



Chairman's view

Woodland sales cause concern

This spring I have been concerned about what was happening on the sale of some woodland in the heart of the Surrey Hills. In February a parcel of recently sold Forestry Commission woodland was now for sale by auction in eight lots.

The sale particulars suggested each lot had various development and recreational possibilities. As soon as the Local Planning Authority heard what the auctioneers were doing, suggesting development might be possible and lotting the land into small plots, they put a control on the land, preventing any changes at all without permission.

At the auction, of the five lots sold, only one purchaser completed the deal. The following month the remaining land was re-offered for sale as one lot, but failed to sell. In May, most of the remainder was for sale as two lots, one of 6 acres and one of 31 acres.

My concerns are - is this a threat to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)? And should the Forestry Commission allow land it sells to be broken up and re-sold? Their agents say that it would be impossible for the Forestry Commission to prevent this from happening and that often small parcels of woodland are better managed than large areas.



The auctioneers' suggestions of paintballing, clay shooting and development are geared to generating publicity. However, the break-up of rural land into small ownership parcels can also lead to poor management and such areas quickly become disjointed and neglected, detracting from the AONB.

At the Surrey Hills Society we would like to discourage sales to buyers who are intent on breaking up land into smaller plots to sell on, interested only in making a quick and easy profit, leaving the purchasers with a liability, not development or commercial possibilities, and creating an eyesore for the rest of us.

We do understand that organisations such as the Forestry Commission may need to dispose of land and they do have a responsibility to achieve the best price. Nonetheless, we would like them to be more careful about who they are selling to. Ideally, I would like them to treat AONBs as they do National Parks, where they try to avoid selling land. Here in the Surrey Hills we think it would be helpful if the Commission notified us and the Surrey Hills AONB Board of any proposed sales, so that we can alert Parish and District Councils, other interested bodies and our members of their plans.

Finally, you will see that Ringway has a role in this issue and I am very pleased to have the support of the company in the production and publishing of this, and future newsletters.

Neil Maltby
Chairman Surrey Hills Society



Our thanks to Chris Howard, Ken Bare, Juliet Eberle, Natural England, Jane Garrett, the Surrey Hills AONB, Surrey Wildlife Trust and other members and supporters who have kindly contributed photos towards this issue
Surrey Hills Society – Registered Charity number 1125532

Haslemere Charter Fair



Take some sunny intervals, add dark clouds and strong gusts of a very cold wind. Throw in sudden, brief, squalls of rain and hail and what do you get? Yes – a May Bank Holiday Monday. Such was the weather when we took the Society gazebo to the Haslemere Charter Fair for its maiden outing, writes **Ken Bare**.

The gazebo was a great help to our volunteers who were promoting the Surrey Hills and the Society, with leaflets, maps etc to give to visitors. Whilst some other stallholders were anxiously watching the weather every time a strong gust of wind occurred, our gazebo was an excellent base for our day.

Haslemere is right on the edge of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with the South Downs National Park just over the boundary and we had many visitors from nearby Hampshire. There was a lot of interest in the Society, we handed out lots of leaflets and talked to large numbers of visitors. A long day but a successful one and one where we definitely fulfilled our Society aim of promoting the Surrey Hills AONB.

Time to book dinner

Time is running out for booking your tickets for the Surrey Hills Society's second annual dinner. This year's dinner is being held at the Wotton House Hotel on Saturday 17th July starting at 7.30pm.

Wotton House, near Dorking, has a long history of landscape links, as it was the family home of John Evelyn who is sometimes credited with the start of the English landscape movement. John Evelyn was born in 1620 into a substantial Surrey landowning family whose fortunes were founded in gunpowder manufacture. He went on to be a landscape gardener on a grand scale, as well as being a notable intellectual and diarist of the period.

Our dinner will include a champagne reception and 3-course dinner with coffee and a bottle of red and white wine on each table. Tables will accommodate up to 8 guests but individual bookings are most welcome. We will also enjoy music from Reed Maxfield, a singer-songwriter duo with their musical roots in English folk music. Their repertoire includes "Winterfold Wood" inspired by the fields and woodlands of the Surrey Hills. See back page for booking details or call Chris Howard on 01483 894437.

