

Facsimile of eNewsletter sent to our members on 7 August 2020

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



## e-Newsletter August 2020



Welcome to our second e-Newsletter of 2020. In this edition, we round up some of the things which have been happening within the Surrey Hills and, hopefully, suggest a few ways in which you can still enjoy our beautiful area during a period which, for some of us, has led to additional leisure time and disrupted lifestyles.

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Registered Charity Number 1125532

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## Chairman's Views

As many of you will have seen, we are now beginning to commence events, although we are of course complying with Government guidelines in relation to COVID 19. In particular all events **MUST** be pre-booked through our website and we are limiting numbers to ensure that appropriate social distancing can be maintained.



It is with some sadness that I have to report that Anthony Wakefield has indicated that he can no longer continue as Chairman of the Newsletter Committee and that his firm will not be able to continue the excellent sponsorship that they have provided for several years. I would like to record our thanks to Anthony and his firm for all the generous support that we have received, and I know that he is keen to continue to support the Society as an ongoing member. We plan to continue with the E-newsletter format that has been developed over recent months, but we will also do two printed newsletters a year so if anybody knows someone who might be interested in providing sponsorship do please ask them to contact me.

Although we have been in Lockdown and we have had to cancel all our events, there has still been a lot to do over the last few months. Not only are we now planning for the Autumn and fervently hoping that Government regulations enable us to enjoy the Countryside despite signs of further spikes, but we are also looking forward to next year and are hopeful that we can resurrect many of the events that had to be cancelled this year.

The Society has been involved in a couple of exciting projects. We have recently helped Surrey Hills Arts with some essential maintenance work to [Perspectives](#) and the new [Inspiring Views Project at Albury](#) is under way.

Before Lockdown, work was done by Surrey Hills Arts with the Albury Estate to clear the view. This work has really lightened what was a dark tunnel of the North Downs Way, allowed light through to the forest floor and thereby created potential habitats for a more diverse wildlife. Chalk scrapes have been created and work is continuing with Butterfly Conservation to plant the scrapes to attract native butterflies and to keep the invasive roots down which will eventually see the return of grass meadowland. During lockdown, the artist Will Nash was able to complete the framework of the [Optohedron](#). This is now weathering beautifully and ready to install. Planning approval from Guildford Borough Council will hopefully be forthcoming in the near future.



Finally another work by Will Nash has been installed on Shalford Common - [a swift tower](#) to protect one of Britain's most remarkable and endangered bird species. The 10-metre-tall steel tower features 45 individually numbered nest boxes, which can accommodate 90 swifts and their chicks, to replace lost nesting sites in an area where swifts have nested for decades.

## **“Into the Wild” - promoting health and well-being in our young disadvantaged communities**

During the last few months, there has been a renewed focus on the benefits of being outdoors. Of course, this is something that all of us connected with the Surrey Hills have known for some considerable time. Last year, the advisory panel to the Surrey Hills Trust Fund decided that one of its key objectives would be to promote the important role that the AONB can play in promoting health and well-being for all ages. However, we recognised that, whilst the Trust Fund could provide seed funding for certain projects, the best approach would be to work in partnership with other charitable funds. It quickly became clear that to obtain this support we had to provide evidence-based research that demonstrated the need in Surrey, the way in which the need could be met and the barriers that existed.

Last November, we organised the Surrey Hills Symposium in conjunction with the University of Surrey. The theme was “Our Natural Health Service” and as part of the event we highlighted the research that had been commissioned by the Surrey Hills Trust Fund in conjunction with L C Energy and the University. This excellent report by Genevieve Lebus is entitled “Into the Wild”. It runs to nearly 100 pages and can be seen online [here](#). Because this is such a wide topic we decided to focus initially on young disadvantaged groups, whilst recognising that immersion in nature can benefit all ages.

