

NEWSHEET

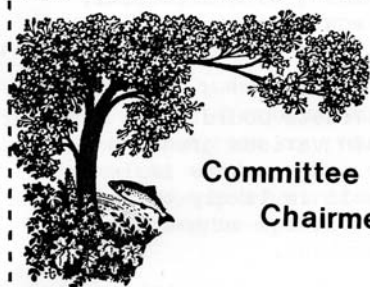


NUMBER THIRTEEN

MARCH 1981

ROMSEY

AND DISTRICT SOCIETY



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STOP PRESS: THE SOCIETY'S JUMBLE SALE ON 7TH MARCH WAS A GREAT SUCCESS, WITH JUST OVER £400 TAKEN.

romsey in 1991

There was a predictably stormy meeting at the Woodley Community Centre on March 3rd when the Town Planners met over 100 residents of Romsey over the issue of the Romsey Area District Plan. The purpose of this plan is to guide the development of Romsey and the surrounding area up to 1991.

If the meeting on March 3rd is anything to go by, then your opinions and voice are invaluable. The remaining countryside at Halterworth is dangerously threatened as is the land at, and north of, Belbins. In the name of housing for future generations, not only the 'green belts' surrounding Romsey are threatened, but the whole concept of 'countryside' and 'natural environment'. In a country with a falling birth rate, does the population of Romsey feel that 200 houses at Belbins and 151 at Halterworth are all that necessary beyond the speculator lining his pocket? It was pointed out at the meeting that agricultural land will fetch £3,000 an acre, whilst an acre of agricultural land sold for building purposes will

fetch up to £60,000 - a tempting prospect for any unscrupulous farmer. Moreover, the generations of future children may never know what it is like to play in areas where they can forget about flower beds and paved paths and forbidden areas. The planned leisure facilities couldn't be better for those who enjoy strolling around with bags of golf clubs on their backs, or skimming around in a boat on a reservoir; if the signs are anything to go by, we can look forward to a future in which the 'natural environment' becomes a pleasure to be paid for. The planners estimate that the population in Romsey will rise to over 20,000 by 1991, yet their Plan makes no apparent education facilities obvious. With a limited opportunity to appreciate and respect nature, with few, if any, chances of a worthwhile, fulfilling education, the prospects for future generations would seem bleak.

A second meeting is to be held at the Crosfield Hall to accommodate those who could not fit into the Hall at Woodley.

For further details of this meeting see The Romsey Advertiser

Editor

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ROMSEY CAR PARKING CHARGES THREAT . . .

IT HAS BEEN PROPOSED BY THE TVBC THAT, DUE TO THE INCREASING STRAIN PUT ON ROMSEY'S CAR PARKS, AND DUE TO THE AMOUNT OF MONEY TO BE SPENT ON ROMSEY'S CAR PARKS OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS, A PARKING CHARGE SHOULD BE MADE IN THE FORM OF A 'PAY AND DISPLAY' SCHEME IN ALL CARPARKS

Demand for Parking Spaces

One reason for the decision to impose charges is in response to representations from private individuals and the Chamber of Trade in Romsey that increased and improved provision be made for car parking because of the current shortage of parking spaces. The Chamber of Trade, however, reflects much of the town's anxiety that charges in the town will drive away many of the town's regular customers to competitive areas. This feeling is endorsed by the Draft Romsey Town Centre Plan, issued approximately one year ago, which states that, 'the availability of free public car parking...within the commercial area of the Town Centre has been an important factor in the continued well being of the Town Centre in the past...' In spite of this report, however, the TVBC now feel they are reacting to requests from the Chamber of Trade and from the Government itself to keep car parking costs to a minimum and to ensure that the driver subsidises the high cost of maintaining car parks. In a town such as Romsey, extremely popular in the summer, this would seem a reasonable point and one that would be welcomed.

Statistics

The statistics from which the TVBC are working have been obtained from traffic and parking surveys taken annually from June 1975 to August 1980. The conclusions drawn from the report are that at peak times, 'public off street car parks are working close to capacity.'

The TVBC feel that parking charges in Romsey will result in a higher turnover in spaces, making available more spaces for those shopping in Romsey, resulting in a higher turnover in local business.

The point has been made that Romsey offers more than free parking. Unlike large shopping centres Romsey has character, a usually relaxed atmosphere and a wide variety of specialised shops and offices, such as estate agents and building societies.

