



Denbies vineyard where it all began

Celebrating the Surrey Hills

While we are all very excited about our future, we felt our tenth anniversary offered an opportunity to reflect on some of the highlights of the past decade. With that thought, we asked a number of our founder members to offer their personal memories.

Views were many and varied and we will be sharing them with you during 2018. While the SHS is an umbrella organisation formed "to discover, promote and help conserve the natural beauty of the Surrey Hills for everyone to enjoy", the Society means very different things to our members. Some highlights referred to the walks, talks and private visits to places not usually open to the general public. While others took a broader perspective - focussing on the many projects to help conserve our hills, working with our affiliate partner organisations, and raising awareness for future generations.

It is not perhaps surprising that the inaugural meeting, at Denbies Wine Estate back in October 2007, was deemed particularly special. A good number of the 180 attending pledged their support to establish the Surrey Hills Society and its mission to promote the Surrey Hills AONB.

Our president Neil Maltby, remembers the subsequent 50th anniversary celebration for the AONB at the House of Commons in 2008, attended by the SHAONB patron

Dame Penelope Keith. Together with MPs from across the Surrey Hills and other dignitaries the Society was launched as a legacy project later that year.

So what makes the SHS so special for its members? A number mentioned the annual Chairman's Day; these have included visits to Leith Hill Place, where the late Robin Wells (former director of music at Charterhouse) gave a recital on Vaughan-Williams's piano; the Hampton Estate at Seale hosted by Bill and Bridget Biddell, and the visit to hidden East Surrey championing food and farming.



Society members at Highways Agency

Others included the many private tours mentioning the Highways Agency Control, Surrey Police HQ and UCL Mullard Space Science Lab at Holmbury St Mary. These along with visits to private houses and gardens including Munstead Wood,

former home of Gertrude Jekyll hosted by Sir Robert and Lady Clark; the rambling old 13th Century house at Chaldon owned by Madeline Hutchins and the annual pre-Christmas visit to the Arts and Crafts gem that is now Belmont School.



A SKYLARK space research rocket at UCL Mullard Space Science Lab."

There are so many more events we could mention and will do so later in the year as well as focussing on some of the other achievements and highlights. But a rather lovely note to end on comes from Rob Fairbanks, Director of the SHAONB. When asked about his personal highlight, rather than the walks, talks and visits, he valued "meeting such inspirational people through the membership; in particular the team of dedicated volunteers".

Chairman's Views

Can you believe the Surrey Hills Society is 10 years old already! 2018 will be an amazing year for us here in the Surrey Hills. All through 2017 we have been planning and brainstorming ways to celebrate, not only our birthday, but the 60th anniversary of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well.

The Society was created as part of the legacy of the AONB's 50th anniversary and was intended to assist in raising public awareness of the Surrey Hills and in developing projects that benefited the area.



SHS Chairman and President finishing Surrey Hills Challenge in September 2017

It has been a huge team effort to get us to where we are now and I have to say the best team I have ever had the pleasure to work with. I am very proud that we are now a major delivery partner for the Surrey Hills Management Plan, with a Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) bid under our belt, and several others that we have been major partners in. This has included interpretation work, conservation and promotional projects.



SHS Chairman, Chris Howard receiving cheque for Surrey Hills Trust Fund from last year's Mayor of Guildford, Gordon Jackson

We have also been able to support some other organisations working across the area with important projects, like raising over £1000 for the 250th anniversary of Leith Hill Tower. This resulted in restoration work around the tower and enabling a refurbished water trough to be installed. In 2016 we assisted Gatton Trust with their HLF bid for funding to celebrate landscape architect Capability Brown's 300th birthday. This involved re-establishing some of his lost landscape features at Gatton. We also assisted Leith Hill Place when they first opened their doors to the public in 2013 to see whether there was enough interest to make it viable to keep. As you know the response from the public was overwhelming. I am also very proud that our volunteer Administrator, Peter Salisbury, is also a regular volunteer at Leith Hill Place.



