

Facsimile of eNewsletter sent to our members on 15th May 2020

All these articles may be found on the News page of our website



Welcome to the Surrey Hills Society's first e-newsletter of recent years. We say this because, apparently, we did produce a few short ones in the early days of the Society before the regular printed version became established. Needless to say, the driver for this edition is the disruption caused by coronavirus. However, if it becomes a well-received addition to our communications, we hope to be able to produce it in addition to the regular paper one.

In this edition, we pick up on a few topical stories plus some of the interesting items that space would not permit us to include in our normal 8-page edition. We hope that you will find it interesting.

Surrey Hills Society, Warren Farm Barns, Headley Lane, Mickleham, Dorking, Surrey RH5 6DG

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A new Chairman for the Surrey Hills AONB Board



Late in 2019, the Surrey Hills AONB appointed a new Chairman to replace David Wright who had retired following the local elections last year. We are delighted to be working with Heather Kerswell as she steps into the role and drives the AONB forward. Although she has been trying to meet many of the Surrey Hills people and get to know more about what we do, she has clearly been hampered by the current disruption. It is therefore with great pleasure that we give Heather the opportunity to contribute to this e-newsletter.

Well done to Surrey Hills Society for sending its newsletter electronically! A sign of the times.....

It was a huge privilege when the Board of Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty invited me in December last year to become its independent chair, helping to bring together the Surrey Hills family – the Society, Enterprises and the Trust Fund. It is a privilege because I get to work with the small but extremely expert and enthusiastic staff (many currently co-ordinating local crisis help), with a Board of councillors and other experts all giving us their time and advice, all driven by a common purpose, with the chairs of the ‘family’, and with the fantastic volunteers whose work is crucial in turning ideas into reality.

Some of the things we all want to achieve are:

- To extend the AONB, agreed locally in 2013 but still with Natural England for decision
- To reinforce the greenness of the AONB, reverse the decline in nature and help tackle the climate crisis
- To enable sustainable visiting
- To strengthen community, sustainable prosperity and a sense of locality
- To work with other protected landscapes around London on a joint vision for the region

I will be putting my time and skills to work to help us make progress on all these fronts. By way of background I am a geographer, so imbued with Wealden geology, professionally a planner, starting as Waverley’s conservation officer, moving to strategic planning in London and the southeast and then serving as Mole Valley council’s chief executive for twelve years. Since retiring I have been working with property based charities.

So how can we view the ambitions of the Surrey Hills family in the current virus crisis, when so many people are dealing not only with isolation but with danger and bereavement? Are there some glimmers of hope? Maybe we can all observe changes which could be influential in future:

- We have adjusted to travelling less – working at home, meetings by Zoom, conversations by Facetime, schooling via iPads, shopping on-line. Could this continue post crisis and lead to a permanent reduction in road traffic passing through the Surrey Hills?

- Will visitors come by public transport or if car-borne look to stay over and walk or cycle from their stop-over place?
- Surrey Hills Enterprises have put on the website a list of local produce available for delivery. We are certainly discovering and using more local suppliers – Mandira’s Kitchen and Hampton Estates for instance have been a lifeline – and we intend to go on post crisis. Delivery of Surrey Hills produce could become much more important commercially; it helps the environment and brings a quality product to your door.
- Everyone is feeling deprived of access to nature and open spaces. This will surely bring a crusade to reverse decline and a search for ways to intensify the wildness of our natural places.
- We are leaving the European Community and have a chance with legislation progressing now to set our own standards and bring nature more firmly into the equation in giving grants to the farmers and landowners on whose skill and goodwill we all rely for managing our green areas.

And we will never again take for granted the things which can only be experienced live – like hearing church bells, singing in a choir or walking in the Surrey Hills.

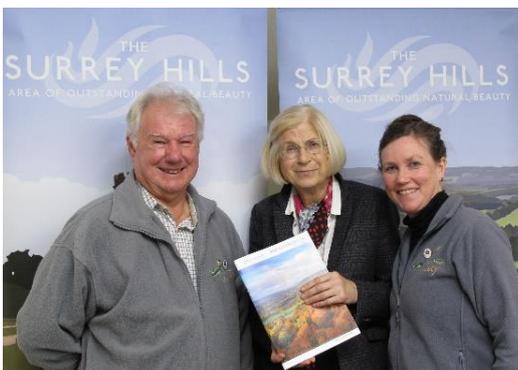


What has the Society been doing?



