



Members at the launch party

## SOCIETY LAUNCH EVENT A GREAT SUCCESS

Some distinguished guests joined Surrey Hills Society members at a launch celebration event in The Guildhall, Guildford, in the middle of September. Guests included Mole Valley MP Sir Paul Beresford, who recently joined the Society, and the Mayor of Guildford, Jennifer Jordan.

In the ancient setting of the Guildhall, members and guests had the

opportunity to enjoy a drinks reception, a wine tasting with Dorking winemakers Denbies, canapés from Society member Alan Fisher's Surrey Gourmet company and a short concert by the Godalming Operatic Society, all organised by Guildford town centre manager and Society member Chris Howard.

Chairman of the Surrey Hills Society, Neil Maltby, welcomed the guests and thanked Guildford Mayor Jennifer Jordan for allowing the Society to use the Guildhall. He told guests that the Society had grown fast this year, less than

twelve months from the first meeting at which its formation was proposed. It had now been confirmed as a registered charity. And he thanked all those who had contributed to the work of setting up the Society and getting it underway.

He added: "I have been very encouraged by the enthusiasm with which so many people have welcomed the formation of the Society. It has shown that there are many people in and around Surrey who share my enjoyment of the Surrey Hills. Charitable status and our steady expansion also means that there are more opportunities for people to volunteer to help with the running of the Society or in organising and participating in walks and projects or enjoying social events."

### CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

"Great news; the Surrey Hills Society is now a registered Charity. This means that we will now be able to reclaim tax on donations and be eligible to apply for a wider range of grants and funds than we were before.



Sir Paul Beresford and Neil Maltby

The membership continues to grow and I am delighted to welcome our many new, founder and affiliate members. Once again a reminder for Sunday November 2nd when a Surrey Hills 50th Anniversary Country Fair will be taking place at the Dorking Halls. We are also looking at some of the 'issues' that are of concern to us all, such as fly tipping and some of the projects suggested to us, such as clearer and more informative waymarking. We do urgently need more volunteers to help us run our new Society, organise events, help us with projects and help us source and raise funds for the many opportunities that there are for us to deliver our aims and objectives. If you can spare anything from an hour to a few days a month, please contact Gail Sperrin [info@surreyhillssociety.org](mailto:info@surreyhillssociety.org) or 01372 220647.

Members have benefited from a variety of events this year, our visit to Hindhead Common and the new A3 tunnel was a great success and hopefully will be repeated next year. Society

members were invited to an exclusive viewing of an exhibition at the Guildford House Gallery in August which focused on fifty years of farming in the Surrey Hills. Some of these eye-catching displays will be at the Dorking Halls on Sunday 2nd November. We value your feedback and enclose with this newsletter a questionnaire to help us to further understand which areas you would like the Society to concentrate on. We are also looking to widen the scope of our walks, talks and events programme to include weekends, and further liaise with other organisations running events in the Surrey Hills. Please make your views known by completing the questionnaire.



Members at the Guildford House Gallery

Finally, we are looking to have a 'Christmas Party' get together in December and will circulate details when the arrangements are made. Do not forget to look at our website [www.surreyhillssociety.org](http://www.surreyhillssociety.org) and pick up on all the latest news."

**Neil Maltby, Chairman of the Surrey Hills Society**

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## CELEBRATING SURREY HILLS HISTORY WITH A LOTTERY GRANT



Half a century of farming and food production in the Surrey Hills has been celebrated this year thanks to a grant of £41,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The 50th anniversary of the Surrey Hills' designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty fell in May. 2008 also marks the European Year of Food and Farming, which has provided a double reason for a celebration that has taken the form of a host of events.

Commenting on the project, Michael Sydney, Chairman of the Surrey Hills Board says:

*"Our aim is to enable as wide an audience as possible to understand, appreciate and celebrate the cultural and natural heritage of the Surrey Hills landscape."*

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sheena Vick, Regional Manager for South East England, says:

*"This project has provided an opportunity for local people and especially children to understand how their communities and landscapes have been shaped*

*by farming and food production over many years,"*

Neil Maltby, chairman of the Surrey Hills Society, adds:

*"The 50th anniversary of the start of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the ideal moment to be working to raise awareness of the Surrey Hills landscape and provide opportunities for residents, visitors, local community groups and businesses to get involved in exploring and learning about the special qualities and distinctiveness of the area. This award from the Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled the Society to make a much greater impact, and, bearing in mind the pressure local farmers have been under, the theme of food and farming is of the utmost importance to the area."*

Read on to find out more about the projects taking place this year...