Peter Salisbury (right) with Diane Cooper and Jeff Holliday at Surrey Hills Challenge at Denbies, Dorking

Actually, this goes for lots of our volunteers who in addition to their voluntary work for us also give their time to the National Trust or Surrey Wildlife Trust. Many are also active in the Scouts or Guides and other organisations across the county.

We are delighted that Surrey Life magazine has agreed to feature our birthday in their May edition. They have also created a wonderful Surrey Hills calendar based on last year's photographic competition. Also do get involved in the "60 Things to Do in the Surrey Hills" campaign or join us for our anniversary celebration in June.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the numerous events we have planned during the year and, remember, we are always looking for new volunteers to get more involved with us.

Volunteer portrait – Stella Cantor

I'm the membership secretary for the Surrey Hills Society – that is, I am the one who sends you the letter telling you that it is time to pay your subscription again. There's a bit more to the job than that, including sending out the newsletters and putting the gift packs together. I am also a Trustee as I am looking after one of the most important aspects of the Society – the membership.

Why did I get involved? There are three parts to this. One is that I was born in Dorking, spent my time in the countryside around the town and I think Surrey is a truly under-rated county. So near London with all its facilities, and yet the countryside is wonderful. How many times do we look at a view with no sign of habitation and

wonder how this can be only 20 miles from central London? Secondly, when I was eight years old, I made my Brownie promise including to lend a hand. I'm still doing it and am still involved in Girlguiding trying to spread the habit.

My last paid job was as a teacher of IT. So I had the necessary skills to handle the job.

On top of all that, the Society is very friendly and some of the events have taken me to parts of the county which I never knew existed even having lived here most of my life. It's a pleasure to work with the other Trustees and members of the Management Committee, and I should certainly thank the people who help me – the packing team, and particularly Rosie Challis who has been

packing up all the letters and banking the cheques since before my time. And thanks to you, the members, for making the job easy.



Our lovely volunteers – Stella Cantor (left) with Rosie Challis

Creative Landscapes for Health – Taking the Air

The Surrey Hills Society supported a pilot project that saw an Artist-in-Residence at Gatton Park engage with local people. Susan Ryland spent four months exploring the Gatton Park landscape with an emphasis on ‘taking the air’. This residency contributed to Gatton Park’s Capability Brown project, which celebrated the 300th anniversary of landscape architect Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown’s birth and was part funded by the Community Foundation for Surrey, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Surrey Hills Trust Fund.

Susan immersed herself in the site, particularly exploring the areas around the lake appreciating its microclimate and taking readings of the varying breezes. As part of the process, Susan led creative health walks where she shared ideas about

her project as they walked through the Japanese gardens, around the lake and back through the rocky.

“The Creative Health Walks proved to be a rich source of inspiration – the dialogue I had with the Creative Health Walk participants evolved into the dialogue I created between the brass plaque phrases and their particular locations in the landscape in The Beaufort Way.” Susan Ryland.

Susan’s residency resulted in The Beaufort Way, a new walk around the Gatton landscape with boundary markers. The Beaufort Way explores the relationship between meteorological ‘wind force’ – from light breeze to hurricane. On each boundary marker are snippets from the Beaufort scale from windforce 0 – 12.

Susan has created a blog of the project www.takingtheair.wordpress.com as well as creating a map that can be downloaded from the site.

The park is open on the first Sunday of each month so why not have a visit and ‘take the air’!



Walkers admiring Gatton Park across the lake



Volunteers enjoying a break and wonderful views after hard work

Update on the Surrey Small Blue Project

Project Officer Fiona Haynes has had a busy 6 months working with site managers and landowners to undertake projects that will benefit the Small Blue butterfly this winter.

Successful weekly volunteer work parties are now up and running at Netley Park, Polesden Lacey, Brockham Quarry and Betchworth Quarry. Each week a group of around 10 volunteers undertake scrub clearance, removal of ash saplings,

clematis and buddleia, quarry restoration work and create bare ground patches that should help to establish kidney vetch, the plant that the butterfly’s caterpillar feeds on. This important work will help to support and sustain the Small Blue into the future.

Please do get in touch if you are interested in getting involved with the project or want further information fhaynes@butterfly-conservation.org.