Some of the facts that emerged as a result of the research truly startled us all. It is very easy as you drive down the leafy lanes of Surrey or walk in the beautiful countryside to be totally unaware of the real deprivation that exists on our doorstep. The chart below contains some of the most disturbing statistics:



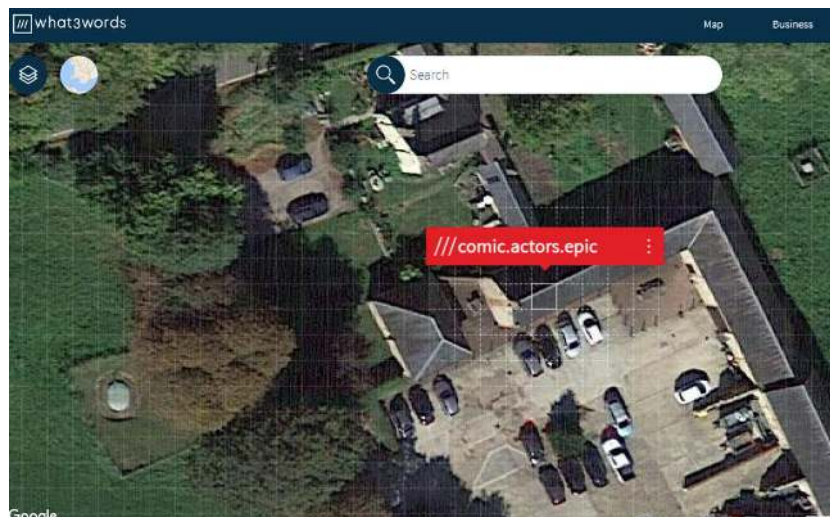


Of course, different people have very different needs and it was very clear from the research that it is impossible to adopt a 'one size fits all' approach. It is encouraging that there are a huge number of Surrey based organisations that are focussed on trying to meet some of the need identified, but there are some significant barriers that also exist. One of the main problems is the lack of education. Most people seem unaware of the benefits that nature can provide, or the negative consequences of departing from it. This has led to parent restrictions, societal rules, a blind acceptance of a technological way of life, and even a fear of the outdoors. It is clear that greater awareness is needed to highlight the importance of engaging with nature and hopefully incorporate it into mainstream culture.

In addition, another key barrier emphasised by local organisations was a lack of funding into relevant projects and interventions. Money is required to pay for equipment, volunteers and transport to help facilitate access to nature and to take young, disadvantaged people outside. Funding would allow organisations to expand and reach more of those who need help.

As a result of this research the Surrey Hills Trust fund is now working with the Surrey Hills AONB Board to develop a campaign that will promote the therapeutic benefits of activities in the Surrey Hills. Genevieve Lebus is assisting with the redesign of the Surrey Hills AONB website and we are starting by helping to fund certain youth groups to participate in a representative range of activities that will be videoed and widely promoted as part of a comprehensive communications plan. The Fund will then make grants to assist with the funding of disadvantaged children, who wish to go on the courses. However, the most important ambition is that, having started on this path, we can persuade other charitable funds to partner with us so as to expand the scheme and to make a real difference to young lives.

## Where am I?



According to the BBC, last year a group of friends got lost in a forest on a dark, wet night. They had planned a five-mile circular stroll through the 4,900 acre (2,000 hectare) woodland Hamsterley Forest, in County Durham, on a Sunday evening, but after three hours they were hopelessly lost.

"We were in a field and had no idea where we were". At 22:30 they found a spot with phone signal and dialled 999. One of the first things the call-handler told them to do was download the what3words app.



Within a minute of its download, the police said they knew where the group was and the soaked and freezing walkers were swiftly found by the Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue Team.

Well, the expanses of the Surrey Hills may not be as large and featureless as the Hamsterley Forest but things can still go wrong. For example, a medical incident such as a fall with a broken leg or coming across an early stage heathland fire and needing to raise the alarm.

The basis of what3words is that the smartphone app has the entire country (and overseas) divided into 3m x 3m squares with a set of three random words associated with each one. So by using the app, a specific location can be defined very exactly. This is far more use than postcodes which in rural areas are large diffuse areas or, indeed, totally misleading.

