

Facsimile of eNewsletter sent to our members on 3 June 2021  
All these articles may be found on the News page of our website



Welcome to our June 2021 eNewsletter. As we promised in the March paper-based edition, we are now aiming for a mix of paper and electronic newsletters so that we can enhance our offering whilst minimising costs.

A lot has happened in recent months! In part, this is due to the easing of coronavirus restrictions but, as always, the spring brings with it the opportunity for more events, hopefully better weather and a natural feeling of wanting to get out and enjoy our Surrey Hills.

In this latest edition we have picked up on some of the positives - two new initiatives which are taking place, ongoing events that you can visit and enjoy plus a number of items with a strong "Conservation" element to them.

We hope you will enjoy reading the articles and that they will inspire you to get out into the Surrey Hills to play your part in conserving and enhancing the area even more.

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

*Registered Charity Number 1125532*

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## Two new initiatives in the Surrey Hills

### Surrey Hills Champions' Programme



The Surrey Hills Society is delighted to be collaborating with Surrey Hills Enterprises to implement nature recovery projects as part of their Surrey Hills Champions programme.

The programme is an exciting opportunity to become part of a growing network of like-minded individuals and organisations, who share the same love of the Surrey Hills. There are a number of benefits for those that subscribe to become Champions including exclusive offers for products, experiences and events provided by Trade Mark Surrey Hills businesses. Trade Mark Surrey Hills is a mark of **local provenance, quality and sustainability**.

The cost of becoming a Champion is £25 of which £10 will be paid by Surrey Hills Enterprises to the Society to carry out vital community projects including selective tree planting, hedgerow planting and supporting young people to benefit from the healing power of nature. These projects are a significant part of our strategy to increase environmental sustainability, encourage native insects and wildlife and play our part to help reduce climate change.

Full details of the Surrey Hills Champion Scheme can be found [here](#)

Society members are entitled to a subscription discount of 20% using the following coupon code: **SHSCH2021**

### The first Nature Recovery site - Clandon Wood

The first designated site will be **Clandon Wood Natural Burial ground and nature reserve**. The 31 acre grounds are managed to complement the surrounding farmland and woodlands to the benefit of local wildlife. Although most of the site is meadowland the newly planted hedgerow trees will blend the woodlands and grasslands of the neighbourhood together.



### Friends of the Surrey Hills



As a Society member you already receive our regular paper and electronic newsletters, which provide in-depth commentary on a wide variety of interesting aspects of the Surrey Hills. You also receive our regular mail chimp that alert you to the events that are organised by the Society for its members.

In addition, the AONB is now publishing a more regular e-newsletter 'News from the Surrey Hills' that will highlight the work of the entire Surrey Hills Family. It's completely free and will be issued direct to your inbox every six weeks. If you wish to receive this simply [click here to subscribe](#) and start receiving updates, news and events from across the Surrey Hills.

PLEASE NOTE the Surrey Hills Society will not give your contact details to anyone without your prior consent. For further information please see our [privacy policy](#).

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## Greening Communities in the Surrey Hills

Concern over climate change is inspiring dramatic changes in thinking all around the world and that includes many in the Surrey Hills too.

In my own village of Shamley Green, we decided to form an environment group in January 2019. Despite the pandemic the group has gone from strength to strength. There were two urgent tasks. The first was to find more volunteers for the toad patrols that happen in February and March. Toads like to make their way back to the pond of their birth to breed at this time - just around dusk. Unfortunately this coincides with the evening rush hour and has resulted in many toads being killed.



The second urgent job was to do something about our village ponds. One had become so overgrown with an invasive weed (*crassula helmsii*), that the ducks were now standing on the pond - not in it! We also have a second pond which was completely choked by reed mace.

