

MOVING TIMES

An Occasional Newsletter from Dakin Estates

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Our last issue at Christmas provoked considerable comment - despite this, we've produced another!

JD (Editor)

DAKIN ESTATES NEWS



Carter Jonas have just sold a finished barn for us at De Freville Farm, Gt. Shelford, Cambridge and, (though we say so ourselves) what a beautiful house it was. We are also trying to get a consent on a further barn on the same site.

Work continues apace at Tilbrook Farm, Dullingham with the first unit coming to the market with Bidwells in September.

A fond farewell to Matthew who has gone to pastures new but a warm welcome to James who joins us in his place.

A Happy Birthday to Big Al, 63 and very much still going strong.

Finally, congratulations to Marco on the birth of a son – father and baby doing well!

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Despite the article in our last edition condemning the cattle market scheme arousing considerable support, the scheme has since got the final go ahead (surprise, surprise), with the Mayor of Bury St Edmunds telling members of the public at the recent Council Annual General Meeting that questions regarding the Cattle Market were out of bounds (so much for democracy!).

Bury St Edmunds has two shopping "mall" developments, Cornhill Walk, Langton Place (and had a third in what is now Iceland). Can either of these be said to encourage visitors to Bury St Edmunds?

As for Bury "needing to compete" with Ipswich and Cambridge - on a Saturday afternoon in Bury one frequently encounters acquaintances who live near Ipswich or Cambridge but prefer the more relaxed and pleasant atmosphere of Bury.

With falling high street sales and the growth of internet shopping, is this the wisest time to increase Bury's retail space by 30% overnight?

To date the Council has squandered £2.5 million on "Consultants" and delays to the project have already been announced. Could the Cattle Market become Bury's Millennium Dome?

IN MEMORIAK

On a cold winter's day the sleepy Suffolk village of Framsdon in Suffolk was, for an hour or so, completely clogged with traffic as people came to pack the small village church to capacity to bid farewell to Chris Gorniak, architect, who passed away over the Christmas period.

Chris and colleagues have been designing historic building conversions for Dakin Estates since 1982 and with his booming voice, bushy beard and puffing pipe, he was a familiar character on our sites.

.....And we shall miss him.



THE TREASURE HUNTER

A feature of developing historic buildings are the things you come across in them (writes Big Al).

At an old farmyard in Coddendam a growing tree had blocked a doorway and we were unable to access the building until we had taken possession. When we did remove the tree we found inside an old working horse stable divided into stalls and above which were the horses' names, together with their prize certificates from pre World War 1 agricultural shows.

Hitler's Harness

Many finds are equine related. In the corner of a farmyard building in Stoke by Clare we found a small working horse harness. Research revealed that the buildings had been a dairy sending milk to London via a railway which ran across the village green. An attic revealed boxes and boxes of silver milk bottle tops each inscribed with "Stoke by Clare Dairy" and a day of the week.

And the harness? That belonged to "Hitler" the last working horse in the village who pulled the dairy's milk float for local deliveries and who died in the 1950s after the ill judged consumption of ragwort.



We have also found Georgian prints, a mediaeval wall painting and, in an old house, the Estate Manager's Office still with desk and chair, estate map and a large safe although the estate itself had been split up and auctioned off in the fifties.

The Time Capsule

Quick's Farmhouse at Edwardstone Suffolk needed no less than four inglenook fireplaces unblocking one of which contained an original bread oven evidently closed and sealed for the last time just before the First World War.

This time capsule contained old household tins and jars, a sample card of dress material (special patterns for Spring and Summer 1913) and a 1912 copy of the East Anglian Daily Times with news of a Suffragette meeting at Haverhill ("Rowdy scenes at Haverhill") and concern at the effect of foot and mouth on prices at Ipswich Cattle Market alongside an advert for a Garret steam lorry ("The most economical and reliable form of road transport at present known").