You will be aware that one of the effects of the coronavirus lockdown has been the cancellation of our current events programme. This is probably the aspect of our work seen by most of our members. However, the Society hasn't just pulled up the drawbridge and ceased to function. There has been a large amount of work continuing in the background. In the following sections we can give you an indication of some of the key topics and, in doing so, help to show how wide our range of activities has become.

AONB Management Plan



Late in 2019, the AONB Board launched the latest version of the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan which covers the period 2020 – 2025. Having got the strategic document agreed by all the Borough & District councils and Surrey County Council – who contribute financially to the AONB and who are required by law to implement the plan – the next stage has been to agree who is going to deliver specific activities in order to achieve the required objectives and targets. Each objective has a lead organisation plus a number of supporting ones.

In most cases, the lead body is one of the components of the AONB 'family' of Board & Management Team, Society, Enterprises or Trust Fund and in many instances, the work is supported by multiple 'family' members.

For the Society, the biggest topic area is around communication and awareness. This is very much our forte since we have come to be known as a public face of the Surrey Hills AONB. Our newsletters, presence at shows and fetes, external talks and media exposure all contribute to this. And this is also where our Events programme fits in because the more people we can get out into the area the more they learn about it and hence become ambassadors themselves.

To make all this happen, our Chairman and Vice-Presidents have been working with the AONB Board and Management to develop a detailed Delivery & Monitoring Plan which will be reviewed quarterly by the Board to track progress. Coronavirus may have disrupted a lot of things but the clock is still ticking and hence the Society has been working away in the background to ensure that it can deliver on its commitments.

The Society's Annual Review



Our members have recently received an email to let them know that the Society's Annual review for 2019-2020 has been written and published. This is the third year that we have produced a look back at the year's activities and it has proved to be a useful record and promotional tool. On this occasion we took the decision to issue it as soon as possible after our year end rather than wait for our AGM in the autumn.

This type of document involves input from a large number of our volunteers. Quite apart from writing the text and providing the photos (Ken Bare), data and content was provided by our Chairman (Gordon Jackson), Finance Director (Martin Cantor), Membership Secretary (Stella Cantor) and Vice-President (Chris Howard). One of our members (Piers Plummer) turned it all into the professional looking document that we issued and we relied

strongly on the eagle eyes of our proof readers (Susie Turner, Sall Baring, Lesley Crofts and Diane Cooper). We are incredibly grateful to all of them for the hours of work that they contributed to making this happen.

Surrey Hills Photo Competition



By the time that you receive this e-newsletter, our photo competition will have just closed. A good number of you have submitted photos which have been placed on our website. The Chairman and Vice-Presidents now have the tricky task of judging the entries to identify a winner. This is certainly not the easiest of tasks since there are some stunning images.

Social Media



In parallel with our photo competition, we have been expanding our presence on social media including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram where a number of our active members have been submitting images. We are in the early days of developing these lines of communication but they are already showing success in helping us to reach new audiences.

As a reminder:

Facebook: @SurreyHillsSoc (<https://facebook.com/surreyhillssoc>)

Stay up to date with upcoming events.

Instagram: @SurreyHillsSociety (<https://www.instagram.com/surreyhillssociety/>)

See our latest photographs of the Surrey Hills.

Twitter: @SurreyHillsSoc (<https://twitter.com/surreyhillssoc>)

Follow our Twitter to see what our members have been up to.

Events Planning

Whilst our current programme of events may have gone on hold, we want to be able to hit the ground running when the right time comes. Many of the events organised by the Society have a long lead time – up to a year in some cases! To enable us to give our members a programme to look forward to, our Events Team have been working away in the background. Hopefully we will be able to revive some of the visits which were planned for 2020 and include them in our 2021 schedule. Meanwhile, other topics come to light or opportunities arise and our Team is always on the lookout for these.



One specific element of our events programme which has become very popular is our involvement with local walking festivals. We had planned to participate in Farnham Walkfest in May, a new event planned for the Dorking area and, of course, our major involvement with Guildford Walking Festival in September. At the moment, it is unclear whether Guildford Walking Festival will be able to go ahead but

we are continuing to work as if it will – even if it's in a modified form. The Society normally hosts numerous walks during this month long festival - and also provides several of the core organising team - so a significant amount of work is involved.