### HAS THE SURREY HILLS LANDSCAPE SUCCEEDED IN KEEPING ITS CHARM?

Local photographer Donald Ashley Birkinshaw had a passion for the countryside and his evocative scenes of post-war Surrey are part nostalgic, part reassuringly familiar. As part of this project a comparison was made of his images taken in the 1950s with the same image taken today. The 2008 view of the same landscapes and buildings show how much the car has intruded, with all its accompanying paraphernalia of road signs and markings. More trees, less open space but the countryside and villages are still beautiful.

Right Haslemere today  
and below Haslemere in  
the 1950s



To view more  
images visit  
[www.surreyhills.org](http://www.surreyhills.org)



## Surrey Hills 50th Anniversary COUNTRY FAIR

2nd November 2008  
11am - 4pm • Dorking Halls

Visit the Dorking Halls on 2nd November and discover more about 50 years of food and farming in the Surrey Hills. Entry is free and there will be a host of stalls selling local produce and rural crafts.

You'll also discover morris dancers, a traditional story teller, face painter, information on wood fuel, other Surrey Hills projects and a wonderful display of 'Then and Now' photographs comparing the Surrey Hills 50 years ago with today.

To find out more visit [www.surreyhills.org](http://www.surreyhills.org)

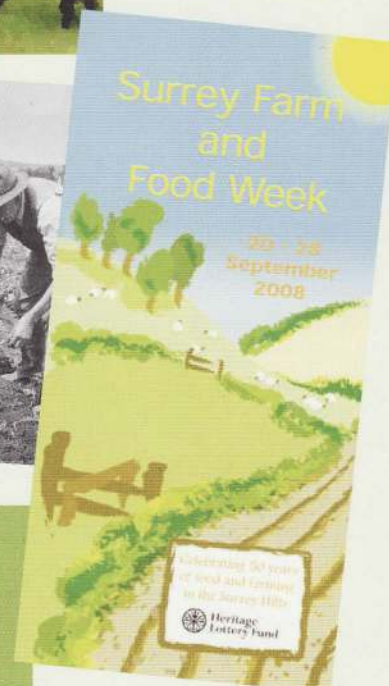




The Food and Farming project has also provided the sponsorship for the Surrey Farm and Food week organised by the Surrey County Agricultural Society in September. Activities have included guided farm walks and open days, food festivals and much more.



Many of the Surrey farms which featured in this programme have been looked after by the same family for several generations, and the current farmers are mines of information about the history of their landscapes.



*"Farming was exciting right through the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Tractors had come in and horses went out. We needed fewer farmhands as mechanisation took over. 50 years ago nearly every farmer had a few cows but those little farms have now gone".*

Bill Westnedge, who has farmed at Norwood Hill in Surrey since 1947.

As part of the project the Surrey Heritage team engaged people living in the Surrey Hills through community workshops. The Old Surrey Downs Project took up the offer of an archive based workshop. Chris Skinner, Project Officer comments;



Chris Skinner talking about the work of the Old Surrey Downs Project

"I just wanted to say how much we valued the day we spent at The History Centre. It was the first time I had visited and I was amazed at the treasures it held in store - the image of one of our volunteers holding an ancient Court Roll and actually reading it is one that I will never forget.

Thanks to the opportunity provided by the Surrey Hills Food and Farming project, we were able to locate some photographic images of the North Downs from the 1920s, clearly showing the effects of sheep grazing on the landscape, as well as some images of cattle grazing on a downland site that we thought had only been previously grazed by sheep. We also discovered a map dated 1812 which supplied some much-needed information about the land we currently use as hold-back land for our sheep and those court rolls also referred to sheep from Banstead, so perhaps there was a "Banstead breed" after all... the research continues.

I am confident that we will have some interesting information to present to other groups participating in the

Surrey Hills Food and Farming project, but must point out that this is only the start - our visit to the History Centre has generated a huge amount of interest and enthusiasm and new leads for research. We now consider that it will be an ongoing project for us.

Our visit to the History Centre will help us to achieve our aim of raising public awareness of the interdependence between farming and wildlife and we consider ourselves very fortunate in being able to participate in this initiative. Thank you for such an interesting and productive day"



A further workshop with representatives from the Hindhead Together Partnership has also been a success. The partnership whose aim is to secure a brighter future for the Hindhead area arising from the £370m road scheme, is keen to document oral histories of local people. Several interviews have taken place and it has been decided to expand the idea to a Surrey wide villages project.