Apart from the emergency incidents outlined above, what3words can also help you to find a route to your destination. More and more mapping tools are including this feature within their software. For this reason, Surrey Hills Society will, where possible, now be including a what3words location within the details of events to help you find the meeting point.

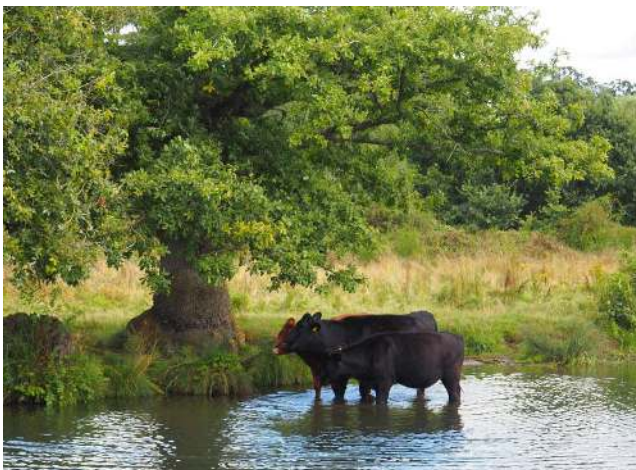
If you don't already have the app on your smartphone, download it and have a play. As a bit of practice for you, see if you can identify this location: `///beside.bunny.since`

If you have problems, a glass of wine or a stiff gin might help you. Or if you prefer food, how about a bit of cheese or a good curry. You can get all of these within a few metres of this location.

## Quiet enjoyment on and near the water

For many of us holidays by the sea whether abroad or here in the UK have become a regular annual fixture on our calendar. There is something rather special about being close to water - the sight, the smell and the sound - whether walking on the beach, swimming in the sea or simply drinking a glass of rose at a beachside taverna.

But life this year, as we are all too aware, is sadly rather different. Many of us feel that holidays abroad pose too much of a gamble and are just too stressful to contemplate. At the same time, we have perhaps been deterred from going to the coast in England following the horrific scenes at south coast beaches during the June heatwave and the likelihood of a frosty welcome from locals when going further afield.



Perhaps it is time to think about being closer to home and seeing what the Surrey Hills has to offer. We may not have the sea, but we do have a wonderful variety of rivers, ponds, canals and lakes right on our doorstep. Even this poses a dilemma however, as overcrowding, destruction of natural habitats and safety issues are a real cause for concern. Overcrowding at popular places such as Frensham Ponds, a spate of recent deaths from diving from bridges or swimming in rivers,

along with concerns about disturbing wildlife when embarking on the increasingly popular wild swimming, are just a few of the hazards.

There are, however, plenty of interesting waterside places to visit and activities to enjoy that while not being the perfect substitute for a week by the sea may go some way to providing enjoyment this summer.

Swimming is often synonymous with holidays. One hidden gem is Buckland Park Lake between Dorking and Reigate; a recently created venue offering 50 acres of open water swimming in a beautiful setting. Like most sites it was forced to close again due to Covid, but has now reopened with the usual post lockdown rules in force and a strict on-line booking system.

Messing about on the water offers more adventure, perhaps canoeing, sailing or kayaking, but for something more peaceful, take a look at one of the many video clips of travelling by narrow boat to see why it has to be one of the most relaxing staycations.

Boating on the River Wey, one of England's oldest navigation systems, dating back from 1653, has always been popular. It can however get far too busy sadly and the weir in Guildford being washed away by the winter floods has not helped matters. One option perhaps is to go upstream from Byfleet,



passing through three locks, Pyrford, Newark and Papercourt, although this is probably far more enjoyable out of season. While the towpath around Guildford and other populated areas gets too congested, the footpaths that run close to the upper reaches of the Wey around Tilford or Elstead can offer wonderful countryside and a more peaceful environment.