It was this that intrigued the most – not the contents themselves but the mystery. Were they left by chance or had someone, whose name we'll never know, deliberately placed them in the bread oven a hundred years ago knowing that one day someone might discover them and be given a tantalising glimpse of East Anglian life in a far off Edwardian summer?

Was this a message from out of the past?

We'll never know.

.....while you were out

At the time of the recent general election we were surprised to hear muttering about the possible effect of the elections on the housing market as, in our opinion, whoever you vote for, the government always gets in. Pre election jitters in the housing and stock market have gone the same way as people queuing to fill up with petrol before the budget - it's something you simply don't see anymore.



Robertson's Golly lasted until 2001

This prompted thoughts of other things, once an integral part of our lives, that have simply disappeared and we never even noticed their passing. Typewriters, when did you last see or hear a typewriter? Also, luncheon vouchers, paraffin, parking meters, Green Shield stamps, hitchhikers, goliwogs, sugar mice, soda siphons and telegrams. (Even up until the 1980s some Suffolk post offices had old signs. "You may telegram from here").

What happened to dripping, half day closing, sweetshops, bob a job week and penny for the guy, Beaujolais Nouveau and boil in the bag meals? (Not all these will be missed!).

When did all these things disappear and why?....Or, is it that we are just getting older.

VIEW FROM THE HEATH

The Oldest Game

Do you know what sport is the oldest team game in the world which was known to Ghengis Khan and Alexander the Great. It's Polo.



TC in action at a polo evening hosted by Strutt & Parker

Polo has been around for centuries but entered a period of doldrums after the loss of India and empire being played in only a few exclusive clubs by army officers and royals.

However, since the 1980s its popularity has grown apace – there are now five clubs within 50 miles of Cambridge and the University has had a team since 1873.

It is often seen as a sport for millionaires and royals – an unfortunate image compounded by Gilly Coopers book Polo. In fact nowadays people from all walks of life play polo at grass roots level, many hiring ponies or having only one horse.

A match consists of 4-6 “chukkas” or seven minute periods, (they seem longer as the clock is stopped for fouls or injuries), and players have to change ponies after each chukka. The teams consist of four people each and there are one or two mounted umpires.

It helps to be good at bat and ball type games and a good rider although some people learn without being able to ride.

Can women play? Most definitely – about a third of local clubs players are women and the percentage has been rising steadily in recent years. Clubs are friendly and encouraging to beginners and those taking up polo can find that they have their exercise, sport, interest, hobby and social life all in one package.

Be warned though – it's an exciting, fast paced and exhilarating game (sex is the poor man's polo!) and it's very easy to get bitten by the bug.

T.C.

UNDER THE SUN

PALM ESTATES

Having, four years ago, being asked to handle the rentals on ten houses, Mrs Bensouda-Riley went on to found Palm Real Estate, the Gambia's first British style estate agency which now has two offices and twelve employees.

The residential side of the business consists of 60% sales and 40% rentals and Palm Real Estate also handles commercial buy-to-let and management services. Most business, given the gregarious nature of West Africa, comes from contacts, recommendation and word of mouth.

Mouthwatering Fees

Gambian estate agencies differ from the British. Fees on sales are (to British eyes) a mouth-watering 10% although as Mrs Bensouda-Riley points out, the turnover is far lower than in Britain and the most expensive house ever sold by Palm was only £120,000.

Sales particulars and adverts quote square metres and in a country with a developing infrastructure, much emphasis is put on the availability of services and mention of boreholes and generators are commonplace. Values are much enhanced by quality roads and services.

Offshore Accounts

Sometimes houses are sold with no services at all and a significant number of houses are offered for sale in a half built state, their owners having run out of resources during construction. It is common practice to sell houses complete with contents and given the cosmopolitan nature of the Gambia upper echelon, prices can be quoted in many different currencies according to the nationality of the owner (or that of his offshore bank account!).

International Investors

Palm Real Estate also advises developers, investors, embassies and international companies seeking to buy property in the Gambia and Palm is shortly opening a new office for European investors.

After all, there is already a UK company selling holiday homes in Brazil.

N.D.