A Surprise at St Catherine's



If any of you have joined us on one of our walks along the North Downs Way heading out of Guildford along the banks of the River Wey, there is a good chance that we will have included a short diversion up to St Catherine's Chapel. This is not only a super viewpoint across the area but is also a historically interesting structure. It has become even more interesting recently following a landslip which disrupted the adjacent railway line.....

St Catherine's Chapel, on top of the hill, was built in the early 14th century in the reign of Edward I. An annual fair, also dating from the Middle Ages, was held every year until after the First World War. But over the years evidence has been discovered of more distant human activity on the hill in the Iron Age, Bronze Age and even Mesolithic (middle Stone Age) periods.

An incredible hidden cave thought to have been used as a medieval shrine has now been discovered in the hillside by rail workers repairing a recent landslip. Network Rail engineers came across the small cave, with markings and evidence of use in the 14th century, while stabilising the embankment between the railway line and the A3100 Old Portsmouth Road.

The sandstone cave is made up of several sections ranging from 0.3 metres to about 0.7 metres high and it's thought to be the surviving section of a much bigger cave. The rest may have been lost when the railway line was carved out of the hillside in the early 1840s.

Images taken from the site show the presence of a Gothic niche decorated in dots with a Calvary cross nearby. There are seven or eight further niches and experts found considerable evidence of writing and other markings across the cave ceiling.

The cave is partially covered in deposits of black dust, believed to be soot from lamps. The remains of two suspected fire pits were also uncovered in the cave floor. The hope is that radiocarbon dating can be used to establish the period when the cave was in use.

Mark Killick, Network Rail Wessex route director, said: "This is an unexpected and fascinating discovery that helps to visualise and understand the rich history of the area. A full and detailed record of the cave has been made and every effort will be made to preserve elements where possible during the regrading of the delicate and vulnerable sandstone cutting."

Tony Howe, historic environment planning manager and county archaeologist at Surrey County Council, added: "The discovery of this cavern is tremendously exciting. It's very early in the process of understanding its full significance, but the potential for knowledge acquisition is huge. We're looking forward to learning an awful lot more about the site as studies progress."



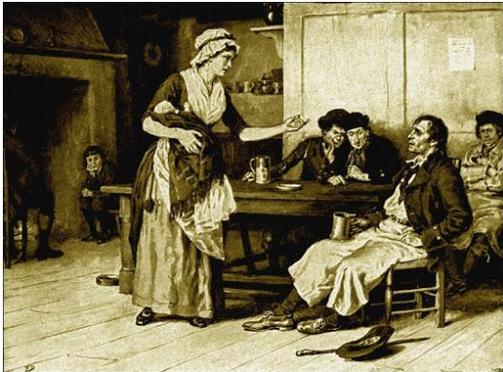
A Good Read



Both of the Society's Vice-Presidents enjoy reading books about Surrey, the Surrey Hills and the surrounding area. For this newsletter, they have each selected a book which they have enjoyed and which you might like to find for yourselves. Ken has chosen a historical novel centred on Hindhead whilst Chris

has selected a recent non-fiction book which gives some thought-provoking ideas about how we could enrich our countryside. If you know of books that have a storyline based on and around recognisable locations within the Surrey Hills or relevant non-fiction books that make good reading, why not let us know at info@surreyhillssociety.org and we can create a book list on our website.

The Broom-Squire by Sabine Baring-Gould



Set in and around the Devils Punchbowl, this is a wonderful Victorian novel that deserves to have a wider modern readership. It starts from the idea that the sailor who was murdered near Hindhead in 1786 had his baby daughter with him (his wife having just died in London). Following the murder, the baby is found and brought up at a Thursley inn. The story then does a “fast forward” of 18 years so that the baby is now a grown woman – naturally a very good looking one!