But where to start? We were just all enthusiastic amateurs. We contacted the Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group who recommended that we started with an environmental audit. The parish council agreed to pay for this at their March meeting and by April we had an expert out surveying our ponds and creating a report. A ponds working group was formed. Our challenge, however, was that everyone had a slightly different idea as to the purpose of the two ponds and it appears that ducks and amphibians are not great neighbours. The consensus eventually was that we would manage one pond for wildlife and the other pond for ducks and humans.

Once the project brief regarding the ponds had been agreed, a generous villager came forward and offered to pay for the expensive task of removing the *crassula* and the reed mace in the autumn of 2020.

Another group was formed to work with the parish council to change the way we mowed our commons, as we wanted to increase biodiversity through the creation of wildflower meadows. It also had implications for the



frogs and toads who need the long grass for protection and green corridors to move away from the ponds after breeding.

Some residents felt that the long grass would look unkempt and so began a detailed consultation with all the villagers to agree where we would mow and where we would not.

One of our members turned out to be a very knowledgeable landscape designer. She organised, as part of her company's training scheme, to bring Prof James Titchmough, the famous designer of the wildflower meadows at the Olympic Park, to spend the day with us. After spending the morning with her team, she generously donated the rest of his day to meet with our volunteers and give us advice on how to manage our commons more sustainably.



We now have groups focussing on birds and trees, whilst another group is working with our local schools. It has been really surprising how easy it has been to get these projects started and we seem to have lots of support from the borough council and our parish council. I know there are quite a number of other environment groups across the Surrey Hills, so do think about getting involved in one local to you. I have found these environmental initiatives very rewarding and have also met some really interesting new people in my village.

*Chris Howard*

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## Farmers' Markets



Many of us are giving much more thought to our health and wellbeing since the pandemic and have developed a greater interest in the provenance and traceability of our food. We have also become much more aware of our local community and shown an increasing desire to buy local. We are lucky in Surrey to have an array of wonderful products that are grown and produced locally. What better way can there be to support our local producers than buying food from one of Surrey's farmers' markets?

They range from the relatively large monthly markets of Guildford, Farnham and Ripley through to far smaller ones such as the weekly Food Float in Dorking. Those in-between include Cobham, Horsley, Ockley, Reigate and the South West Surrey Farmers' Market Co-operative - a not-for-profit organisation that sells locally grown or sourced products through markets in Godalming, Haslemere and Milford.

Many of these markets have become a social hub for the local community - such as the monthly farmers' market in Ripley. Visiting on a wet and windy morning in May, families were out and about despite the rain, stopping to chat and trying or buying from a diverse range of products. There were well over thirty stall holders set out over the Green. Meat, poultry, honey, cheese, breads, biscuits, handmade chocolates, vegetables and plants were all for sale, along with the more unusual items such as microgreens and naturally fermented vegetables. Stalls with wine, beer and even rum were offering tastings along with the very much on-trend probiotic drinks. Joining the queue to buy locally grown asparagus, baby carrots and spinach was well worth the wait. As I left, another queue was building for the fresh fish mobile market where naturally the fish came from a greater distance.



Guildford's farmers' market takes place on the High Street on the first Tuesday of every month. It has been thriving since 2000 and has a wide range of local vendors from Guildford and further afield. The layout along the cobbled street is perhaps less family friendly, but the focus of this market is for customers to buy things and perhaps grab a bargain.

A large corn and cattle market was once a feature of Dorking High Street while a poultry market was regularly held in South Street where the famous 'Dorking Chickens' were sold. These have been more recently succeeded by a monthly artisan market and a weekly small general market. The Friday I visited there were some half dozen traders, selling plants, fresh fish, household goods, fruit and vegetables. Sadly, local produce seemed thin on the ground.



However, Dorking still offers access to local farmers and other suppliers through the weekly Food Float; a not-for-profit company staffed by volunteers. It has been operating since 2010 and offers a wide range of locally sourced produce all crammed onto an old-fashioned stand rather like a milk float. There was an incredible range of dairy, meat, preserves, bread and vegetables along with some more unusual items such as locally ground speciality coffee and dried fruit crisps. It really is all about local produce, with just a few items coming from across county borders. I caught up with Maddie who runs the operation asking her how lockdown had affected their trade. She

explained they managed to do extremely well, switching much of their operation to home deliveries as well as donating produce to local families.

