

CAMS



NEWS

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Forum No.7 - Best Yet!

Over 80 delegates, representing a wide range of interests and organisations, attended the seventh meeting of the CAMS Forum in the Gilt

Hall at Cobham Hall on 26 July 2001. Presentations were given on a variety of topics ranging from progress on the CTRL to the future prospects for dormice

in the area. The presentations are summarised within this newsletter. As usual, a lively debate followed with the questioners pulling no punches. All in all, a most interesting and informative meeting.

The meeting was chaired in style by Lord Darnley and on this occasion the Forum was also attended by Sir James Colyer-Fergusson bringing together, for the first time, two of the influential families that have done much to shape the history and development of this part of Kent Thameside.

Additional copies of the newsletter can be made available to organisations for wider circulation.



Sir James Colyer-Fergusson and Lord Darnley at the CAMS Forum

Your comments on the format of the newsletter are always welcome.

For your diary, please note that the next meeting of the Forum will take place at Cobham Hall on 11 December 2001. Delegates will be invited to arrive at 2 p.m. for tea or coffee prior to a 2.15 p.m. start.



Delegates in the Gilt Hall attending the CAMS Forum.

Shorne Woods Country Park - Bigger and Better

Graham Dear, Countryside Manager at Kent County Council, outlined plans for an extension to the Shorne Woods Country Park on the north side of the A2 adjoining the CAMS area. The park is already the busiest and most popular country park in Kent and in many ways, is a victim of its own success. Graham reported on the timely acquisition of a safety valve, namely the purchase of 114 acres of Randall and Brewers Wood. This, together with the habitat enhancement of land to the south of Great Crabbles Wood adjoining the Wainscott Bypass, and the provision of new public rights of way, creates a major informal recreational opportunity within this special area between Gravesend and the Medway towns.

On this occasion, some quick thinking and talking was necessary. Representatives of the Cobham Park Estate indicated in October 2000 that the woods were for sale and were helpful throughout. Rapid research and consultation was undertaken with such bodies as English Nature, and support was forthcoming from the Rail Link Countryside Initiative to enable a fastrack application to be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund. As a result, the purchase of Randall and Brewers Wood, which includes the ruins of the medieval Randall Manor, was completed at the end of March.

The area is bright with surprises. Initial investigations have revealed that the woodland



*Shorne Wood Country Park including the new land acquisition.
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is very different in character and perhaps more diverse than the existing land within the country park. In the words of Graham Dear, it is "rapidly becoming his favourite KCC owned woodland".

The next steps include a follow-up application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to enable

development work leading to a greater understanding of the area. This, and other projects in the area, will mean major capital investment to provide a focus for the wider Green Belt countryside, including CAMS. This is an exciting prospect in an area of exceptional countryside that is now getting the attention it greatly deserves.

News Update

In introducing Phillip Smart, the CAMS Scheme Manager, Lord Darnley spoke of the human tragedy arising from a fatal accident involving two motorcyclists in Cobham Woods and expressed sympathy for all concerned.

Phillip reminded the audience of the objectives of the CAMS Management Strategy, copies of which are still available on request. The five-year life span of CAMS, due to come to an end in April 2002, will be extended to complete the restoration of the Cobham Park Heritage Project, centred on the repair of the historic landscape and buildings.

This flagship project, the largest of its kind in the County, had received substantial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund following their visits to the Historic Park last autumn (see photograph). A major milestone was also reached in February this year when 165 acres of the Historic Parkland



Park Cottage before it was pulled down in the 1950s.

including the Grade I listed Darnley Mausoleum was acquired by Gravesham Borough Council, on behalf of the Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme. The intention is that Gravesham Borough Council will continue to be the guardian of the land and building until the project is complete when it will be gifted to the National Trust who will be responsible for its ongoing management and maintenance.

A photograph of the former gamekeeper's cottage near the Mausoleum had come to light through a descendant of a previous occupier. It is the intention of the project to provide a new warden's cottage in the finished scheme for site security. The audience was asked to look out for other historic photographs or memorabilia associated with the Cobham Park estate, and bring these to the attention of the Scheme Manager, as they could be useful in drawing up the restoration plans. It is hoped to submit a detailed Stage II application for the project to the Heritage Lottery Fund in Spring 2002 and to commence the works in earnest by the end of that year. If all goes well, the works should be completed around Easter 2004. In the immediate future, the access track from Lodge Farm to the Mausoleum would be repaired to enable the development works to go ahead, in particular the archaeology and trial cleaning to the Mausoleum.