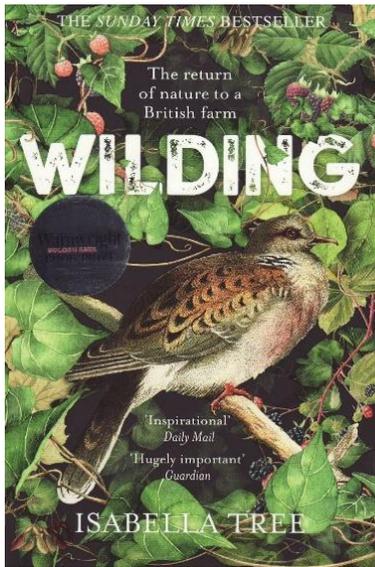
The woman has grown up with the son of the innkeeper but he leaves home after a family disagreement. She falls into a hasty and ill-conceived marriage with the Broom-Squire. He is one of a group of inter-related squatters who live in the bottom of the Punchbowl and dislikes (and is disliked by) everyone.

The core of the story is the interplay between the woman, the broom-squire and the inn-keepers son. It may seem like the story-line for many Victorian romantic novels but there are all sorts of unexpected twists to the tale.

For a local reader, an added interest is that Baring-Gould was writing in the 1890s about an event which happened a century beforehand. Thus his descriptive text contrasts Victorian landscape and life with that of an earlier period – both of which make a fascinating contrast to the area in modern times.

This book often pops up in antiquarian bookshops and is readily available (both as original and modern reprint) online via AbeBooks.co.uk or as a free download at Project Gutenberg.

Wilding by Isabella Tree



Anyone with an interest in the management of the Surrey Hills landscape needs to read this book. It challenges the assumption that 'natural' Britain was a closed canopy forest. Many Surrey residents think we should just stop managing our woodlands and let them go back to primeval forest. However, Isabella Tree expertly reveals why this version of our history is being challenged in re-wilding projects across Europe and more personally, at the Knepp Estate in West Sussex, owned by Isabella and her husband.

Like many of our struggling farmers, Isabella and her husband Charlie Burrell have been forced to question whether intensive farming is sustainable. They decided to step back from all the EU farming grants and intensive farming techniques and just let nature take over. By introducing free-roaming heritage cattle, ponies, pigs and deer – proxies for the large animals that once

roamed Britain – the 3,500 acre project has seen extraordinary increases in wildlife numbers and diversity in little over a decade. Their beef is now sought after by top London restaurants. Chef, Heston Blumenthal claims it is even better than the famous Japanese wagyu beef.

The results have been astounding and challenge many of our commonly held beliefs about land and habitat management. This includes assumptions about where rare birds such as nightingales and turtle doves, peregrine falcons and lesser spotted woodpeckers choose to live and breed and what the favourite haunts of rare butterflies are.

The book is beautifully written by this accomplished author and travel writer, who has also written *The Living Goddess* and *The Bird Man*. *Wilding* has won several prizes and is a thoroughly recommended read for anyone interested in wildlife, farming or the environment.

The latest from Surrey Hills Arts



Surrey Hills Society has worked closely with Surrey Hills Arts (SHA) for a number of years. Much of their work relies on external grant funding and, understandably, the majority of these sources have been diverted towards the pandemic. However, SHA haven't been idle. They have progressed a range of projects and are looking to initiate a fascinating piece of work that Society members may wish to participate in.

Recently, SHA have created an online programme of arts activities, many inspired by our landscape or using natural materials. This weekly programme is allowing people of all ages to join the artist by simply clicking on the [link](#) and being instructed with their artworks. So far they have painting for adults, wood carving and pyrography, print making and creating a papier mache friend

to keep you company in this period of isolation! These are all proving very popular and more classes are being added. The programme is also supporting our local artists who have suddenly found themselves without an income.

SHA have been developing a project on reviving historical crafts in the Surrey Hills. The project will research into the history of these traditional crafts of the landscape. It will identify and support specialists to train selected contemporary artists/makers who will then re-imagine the craft within the relevant landscape setting. SHA hopes that the project will give access to a new audience who would not normally experience the crafts or landscape whilst providing new skills and knowledge.

The Surrey Hills have a strong history of making use of the natural materials of the land. Basketry was a common industry in Guildford in the 18th century and hurdle making was widespread in South West Surrey. Brickmaking has a long history in East Horsley using locally dug clay, white sand from Ockham Common and red sand from Ripley.