Chairman's Day at Tandridge

On a bright spring day at the end of April a group of about 40 Society members joined chairman Neil Maltby to enjoy some of the high spots of the Tandridge countryside, starting at Court Farm, the Colebrook family's cattle and arable farm in Chaldon, writes Diane Cooper.

Roger, his wife and his brother met us with refreshments before telling us about the problems of small-scale farming in the current economic climate. A guided tour to see some of the many breeds of cattle on the farm followed, along with a field walk to talk about the crops and view the local scenery. From various high points it's possible to see the skyline of London – Court Farm being the first real farm south of the capital.

From there we went on to Surrey Wildlife Trust's Bay Pond Nature Reserve in Godstone, where we were met by Nigel Davenport, SWT chief executive and a member of the SHS management committee. The reserve's principal role is education for schoolchildren, so we were fortunate to spend time in this idyllic spot with the

reserves manager, David Millen and some of his volunteers. They showed us around the three ponds telling us about the way the reserve enhances children's education away from the classroom, seeing all kinds of flora and fauna and a wealth of invertebrates.

Lunch followed in the Bell at Godstone, then onwards to a private tour of the wonderful Titsey Place – at the furthest eastern reaches of Surrey. Guide Bronwen Mills and her colleague gave us a fascinating insight into this beautifully-preserved early-nineteenth century family home, on one of the largest surviving historic estates in Surrey, dating back to the mid-sixteenth century. The grounds are glorious and provide stunning views, with all the accoutrements of an estate of the period, including splendid walled gardens. The house is now maintained by the Titsey Foundation.

This was the first major event I have attended and I was really impressed at how the day went. A very friendly crowd - I'll be back for more!



Trampers at Newlands Corner



A Ramble with a difference is how some people have described the Society's first event for those with impaired mobility, when the Surrey Hills Society's Ramble by Trampler (Trampers are outdoor activity buggies which can cover rough terrain, mud and grass) took place at the end of March, setting off from Newlands Corner and using the North Downs Way.

Member Derek Brown says: "After a short introduction and a trial run around the car park at Newlands Corner, we set out east, led by member Peter Hattersley and chairman of The Disabled Ramblers organisation Robin Helby, who was towing a mobile trailer facility. Being early spring there were plenty of muddy puddles and ruts along the way, but the Trampler had no difficulty negotiating them. The Trampler was easy to drive, it felt very safe and after a near six-hour trip, it was really comfortable. It was great seeing the countryside from an angle I had not seen in quite a while. So, many thanks to Peter and his wife, and to Jim Storrar and all the others who helped make it a super day out."

Enjoying Shamley Green

In mid April, on a lovely sunny Saturday, Society members had a fascinating introduction to Shamley Green from local historian Mike Harding, all organised by Wonersh Parish Council.

June Robinson, Surrey Hills Society Administrator, says it was exactly what she had hoped for. "I am sure everyone must have had a favourable impression of the Society's organisation and friendliness. Mike took us on a heritage trail - guiding us round the village pointing out interesting landmarks and finish-

ing with beautiful views across the Surrey Hills. I thought Mike did a wonderful job and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves."

"We also had a second session after lunch just round the green for about half an hour or so! It was wonderful to learn the background to the properties and hear anecdotes about the people; they really brought the history of the village to life. I'm not sure which was the highlight - the beautiful paintings on the East wall at Christ Church or the amazing view from the top of the hill. We were so lucky to

see it all bathed in the spring sunshine."

This was particularly so as the visit was timed when there was a clear blue sky, completely unmarked by white airplane trails. And it was a visit which attracted lots of people who weren't really looking for ten mile walks, no matter how wonderful the views. There are plans to see if we can make this type of event more regular, a Day in the Country introducing the Surrey Hills Villages with a heritage walk by a local historian/expert.