As part of the access strategy, Kent County Council had been approached to re-classify the track from Lodge Farm to Cobhambury Road to downgrade it from a road used as a public path (RUPP) to a bridleway. This was likely to be the subject of a Public Inquiry and those with an interest in the proposal were

invited to make representations to the County Council.

As to unauthorised access within the project area it was considered fundamental to the success of the project to maintain efforts to preclude vehicular and motorbike access to the area, although it is accepted that the culture of unauthorised access would not disappear overnight. Continued vigilance is the order of the day. Police operations, 'Iceland' and



Left to right: Dr Michael Houghton, Heritage Lottery Fund Case Officer; Mrs Primrose Wilson OBE, Trustee of the National Heritage Memorial Fund; and Phillip Smart, CAMS Scheme Manager at Cobham Hall

'Igneous' had been launched to tackle the problem of unauthorised motorcycles and abandoned cars and further efforts were planned with the off-road Police motorbike team at Cobham Woods. The programme of installing and repairing vandalised gates, barriers and fences continues.

On a more positive note, the potential of the area for orienteering is being investigated in conjunction with the Dartford Orienteering Klubb. The revised management plan for Ashenbank Wood is currently being agreed with the Forestry Commission for support under the Woodland Grant Scheme and the Woodland Trust has a new officer in place, Clive Stewart, who was introduced to the meeting.

Cobham School, the Stour Valley Arts Project and CAMS have been in discussion with Andy Goldsworthy, the eminent contemporary artist about his possible involvement at Cobham Hall. Andy specialises in ecological art and the effect of natural

processes on natural materials and has expressed an interest in producing a piece of art that contributes to the historic landscape and the restoration project. Lastly, following a series of exhibitions by the Highways Agency on their proposals for widening of the A2 west of Cobham to the Bean junction, representations have been made on behalf of CAMS to ensure that CAMS objectives are taken into account, notably pedestrian and horseriding access routes radiating from CAMS.



Andy Goldsworthy at the Ice House, Cobham Hall

Talk of Mice and Men

There was a rare sighting at the Forum of an ecologist in a suit. Mick Hall, the RLE Ecology Manager, gave an enthusiastic insight into the work of the ecologists on the CTRL team. At any one time, some 17 ecologists are at work in the Rail Link corridor; they were there at the start and will still be there monitoring their work long after completion of the railway itself.

Apparently, enough soil has been shifted around the Rail Link corridor to cover the M1 and half of the M25 to the depth of one metre. Forum members clearly felt this was a worthy objective and an opportunity missed!

Mick Hall drew the distinction between works in mitigation,

such as the provision of wildlife corridors across land bridges, and works in compensation such as the provision of 255 hectares of new woodland. He explained the nature of the ecological input involving surveys, advance works, trials, programmes of action, and monitoring.

The CAMS area is a key location for ecology. Three of the receptor sites for ancient woodland soils are in this area and are regenerating well beyond expectations. The area played an important role in the dormouse trans-location project – over half of the 1200 trial nest boxes were here. All of the many bat boxes erected in the CAMS area show signs of having been visited by the bats,

many of which are rare species. A rare fungus, known in only five locations world wide, is also present. Two of the nine new ponds created along Section 1 of the Rail Link are

in the CAMS area. CAMS is at the forefront of pilot projects on dead wood translocation, including the strapping of dead tree trunks to live trees.



A Dormouse! (Muscardinus avellanarius)

Making the Most of the Mausoleum



Darnley Mausoleum interior

Architects, Purcell Miller Tritton, have been commissioned to oversee repair works to the four main listed buildings within the historic Cobham Park. These are the Darnley Mausoleum, and the Dairy, both designed by James Wyatt, the Aviary and the Pump House. Andrew Clark, the Project Architect, outlined the intentions and next steps for each building.