In addition a number of individuals involved in work in the Surrey Hills e.g. farmers, conservation workers etc. are due to be interviewed to further add valuable information to the historic record of life in the Surrey Hills over the last 50 years.



### WHY THE SURREY HILLS IS IMPORTANT TO US SALLY VARAH HIGH SHERIFF OF SURREY



Sally Varah with Pendelope Keith CBE © Surrey Hills Board

"Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are the jewels of the English landscape – and for me, the Surrey Hills AONB is the greatest treasure of them all. I am inordinately impressed by the enthusiasm and momentum of the Surrey Hills Society – and the commitment and hard work of so many to promote and protect this extraordinarily diverse landscape. These were the hills and views that my late husband loved, and where we walked. That's another reason why I joined as a founder member and – as High Sheriff of Surrey 2008-09 – I am encouraging those I meet to do the same!"

### WALK LEADERSHIP TRAINING DAY – one of the many events available to members of the Society

We met at 10am at the National Trust's lovely offices at Warren Farm Barns. Chris our trainer soon got us to introduce ourselves and to describe our previous experience of leading walks, which ranged from not a lot to lots and lots! We split into small groups and the morning raced by as we tackled the tasks Chris set us. The discussion was lively as we had to tease out the different reasons people might have for organising or attending guided walks, the role of the walk leader, and the different leadership styles that can be used. It turned out that we needed mostly common sense and some lateral thinking, and everyone was able to contribute and to learn from each other.

Fortified by the delicious sandwiches and cake provided by Alan from Surrey Gourmet, we were eager to get out onto Box Hill. We started with a short circular walk to explore the chalk grassland, beech and yew woodland, fabulous views and



Society members enjoying the day

the fascinating mobilisation fort. Chris shared her wide knowledge of the habitats and species we saw – did you know that the flowers on English orchids grow upside down?

And then it was our turn! Somewhat nervously we put theory into practice and enjoyed two short walks on which everyone took a turn leading and talking to the group.

**A fascinating and enjoyable day!**

**By Richard Pitts**

### FOUNDER MEMBER - DUNCAN WILLIAMSON



"As soon as I heard there were plans to form the Surrey Hills Society I was 100% behind it. I have lived in and around the Surrey Hills all my life and passionately believe that any body that promotes the beauty and diversity of this area should be supported fully.

I work in the field of sustainable living and I recognise that the Surrey Hills epitomise the core principles of this ideal. They are a haven for flora and fauna while supporting a diverse community of people and as such should be protected now and for future generations."

[www.surreyhillsociety.org](http://www.surreyhillsociety.org)

**SurreyHills Society**

Registered Charity number 1125532

### EVENTS

A variety of events are on offer for Society Members, book early to avoid disappointment.

#### NOVEMBER 2nd 2008

##### **Surrey Hills 50th Anniversary Country Fair -**

11am – 4pm, Dorking Halls

A fun day for all the family. There will be a variety of stalls selling local produce and crafts. Entry is free.

#### DECEMBER 27th 2008

##### **Christmas Stroll with Mulled Wine & Mince pies -**

Limpsfield Common

A jolly Christmas stroll across Limpsfield Common topped off with mulled wine and mince pies with National Trust Warden Mark Richards. Ticket price £4.

#### MARCH 1st 2009

##### **Gatton Park Open Day**

A special invitation to Society members to the Gatton Park Open Day. Please visit the website for further details.

#### MARCH 14th 2009

##### **Guided tour of the Lovelace Bridges**

10am – 1pm, East Horsley

A guided tour around the fascinating Lovelace Bridges near East Horsley with Peter Hattersley, followed by a pub lunch.

For more information on events visit our website

[www.surreyhillsociety.org](http://www.surreyhillsociety.org)

### GIVE US YOUR VIEW...

We are seeking your views on what activities you would like to see the Surrey Hills Society provide in the future and asking whether you might be able to help us in some way. Enclosed within this newsletter you will find a questionnaire seeking your opinion.

Please take the time to give us your feedback to help us to make the Surrey Hills Society the best it can be. If enough people are prepared to offer even a small amount of their time this would have a dramatic impact on the range and extent of activities we can provide.

For further information visit [www.surreyhillsociety.org](http://www.surreyhillsociety.org) or telephone 01372 220647

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