



Hindhead Common © John Miller

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

### Friendly AGM for Society members

On a lovely day in June we held our first Annual General Meeting (AGM). We were delighted when about fifty members turned up, and equally delighted when most of them stayed for a buffet lunch afterwards. We also felt the discussions went well and that members seemed to enjoy being with us.

After lunch, about thirty members then walked up to Headley Heath, led by Mark Dawson and Susan Harris, the National Trust wardens, who explained what the Trust is doing to manage the area.

At the AGM, we explained to members how our first year had gone and we reviewed what we had achieved. We have held a range of events and activities for members, including walks,

talks, events and the country fair, where at least 1500 people helped us celebrate 50 years of food and farming in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). With the help of this newsletter, magazine articles and our website, together with several e-bulletins, we have kept our members informed.



Susan Harris leads the after lunch ramble on Headley Heath.



We have also worked on a project to create new routes and a network for mountain bikers and we will have more to say on this later. This is an important issue and one that often causes problems amongst those who are out enjoying the wonderful Surrey Hills. Members and other organisations also tell us that the Society has generated a significant amount of goodwill across the AONB.

Helping to take the work forward, we have appointed an administrator following a successful grant application to the Surrey Hills Sustainable Development Fund. Looking ahead, our programme of walks, talks and visits together with our policy of support for the Surrey Hills Board and raising awareness of the Surrey Hills will continue to be priorities.

**Neil Maltby, Chairman Surrey Hills Society**

## OUR FIRST ANNUAL DINNER

The Surrey Hills Society's first annual dinner was held on Saturday 25th July, kindly hosted by the County Club in Guildford.

The dinner, compered by our chairman Neil Maltby, was an opportunity for members and trustees to celebrate the success of our first year and reflect back on what we had achieved so far. We now have more than 670 members, of which around 40 are affiliate members, including parish and other councils, conservation societies and organisations like the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the National Trust.

As well as an excellent dinner, the evening's benefits included entertainment by Godalming Operatic Society who presented a small selection from their recent summer show at the Electric Theatre, Guildford.



Above: Godalming Operatic Society perform some show songs.  
Below: David Radcliffe, Jane Maltby and Tessa Radcliffe  
© Ken Bare





# VIEWS

## SILVER ARROWS LEAD THE WAY IN SURREY'S 'DIAMOND' WALK

by Jane Garrett

The Mole Gap Trail between Leatherhead and Dorking has a unique feature, a succession of elegant polished steel arrows, glinting silver in the sun, guiding you through the river valley. Their current high quality state is thanks to one of our members, Lesley Marshall-Williams, and the work by partners to restore the trail which she initiated.



In just six miles the Trail runs through an incredibly varied selection of countryside, the heady blossoms of an elderflower orchard, a stroll through a fabulous 18th century landscape park, the pleasure of dappled sunlight on a basking carp and thousands of rows of immaculately espaliered vines.

The rich diversity of this walk, with the added artistic merits of

its waymarkers, is what singled the Mole Gap Trail out for inclusion in the "Diamonds in the Landscape" 60th Anniversary Walks – a set of spectacular walks across England and Wales selected to help celebrate the 60th anniversary of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, the legislation that created Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks and National Nature Reserves. There are close connections between this Act and the 1948 National Health Service Act, because the creation of these protected areas of countryside had, as one of its aims, the provision of good, healthy, outdoor access for everyone to benefit from.

After surveying by Lesley to see what needed renewing, scrub was cleared, access improved and new arrows put back thanks to partnership working between the Surrey Hills AONB Board, the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project and Mole Valley District Council.

Earlier this year the Mole Gap Trail was officially re-launched. The path can now be clearly followed along the river and through the meadows, following the trail laid out with arrows and words by international artist Simon Faithfull more than 10 years ago. On your journey, enjoy wonderful views of Cherkley Court and Norbury Park Farm, where Norbury Blue cheese is produced.

Lesley is delighted with the result. "The arrows make it so interesting," she says.



Mole Valley Principal Conservation Officer, Rod Shaw, adds: "It is a lovely walk. What I like about the arrows is that they are unobtrusive in the landscape but they are easily spotted, an elegant and precise solution to the need to provide directions along the entire route."



## LIMITING LOW FLIGHTS OVER THE SURREY HILLS

The Surrey Hills Society has recently responded to the draft Noise Action Plan for the next five years at Gatwick Airport, seeking a lessening of low level flights over the Surrey Hills AONB.

