

GREEN FORUM

The Dover Society, The River Dour and Sewage Disposal

LEO WRIGHT

WATER SHORTAGES IN THE ALKHAM VALLEY

The long-heralded meeting, called by David Shaw, m.p., between Mr D. H. A. Dunks, General Manager of the Folkestone and District Water Company and interested parties led by Sister Ambrose, finally took place on Monday 1 Oct at Kearsney Manor.

The attractive setting in the Old Manor House, with Sister Ambrose as hostess, ensured the friendly tone of the meeting.

We were pleased, if a little surprised, that Mr Dunks does not have horns, for despite all our attempts, this was our first contact of any kind with him, other than his bills. Mr Dunks was accompanied by his Engineering Manager, Mr G. A. Cross. Attendance was virtually the same as at the public hearing in May, with the same impressive local knowledge, advanced with restraint and good humour.

Before the meeting, Sister Ambrose, the most expert on the issues under discussion, had submitted to the NRA detailed daily measurements of water-levels and these were accepted by the NRA and FDWC as conclusive evidence that abstraction of water at Lye Oak significantly affected levels in Kearsney Manor Lake. As stated in our September Newsletter: certain restrictions were imposed on pumping from Stonehall but not from Lye Oak.

With reference to the loss of catchment area available to absorb rainfall and the increased demand resulting from building development, Mr Woolford asked whether water companies are statutory consultees in local planning. They are not.

The meeting, which lasted two hours, always good humoured and reasonable, was not inconclusive.

1. Those present were left with a clearer assessment of the drought and other causes of water shortage and of the options open to the water companies. The proposed Broad Oak reservoir could offer the most rapid improvement.
2. The suspicions that the water demands of Eurotunnel had been the cause of water shortage in the Alkham Valley catchment were, I believe, finally dispelled.
3. It was seen to be desirable that water companies should be statutory consultees in relation to local developments.
4. The controls laid down by the NRA on water abstraction at Stonehall were shown to be ineffective, since Stonehall and Lye Oak are connected.

Within three days of our meeting Mr Shaw had written to the Under Secretary of State on the last two points and it is greatly to his credit, and he deserves our thanks, for having ensured that a previously uncommunicative and faceless company has established better public relations with its customers.

November Update

On 29th October Folkestone District Water Company wrote to Sister Ambrose that they had had second thoughts. Although at the meeting of 1 October they had acknowledged that there appeared to be a connection with pumping at Stonehall, they now took the view that the problem at Kearsney Manor Lake "is much more related to the weather than pumping from the aquifer."

This prompted an immediate response by Sister Ambrose, addressed to Mr David Shaw and the NRA, supported by very scientific statistics and graphs. Her letter refers to statements relevant to the River Dour in the NRA document: "Response to the Issues and Options Report", which also reiterates the water board's general duty "to conserve and enhance the environment." At present Lye Oak is a "license of right", fully under the control of FDWC. It is Sister Ambrose's contention, which we fully support, that it should be made subject to conditions laid down by the NRA.

At the time of writing developments are awaited.

Sewage Disposal

There is nothing further to report at present on sea outfalls but I am now in possession of the European Community Council Directive concerning bathing water, which anyone interested may consult on request. Mr M. J. Beard, Environmental Protection Manager of the NRA and a colleague have agreed to address our Members' Meeting on 25 November and to answer questions about the environment and water supply.

Membership News

Membership: £4.00 per person per year (1st April – 31st May)

Current Membership 316

The current year ends on 31st March 1992. Please remember to renew your subscription, either at the A.G.M., on 13th April, or by post, as soon as possible thereafter.

It has been suggested that the provision of two *Newsletters* to households where both husband and wife have joined the Society, is an unnecessary extravagance. The committee feels, however, that everyone who pays a subscription should have equal rights. These include entitlement to vote, attendance at members-only meetings and, of course a copy of the *Newsletter*. Each one of us is needed and it is good when both partners feel able to belong. We ask tyou all, therefore, to use spare copies as publicity material to recruit new members, so that the Society may remain lively, strong and effective.

SHEILA COPE, *Membership Secretary*