To date, a radar survey of the Mausoleum has established

hidden construction methods and the effect on the structure of the severe fire in the 1980's started by vandals. Consensus was quickly reached regarding the external works to the Mausoleum, where the intention is to reinstate the profile and the moat and to replicate the flying bridge to the chapel. Internally, the proposed course of action is still under discussion. Options range from a 'do nothing', leaving the interior as

a monument to vandalism, to full reinstatement based on the original architect's drawings. It is likely that the solution will be somewhere in the middle of the range involving the reinstatement of the chapel floor and vaulting.

The next steps involve a trial cleaning on the inside, an archaeological salvage exercise on the floor and in the moat, and the erection of substantial hoardings to protect the building from further vandalism. In the immediate future the woodland track from Lodge Lane to the Mausoleum will be repaired to allow access for scaffold lorries and other service vehicles.

With regard to the other buildings, the intentions are to repair the external slate cladding to the Dairy, to provide a wind and weatherproof envelope for the Aviary and to treat the Pump House as a preserved ruin.

Q&A

In a question and answer session to round up the Forum, it was confirmed that:

- the circular bridleway remained a key proposal for CAMS
- Kent County Council was taking action to remove 'travellers' from land owned by Southern Water
- Gravesham Borough Council was taking action on 'fly tipping' at Old Watling Street and Scotland Lane
- an off-road four-wheel drive facility was under investigation in the Swanscombe area
- CAMS had adopted the new British standards for stiles and gates.

CTRL - On Programme and Within Budget

Ted Allett, the Chairman of CAMS, and the Quality & Environment Director of Union Railways, gave an overview of progress on the whole of the Rail Link. He indicated that the two sides of the Medway crossing will be connected by the end of July, completing the physical link from Folkestone to Longfield. Track laying, gantry erection and signalling installation will commence

in earnest from a site west of Ashford in October this year. These works will progress eastwards arriving at the Medway bridge in Summer 2002.

He reported that Section 2 of the Rail Link from Northfleet to St.Pancras, including the Ebbsfleet station and the links to the North Kent railway line, was up and running. Work had commenced on the Thames tunnels, which will be

constructed from the Kent side of the river. It is not yet known whether Hoo Junction will be used as a railhead or not. Additional good news is that Jeff Waller will continue to look after liaison arrangements for the section of the route between Northfleet and Barking and Dagenham. The same faces, the same procedures and the same telephone helpline number will be in place for Section 2.

Section 1 from Folkestone to Longfield is on programme to open in the Autumn of 2003. On completion of Section 2 in early 2007, Railtrack will own and maintain the whole railway. Lord Darnley congratulated Union Railways and thanked Ted Allett for the way in which the construction and environmental matters have been handled throughout. Jeff Waller, from Rail Link Engineering, gave an illustrated presentation on the progress on the local section of the route (Contract 330) from the Medway Valley to the Waterloo connection. Contract 330 will be the first of the civil engineering contracts to be completed on 10 August 2001. There will then be a gap in major works until the late Summer of 2002 because this section will be at the tail end of the track laying westwards from Ashford. Nevertheless, other works, including works to transformer stations, access roads and the planting of the upper slopes of the Ashenbank cutting, will be taking place in the meantime. Works to the Brewers Road bridge, made necessary by the intense fire started by vandals, is taking a little longer than anticipated but will be completed by the end of August.



CTRL at Cobham Junction - © Jack Wells for Union Railways.

A2/M2 Widening - Recovering From a Bad Start

June and July were good months for progress on the A2/M2 scheme. Phil Davies, from CSM, the contractors to the Highways Agency, indicated that some of the programme delays, brought about by the excessively wet Autumn and Winter, had been made good. Large amounts of material, including thanet sand from Three Crutches, had been excavated and transported across the Medway to the Nashenden Valley. The works are now progressing at speed to an anticipated completion in early 2003.

The old road bridge at Three Crutches will be removed in the Autumn of 2001. At that time, recent works to the central reservation near the Brewers Road bridge will be completed and the area re-landscaped. Work has started on the new roundabout at the Cobham interchange and the new slip roads will be in place by mid-November. The new access to Cobham Hall has received planning permission and will be in place by the end of December. The Cobham junction on the south side of the A2 will therefore be complete by the end of 2001.

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