

By the time you receive this Newsletter the Society's Annual General Meeting will be imminent. This year the AGM will be held on Tuesday 26th April at 7.30pm at the Church Room, Mission Hall Lane. We warmly welcome everyone interested in the village, its life and its future to come along and take part. We hope that an extra attraction will be a talk arranged to follow the business part of the meeting. This would have been given by Dr. Donald Baker of the Dorset Institute of Higher Education, but his sudden death has emphasised that man proposes but God disposes. It was intended to discuss Hardy's haunts and the topic seemed particularly appropriate considering the progress already made on converting the Mill, with its strong Hardy associations from the "Trumpet Major". It would also have acted as a further encouragement to those volunteers who have worked at tidying up the land around the Mill on recent Sunday mornings.

2. In fact, the idea of change and continuity, as represented by the new secure future of the Mill, could well serve as a theme for this Newsletter. Although not so clearly visible from the outside, there has been some progress concerning the future of the Springhead, as the many folk who attended the recent meeting arranged with Devenish Breweries will know. If planning permission and renovation work go according to schedule, the pub should re-open in November, still owned by Devenish but leased to the Buccaneer group of hoteliers. Few alterations to the exterior of the building are planned and the meeting was given firm assurances that the Company intend to run the Springhead along traditional pub lines, while maintaining the highest standards possible as regards decor, atmosphere and food. As most people will agree, a pub should provide a central focus in any village; and as the Springhead has already been in that position since 1925 the proposals for the future are encouraging.

3. Other planning matters likely to be of interest are (a) the decision of Dorset County Council to make up the carriageway between Seven Acres and Sunnyfields; and (b) the proposal to develop for housing part of the Diment land adjacent to Sutton Farm House. This proposal raises again a n issue referred to in the previous Newsletter about the Society's ability to influence decisions on development in the village. While regretting the likelihood of a change in use of the old barn, the SPS Committee think that scheduling of the land for residential purposes seems to make some kind of development in the area inevitable. The exact nature of that development, however, is a legitimate concern of the Society and of everyone else in the village. Such matters as access to the road and the preservation of the few remaining landmarks and trees have already come under close scrutiny, as well as the design and proposed materials to be used in the construction of the houses in the development.

4. Social activities over the winter have been impressive in their range. Margaret Brown has kindly organised art classes, craft classes and a very interesting series of history talks by Mr Terry Hearing - from one of which emerged the intriguing fact that the Romans were thought to have had proposals for a by-pass of Durnovaria! All these activities have proved most successful and enjoyable.

5. Residents of Silver Street wish to continue with the laying of paving slabs. Anyone knowing where some slabs (of good quality, even if a bit broken) can be obtained is asked to get in touch with Joy Shires at 3 Silver Street.

6. Back to the AGM - please don't forget the date. This Newsletter can serve as the Committee's Report to the meeting, but any member is free to raise any matter relevant to the life of the village. If you wish to nominate someone to serve on the Committee, please contact our Chairman, Bill Mercer, at Bellamy Cottage. It is understood that most of the existing Committee members are willing to serve again.

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