With sustainable living and a growing interest in our local communities firmly on the agenda, farmers' markets are hopefully very much here to stay.

Susie Turner

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## Planting trees - an informed viewpoint



*Patrick Mannix is a local resident and has been a practicing owner/operator of Sandhurst Copse & Sheepwalk woodland in the Surrey Hills AONB for the last 20 years. He has lectured and hosted visits by the Surrey Hills Society and many members take advantage of his "managed access" system, giving permission to walk in the woodland. Interacting with nature every day, observing and learning, he has been curious about nature and natural processes since his grandfather taught him the names of trees in the 1940s. Now, as a grandfather himself, his concerns are about the world our grandchildren will grow up in and how we can learn to respect our natural environment before it is too late.*

The growing awareness of the need to plant trees and respect other aspects of nature is very welcome; but with a little caution. Nature is such a complex web of interaction between the smallest invisible organisms comprising the microbiome of the soil, and the larger ones that we can see, that almost any action, however well intended, will have an adverse reaction somewhere. Only nature left to itself over a long time can create biodiversity, we do not have a sufficient grasp of the underpinnings. We seem only able to damage it.

To help nature, we should start by understanding what we already have, supporting and promoting that which does well. If we wish to try new species in the expectation that they may benefit from or be better able to withstand climate change, then plant a few as a test, indeed plant a few of different types. When I was managing herbaceous borders that we inherited with our house in Shamley Green, I would always buy several of a new plant, or of several different plants and then only buy more of the ones that were happy in that location and succeeded. In Sandhurst Copse & Sheepwalk woodland for 20 years I have only planted seed or seedlings from trees already in the wood, on the basis that if the mother tree is happy then it increases the chance that the seedlings will be happy, in that location. I am now experimenting with some additional species, eg wild service trees; but



again, plant a few and only replicate those that show success. If you want to try wildflower seeds, then do so on an isolated test site, and monitor what happens to the already established species and only try one new species at a time. Only promote those that do well but do not overwhelm the existing inhabitants.

Be cautious regarding tree planting schemes. If you want to plant a tree, then decide what type of tree for what purpose. It should then be planted in a suitable location for that purpose. Trees do need some management in particular to prevent damage from rodents, rabbits, deer and squirrels, is that going to be provided? Also, whilst planting a tree is touted as a contribution to addressing climate change, it should not be an excuse for failing to take other action. Our most significant contribution to addressing climate change is by adjusting our lifestyle regarding long haul flights, motor vehicles, consumption of beef and dairy products, unnecessary purchases and cutting out any excess. Do not plant a tree until you have, at least, decided on your own personal actions.

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## Update from Surrey Hills Arts

This June, you will be able to explore, experience and enjoy the artwork of artists from across Surrey as they welcome the public into their studios for the annual Surrey Artists Open Studios (SAOS) event. SAOS has been running for 21 years and this year there will be 286 artists taking part in 162 studios.

As well as a chance to meet and talk to artists in their place of work, the summer open studios event offers visitors the opportunity to view demonstrations, buy artwork, enter a free prize draw and even get involved in creative workshops. You should be able to pick up a brochure from your local library or gallery.

The launch weekend takes place on Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 June, with artists offering an array of activities exclusively for first weekend visitors. There will be the opportunity to take part in taster workshops with different materials across the arts and crafts as well as sampling refreshments especially put on for the weekend.

Throughout the event there will be artists' trails that you can do on foot and some to enjoy outdoors such as the Birtley Woodland Art Space where wood sculptor Ruth Wheeler has created a community arts, craft and wellbeing space bringing together a diverse range of talented artists.

This year, artists will be opening in a Covid-safe way, offering a range of measures to keep both themselves and members of the public safe when visiting studios across the county. With this in mind, some visitor numbers to studios may be limited. Check out the [SAOS website](#) for the latest updates.