Cost of Conversion and Subsequent Income

The cost of maintaining Romsey's car parks in the year 1979-80 was £17,990 and the revised estimate for the year 1980-81 is £28,600. The latest estimated income if charges are imposed is in the region of £28,120. This estimate does not take into account the cost of converting to a 'pay and display' scheme, which has been estimated to be in the region of £21,000.

<u>Car Parks Romsey</u>	<u>Estimate 1981-2</u>	
Salaries	£8,050	
Maint. of Bldgs. } Maint. of Grnds. }	1,800	
Heat, Light, Power	320	
Maint. of signs and metres	550	
Clothing and uniforms	460	
Printing etc.	770	
Renewals and repairs	800	
Insurance	300	
Central Estab. Charges	3,690	
Rates etc.	7,500	
Loan Charges	<u>29,680</u>	
	53,880	53,880
<u>Less Income</u>		
Charges	25,000	
Rents	<u>3,120</u>	
	28,120	<u>28,120</u>
		= 25,760

All administration costs will be absorbed by existing employees and offices.

There will therefore be a loss after charges are imposed but the charges will at least contribute to the high cost of maintenance and improvements; there is no such thing as 'free parking'.

Improvements to Romsey's Car Parks

The council are planning to spend £200,000 over the next few years in improving and expanding Romsey's car park. The loan charge alone on such a sum is £30,000 p.a.

The Love Lane car park is to be closed down owing to housing plans, and a car park at Orchard House to be opened up. In Latimer Street, the Old Fire Station is also to be converted into a car park.

The TVBC therefore feel they are responding sincerely to requests to improve and expand parking facilities in Romsey.

Opposition

A strong body of opinion, however, opposes the case for imposing charges in the town. Over 3,100 signatures have been collected on a petition, 11 parish councils have objected, 3 organisations and a county councillor; the Romsey Chamber of Trade unanimously opposes the motion, reflecting the overall feeling of people living and working in Romsey.

Competitive Areas

It is felt that the whole idea should be deferred until the wider implications of charging have been looked into.

It is felt that Romsey cannot be compared with Andover in this issue simply because Romsey is surrounded by a number of highly competitive alternative centres; Sainsbury's at Lord's Hill and Carrefour at Eastleigh, for example. It is felt that people who have to travel elsewhere to work will do their shopping at another centre with free parking near to their place of work in order to avoid paying in Romsey. People living between Romsey, Shirley, Eastleigh and Totton

ROMSEY CAR PARKING CHARGES THREAT . . .

may find it cheaper to travel to the competitive centres which are no farther from home than Romsey. The parish councils of Nth. Baddesley, Rownhams, Nursling and Chilworth are four councils which have expressed reservations at the proposed charging scheme. The New Forest District Council removed charges in 1978 in the Forest due to the high cost of administration, another area, particularly Lyndhurst, which could attract customers from Romsey. The TVBC feels, however, that, 'Experience has shown that where a car parking scheme with charges is in operation, then there is a far greater flow of traffic (resulting) in an increased turnover to traders in the locality'. Reservations have been expressed that no particular examples of areas similar to Romsey have been provided a small centre in close proximity to numerous attractive alternatives.

The Borough is accused of adopting a standard financial principle and applying it without thought as to the human and psychological consequences.

Recession of '50s, '60s & early '70s

There is a fear that, due to charges, Romsey may experience the recession which many Romsonians can remember of 10-15 years ago. This fear is reflected in Waitrose's hesitation in agreeing to a 'pay and display' scheme in its car park. The positive impact of the shop on the town's economy has never been underestimated, as it was the arrival of Waitrose in the early '70s, along with free parking, which largely brought prosperity to the town.

There is a fear that once charges are imposed and a loss made, as has been admitted, there will be evidence enough to drive more potential customers away from Romsey. In this direction, Romsey feels at a disadvantage as far as Council voting is concerned; voting being heavily weighted in favour of Andover.

It is wondered how necessary it is to spend £200,000 in improving Romsey's car parks; are surfacing, white lining and signs all that important? Wouldn't a hard core surface spaced with trees be more pleasant to look at than a surfaced, usually stark parking area?

