers of tourists derive no pleasure and properties are becoming difficult to sell. All of which is gradually leading to economic and social deterioration.

Showing the photograph from 1903 is not a fair comparison, most people then had never even seen a car. However, it would be good to restore the sense of space, tranquillity and safety that the old



How it was: the Square in 1903...

photograph evokes. CEPS' proposal (see back page) addresses some of the present problems. Pedestrians between School Hill and The Street will be provided for by a wide (4 metre) path in front of the houses. At each end, this path curves out towards the centre to (i) provide a short route across the traffic to the central space and (ii) prevent cars parking as they do at present with their engines running.

Provision for about fifteen cars is made in front of the south range of buildings, separated from them by the path. As large as possible central space bounded by oak posts has been reserved, reducing the width of

continued on back page

The Square: a history of CEPS' campaigning

In 1997, a sub-committee was convened by the then Vice Chairman Tony Simms. A survey of local residents was undertaken, and after a lot of hard work by Helen Bonneau and Peter Poole, a document was produced. This gave a history of the Square, an analysis of the problems, and several alternative traffic layouts designed by Peter. It was presented to Chilham Parish Council but not acknowledged.

CEPS continued to campaign and was represented on the Parish Council Roads and Traffic Sub-Committee. The Conservation Officer from Ashford Borough Council attended a meeting in 1997 with two schemes of his own devising. It was intended that all the schemes would be displayed in the Church but unfortunately this did not happen.

The issue of the Square then lay dormant until 2001 when the Parish Council undertook to produce a Parish Design Statement. CEPS considered this a vital opportunity to get the need for improvement of the Square endorsed in a policy document.

continued on back page



How it is: a busier Square today...

What is CEPS?

CEPS was conceived during the summer of 1990 as a response to a petition signed by over a hundred residents living around Chilham Castle. Their weekends had been ruined by severe levels of noise from events held there. This included helicopter sightseeing trips flying low over dwellings continuously from 9 am to 6 pm, a stunting WW II aeroplane, clay pigeon shooting and cannon fire. Tourists and visitors also complained that their enjoyment of the pretty village of Chilham and the supposedly peaceful North Downs Way National Trail had been ruined. Many at first only wanted a noise abatement society but enthusiasm developed for a broader, environmental protection society, thus CEPS was born.

CEPS aims to protect the environment of the Parish of Chilham and campaign against nuisance or interference with the comfort and well-being of its residents. The Society tries to be vigilant with regard to Chilham's environmental assets and takes up issues of particular concern to members. For example, CEPS successfully campaigned during 1993–95 against expansion at the Beeches caravan site on the A28.

Concerns were raised over dangerous pollutants emanating from the site to damage fish and other wildlife of the River Stour and destruction of, or damage to, the ancient beech trees. Action resulted in the desired restriction of the number of permanent caravans to 12 (the application being for 21), improved sanitation, screening and supervision by Ashford Borough Council. CEPS also helped to prevent the site being redesignated as a stop-over point for potentially numerous visiting short-stay caravans.

In 1995–97, CEPS participated in a major, national campaign voicing concerns about the health hazards associated with the dangerous working practices of the Thruxted Mill animal carcass rendering plant situated about 2 miles from Chilham village. Concerns focused on effluent pouring on to land and down wells, seeping into aquifers and polluting local water supply. This effluent included the rendered carcasses of animals infected with BSE. The opposition to the Mill's planning application led to a Planning Enquiry. Eventually, permission was granted but with restrictions. By this time, there had already been massive expenditure and improvements on equipment and practices at the mill.

After a hectic and successful ten years, in October 2000, CEPS decided to adopt a watching brief, ready to continue activities whenever a specific need arose. The realisation last year of the value to Chilham of a Parish Design Statement stimulated renewed activity (see article right).