Ringway Raises Money for Local Children's Hospice

Staff members at Ringway in Merrow have been busy organising a host of different events to raise money for CHASE hospice care for children and have just presented the children's hospice charity with a cheque for £639.80.

For the last six months they have been holding a "dress down day" on the last Friday of each month, where everyone pays £1 to wear clothes of their choice to work. Some staff members have also been baking cakes to sell and boost cash on these days. Their

innovative fundraising did not end there though, with other activities including "Guess the Baby" photo, raffles and several events with a Christmas theme held in December.

CHASE Head of Fundraising and Marketing Jenny Edwards said: "We are very grateful to all the staff at Ringway for their fundraising efforts through their entertaining activities. CHASE needs to raise £4 million every year to ensure our vital service continues. With minimal Government funding, we rely on donations to achieve this and continue our support to families with life-limited children."

Divisional Manager – RIS East (Surrey) Matt Kelley said: "Ringway is committed to supporting the local community in which we work and live. CHASE is a charity very close to our hearts and members of our staff have always supported these initiatives."


hospice care for children
Registered Charity No: 1042495

Developing our website – help needed

Many of you will know our website (www.surreyhillssociety.org) and, judging by the number of hits, it is well used by members and others wanting to know about us and our events.

The site was established when the Society was launched and, for simplicity, was created as an off-shoot of the AONB Board's main site and gave us a good launch pad. However, this link is now starting to constrain us as the Society's separate identity develops and as we increase the content available to you. So the Society is looking to develop a new stand-alone website.

This will be a high profile project for the Society and will act as a shop window for what we stand for and what we do. We have decided what

we want to achieve, had some thoughts on how we want it to look and we have a design/development brief. We recognise that website development and maintenance can be a bottomless pit for our funds so we are keen to have a good quality, easily maintained, cost effective website.

One of our members with good computer knowledge has been able to help by providing the design/development brief but we now need someone to help us take this forward. If you, or someone you know, would be interested in working with us on this project, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us at info@surreyhillssociety.org

Springtime on Abinger Roughs



Have you ever heard of birch sap wine? I know that I hadn't but this was one of the fascinating bits of information which came out of a spring walk on Abinger Roughs with the local National Trust ranger, writes Ken Bare.

We were joined by a dozen Society members who came to the Roughs on a bright morning amongst the trees and open paths of this hillside area above Abinger. The Roughs were originally rough grazing but now form part of managed woodland with a nature trail. The trees are a mix of silver birch, hazel, hawthorn, yew, sweet chestnut and oak and include some veteran beech and birch trees. This brings me back to the wine. In the past, birch was a particularly useful tree in that it not only provided twigs for besom brooms and timber for wooden implements and larger carpentry but the sap could be tapped on an annual basis to produce birch sap wine. Once matured, this has been described as similar to some European wines.

The Roughs are home to more than just trees, though. Whilst we were there, we saw a pair of buzzards floating over the hillside pasture adjacent to the woods. Goldcrests, finches and tits, owls and woodpeckers all inhabit the area so it is worth taking binoculars if you make a visit. In one clearing there is also a rather unexpected sight – a memorial cross. It marks where Samuel Wilberforce, the Bishop of Winchester, fell off his horse and died in 1873. The Bishop (also known as Soapy Sam due to his religious fervour) was a strong opponent of Darwin's 'Theory of Evolution'. It is a curious coincidence that he had his accident there since Charles Darwin often stayed at Abinger Hall in the 1870s, as the guest of Thomas Henry Farrer. It was also Farrer and his descendants who turned the Roughs into a wilderness garden open to the public.

A Day in Guildford



This, the first outdoor event held by the Society this year, took place on a cold but fine day at the end of February, but many members wrote in to say how much they had enjoyed it. Member Nonie Insall said: "It was a most interesting and eye-opening day. The Spike was a revelation, well worth doing again for others to see. Also the Undercroft and the castle - both important parts of Guildford's past." And Tim and Cathy Stevens said: "We both enjoyed the day very much especially the tour of The Spike. Also our guide was certainly an interesting chap."