Since lockdown began one of life's great pleasures for many of us has been the sound of birdsong. Whoever thought birdsong apps, such as birdgenie or warblr, would become so popular, and along with them birdwatching. Along the riverbank a host of native species and visitors can be spotted, including warblers, wagtails, dunnocks, and terns and if you are lucky, the elusive kingfisher.

Other lovely river walks include the Tillingbourne Valley Trail, and the parts of the River Mole avoiding the Stepping Stones at the foot of Box Hill, which has become far too crowded and is impossible for social distancing. And for anyone hooked on fishing there are plenty of options apart from local rivers, including the Tillingbourne Trout Farm, Rushmore Fishing Lakes, near Farnham and the Old Quarry Lake in Betchworth.

Finally, worth considering are the many local nature reserves such as Nutfield Marsh, near Bletchingley, Riverside Park, Guildford and Ripley Nature Reserve. They all support a variety of wetland wildlife and with good footpaths and boardwalks make for interesting and easy walking.

There is so much more, but in planning our staycation, we should also think about supporting local independent businesses, farm shops, pubs, craft and coffee shops and consider visits to favourite beauty spots in the early evening when the crowds have gone. And as for that glass of rose, we have of course a wonderful choice with our award-winning local vineyards.



## The Patchworking Garden - A Post-Covid Challenge

Members of the Surrey Hills Society who have missed the social aspect of the walks, talks and visits of our events programme will be delighted that a limited programme has started up again this month. The impact of the pandemic and particularly the period of lockdown has to some extent been a strain for us all, but for those with physical, mental health problems or learning difficulties, it has been exceptionally stressful.

At a time when charities supporting these vulnerable groups were needed most, many had to reduce their activities or in some cases close completely. However, as they move forward with their plans to reopen or increase their activities, they are now facing increased expenditure to ensure they are Covid safe. With their usual fundraising activities pretty much wiped out this year, for many, targeted appeals are likely to be the only way to avoid a precarious shortfall in income.

Two local charities, with which the society has a connection, and who are supporting clients with mental health, learning or other challenges, are The Grange, Bookham, from whom we purchase all our fleeces and other branded clothing and The Patchworking Garden Project in Dorking, which we have visited and donated funds to over several years.



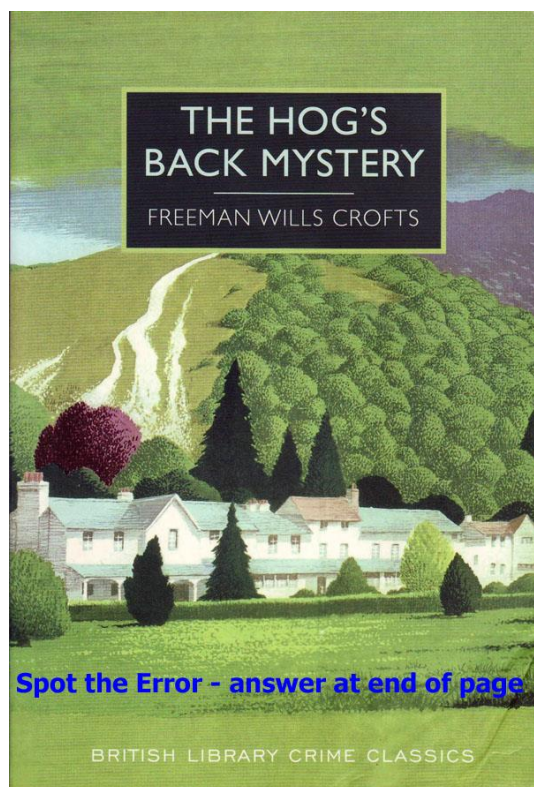
The Patchworking Garden Project, [www.patchworkinggardenproject.co.uk](http://www.patchworkinggardenproject.co.uk) and the Surrey Hills Society, both received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service last year. Established less than six years ago, it aims to bring positive change to people's lives through friendship and gardening.