What's on this year

2003 promises to be busy. As you can see in this newsletter, CEPS will be fully involved in the Parish Design Statement, proposals for the improvement of Chilham Village Square, the Quiet Lanes Initiative and a Biodiversity Action Plan.

And on a lighter note, June will mark 12 1/2 years since CEPS was formed so we thought it would be a good idea if we embraced the Dutch tradition of celebrating the 12 1/2 year anniversary (half way to 25!). We have earmarked Saturday 21 June as a day of celebrations and fund raising. Plans for the day so far include a garden trail and a talk by the naturalist Martin Newcombe on the fauna and flora of the area and how to tackle a Biodiversity Action Plan. We will be giving more details nearer the day. We hope that all members will join in and help to celebrate this anniversary and launch CEPS' next 12 1/2 years with a successful and memorable day.

How to join CEPS

CEPS would welcome new members. Please show this newsletter to any friends and neighbours who have an interest in the protection and conservation of their local environment. CEPS is all about making a positive contribution.

CEPS is its members. Although some members participate in the Committee and help with events, it's not necessary. A strong membership increases the influence of the Society as well as helping to provide the funds to do its work.

It costs just £1.00 to join although if you would like to donate anything in excess of this amount it would be welcome.

To join CEPS, contact the Secretary, Valerie Howe, 12 Mountain Street, Chilham CT4 8DQ.

Associates

Are you concerned about environmental issues but don't have time to get involved? If so, why not join CEPS as an Associate? We are hoping to introduce an Associates Scheme in the near future for individuals, other societies and organisations. Being an Associate means that you too will be part of CEPS' voice. If you are interested, please let us know.

2003 subscriptions

Subscriptions for existing members are now due. CEPS has a busy year ahead with its various campaigns and your subscriptions help towards the costs of this work. We are keeping subscriptions to just £1.00, although if you would like to donate more, it would be welcome.

Subscriptions should be sent to the Treasurer, Francisca Perrett, The Old Vicarage, The Square, Chilham.

Biodiversity Action Plan

Chilham is rightly proud of the heronery at Chilham Castle, mentioned in the Doomsday Book, it is the oldest recorded grey heronery in the world. What is perhaps not so well known is that Chilham Castle's Deer Park is itself very important. Not only does it have an old deer population going back many generations, but the Park has all the 'old woodland' birds, for example, wood warblers have nested there from time to time.

Although we are aware of much of our local biodiversity, it is important that we have as much information as possible on the fauna and flora of our area. Knowing what we have in terms of habitats and species, where they are and how sensitive they are to change is the first step in protecting and conserving our precious countryside. CEPS is investigating the feasibility of drawing up a Biodiversity Action Plan for the Parish. This will involve groups of people identifying different habitats within the Parish and the species occupying these areas. A report will then be compiled on the most interesting areas in terms of biodiversity. It will require a lot of organisation and be fairly labour intensive but we hope that the results will be worth the effort.

Martin Newcombe, a professional naturalist, will give a talk on the flora and fauna of Chilham Parish and how to set about developing a Biodiversity Action Plan on 21 June at our 12 1/2 year celebration.

Kent is fortunate in having a wide range of habitats which are host to a wide range of species. Within the county, the Parish of Chilham is considered to have one of the most valuable habitats. Chilham's water meadows are a target for the National Biodiversity Action Plan. And there is much in the Deer Park that merits careful consideration and preservation.

Chilham has a good population of dormice, badgers and glow worms, all of which are endangered or protected species. But the need to conserve biodiversity is not just about rare or threatened species and habitats. Nightingales and night jars are not uncommon in the area and we hope they remain so. Conserving the less rare is also very important to the quality of our local environment.

As members of CEPS we are all concerned with protecting our environment and you may feel encouraged to help in this project. You could play a part in helping to conserve the richness of our local fauna and flora for future generations.

Chilham's Past and Future

When Confucius suggested a couple of thousand years ago, "Study the past if you would divine the future" our ancestors in the Stour valley were probably approaching the Iron Age.