Juliet Eberle added: "We so enjoyed this day and I was particularly impressed by the Spike which provided such a vivid account of the hard life for vagrants in the nineteenth century. So frequently our family have shopped in, rowed down the river and enjoyed walking in to Guildford and yet we had never visited St Mary's Church, the Museum or even the Castle grounds. The day gave me a new and

richer perspective of a place we always love to visit."

Membership Secretary Richard Pitts wrote: "A very enjoyable day and the first Society event in Guildford for me where it didn't rain most of the time! The most interesting part was The Spike, designed to separate 'undesirable' vagrants from the structured routine of the workhouse. Our guide had himself been a vagrant for five years in Surrey which introduced an interesting angle."



Celebrating Surrey

Last month, at Loseley Park, Surrey's first ever open air arts festival took place. Over the weekend of 26 and 27 June, this event was part of Surrey's response to the 2012 Games and Cultural Olympiad programme. The weekend brought together musicians, artists and performers of all kinds in a celebration of Surrey, its landscapes, heritage and cultures.

For the event, the Surrey Hills Society was working in partnership with NADFAS (National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies) to showcase the wide range of local arts and crafts which have influenced the character and history of the Surrey Hills. The weekend featured art-based opportunities for young people, but there were events for all.

As examples, the Watts Gallery put on ceramics workshops and demonstrations. Fire and Iron Gallery's metalwork display celebrated one

ironworking family's journey "home" to Surrey, starting with ironfounder Peter Quinnell (1603-66) of Compton, near Loseley. Creative Fibres were using spinning wheel and spindle to demonstrate traditional crafts. The North Downs Lacemakers added to their "Pass the Pillow" project - started in 2009 with the aim of getting as many people as possible to participate in making this continuous piece of lace by the start of the London Olympics in 2012. And textile artist Karen Lucas, working with Surrey Heritage and local communities, was making a felted Time Line Scarf inspired by stories of Surrey. Many more activities were hosted by the NADFAS/Surrey Hills team and there was something to appeal to everyone.



Planning issues in the Surrey Hills

1. House at Holmbury St Mary

Surrey Hills Society members might like to know that the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Board has objected to an application for a replacement house in Woodhouse Lane, Holmbury St Mary. Though the current house is not very attractive, it is at least mostly of a low profile and mellow colour so that its impact on the landscape is not high. The Board is objecting because the proposed replacement house is considerably larger.

The Board notes: "There is increasing concern at the tendency for large grandiose houses being proposed as replacements in the Surrey Hills AONB. The cumulative effect of these houses over the years, if permitted, will be substantial and will erode the landscape quality and natural beauty of the AONB that national and local planning policies seek to protect." As it would not take much further development in the vulnerable Surrey Hills for its beauty to be spoiled, the Board suggests that it is important to ensure the planning authorities take a stricter line on replacement dwellings. Members might like to consider this point.

2. Mole Valley Land Allocations

Another planning issue which is causing concern to the Surrey Hills AONB Board relates to housing issues in Mole Valley's Development Plan. The Board considers that there is sufficient potential for finding housing sites in Mole Valley to meet the housing targets without having to turn to the protected landscapes, the AONB and the AGLV (Areas of Great Landscape Value). The exception would be for affordable housing where there is a clearly identified local need. The Surrey Hills Board says that: "If a protected landscape site is to be put forward then it would need to be demonstrated that it was clearly preferable to any other site or sites not enjoying such an important landscape designation."

The Board points out that it has an interest in the AGLV as well as the AONB and says that development proposals on sites outside the AONB or AGLV could nevertheless have important landscape implications. It adds that the boundaries of the Surrey Hills AONB are in places illogical and some are in need of urgent review, the Board says. Again Surrey Hills Society members might like to be aware of these issues.

Tidy Lay-by - Thanks to Ringway!