I think many of us would agree that spending time with nature can improve our feeling of wellbeing during this difficult time and yet sadly the Patchworking Garden has had to remain closed for over four months. During this time, a small group of volunteers regularly watered, weeded and generally maintained the garden, donating produce to the Community Fridge, while others kept in touch regularly with everyone they support. The garden will open again in mid-August, but in order to do so safely it has had to adapt - building a new covered area to provide sufficient shelter and maintain social distancing, provide new handwashing stations and facilities to clean tools along with the provision of PPE. While ensuring the safety of all who attend, it is vital that the garden continues to offer a welcoming, friendly and relaxed atmosphere, particularly for those who suffer from depression, dementia or anxiety.



So as we at SHS begin to regroup and socialise once again with other members on our walks and visits albeit at a distance, it is worth considering the extent to which many of our other local charities are having to rise to the challenge to be innovative and resourceful if they are to successfully adapt to life post lockdown.

## A Good Read: The Hog's Back Mystery



Our author this month, Freeman Wills Crofts, was born and raised in Ireland. He trained as an engineer and had a successful early career with the Irish railways. In 1929, he abandoned railway engineering and became a full-time writer, settling in the village of Blackheath, near Guildford. A number of his books are set in the Guildford area, including “The Hog's Back Mystery” (1933) and “Crime at Guildford” (1935).

He is best remembered for his favourite detective, Inspector Joseph French who was a very different type of detective from that of many other writers. Whilst Agatha Christie used Hastings as a foil to Poirot and Arthur Conan Doyle had Dr. Watson as a sounding board for Holmes, Inspector French always set about unravelling each of the mysteries presented to him in a workmanlike, exacting manner without any such ‘partner’.

“The Hog’s Back Mystery” is a classic example of Crofts’ work. He obviously knew the local area quite well because all the action is set between Farnham

and Guildford and around the villages of Compton, Puttenham, Seale, Farncombe and Binscombe. Even the local roads and travel times are accurately placed in the text. He also made use of the fact that the original Guildford and Godalming Bypass started construction in 1929 and opened to traffic in June 1934. Bearing in mind that this book was published in 1933, Crofts must have been a frequent visitor to the wider area in order to have included such current activity. Presumably this came about because of his railway engineering background.

The core of the story is that three school friends, Julia Earle, her sister Marjorie Lawes, and Ursula Stone gather at Julia and Dr. James Earle's secluded cottage, St. Kilda, to share light-hearted reminiscences of their school days. Ursula discovers that not only is Julia having an affair with her neighbour, but that Dr. Earle has been seen in London with a mysterious woman, dressed in grey. As tensions mount, Dr. Earle disappears from his study in extraordinary circumstances: one minute he is sitting in his living room, comfortably settled with newspaper and slippers, and the next he has vanished.

The police are called in. At first, they suppose Dr. Earle has gone off with the woman in grey. However, their investigation uncovers further discrepancies such as his not taking any money or personal belongings. The local police turn to Inspector French of Scotland Yard to help solve the mystery. The case soon takes a more complex turn; other people vanish mysteriously, including

one of Dr. Earle's house guests. As the situation becomes more perplexing, French finds himself investigating no fewer than four murders.

Crofts' writing style takes the reader through the entire investigatory process to a solution where all the clues are buried in the text but in plain sight. It would, however, be a very dedicated reader who could work out 'who-done-it' before the denouement. What makes Crofts' ending different is that in explaining the case to his fellow police officers, he works his way through all the clues (even giving page numbers to the reader) so that his logic can be followed. No flights of fancy or sudden revealing of hidden facts here - just an engineer's logical approach from problem to solution.

*Did you notice the error on the front cover of the book as illustrated above? The image is of the Burford Bridge Hotel at the foot of Box Hill near Dorking - nowhere near the Hogs Back!*

## Marvels of the Month

Surrey History Centre is well known as a repository of information and documents relating to Surrey's past. Indeed, it has such a large collection that the casual visitor to the website can sometimes find it difficult to focus on their initial topic of interest since there are so many threads that could be followed.