Clearing the Clutter from Surrey’s Roads

Unnecessary roadside signs have come down in the Surrey Hills village of Albury, in what is hoped is the start of a roll-out scheme across rural villages in Surrey. Corroded metal highway signs that spoiled the natural environment of one of Surrey’s most picturesque villages have been removed as part of a new ‘Decluttering’ scheme. The scheme is the brainchild of the Surrey Hills Board in a bid to maintain the rural character of the Surrey Hills.

Liz Cutter, Vice President of the Surrey Association of Local Councils and Chair of the Surrey Hills Quiet Lanes & Decluttering Working Group comments; “Decluttering is the process of removing unnecessary roadside and village signage clutter to help reinforce the rural character of the Surrey Hills. Research shows us

that reducing unnecessary signing actually benefits road users who find it hard to distinguish those signs which provide crucial information from those which do not. Less signs actually help to discourage through traffic and HGV movements from our country lanes.”

Liz continues; “Many road signs are not mandatory. They are put in place by the local highway authority and can be removed at its discretion. We want to encourage local people through their parish council to assess their local road signs and recommend any individual signs that should be removed or relocated. By working together we can make a difference”.

If you would like to see less roadside clutter in your village simply visit the

Surrey Hills website to find out more <http://www.surreyhill.org/board/de-cluttering/> or contact the Surrey Hills office on 01372 220653 to discuss your requirements as funding may be available.



A tractor removing unnecessary signage to discourage through traffic and HGV movements from our country lanes

Celebrating 60 Years as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Winter's Day from Newlands Corner. Image courtesy of Jane Thomas

2018 is a significant milestone for the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as it marks the 60th anniversary of the designation. The Surrey Hills was one of the first landscapes in the country to be designated in 1958 and is now one of 38 AONBs in England and Wales. The Surrey Hills stretch across rural Surrey, from the chalk North Downs that run from Farnham in the west, above Guildford, Dorking and Reigate, to Oxted in the east, covering a quarter of the county!

On 8th May 1958, the Minister for Housing and Local Government confirmed the Designation Order for the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The Act legislated for the designation of AONBs and National Parks. They were both considered to be of equal landscape status with the purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

The AONB designation has been a planning tool to help protect the area from development pressures, although the Surrey Hills is unique in being wholly contained within the Green Belt. It was not until

1998 that a Joint Advisory Committee was established to oversee the administration of the Surrey Hills which led to the recruitment of the first AONB officer. In 2000, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act placed a statutory duty on bodies to have regard to the management of the AONB, and local authorities the duty to regularly plan, review and adopt a Management Plan for the area. The Surrey Hills Board continues to develop policies and programmes that protect and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the Surrey Hills whilst promoting the social and economic well-being of the area. Visit www.surreyhills.org/board/ to discover more.

Caroline Price, Surrey Hills AONB Board Marketing Communications Officer



North Downs Way National Trail 40th Anniversary in 2018

The North Downs Way was formally launched in 1978 at the Wye Crown by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Stretching from Farnham at its western edge to Dover in the East and taking in a loop around Canterbury and Folkestone the trail has provided a recreational route for the increasingly urbanised south east. Easily accessible by car, train, ferry and from the major London airports the trail enjoys thousands of overseas visitors each year.



Running along a chalk ridge for most part it follows the widely acknowledged "Pilgrims Way" between the Cathedral Cities of Winchester and Canterbury and takes in many holy places and locations linked to the Pilgrims

history. Many of the highest points and best vistas are located from the top of the scarp in the Surrey Hills where you can see across the vale below and over to the South Downs on a clear day. Dotted with pillboxes and old mills and quarry pits the trail provides a useful reminder to the military and industrial heritage of its recent past. In between these man made scars remain some of the best chalk grassland in the world.

With protected nature reserves and rolling hillside the trail is the perfect habitat for many rare species of butterfly and orchid in particular. Never far from a town, a village, a train station or a pie & pint, the North Downs Way is the perfect destination for stressed Londoners, a family trip to the countryside or a long distance hike creating memories for a lifetime. In celebration of the 40th anniversary of the trail the Surrey Hills Society will be walking several sections of the trail as part of the events programme (see p.8). For more information about the trail visit <https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/north-downs-way>.