Ringway prides itself in supporting the local community in which it works. In June, a team of volunteers spent time to develop the Lay-by on the A281 at Shalford. The site was improved by cutting back the over-grown brambles and clearing away the rubbish that had been left behind by the general public. Ringway has also provided two litter bins to distract visitors from dropping litter. The potholes have been filled and the site overall looks tidier.

Chairman of the Surrey County Association of Parish and Town Councils
Chris Howard said *'This is a fantastic project where Ringway really demonstrates their commitment to the local environment and community. We are very grateful for their voluntary efforts!'*

A Portrait of the Surrey Hills

This new book, 'A Portrait of the Surrey Hills', describes some of the most beautiful countryside in England, celebrated by writers as diverse as Charles Dickens and William Cobbett. In it, local journalist Jane Garrett explores the countryside she has known since she was a child, combining the intimate knowledge gained from extensive forays both on horseback and on foot with specialist journalistic knowledge of heritage landscapes and the rural economy. Jane has been a journalist for over thirty years and was News Editor of the Surrey Advertiser. A specialist in the rural economy, she has worked for the Surrey Hills AONB Partnership and has written extensively about the area for local magazines. Her book, ISBN-13: 9780709085614, has a list price of £12.99 and is published in paperback format.



Surrey's National Trail - The North Downs Way

Many of us know that the North Downs Way is Surrey's National Trail, where it runs along the chalk ridge of the North Downs. There is a lot more of it though. Starting at Farnham, it extends for 153 miles to Dover on the Kent coast with a loop via Canterbury. In places it uses the route of the legendary Pilgrim's Way - the ancient trackway between Winchester and Canterbury. And not everyone knows that it is part of a family of 15 National Trails throughout England and Wales. These Trails have been designated because they provide a unique network of routes for walkers, cyclists and horseriders amongst some of the finest scenery in the country. And they have a long history.

Tony Gowers, the National Trails officer for the North Downs Way, says: "Walking in the wild and beautiful parts of Britain became increasingly popular in the early decades of the Twentieth Century. After World War II the desire to keep areas of Britain 'special' and to protect them from post-war development led to the passage of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. This Act provided the basis for the establishment of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding National Beauty (AONBs) and Long Distance Routes (now called National Trails in England and Wales). The first such route, the Pennine Way, opened in 1965 and since then another 14 have been designated in England and Wales including the North Downs Way in 1978. Each trail is managed by a full time dedicated National Trail officer.

Although based in Maidstone Kent, the National Trail Officer is responsible for all 153 miles of the trail and has a range of responsibilities including marketing and promotion, monitoring usage, building a network of Volunteer Wardens, partnership working and co-ordination with Council Public Rights of Way teams.

Tony adds: "The North Downs Way is made up of a series of footpaths, bridleways and byways. In Surrey we work with a variety of agencies including the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team on a range of projects including a new circular walk at Gatton Park and viewpoint creation. We also work closely with colleagues in Surrey County Council's Public Rights of Way Team to ensure that the route is open and available for use throughout the year. We are also looking at improvements and making the route easier to use by replacing stiles with kissing gates. The whole Surrey section is virtually 'stile free' now."

"We also work to maintain National Trail quality standards. There are a series of quality standards to measure progress on improvements along the trail ranging from the quality of the signs, gates and stiles to the surface of the paths and whether they are 'litter and dog mess' free. My task is to try and meet annual targets for improvement in 24 key areas."

"We have recruited a group of volunteers and allocated them each a section of the North Downs Way to look after. They walk and report on a range of problems from flytipping and burnt-out cars (thankfully less common recently) through to broken gates and missing signs.

"So with the sun now high in the sky, this is a perfect time to think about getting your walking boots out and planning a walk on the North Downs Way. To find out how to get the best from your North Downs Way experience please contact the Trail Office on 08458 247600 or visit the website www.nationaltrail.co.uk/north-downs. I look forward to hearing from you or meeting you on one of the sections of Surrey's special National Trail," he says.

Events

A wide variety of events are on offer for Society Members. Please book promptly to avoid disappointment, but please also note that we have now introduced a system where bookings for popular events cannot be made before a particular date defined for each event (generally eight weeks before the event). These details are on the website.