Guidance from the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs says that airport operators should avoid, where possible, over-flights of National Parks and AONBs below 7,000 feet and to seek opportunities for protecting quiet areas using ameliorative measures, such as more sophisticated flight path management.

The Society has written to the consultation to say that the Action Plan should contain a pledge to work with the Civil Aviation Authority and the National Air Traffic Services to reduce the disturbance in the Surrey Hills AONB to the north, north-west and north-east of Gatwick Airport. Planes departing in an easterly direction and turning northwards on to the Kennet Beacon regularly pass over the AONB at altitudes significantly less than the recommended 7,000 feet. "The Noise Action Plan should seek ways of enabling planes to pass over the AONB from Gatwick and Heathrow at a greater height," the Society says.

## TIME FOR BIGGER THINGS

Now that we are well into our second year, we think that members might like us to expand our newsletter. Our plan for the next edition is to include material from some of our affiliate members and other contacts. With their support we would like to make the next edition an eight-page version and we would be very pleased to hear from any affiliate member or organisation with interests in the Surrey Hills who would like to contribute editorial material or other inputs.

This expansion means we have the option of carrying advertising material. We would also welcome sponsorship by any organisation which shares our views on caring for the Surrey Hills.

If you are interested in some, or all, of these ideas, you can contact the society on our generic email: [info@surreyhillssociety.org](mailto:info@surreyhillssociety.org)



## SURREY'S ORCHARD TREASURE

Nestling at the foot of the Hog's Back, on the south-west side of Guildford, lies the historic village of Compton. It has a beautiful 10th century church and the village merited a significant reference in the Domesday Book. It is home to a number of countryside sites which belonged to the Elizabeth McAlmont Memorial Trust, including the orchard at Puck's Oak Barn, which, along with other McAlmont Trust properties, is now managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust.

In the early 1990s, the former Victorian orchard in the middle of the village was in a bad way. The conservation-based Elizabeth McAlmont Memorial Trust, set up by a former Compton teacher Kathleen McAlmont in memory of her daughter, bought the orchard. Volunteers undertook the hard work of restoring it, conserving the remaining specimens and replanting with other old varieties of English apples, pears, plums and quinces.

Such orchards are now few and far between and not many people realise that Surrey has its own legacy from the time when every English county had an important orchard-based economy with its own varieties and its own production, processing and distribution of fruit and fruit-based products.



Surrey apples include Peasgood Nonsuch © Royal Horticultural Society

Within the McAlmont Orchard are several Surrey varieties, along with a number of other special English varieties. The apples, Scarlet Nonpareil (one of the oldest known Surrey varieties - raised in Esher in 1773), Braddick Nonpareil and Curltail were bred in Surrey and feature in the



Surrey pears include William's Bon Chretien © Royal Horticultural Society

orchard. The orchard is also home to a range of other English apples, including Easter Orange, Egremont Russet, Kentish Fillbasket, Millers Seedling and Peasgood Nonsuch. Pears include Laxton's Foremost, Old Warden and William's Bon Chretien, and there are plum, quince, medlar, mulberry, damson and walnut trees.

Other organisations are playing their part in the conservation of Surrey's orchard legacy. Jim Arbury, superintendent of fruit and trials for the Royal Horticultural Society, says: "The Royal Horticultural Society has held fruit cultivar collections since the early 19th century and the collections have been at Wisley since the early 20th century. Twenty-one out of the total 700 cultivars in the collection come from Surrey, including Pixie which was raised at Wisley in 1947. We are always looking for information to help us find out how many old trees and remnant orchards still remain."

"Kathleen McAlmont was a pioneering conservationist," says Surrey Wildlife Trust director Nigel Davenport. "When it was no longer practicable, for health and safety reasons, for her volunteers to do the work, her trustees passed the work on to Surrey Wildlife Trust which has been very happy to continue the aims."

## TALKING ABOUT MEMBERSHIP

Setting up a new Society from scratch has been an interesting experience.

Our small sub-committee of Richard Pitts, Juliet Eberle, Andy Tanner and myself had the task of setting up procedures to process memberships and to make bank payments. We are grateful to Richard for his work in creating our system, not only to maintain membership records but also in storing email addresses and producing labels and letters when appropriate.

At the latest count we have close to 370 single and family memberships, which gives us about 670 individuals. We also have around 40 affiliate members, including Parish Councils, Surrey County Council, and many local and national groups and societies, including The National Trust and Surrey Wildlife Trust.