The whole of the river valley had already known people from the early and late Stone-Age periods, and when I dug up an early Acheulian* hand axe from the garden it sparked the imagination. Time and effort, mainly field walking, has resulted in an accumulation of evidence from Milton Bridge to Godmersham and beyond.

Over many tens of thousands of years, humans would have arrived, moving around to exploit resources such as food and shelter, and perhaps retreated to the south, particularly when the glacial climates descended.

Later, during the relatively short Neolithic period when herds of wild animals such as mammoth had disappeared, human groups settled in areas where fish, birds and small mammals were more plentiful and easily caught with the help of new technology – bows and arrows, harpoons and nets. Forest clearance allowed for huts and enclosures whilst primitive farming and domestication of animals meant a greater life expectancy for young and old.

The expanding population needed more tools but the main material to survive has been the flint or stone artefact. An axe is a rare find, but its manufacture from a flint core could have required the removal of a hundred or more waste flakes which are recognisable, more commonly found and occasionally re-tooled as scrapers or knives.

One visiting enthusiast was delighted to see that the 'rubbish' I had collected represented such a succession of prehistoric and historic periods from early Stone-Age to Saxon times. Another knowledgeable visitor on seeing Roman roof and hypercaust tiles associated them with a lump of curved masonry which I had not remotely associated with the period, and announced they were from a not particularly prestigious two storey Roman villa. It helps if you know what you are looking at!

Our Stone-age ancestors were very dependent on each other, respected those most useful in society, enjoyed a comprehensive understanding of other life forms and the shared environment and were fortunate indeed not to be burdened by celebrities, soaps, Beckham, the Sun and the one hundred share index!

*Don Poole,
Mountrose, Mountain Street,
Chilham*

*Associated with the bones of Swanscombe Man, our earliest known ancestor

● Chilham is unusual in having had a fairly continuous succession of peoples inhabiting the village and river valley. It is one of CEPS' aims that at some time in the not too distant future a survey be instigated and an inventory made of local archaeological findings and sites and areas rich in unrecorded archaeology. It is important that we know what we have so that we can try to preserve what is worthwhile before we lose it.



Neolithic, mesolithic and palaeolithic finds from the Stour Valley

Quiet Lanes Initiative

We are fortunate in Chilham in having many beautiful rural lanes, none more so than the North Downs Way National Trail. If you are a regular walker, cyclist or horse rider, however, you will almost certainly be aware that traffic in our countryside is rising quickly. Not only are traffic levels increasing so is the speed at which some of this traffic travels. This makes walking, cycling or riding less pleasant and difficult and actually dangerous in some places. The traffic also seriously affects the wildlife and verges as well as spoiling the peace and tranquillity of our country lanes.

The Quiet Lanes Initiative is a project that aims to preserve the character of these country lanes and

Parish Design Statement

After the issue was raised by CEPS, Chilham Parish Council in 2001 set up a Steering Committee to undertake the production of a Parish Design Statement.

Design statements are the outcome of an initiative by the Countryside Commission (now Agency) to encourage and influence local participation in the planning process. The aim is to raise awareness of our built and natural environment, and to be a tool for planners, developers, householders and landowners. Choice of materials for new buildings, extensions and maintenance affect the visual qualities of each dwelling and so, accumulatively, the whole village. It is a guide to avoid misplaced and unsympathetic developments in scale and density and to protect views and special landscape.

The Steering Group, after a slow start, arranged a workshop and invited every household in the Parish to attend.

This workshop was held on October 2002 in the Village Hall and was well attended with much active and enthusiastic participation. Participants were divided into groups to cover different aspects of the Parish and, armed with cameras, were sent off to the main areas. The films were processed during the lunch break. The groups reassembled in the afternoon to discuss the photographs and explain their likes and dislikes.