Peter Morris, North Downs Way Trail Manager



Inglis Memorial at Colley Hill on the North Downs Way above Reigate. Image courtesy of Ken Bare

Surrey Hills Society Tenth Anniversary 2018



2018 is a year of anniversaries; not only for our Society, but also for a few of the partner organisations we work with. In these centre pages we are highlighting all these anniversaries and look forward to mutually supporting them throughout this important year.

We've come a long way since our tentative beginnings in October 2008 when a gathering of 177 people met at Denbies Wine Estate to discuss the aspiration to start a charity that would support our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, better known as 'the Surrey Hills'.

From those understated beginnings we've grown into a charity run by a dedicated team of volunteers whose passion to see the Surrey Hills remain protected and publicised is at the forefront of everything we do.

We're excited about our future and feel that the Surrey Hills Society is now well-known and valued across Surrey's range of conservation organisations and charities. There are a number of celebratory events during 2018 which we hope many of you will come along to and support. Most of all though, we value your continued support as a member of our growing charity, whether as an active member who volunteers for us, someone who comes to the occasional event or someone who keeps in touch on what's going on by reading our newsletter. Our members remain key to everything we plan. Help us



Walk off your Christmas puddings walk in December 2017

remain part of the Surrey Hills family and the wider countryside network into the next exciting decade.

Diane Cooper, SHS Marketing and Communications Committee Chairman

30 years of Downlands Partnership

In May 2018 the Downlands Partnership, one of the three Surrey Countryside Partnerships, is celebrating 30 years of its countryside management service, working with volunteers and local communities.

The Downlands team works in partnership with local authorities and private landowners to manage the rare chalk grassland habitat found across the North Downs, plus many ponds, woodlands and walk routes, across NE Surrey and in to Croydon and Sutton. Downlands has its own flock of sheep, goats and cattle which graze the chalk grassland sites to benefit the native flora and fauna.

At the heart of the Downlands service is community involvement; by individuals, groups and corporates. Volunteers of all ages support the service by joining in throughout the year, come rain or shine, to help the team carry out practical seasonal conservation work such as scrub clearing and access improvements, plus essential livestock checking. During 2016/17 the Downlands Partnership service was supported by an impressive 12,945 volunteer hours!

The Downlands team also has an environmental education role; school and community/scout groups enjoy volunteering and craft activities; supporting young people through work experience and training placements is a key objective of the service. Registered charity partner, the Downlands Trust, supports the service by raising funds through memberships and fundraising initiatives.

Details of Downlands Partnership's planned spring/summer 2018 celebratory events will be uploaded shortly on the website: www.surreycc.gov.uk/surreycountrysidepartnerships.

Debbie Hescott, Business Development Officer, Surrey Countryside Partnerships



Downlands Partnership's snowy sheep



An Informative President's Day

Part of the Surrey Hills Society's role is to champion what is special about the area and to highlight issues affecting it. Our President had organised a fabulous day out to learn about and enjoy the fascinating world of horse racing at the Epsom racecourse. From its heyday in the 1950s when over 640 horses trained in the area, the numbers have declined to just 135. Luckily, steps are being taken to reinvigorate this famous institution.

Epsom remains synonymous with horseracing and long-term residents of the area speak of the days when everyone in Epsom would attend the Derby with businesses and schools closed for the day to join in with the festivities. The horseracing industry in Epsom has an annual economic impact of £13 million and also employs 40 full-time and hundreds of part-time staff.

To secure a brighter future for this historic training ground, The Jockey Club, the British Horseracing Authority, the Training Ground Management Board and the Epsom Trainers Association have come together with other partners including the University of Surrey, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and the Woodlands Trust. They have created a new Epsom vision:

- Increase the number of declared horses in training from 135 to 250 by 2021.
- Make Epsom a centre for digital innovation in horseracing.
- Increase the economic value of the local horseracing industry and raise local employment.
- Conserve and improve the Downs for the local community and for horseracing.

- Work across the horseracing industry to develop wider economic and social proposals to benefit the whole Epsom area.

