

**Date:** Wednesday 27 November 2019

**Report:** Surrey Hills Society – Autumn 2019

**Written by:** Gordon Jackson - Chairman

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### **Purpose of Report**

To report on the activities of the Surrey Hills Society

### **Summary**

The Surrey Hills Society continues in its main role of promoting and engaging with the public and raising awareness of the issues facing the AONB. It also leads on, and supports, relevant projects across the AONB, in partnership with key stakeholders. This report covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

### **Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service**

The Earl of Wessex KG GCVO presented The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service to the Society on Wednesday 6 November 2019 at a ceremony attended by over 40 Society volunteers. The presentation took place at Albury Old Saxon Church.

Before presenting the Award, Prince Edward spent time talking to the Society’s volunteers about the work that they do. He heard about the Heritage Lottery funded Tales of the Tillingbourne project, which sought to encourage various communities along the valley of the River Tillingbourne to engage in the unique and beautiful landscape by researching its industries, promoting heritage trails throughout, capturing local knowledge through oral histories, and monitoring and recording the ecology of the river. Part of the legacy of the project is a permanent display at Shere Museum that includes 7 (1.2m high) puppets, that were specially loaned for the occasion.

The Earl was shown a short play by Nick White of GeeYou entitled “Tales of the Wey”, which the Society hopes to develop as part of a sequel to the Tales of the Tillingbourne Project.

### **The SHS Strategy**

We have continued to progress our strategy

- **Create Social Media presence and strategy**
  - I am pleased to report that we have engaged Tilda Street to assist with the promotion of the Society’s Social Media. Tilda will be working approximately 5 hours per week for the Society and is currently developing our strategy. We will have Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages with the primary emphasis being on Instagram, as we obviously have a large quantity of photographs.
  
- **Working with others in the Surrey Hills**
  - Arts and Crafts Movement  
The Chairman and Secretary of ACMS, Carolyn Smith and Denise Todd were guest speakers at our AGM and gave an interesting presentation about Goddards and the work of ACMS. We are signposting two forthcoming ACMS events and, as a result of

introductions they have made, will be visiting Tollsworth Manor in Chaldon in June 2020.

- Surrey Hills Enterprises
  - This year the Society had a stall at the Surrey Hills Wood Fair, and we would like to build on this next year. We think that it would be advantageous to be situated near the entrance as this makes a closer link with the Surrey Hills family and we could also include some information about the work of the Surrey Hills Trust Fund.
  - We are arranging visits in the Spring next year to the Surrey Copper Distillery and Adam Aaronson Glass Studios, both of which are SHE members.
  - See also the Clandon Wood event below
- Surrey Wildlife Trust
  - We are supporting SWT's Youth Summit on 26 March 2020 with a contribution of £500.
  - Sarah Jane Chimbwandira will be doing a talk to Society members alongside Simon Ferrar of Clandon Wood Natural Burial Ground about biodiversity in the Surrey Hills.
  - We are also aiming to do further walks in conjunction with SWT in the Summer
- University of Surrey

We have close links with UoS and are heavily involved in the organisation of the Surrey Hills Symposium – “Our Natural Health Service”, which is being hosted by UoS on 27 November.
- Surrey Hills Arts
  - The Society is supporting the Inspiring Views Appeal for a new bench at Albury above Newlands Corner and is making available free membership for one year as part of the award scheme that has been developed to encourage the Crowd Funding appeal. We are delighted that the Crowd Funding has raised the required £8,000.
  - Although not specifically a Surrey Hills Arts project we are developing plans for the promotion by the Society of trails promoting existing sculptures in Surrey. The works of Lucy Quinell have been identified as the pilot project.
- Vantagepoint Magazine
  - Gordon Jackson was one of the judges for the magazines Surrey Hills photographic competition. The standard was extremely high and the winning entries will be published in the December edition. The winner's prize included free membership of the Society for one year.
- Support Walk Festivals and walk programmes
  - In September, we led 12 walks as part of Guildford Walkfest, out of the total programme of 49 walks, and were represented on several others. The Society is very heavily represented on the Guildford Walkfest Committee and provided sponsorship. The festival was a huge success with average attendance being about 16 people per walk, although the Society walks mostly attracted between 20 to 30 people. One walk in particular stands out, Gordon Jackson and Chris Howard worked together with the Guildford Street Angels to lead a sponsored walk from Guildford to Denbies along the North Downs Way – over £3400 was raised as a result of the walk for this very good cause.
  - We are working with Farnham walking festival for 2020 and will be leading on some walks for them.