Long Stay Parking Areas

There is the possibility that in improving car parks the number of spaces available will actually be reduced. The Romsey Chamber of Trade has carried out its own survey into people working in Romsey. The council has allocated 170 long term spaces to facilitate those working in Romsey, but the Chamber's survey reveals that more than 215 spaces would be needed with another 105 for casual staff.

It is feared that this lack of space will drive people to park on the streets, ultimately making Romsey a 'yellow line' town, endangering residents who live in the town who have nowhere else to park but on the streets. Short term parkers, as well, may spill over into the streets to avoid paying and cause congestion. Whilst this would be the County Council's responsibility and not the Borough Council's, the cost of any resulting action from what ever restriction is imposed, would still fall on the rate payer.

Size of the Town

It is a commonly held opinion that further expansion of Romsey should be halted at least until the town centre has been properly reviewed.

Opportunity to Object

Finally, a period of six months has been allowed to complete legal procedures. The Borough Council has agreed in principle to the charges but there are a number of stages to go through before everything goes ahead. There will also be an opportunity for the public to formally object and if so there will be a public enquiry.

Public opinion can be powerful if enough voices are heard. By E.A. McCormick

ROMSEY NEWSAGENTS

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future events

- Wed. 18th March ABBEY HALL 8.00
'Old Romsey From Postcards' by N. Bachmann
- Wed. 13th May CROSSFIELD HALL 8.00
'New Buildings in Historic Areas'
Annual Lecture by Roy Worskett
From May 1st: 12 Friday Lunchtime
Concerts in King John's House.
Sat. 27th June MOTTISFONT
Romsey and District Society's Summer
Party.

ROMSEY COMMUNITY CENTRE

by Sylvia Robinson



When Jenny Taylor and I first attended the meeting on the 12th January of the Town Council Town Hall Sub-Committee, it was simply to put forward the idea that a Community Centre along the lines of the Farnham Maltings should be considered as a use for the Town Hall, especially as the buildings had been purchased with the intention that it be used by the community.

We established that there was a need for this type of centre in Romsey after taking into account the existing facilities available at the Crosfield Hall, the Abbey Hall and King John's House, the intention not being to draw away usage from these buildings.

Existing Demand for a Community Centre

There are many groups who carry out their activities in unsuitable places. A number of clubs and societies have said they would definitely like to use space in the town hall. A day centre is needed by the elderly, the W.I. is interested as is the Film Society, the R.A.F. Association, the Judo and Weightlifters' club, the Railway Modellers' Society,

club, the Railway Modellers' Society, The Southampton Postcard Club, the Viewfinder's Camera Club - a room to seat at least 50 with a blackout, the C.A.B. and the Romsey & District Society and the Buildings Preservation Trust for office space and exhibitions. The Playgroups Association, the Waterside Choir and the Romsey Singers have shown interest in the Centre for recitals. The Red Cross Lunch Club are also enthusiastic.

There would be opportunities for new groups to be set up; a Keep Fit Class for Ladies. In Farnham a painting group for the under fives run successfully. Mothers and children could all make use of the Centre during the day; the children taking part in activities whilst the mothers shop or meet in the coffee bar - the library is currently used for this purpose. There is a need for Craft courses.

The centre could run its own activities; fund raising activities like New Year's Eve Balls and Cheese and Wine parties. A coffee bar which is open weekends and evenings is badly needed in the town; there is concern that there is nowhere for young people to go other than pubs.

Commercial Lettings

In our calculations for income from lettings we have not taken into account Commercial Lettings which would be higher than for community use; musicians, parties, craft exhibitions etc. could all use the Centre.

Cost of restoring and refurbishing

There would need to be few alterations to the building if it were intended for community use, other than to make it sound and safe for public use.

We have studied the plans of the building with architects and read the structural survey report prepared for the council. Our costs for the restoration and repairs of the building are £142,137.

This sum does not take into account all the grant aids which would be available, and the aspect of using the Youth

Opportunities Programme which is being used in Farnham and in the work on the Community Centre in Shrewsbury.

Estimated Income and Expenditure

Our calculations are based on a letting fee of £1 an hour for the small rooms and £4 an hour for the Assembly Room on Saturday and Sunday nights.