Our members were also invited to visit one of the remaining training stables. South Hatch Stables are surprisingly close to the urban fringe and unless they can get permission to controversially invest in development in the green belt on their own land, then they will not be able to invest in the modern stables needed. Quite a dilemma for the Borough Council and explains why support from the local community will be crucial for the survival of this special institution.



Epsom racecourse



Launch of the Surrey Hills Society at Guildhall in Guildford

Following the formation of the Surrey Hills Society as a registered charity in May 2008, a formal launch event was held in September 2008 at the historic Guildhall in Guildford High Street. In this photo you can spot Neil Maltby, the first Chairman of the Society (right), behind the then Mayor of Guildford. Right behind him is Deborah and Kate Maltby, and Chris Howard, our current Chairman, and Peter Hattersley. Centre is David Wright who is still Chairman of the SHAONB, Nigel Davenport, still the CE Surrey Wildlife Trust, Richard Pitts, Graham Butler and right at the back, Jane Maltby and John Rennie. All still active members of the Society, ten years on! (apart for John who moved to Scotland).

Thank you to the Bulls Head

In the heart of the Surrey Hills, The Bulls Head in Ewhurst has been part of village life for many years. Some Society members were recently offered a very warm welcome to one of their quiz nights.

The Bulls Head is definitely a pub where you can relax and enjoy a drink and/or a delicious meal with family and friends. They also welcome ramblers, cyclists and well behaved dogs.

We would like to say a huge thank you to the owners, Elizabeth and John O'Brien for organising this joyful evening. The pub was absolutely full of locals from Ewhurst and around. The quizmaster was excellent and food delicious. As if this wasn't enough, the Society was donated more than £400 from the evening's receipts.

More information on this lovely pub can be found on their website www.bullshheadewhurst.co.uk. Here is to our next visit on 16th May (see Events programme)!



Fantastic Bulls Head pub in Ewhurst

Sponsor's view

While we have much to celebrate in 2018, it is sobering to think that when the Society was formed in 2008 the world was going through the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

For some of my firm's clients the collapse of banks and other sources of finance was disastrous. Loans and mortgages were being called in and queues formed outside the local offices of the Northern Rock Building Society. The Government had to rescue the Royal Bank of Scotland and Lloyds Bank.

So it was most prescient of Neil Maltby and others to form a Society that would look to the long term preservation of our wonderful countryside in the Surrey Hills. While others were focussing on their financial worries Neil saw that the real wealth of our nation is to be found on our doorstep and that helping it to flourish would offer a long term panacea to our problems!

Ten years on the equilibrium of our nation's financial health has largely been re-established, although many people are still feeling

the pinch of the Government's austerity. At the same time, the Surrey Hills Society's fortunes have gone from strength to strength.

I wish you all well for the next ten years!

Anthony Wakefield



Partnership Day at Devil's Punchbowl, Hindhead – Neil Maltby, Ken Bare and Anthony Wakefield

Planner's view

Development pressures on the Surrey Hills AONB are increasing.

A recent study by the CPRE has revealed, worryingly, that the amount of AONB land nationally approved for housing has increased five fold from 41 hectares in 2012/13 to 212 hectares in 2016/17.



In the Surrey Hills, the latest development proposals arise from the Waverley Local Plan Inspector's current requirement that Waverley needs additionally to take half Woking's housing needs not provided for in its local plan. But just as Woking is constrained in meeting its housing needs by the Green Belt so is Waverley. Consequently, the Council is currently being obliged to propose to meet Woking's housing shortfall largely on Green Belt sites some of which are also normally protected by being within the AONB, a planning constraint not existing in Woking. The planning logic of a Council having no reasonable alternative but to allocate doubly constrained AONB/Green Belt land for housing development in this way to meet an Inspector's judgement is difficult to comprehend.

An appeal on a site partly within the AONB at Haslemere for 19 dwellings has been allowed with the Inspector noting, in seeming part justification, that the local plan includes proposed housing within the AONB.

Whilst there is a national need to provide more housing there should be a wider and more strategic planning approach to avoid housing developments within AONBs.