Saturday 17th July

Surrey Hills Society dinner at Wotton House, near Dorking
Last year's dinner in Guildford was a great success so we are pleased to be offering an even more exciting venue for this year's dinner on Saturday 17th July. Wotton House is the venue. Dinner will include a champagne reception and there will be music from Reed Maxfield, a singer-songwriter duo with their musical roots in English folk music, whose repertoire is inspired by the Surrey Hills. See our website www.surreyhillssociety.org for more details and the booking form or call 01372 220647

Saturday 24th July

Woodland Wandering on Juniper Hill
This afternoon walk on Juniper Hill offers yew and box groves to explore, together with rare chalkland flora with varying views of the River Mole gap in the North Downs. For those who wish to walk further, National Trust land is adjacent with public footpaths running north to Mickleham or Headley Lane. See our website www.surreyhillssociety.org for more details or call 01372 220647

Tuesday 24th August

Children's Woodland Adventure at Out-wood Common
On Tuesday 24th August, we are holding a children's woodland adventure afternoon, with bark rubbing and bug hunts, plus advice on why trees are so important. This event is limited to a maximum of 20, plus parents. See our website www.surreyhillssociety.org or call 01372 220647

Sunday 10th October

Specialist woodland walk at Sheepleas
Based at Sheepleas, near West Horsley, this is a walk focussing on identifying the trees and shrubs in the area, with expert advice on hand. Starting at 10.00am, you will need to bring your own lunch. Booking starts in July so see our website www.surreyhillssociety.org or call 01372 220647

Saturday 16th October

Annual General Meeting and Members' Day at Gatton Park
We will be holding a Members' Day and AGM on Saturday 16th October at Gatton Park near Reigate. There will be updates on the progress of the

Society in the morning, followed by a buffet lunch. In the afternoon there will be a guided tour and walk round the Capability Brown designed landscape. Members will receive further details of the day nearer the time.

Saturday 11th December

Pre-Christmas walk and celebration at Belmont School, Holmbury St Mary
We are repeating last year's very popular pre-Christmas walk followed by mince pies and mulled wine or soft drinks, courtesy of one of our affiliate members, Belmont School, Holmbury St Mary. Booking opens for this event in and around the school in October so see our website www.surreyhillssociety.org or call 01372 220647

There are many other events planned through the year, so join in as we celebrate our wonderful Surrey Hills. For more information on the Society's events visit our website www.surreyhillssociety.org or call 01372 220647.



Founder Member Richard Pitts

Three years ago, after taking early retirement from my work as a senior Government science policy adviser, I (and my wife) were considering how to fill my time – other than growing more fruit and vegetables which has been a long term interest of mine. I first decided to do something practical for the environment and became a volunteer on Ashted Common. This is a National Nature Reserve between Epsom and Leatherhead with many ancient oak pollards and rare species of insects and it is right on my doorstep. The diverse tasks include hazel coppicing (one of my favourites) and grubbing up blackthorn (not one of my favourites).

However, I also wanted to use my administrative background and I contacted my local branch of the Council for Voluntary Service. I discovered that there is an amazing variety of local volunteering opportunities, so I made a trip to the Surrey Hills AONB Office at Warren Farm Barns where I agreed to provide administrative support once a week. The National Trust shares the attractive converted farm buildings with the Surrey Hills AONB Office and the Society. I arrived shortly before the Society was formed, but, as it has developed, I have become progressively more involved – joining the Society and the Management Committee as a founder member, becoming Membership Secretary and more recently, becoming a trustee. I also help to update the website.

I very much enjoy my involvement with the Society, working with colleagues, meeting other members at events, exploring the beautiful Surrey Hills and being part of an organisation which is there to help protect them. We have some wonderful volunteers, but could always do with more help. I would certainly welcome additional assistance on membership administration. So, if you could spare around half a day a fortnight, please contact me at membership@surreyhillssociety.org

Richard Pitts – Membership Secretary & Trustee