Another outing for you to enjoy is a visit to RSPB Farnham Heath. Heathland Artworks returns for a summer-long experience combining a beautiful walk with an innovative arts trail. Students in 'Craft, Fine Art and Textiles' from the University for the Creative Arts have been exploring the wildlife, geology and history of the heath to develop these artworks and make them in their workshops.



This year their exciting artworks include textile hangings, ceramic egg forms and navigation markers. Fine Art MA student Noelle Geneviev creates stunning collages and she will be developing her work by finding a way to waterproof these. They will wrap around the trees in an incredible display of images, textures and colours. This is just one of twelve artworks you can see. A [downloadable map](#) will be available throughout the event.

If time permits, why not take a detour to the viewpoint on the heath where you can find the Surrey Hills Arts commissioned 'The House of Invisible Hands' created by sculptor Walter Bailey.

Heathland Artworks will be open for visitors at Farnham Heath from June 24 - 31 October, free of charge. Parking is available at the Rural Life Living Museum, Tilford, during opening hours.

Ali Clarke

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## Our Butterflies

*Ben Carter has been one of the Society's younger volunteers for a number of years (he can be seen modelling our SHS fleeces in a photo on our [Shop web page](#)). In this article he explains how recent events have led to his interest in butterflies and introduces some of the conservation initiatives being undertaken in and around the Surrey Hills.*



Connecting with nature has been very important for me during the lockdown. During breaks from the computer, following a day of working from home last summer, I would often walk to local parks, countryside and common land near to where I live in Haslemere. Making an effort to feel mindful and connect to the natural space I was in when exploring new areas on my doorstep, I began to notice the different butterflies that were fluttering around. I made records and researched what I had seen. These activities really began to develop my interest in butterflies as well as help to get through long periods of lockdown.

I soon discovered that we are extremely lucky to have 42 different species of butterflies resident in Surrey. Our diverse landscapes and habitats within the county really encourage a wide range of species. These vary from common garden butterflies, such as the Red Admiral and Large White, to delicate and vibrant Blues that inhabit our chalk grassland. Surrey is also the only remaining refuge in the south-east of the elusive Wood White butterfly, which is one of the rarest in the country.



However, it is clear that despite this biodiversity, butterflies face large challenges in our changing world.

According to the charity Butterfly Conservation, '76% of the UK's resident and regular migrant butterflies declined in abundance, occurrence or both over the last four decades.' Luckily, charities such as this are working hard to stabilise these alarming trends by developing habitat restoration projects. There are various exciting projects that exist locally, which require volunteers, and the Surrey branch of the charity has its own excellent [website](#).



One way for everybody to get involved in conserving butterflies is to take part in the annual 'Big Butterfly Count' in July. According to Butterfly Conservation '*The Big Butterfly Count is a UK-wide survey aimed at helping us assess the health of our environment simply by counting the amount and type of butterflies we see.*' The exciting thing about the count is that anyone can take part, anywhere they like. You could count butterflies from your garden or out in the countryside on a walk. When the next count takes place this summer, I urge everyone to get involved and record what they

see. It is an enjoyable experience and provides crucial scientific data.

I don't profess to be a butterfly expert, but taking part in the **Big Butterfly Count last year** has really inspired me to join Butterfly Conservation so I can learn more about these amazing, beautiful and important insects. With lockdown easing and being allowed to travel further afield, I am looking forward to discovering more species on my walks. There are still so many butterflies for me to discover within the amazingly varied landscapes of the Surrey Hills.



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## The Vineyards of the Surrey Hills

At the Guildford Book Festival in 2020 Oz Clarke spoke about his latest book, "English Wine - From Still to Sparkling - The Newest New World Wine Country".