Clive Smith, Surrey Hills AONB Planning Adviser

The Society will be very much involved with two walking festivals this spring and will lead walks for partner associations

Mole Valley Ramblers Spring Walks Festival

Dates:

Saturday 28th April - Monday 7th May 2018

Come and join this friendly walking group and explore the spectacular Surrey Hills.

The festival will include daytime and evening walks between 3 - 16 miles.

For full details visit

www.molevalleyramblers.org.uk/festival

Farnham Walking Festival

Dates:

Sunday 20th May - Sunday 3rd June 2018

The festival will include daytime and evening walks between 3 - 16 miles.

For full details visit

www.farnham.gov.uk/events/farnham-walking-festival-2018

(see back page for more details)



Event Programme February – May 2018

Visit our website for more information and additional events.

Booking is essential – even for free ones. Bookings generally open about 6 weeks before each event. Non email users can get more information by sending as SAE to the address above.

Sunday 4th February

Explore Dorking

Our FREE guided, monthly town walk. We will follow smaller paths and narrow lanes to discover more about Dorking. Far from flat, Dorking is full of steeper hills. Meet at Dorking Halls Car Park, Reigate road, RH4 1SG at 10.30am for a prompt 11.00 am start.

Saturday 10th February

Map Reading to enjoy the Surrey Hills

A training day for those who want to get out and appreciate the hills, but do not have the confidence and experience to use Ordnance Survey maps and a compass. Based in Wotton.

Wednesday 21st February

Local menu lunch at Stephan Langton Pub, Friday Street

Enjoy a special menu of local produce from the award winning team at Stephan Langton. The owners, Lee and Annaliese will also entertain us with the story of their passion for local food and how they created the Tillingbourne Brewery.

Sunday 4th March

Explore Blackheath

Our FREE guided (short) monthly walk to explore the delights of this famous Arts and Crafts village and surrounding alpine woods and heathland. Meet at Albury Heath Car Park, GU5 9DB at 10.30am for a prompt 11am start.

Wednesday 14th March

Ripley Revisit

Following a very successful and enjoyable visit last year we are putting on another chance to visit the historic village of Ripley. Lunch at a local coaching inn will be followed by a tour of the village by a member of Send and Ripley Historic Society.

Sunday 8th April

Explore Banstead Countryside

Our FREE guided 5.5 mile walk to explore the beautiful Banstead countryside. Meet at Holly Lane Car Park CR5 3NR at 10.30am for 11am start.

Tuesday 17th April

Behind the scenes at Guildford Cathedral

We will be provided with two tours of this important cathedral which was used in the original film "The Omen". One part is regarding the main part of the cathedral and the other is a guided tour of the tower. A head for heights may be required for that part of the visit.

Saturday 5th May

Walk North Downs Way from Guildford to Dorking

In partnership with Mole Valley Ramblers as part of their Spring Walks Festival.

Sunday 6th May

Walk North Downs Way from Dorking to Reigate

In partnership with Mole Valley Ramblers as part of their Spring Walks Festival.

Saturday 12th May

A Day in Reigate

This event will combine visits to the fascinating Holmesdale Museum, the memorable Cranston Library and the surprising caves. Attendee numbers will be limited due to venue capacity.

Wednesday 16th May

Discover the history of Ewhurst

Join local historian, Janet Balchin on an interesting tour of this quaint village, with optional lunch at local pub after the walk.

Saturday 26th May

Walk North Down Way from Farnham to Guildford

Join our Chairman, Chris Howard and North Downs Way Trail Manager Peter Morris for this section of the trail in celebration of its 40th anniversary. Part of the Farnham Walking Festival.



A Volunteer to run our new Facebook page

Our lovely Society is run by volunteers. We are currently looking for a Social Media enthusiast to update our Facebook page and create a small SHS community around

our walks and other events on this dynamic and popular social hub. If you enjoy what we do and want to share with others on a regular basis, please let us

know. There will be a dedicated team behind you to help you when needed. Call our Coordinator, Marika Elzinga to discuss the details on 07530-949302.

To join us go to www.surreyhillssociety.org and click on the Personal Membership tag