The results of this workshop are now being analysed and written up by representatives for Chilham, Old Wives Lees and Shottenden. The document will then be co-ordinated and a draft statement submitted for the approval of the whole Parish. It is hoped to have the finalised document available in the autumn.





ceps call to action

March 2003

Chilham Environmental Protection Society

Motorbike menace

Please help to protect the North Downs Way and Kings' Wood

We think of Kings' Wood as one of the most treasured areas of natural heritage in the Parish – a safe haven, rich in wildlife, beautiful scenery and above all, tranquil. It is a valuable resource for everyone to enjoy.

Sadly this is no longer the case. Motorbike scrambling has become a serious menace. Walkers, especially children, risk serious injury when motorbikes hurtle past on the narrow, slippery, paths. Deep hazardous ruts have been gouged out of the paths and fragile flora and fauna destroyed. The worst affected paths are on the loop through Kings' Wood between Dane Street and Mountain Street. Some of this route is on the North Downs Way National Trail. As the paths are classified as 'byways open to all traffic (BOATS)', motorised vehicles can use them at present. However, Kent County Council (KCC) has the power to apply to a Magistrates Court for a 'Traffic Regulation Order' (TRO). This bans motor vehicles from the paths and gives the police powers to act (if necessary).

CEPS Chairman walked the paths with two KCC officers and the police at a meeting on 20 February. The officers are sympathetic but the problem is widespread. The procedure for obtaining a TRO is cumbersome, costly and time consuming, and there is little funding available. We must make the problems at Chilham a priority for KCC by demonstrating that there is a huge demand for a ban. It is up to us. We must ask for a TRO and to do this we should address our requests to (i) KCC officers and (ii) politicians – especially KCC's Councillors as they have to be responsive to public opinion and allocate funds for KCC projects. We can also alert Forest Enterprise (the owners of Kings' Wood) of the danger to the public so they might support a request.

What you can do

CEPS will get up a petition, but please could you:

- write letters to one/more of the addressees listed below
- send your letters to CEPS (Chairman, Helen Kirwan, Heron Manor, Mountain Street, Chilham) for forwarding (to KCC and Councillors) to help us to make strategic, co-ordinated approaches.

Your letter should ask for a Traffic Regulation Order to stop motor vehicles using the Rights of Way on The Definitive Map Nos. AE25 (Dane Street) and AE35



(North Downs Way). Please give the *grounds in law** for a TRO. These are that "motorbike scrambling is causing..."

(i) severe surface damage to the fabric of the path, e.g. ruts approximately 24 inches deep

(ii) a real danger to other users, e.g. walkers and horseriders

(iii) damage and destruction of flora and fauna; risk of damage to archaeological artefacts (pottery going back to 500BC has been found: paths are thought to be on the site of the Saxon village of Felborough).

You can also point out that:

- "motor vehicles are out of keeping with the character of the North Downs Way – the way is more suitable for use by people on horse-back or on foot
- banning motor vehicles will help to preserve and improve the amenities and character of ancient Kings' Wood and the North Downs Way National Trail
- there is a need to conserve the natural beauty of this invaluable historic amenity for other users."

Write to:

1. Jonathan Carpenter, Area Manager, Public Rights of Way, Kent County Council, Unit C, Marten Park, High Halden Kent TN 26 3JP.
2. David Hiscock, North Downs Way Officer, North Downs Way Team, Strategic Planning and Environmental Management, 2nd Floor, Invicta House, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XX.
3. **Mr Grahame Weston, Councillor (re: Public Rights of Way), 34 The Drive, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 2LR.
4. **Mr Charles Findlay, Councillor (re: Chilham), Owerry House, 28 Oxenturn Road, Wye, Kent TN25 5BE.
5. Mr D Williamson, Forest District Manager, Forest Enterprise South East England Forestry Division, Bucks Horn Oak, Farnham, Surrey GU10 4LS (stress risk of serious injury to walkers).

*See: *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.*

**These councillors specifically deal with the topic shown.