<u>Income</u>	<u>Per Week</u>
<u>Lettings Available:</u>	
1 Room	121.50
Lower Hall	20.00
1 Large Room-First Floor	212.50
Assembly Room	303.50
	<u>657.50</u>
Per Annum Total	34190.00
Reduced to say 40% use	13676.00
<u>Additional Income:</u>	
Net Profit Coffee Bar	3000.00
Events	1000.00
Members Subs.	2000.00
C.A.B. Rent	<u>1500.00</u>
	21176.00

Unquantified Funds as Follows:-

<u>Grants:</u>	Southern Arts
	Romsey Town Council
	Test Valley
	Social Services re Day Centre
<u>Fund Raising:</u>	By local Organisations
	Donations from Town
	Industries

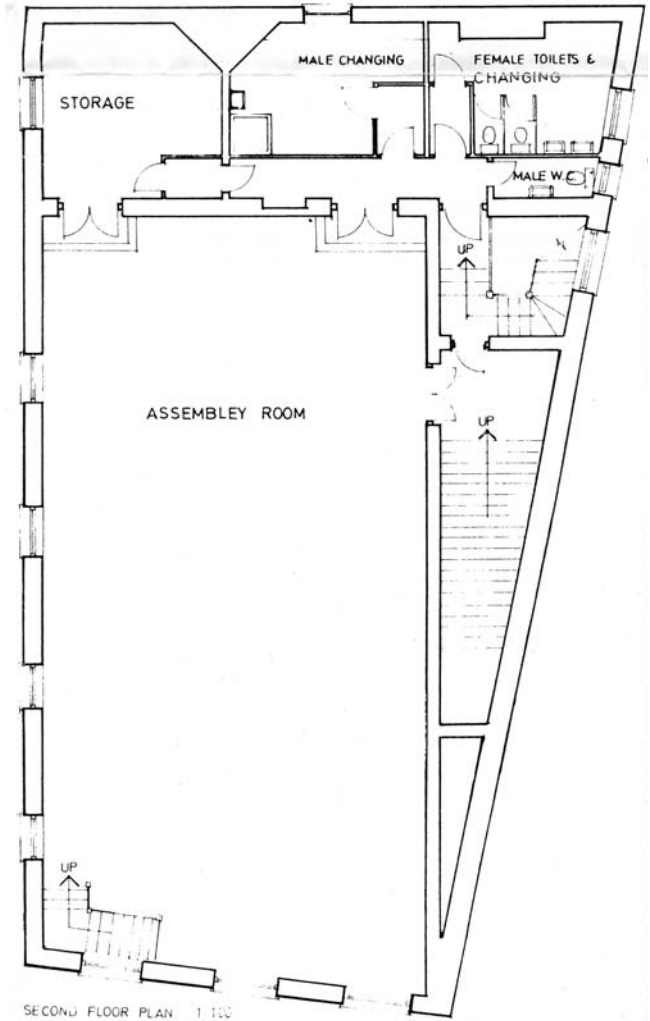
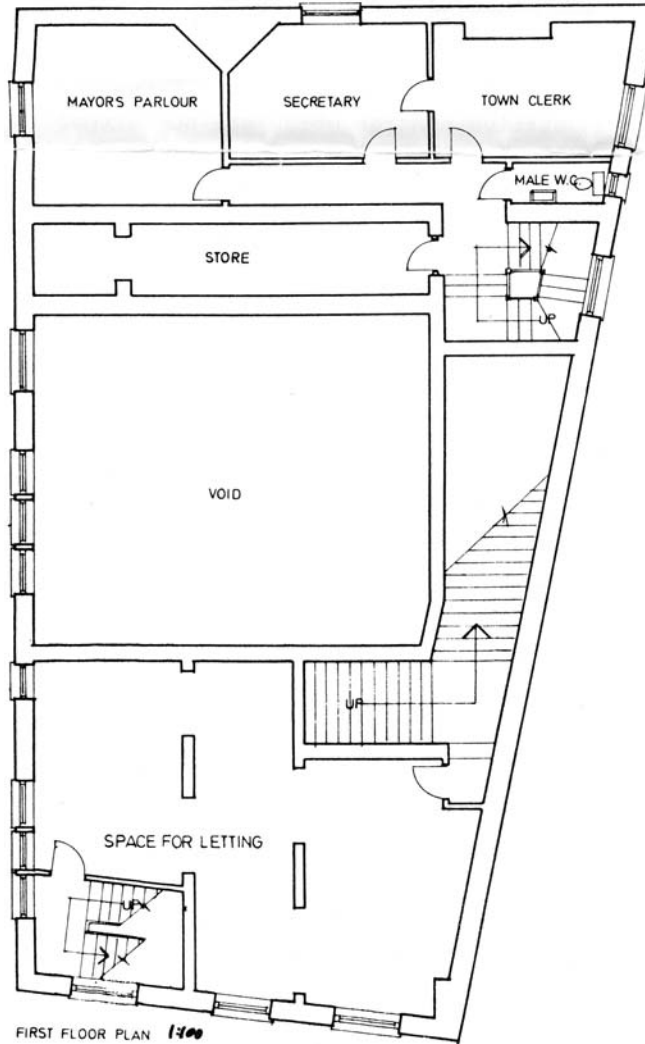
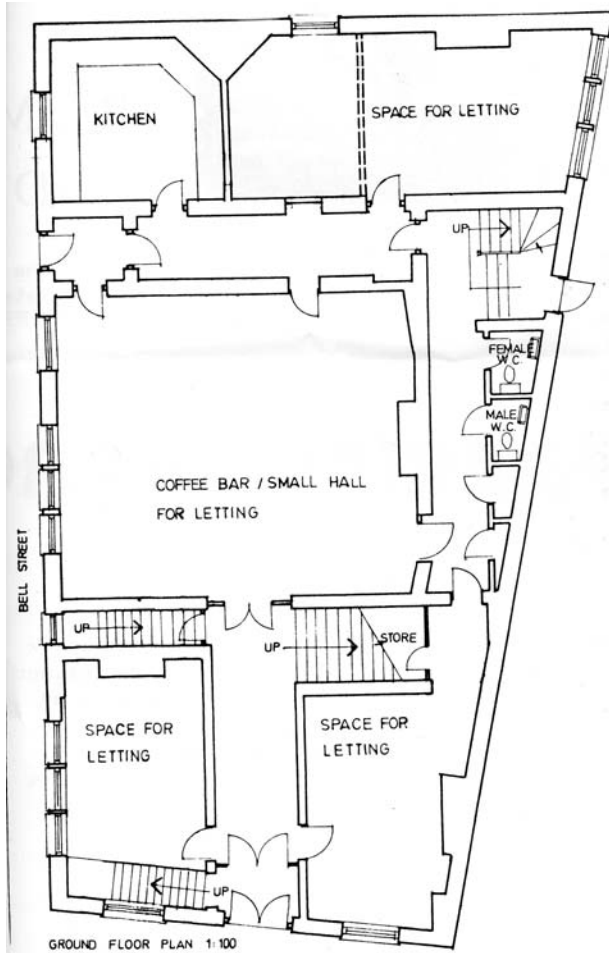
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ROMSEY COMMUNITY CENTRE