During this year, the Society has gained its Charitable Status and this enabled us to produce a new membership leaflet in January 2009 with a Gift Aid section. This lets the Society retrospectively claim tax back from HM Revenue & Customs on members' subscriptions and donations. We would like all those who have not yet responded, and are able to do so, to return a Gift Aid form. In due course we will be looking at introducing new membership categories such as Life Memberships and new ways of paying such as Direct Debit.

Graham Butler,  
Chairman of Membership Sub-Committee

## MEMBERSHIP

### Founder Members

78	Single
151	Family
229	TOTAL Single + Family
445	Individuals

### All Members

148	Single
217	Family
365	TOTAL Single + Family
669	Individuals



### WHY THE SURREY HILLS IS SPECIAL

Sir Paul Beresford MP, Conservative Member for Mole Valley



Sir Paul Beresford MP

*"Coming from New Zealand, I know what a wonderful landscape means. Hills and trees have been part of my life, helping how I feel about the world. Here in the Surrey Hills we have scenery and landscapes which are as close as one can come to some of my native countryside. The Surrey Hills is a very special place, a living and working landscape which offers some superb walks and many other great outings, a source of inspiration and contentment which is hard to beat and a place which is beneficial for everyone."*

*As the first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to be designated in the South-East, some fifty-one years ago, the original concepts of protecting the Hills from development and of helping people to enjoy them are even more important today than they were then. Being close to London, the Hills face many pressures, not least the volume of traffic, the need for more housing and a rural economy which benefits from our support. This is why the Surrey Hills Society is so valuable and why it is vital that we continue to give this area the protection it deserves.*

*I am delighted to continue to support the Surrey Hills Society and the Surrey Hills AONB and I hope the area will give enjoyment to everyone in the generations to come. I offer my best wishes to all those who work so hard towards that end."*

### CHAIRMAN'S DAY

Neil Maltby writes: I am pleased to report that, in late spring, we held a very successful 'Chairman's Day' in the Leith Hill area when I was able to meet over 30 members.

We visited two farms, met the farmers, had a talk on Leith Hill by the National Trust warden and walked to Leith Hill Place, where Sir Martin Wedgwood told us of the history of the house and recalled his childhood memories from living there. Having the chance to visit these places and meet their owners is one of the advantages of membership.



### EVENTS

A wide variety of events are on offer for Society members. Book early to avoid disappointment

#### SUNDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER

##### Loseley Country Fair & Ploughing Match

This annual event, on Loseley Park between Godalming & Guildford, draws big crowds who come to see modern and vintage tractors, heavy horses and ploughing competitions. There are also steam and aerobatic displays, a farmers market and lots more. The Society will have a stand there with lots of information and we will be there between 9.00am and 6.00pm. Come and talk to us.

#### FRIDAY 9TH OCTOBER

##### War and Peace in the Surrey Hills

This is an illustrated talk by Keith Grieves, discussing the lives of local villagers and the environment in the Surrey Hills between 1870 and 1950, including the impact of the motorist and local campaigns to save 'Leith Hill Country' in the 1930s. Meet at 8.00pm at East Horsley Village Hall, East Horsley KT24 6QT. Booking essential on 01372 220647 or by email to [info@surreyhillssociety.org](mailto:info@surreyhillssociety.org)

#### TUESDAY 3RD NOVEMBER

##### Surrey Hills Autumn Country Fair

This year the Surrey Hills Society Country Fair will be held in Guildford High Street as part of the very popular farmers market. We will have stalls and entertainment, and information on the Society, from 10.00am. Come and find us near the Guildhall or look at our website [www.surreyhillssociety.org](http://www.surreyhillssociety.org) for more information.

Join in as we celebrate all that is special about the Surrey Hills.

For more information on the Society's events visit our website [www.surreyhillssociety.org](http://www.surreyhillssociety.org) or call 01372 220647.



### BRITISH SCIENCE FESTIVAL IN SURREY

Running from 5th September, Surrey is hosting the British Science Festival, an event which offers lots of events which those with an interest in Surrey's rural sector might appreciate.

For instance, on Monday 7th September, at the Austin Pearce 3 room at the University of Surrey, 'Gardening for Wildlife' will investigate how suburbia could become Britain's largest nature reserve. And on Tuesday 8th September the topic 'Energy from the Surrey Hills: Wind and Wood' offers a discussion on renewable energy in a protected landscape.

Find out more from the Festival website [www.britishtscienceassociation.org/web/BritishScienceFestival](http://www.britishtscienceassociation.org/web/BritishScienceFestival)