The first stage of this project is the research - so if any Society members have relevant knowledge or an interest in researching, please do get in touch at surreyhillsarts@gmail.com. SHA are particularly interested in the crafts: basketry, brickmaking, hurdle making, pottery, textiles and glass. They intend to do a pilot project in one area, possibly near Farnham as this is Surrey's Craft Town. To fund this project, SHA will be looking for sponsorship. Naturally, if you know of anyone who would be interested in doing so, they would love to hear from you.

Virtual Visits



While we are probably all missing getting out and about in the Surrey Hills right now, we can still visit a diverse range of places as virtual escapism is just a click away. From the comfort of your own home, cup of coffee in hand, or even a glass of wine, why not explore some old favourites or try out somewhere new. Driving for pleasure may be forbidden and gardens, historic houses and galleries may all be closed right now, but we can still immerse ourselves in their beauty and often gain new insights and knowledge. Susie Turner, from our Newsletter Team, gives us some examples of what is on offer.

The National Garden Scheme highlights several wonderful virtual garden tours on its website, among them Dunsborough Park, Ripley, mentioned in our chairman's April e-mail as it was sadly one of our postponed visits. The video is very uplifting so you may wish to take another look as it really is the ultimate tulip destination. Or why not look at video clips of nearby [Wisley](#), exploring perhaps the wisteria walk, the walled gardens, or mixed borders to give you new ideas for your own garden.

And if you are missing those gallery visits, you may enjoy taking a 360 degree tour of the [Watts Gallery](#), or view the extensive art collection at [Polesden Lacey](#), or perhaps take a quick peek at the [Sculpture Park](#) near Churt, with the option to purchase a piece of sculpture online.

Surrey Day's virtual celebration, sponsored by BBC Radio Surrey, Surrey Life and Visit Surrey, on Saturday 2 May was a great success, so there is plenty to check out on the various websites. The [Visit Surrey](#) website in particular has many other suggestions, including lots of food and drink, – why not learn about a typical day at Albury Vineyard, family owned and using only organic grapes grown in the Surrey Hills. Or what about something for all the family such as Spring at Bocketts' Farm, the amazing British Wildlife Centre near Lingfield, or explore 16th century Loseley House and gardens, owned by Surrey's Lord Lieutenant, Michael More-Molyneux.

[Surrey Life](#) also features a series of mini virtual tours of some of Surrey prettiest places. For those missing hiking further afield, why not navigate your path along the [North Downs Way](#), starting at Farnham, and creating your own virtual trip. And if it's company you are after try following the [Bald Explorer](#), Richard Vobes, as he walks and talks his way through local places of interest, including Reigate's Fort and Priory Park or Leith Hill and the Greensand Way.

These are often short clips lasting just a few minutes, but they often offer something new to learn and give a real taster for a future visit.

While some virtual tours have been created specifically during lockdown, others are older, but nonetheless we feel they are still worth a look.



How is Coronavirus affecting our Local Producers?



[Diane Cooper](#), who is a key member of the PR & Communications Team, is also one of the organisers and volunteers at Ripley Farmers' Market. In the following article she provides an insight into how farmers' markets and their stallholders are coping with the issues thrown up by coronavirus.

[Ripley Farmers' Market](#) has been running now month in, month out second Saturday of the month for the last 15 years and has never been cancelled. Until now! There's a core of 30 plus regular stallholders who have loyal customers coming to market each month, as well as about another 20 who come seasonally or for special events. The Market committee are keeping in touch with them through this time and have discovered the varied ingenious ways they've come up with to satisfy their own customer base.

[Just Because Treats](#), offering South American sweet pastries, have an online booking service with free delivery in their area a couple of days per week. Jen, one of the owners, tells us a few of her coping strategies:

- Live one day at a time as it's difficult to plan in the current uncertainties
- Get better at understanding customers' new behaviours/needs
- Find ways to promptly adapt to their needs in commercially viable ways

[Café Zinho](#), based in the Surrey Hills in Woldingham, is a relatively new stallholder at the market. Sidinaea Wilson's business model is that she travels to buy raw coffee beans from plantations in her home country of Brazil twice a year and thereby cuts out the middle-man. She then roasts the beans and sells to restaurants/cafes/farmers' markets. Her latest shipment is stuck in Rotterdam and although she has stock to last for a couple more weeks, she needs the supply chain to unlock to get her raw materials through. Her business has gone down 70% in sales to restaurants etc. but her online sales have grown 500% and she needs supplies for those customers.