FILMING THE FEW



ND was interested to see that MGM have recently released the film *The Battle of Britain* on a remastered DVD, as he witnessed the whole thing.

Not, you understand, the battle itself, but the making of the film when ND was at the Friends School in Saffron Walden, the location of which proved ideal for small boys to watch the aerial dogfights in the East Anglian skies.

In 1968 there were no computer graphics. This was done for real with Spitfires and Messerschmitts based at RAF Debden (now Carver Barracks) and RAF Duxford (now the Imperial War Museum) both of which were still RAF stations and had been in 1940.

Day after day in the summer of 1968 WW2 fighters from both bases swarmed into the air over Saffron Walden and swooped, soared, banked and dived in the sky whilst ND and his young chums looked up enthralled, much as their schoolboy predecessors must have done in 1940. The teachers complained that the aircraft were disrupting studies (as their predecessors probably did in 1940!).

In 1968 WW2 was not history but the very recent past which attracted little thought of heritage or preservation and, although many RAF stations still had a Spitfire on display, it was reckoned that out of 20,000 manufactured there were less than six airworthy Spitfires left in the World.

MGM spent 2½ years scouring the world, borrowing and buying Spitfires and bits of Spitfires until they had amassed a fleet of 27, (although some could only taxi) as well as others to be cannibalised to keep the main fleet in the air. Aeroplane buffs today credit MGM for saving the Spitfire and it's thanks to them that there are more flyable Spitfires around today than in the early fifties.

The Luftwaffe planes were easier, as in 1968, WW2 type German planes were still in use by the Spanish airforce. MGM bought 27 Messerschmitts which were being retired and negotiated the loan of 50 twin engined Heinkel bombers which weren't, for which reason the Spanish would only allow two to go to England. The remaining Heinkel footages were shot in Spain and later intercut with footage that ND saw being filmed.

There is a story that during filming in Spain the Spanish borrowed back some Heinkels and, with cheerful Latin disregard, flew air patrols with the planes still in MGM's Nazi insignia over their protectorates of Ceuta and Mellila in North Africa. (The effect of this show of force on the populace below is not recorded!).

The film gives a vivid depiction of the blitz on London. In docklands in the late sixties there were still whole streets of bomb damaged houses and warehouses which MGM set fire to or blew up, watched by a crowd of Eastenders who had lived through the real thing and some of whom appear in the film.

Making the film was a Herculean task but it opened to only lukewarm reviews despite having all the top actors of the late 60s including Michael Caine, Christopher Plummer, Susannah York, Trevor Howard, Robert Shaw, Ralph Richardson and a host of other faces familiar from other post war films and of course, Kenneth Moore.....and that epitomised the problem. 1969 was the summer of love - an era of hippies, flower power and protest with the patriotism and values represented by such films being questioned, even mocked.

The stiff upperlip genre of war film with which the *Battle of Britain* was associated was past its sell by date and the film was unjustly consigned to an occasional airing on Sunday afternoon television alongside *The Dambusters* and *Reach For the Sky*. The new trend was for fictional anti war, anti hero type films, such as *Mash*, *Catch 22*, *Kelly's Heroes*, *The Dirty Dozen* and *Slaughterhouse Five*.

Interestingly, the new DVD contains a number of documentary films about the making of the film including one, from 1969, introduced by Michael Caine from Carnaby Street in "Swinging" London which today looks far more dated than the 1940s England depicted in the film.

It would be impossible to make a film like the *Battle of Britain* now. With all those stars and vintage aeroplanes the accountants wouldn't allow it and, even if they did, the project would be strangled at birth by health and safety legislation.

Today, far from looking dated, the film actually seems to have improved with age. Every event depicted is based on fact, the actors (particularly Olivier) are good, the musical score is terrific, the planes are real and the air combat scenes easily match *Top Gun* and far surpass the recent (ludicrous) *Pearl Harbour*.

If you have never seen the *Battle of Britain* or haven't seen it for some years, the new DVD is well worth buying.

It's a cracking film!

