

## *Water, Water... EVERYWHERE?*

LEO WRIGHT

Writing in February ... the River Dour is flooding in the Alkham Valley and in Bushy Ruff, tumbling over the concreted "mill-wheel" in Temple Ewell and over the waterfall in Kearsney Abbey. At High Water Springs the river was barely able to contain itself in its new deep concrete channel behind Camden Crescent.

And yet there were two meetings, chaired by the MP, to protest about excessive extraction from the aquifers. At the public meeting the NRA representative warned that, despite all the rain and the floods, we could still experience a water shortage in the summer. This opinion led to a correspondence in the *Times* where Southern Water hastily wrote to say that "water stocks are excellent, reservoirs are full and the water supply position is the best for a decade."

But things are not so with Folkestone and District Water Services. It could be that, with no reservoirs, the small catchment area of FDWS, even with normal rainfall, is not sufficient for the increased population and demand.

Perhaps in the long term, the reduction of leakages (OFWAT estimates that, nationally, loss from leakages amounts to 27%) and the introduction of metering will help. But how long is the term?

To ensure adequate supplies and to safeguard the water environment there are three possibilities.

1 To conserve the water which is even now hastening to the sea – but there is no date for the suggested shared reservoir at Broad Oak. Indeed, it may never be built, as Southern Water does not need it.

2. To "buy in" water from the big neighbour: Southern Water, but this would reduce profits or put up charges.

3 To revise the licenses for pumping from the aquifers, but FDWS would require compensation for this, which the NRA could not pay and the present government would not wish to.

The two meetings were inconclusive but showed increased local concern. The continuing initiative about our local river is now firmly in the hands of the Alkham Valley Conservation Society who are raising funds and examining the possibility of legal proceedings in the European Court.

We shall give them all possible support.