Many brewers/wineries/cider and spirits producers have had to cope with cancellation of orders to pubs and restaurants but most have been able to transfer their sales on-line relatively easily as this part of their business was already developed. Spirits producers have been offering alcohol hand sanitizer with purchases, initially for the NHS but now more widely available. Sadly, there have been films of barrels of beer being poured down the drain (literally) as it had passed its sell-by date.

Fortunately this wasn't necessary for [Godstone Brewers](#), who quickly diversified their cask sales into bottles, so there's been no wastage. Bottling is more time-consuming and their profit margins have suffered, but it's allowed them to sell their beer more easily via their local farm shop, as well as online sales. They also have a limited supply of lager being sold with a 50p donation per bottle to the NHS. They're looking forward to coming back to the rural markets they normally attend.

And Good Living Brew, award-winning producer of the low alcohol wine-lover's beer, [Binary Botanical](#), has a similar story to tell. Their online business was already fairly well-developed and they are very busy with free delivery of orders, with an additional offer of a free 12 pack of their no-alcohol beer according to spend.

Small nursery business, Specialist Plants, based in Ripley have found that being local and well-known to residents through their seasonal attendance at the farmers' market, are also coping fairly well. With people having plenty of time to nurture their gardens, perhaps start that little vegetable plot they always dreamed of and it being the right time of year, their sales are pretty stable with buyers coming to them rather than the other way round.

So this snapshot of how rural small traders have coped during the pandemic shows that most of them have found a way to adapt, reacted quickly to the lockdown and are managing to cope with reduced income so long as they can see a return to more conventional business trading soon.

Editors' Note: As we mentioned in our regular monthly email to you, you can find a [list of businesses that are providing home deliveries](#) and other services on the website of our sister organisation, Surrey Hills Enterprises. Our Newsletter Sponsors, Anthony Wakefield & Partners are also supporting Surrey Hills Businesses through their [CIVING](#) page on Facebook



Surrey Day 2020



Our Vice-President, Chris Howard, is also the Chairman of Visit Surrey. Wearing that hat, she has been one of the driving forces to create Surrey Day and to make it such a success. In the following article, she explains a little more about this year's special day.

Surrey Day, a national celebration of everything that makes the county so special, returned for a second year on Saturday 2 May. This time, the concept had to be re-thought to make it viable during lockdown. The result? A virtual Surrey Day. Jointly hosted by the county's tourist board, Visit Surrey, along with BBC Radio Surrey and Surrey Life magazine it was recreated for an online audience that tuned in to BBC Radio Surrey from all around the world.

Following last year's inaugural celebration, which saw several hundred special events taking place across the county, everything had to happen 'virtually' this time. However, if anything, the day proved to be even more successful, as it meant people could get involved from wherever they were based – making it a truly global event. It even included two of our Swedish SHS members, Gunnar and Katarina Nyman, who phoned in from Sweden to talk about why they love visiting the Surrey Hills. Closer to home, our Chairman, Gordon Jackson and Rob Fairbanks, Director of the Surrey Hills AONB, were both interviewed as part of the day.

BBC Radio Surrey made Surrey Day the focus of their entire programming from 6am to 6pm and managed to include a whole host of different topics. There was everything from online tours of the county's museums, galleries and attractions to special interviews. They pre-recorded potted histories of many of Surrey's towns – read by local experts such as museum curators – and included numerous clips produced by their own staff explaining what they liked about where they live and what they could see from those places.

People also took to social media to share their favourite local views – and, for the grand finale, Guildford Cathedral was lit up green, thanks to Peachy Productions, in homage to England's most densely-wooded county. No wonder then that #SurreyDay was also trending on Twitter.

The Society's congratulations go to all the people involved in making this such a wonderful day. There was clearly a vast amount of work involved but it resulted in a really successful celebration and promotion of what makes Surrey special. Now we are looking forward to Surrey Day 2021!

Editor's Note: Until the end of May 2020, the Surrey Day broadcasts can be heard on the BBC Sounds app by clicking [here](#).



We hope that you have found this newsletter of interest. As you can see, we have not been idle during lockdown and we are looking forward to getting out and meeting you all in person again as soon as possible.