An extraordinary transformation has been quietly taking place during the last 20 years. Although wine has been made in England for over 2000 years - the Romans planted vineyards as far north as Lincolnshire - it would have been hard to find anyone that took English wine seriously during most of that period. Since the turn of the century there has been an ever-increasing interest in the potential for vineyards in England and in 2019 we produced 10.5 million bottles of wine - 72% of which was sparkling.



The harbinger of change occurred in 1998 when Nyetimber's 1993 Classic Cuvée sparkling wine was awarded the Trophy for the Best Sparkling Wine in the World, shaking the wine establishment to its core. Since then, a recognition that the chalk geology of the North and South Downs is nearly identical to that in Champagne and the certainty of increasing temperatures because of climate change have led to more and more plantings. Even some of the great French Champagne Houses such as Taittinger and Vranken-Pommery have begun planting the traditional champagne grape varieties in Kent and Hampshire.

The Surrey Hills is now a recognised wine growing region. The Vineyards of the Surrey Hills collaborate to market their award-winning wines, although each has its own unique way of promoting a wine experience.

**Denbies**, owned and run by the White family, is the largest single estate vineyard in the country and produces several internationally award-winning wines. Dine at the Vineyard or Gallery Restaurants, experience an indoor wine tasting and winery tour or take an outdoor vineyard tour on a train and enjoy the panoramic views of the vineyard and the North Downs.



It was their still Silent Pool Rosé that first put **Albury Organic Vineyard** on the map when it was served on the Royal Barge to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. The brainchild of former IT specialist, Nick Wenman, Albury rigorously apply biodynamic principles to the production of their excellent gold award winning sparkling wines. Again, there are a wide variety of experiences to enjoy: Sparkling Afternoon Tea (with the team from the Dabbling Duck), Biryani and Bubbles (with nearby Mandira's Kitchen), Bee Keeping Demonstration with Sergio, the Albury Bee Keeper, and Music in the Vineyard to mention just a few.

At **High Clandon** Bruce and Sybilla Tindale are twice winners of the prestigious IWC Cellar Door of the Year in 2017 and 2018. They call their sparkling wine Quintessence of England. And that is certainly the sense you get if you visit the Glass Barn - their new visitor centre where they host sparkling wine tastings alongside Sculpture and Art exhibitions. Their wildflower meadow enjoys glorious views over the AONB towards London with the boutique vineyard nestling below.

Mike and Hilary Wagstaff took over **Greyfriars Vineyard** In 2010. With over 50 acres now planted near their base on the Hogs Back they have dug a cellar out of the chalk that will house 250,000 bottles. They specialise in making top quality sparkling wines using the traditional method but with the most modern grape growing and winemaking technology.

Mia and Graham Wrigley run the family-owned business at **Chilworth Manor** that produces excellent Rosé made from 51% Pinot Meunier and 49% Pinot Noir. Chilworth Manor is a house and estate rooted in an extraordinary 1000 year history that reaches as far back as the Domesday Book - its story told through the lives of Saxons, Normans, monks, and gunpowder manufacturers. Their 2020 production is already sold out!

There are other wineries in or near the Surrey Hills AONB such as **Godstone** and **Iron Railway** and all the signs are that future growth of wineries in the Surrey Hills will be substantial. There are now 222 vineyards in the South East representing 61.5% of the total hectareage in the UK. 26% of winegrowers in England have indicated an intention to plant more vines in the next three years (see **Wine GB 2020 Industry Report**).

Interestingly, it is not only the wineries that are growing. There are many breweries and distilleries beginning to flourish in the Surrey Hills. Keep an eye out for future eNewsletters when we hope to review the exciting things that are happening in this area.

*Gordon Jackson*

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*We hope that you have found this newsletter of interest. Our Management Team and other volunteers have been working hard behind the scenes to ensure that we get back to a post-pandemic normal as quickly as possible. In particular, the Events team have been very busy and visits or other experiences are being published on-line on an ongoing basis. Keep up to date with all our Surrey Hills Society activities by checking our website [www.surreyhillssociety.org](http://www.surreyhillssociety.org) on a regular basis.*