Costs:

Caretaker (inc. cleaning materials and management of coffee bar)	8000
Insurance	1500
Gas, Elec, Water (gross)	2000
Less Surcharge on Lettings in Winter period	500
Maintenance	1500
Rates (subject to charity rebate)	2000
Advertising	300
Administration	1500
Contingencies @ 10% of above	1780

	21176.00
	<u>19580.00</u>
Surplus	= 1596.00

A sub-Committee of the Romsey and District Society has been formed and has discussed these plans in detail. The main problem is the raising of the £142,000 needed for refurbishment. Our plans of the proposed Centre will be exhibited in

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ROMSEY COMMUNITY CENTRE

the Town Hall during the week 7-12th March; please go along to the Town Hall to have a look.

Suggested Proposal

As we see it, the Council could proceed with the structural work in one of three ways:

- a. The Town Council to modify their plans and carry out the necessary work, then handing over to a Management Committee.
- b. To hand over the building in its present state to a Community Centre Trust who would then renovate and operate the building within the guidelines previously agreed with the town council.
- c. To release the building to an intermediate body such as the Hampshire Building Preservation Trust who would then renovate the building to a previously agreed standard and then, in turn, relinquish control to a separate Community Centre Trust.

Charitable Trusts would be in a better position to obtain various grants and use voluntary labour. Any scheme implemented by the Town Council is likely to be more expensive than a similar scheme organised by an independent body.

While fully appreciating the problems the Town Council has had with this building to date, we would hope for a decision as soon as possible as we would envisage work beginning here this Autumn. The final sum, less grants etc., could be raised either from Government sources or at advantageous rates on the commercial market and the guarantee from this would enable an early start to be made.

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