## **The Society's AGM**

The Surrey Hills Society AGM was held at 10:30 am on Saturday 12th October at the Evelyn Hall in Abinger Common followed by lunch at the Abinger Hatch and a visit to St James Church on the Common and short walk to see the outside of Goddards. There were nearly 60 attendees and it was a hugely successful day despite a certain amount of rain!

## **Staffing**

As reported above, Tilda Street has joined us as a Social Media consultant.

Lesley Crofts continues as our Co-ordinator and is now well entrenched.

## **Premises**

The Society has given up its room at Loseley Park because the current tenancy, which was shared with Visit Surrey, has come to an end. We are taking additional storage in the Reigate area to supplement our Shalford store.

## **Funding and Charitable Objectives**

The Society continues to be a totally self-funded organisation, with core funding coming from our membership fees, our events programme, donations and fund-raising events. The majority of our events make a small profit and any surplus over operating expenses is applied towards small charitable grants that support the Society's objectives.

Our most recent grant is to Surrey Wildlife Trust to support their Youth Engagement Day as reported above.

We are also acting as delivery partner for the Into the Wild Project by contracting with the independent consultant, Genevieve Lebus. Details of this project are in the report to the Board on behalf of the Surrey Hills Trust Fund.

## **Communications and Publicity**

In addition to the priority emphasis on our Social Media presence, which I have mentioned above, we are looking at various minor changes to Society's website that will improve the user experience.

The Winter newsletter will shortly be in circulation.

Chris Howard continues to write a monthly column in Surrey Life magazine on current affairs in the Surrey Hills. She also creates the monthly walk pages sometimes in collaboration with other Society walk leaders

## **Talks**

Our Vice-President, Ken Bare, continues to deliver talks to various groups across the County. This not only fulfils our charitable aim to promote the SHAONB, but also brings us an income as often the organisations we speak to make us a charitable donation.

## Shows

Since the beginning of September, we have attended the Surrey Hills Challenge and the Surrey Hills Wood Fair.

## Walks

The Society continues to run a monthly free walk to engage wider public (particularly young people) to get out and enjoy the Surrey Hills and learn more about the AONB. We have around 20-30 people attending each walk.

## Events

The Society volunteers organise and run over 40 events each year. The events are open to all with different prices for members and non-members. Most of the walks are free. All events are listed on our website and can be booked online.

During the reporting period the following events have been held in addition to the Walkfest events mentioned above:

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|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| • The Industrial History of Abinger  | Sunday 15 September    |
| • Return to Mane Chance Sanctuary    | Tuesday 17 September   |
| • A day on the farm at Wooton        | Saturday 21 September  |
| • Guided walk around Newdigate       | Wednesday 25 September |
| • Explore Polesden Lacey             | Sunday 6 October       |
| • Saving our Bees                    | Thursday 24 October    |
| • Tree and Fungi Identification Walk | Wednesday 30 October   |
| • Explore Reigate                    | Sunday 3 November      |

Forthcoming Events:

We are currently putting together our Spring and early Summer Programme in preparation for the next issue of our Newsletter. The following future events are definite, but others are planned:

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| • Pre-Christmas Walk at Belmont School       | Saturday 7 December          |
| • Christmas Wreath Making                    | Saturday 14 December         |
| • Walk off your Christmas Pudding            | Friday 27 December           |
| • Walk around Godalming                      | Sunday 5 January             |
| • Visit to the Surrey Copper Distillery      | Thursday 13 February         |
| • Meet the Farmer – Ian Jones                | Thursday 3 March             |
| • Wool Industry in Guildford – Talk and walk | Tuesday 10 March             |
| • Adam Aaronson Glass Studio                 | Thursday 19 March (date tbc) |
| • Clandon Wood – Biodiversity talk           | Wednesday 22 April           |

## Recommendations

The AONB Board is asked to note the report.