One heading which is certainly worth checking out is that entitled "Marvels of the Month". Each month, the Surrey Heritage teams showcase their own particular "Marvels of the Month" and the range of subjects is fascinating. The website has monthly entries going back as far as 2012 so there are lots of topics to choose from.

To give you a flavour of the content, and with the kind permission of Surrey History Centre, we have selected a couple of entries which we hope will entice you to check out the site for yourselves.

### March 2017 - Words in Focus



In the mid-nineteenth century, the area around Haslemere, Witley and Milford attracted a considerable number of London-based artists, drawn by the beauty of the landscape and the healthy air. The artist James Clarke Hook (1819-1907) moved to Hambledon in 1857 and was visited there by his friend Myles Birket Foster (1825-1899), one of the foremost watercolour painters of his time. Foster initially rented a summer cottage for his family and then in 1863 bought Wormley Hill where he built The Hill, a mock

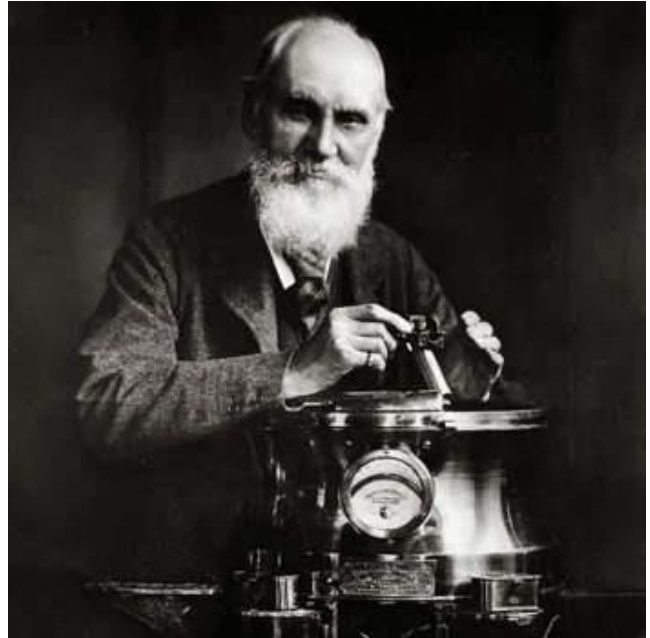
Tudor house decorated by William Morris. He was interested in the vernacular architecture of South West Surrey and he sketched and painted many of the local cottages and farmhouses. One cottage near his home in Wormley Wood was a favourite subject of many local artists, and Foster even paid for the roof to be repaired when it was threatened with demolition.

Another visitor to the area was Helen Allingham, well known for her paintings of Surrey cottages. She first visited the county when she and her husband stayed with their friend Lord Tennyson in Haslemere. In 1881 the couple bought a house in Sandhills, near Witley, and it was in the area that she discovered and painted the classic 'chocolate box' country cottages with their tumbling thatched roofs, cottage gardens and barefoot children in bonnets for which she is famed.

### January 2013 - Surrey and the discovery of sunspots

Redhill Observatory was built by Richard Carrington (1826-75) on Furze Hill in 1852, and it was here that he carried out the work that would lead his major contribution to the history of astronomy. He identified solar flares and devised a system for sequential numbering of complete rotations of the sun that is still in use today. 2,000 complete rotations were logged by 1995, continuing the system began by Carrington in November 1853, he noted a total of 99 rotations in his lifetime. These discoveries lead to the publication of:

- A Catalogue of the 3753 circumpolar stars observed at Redhill in the years 1854, 1855, and 1856 (1857) (SHC Library 523.89 S1x)
- Observations of the spots on the sun, from November 9, 1853, to March 24, 1861, made at Redhill (1863)



In the 1860s, after a few years away from Surrey, he purchased 19 acres of land in Churt where he built another house known as Jumps House and an observatory further up the hill at Middle Devil's Jump. This involved tunnelling into the hill both vertically and horizontally; the altazimuth instrument was located in the vertical tunnel enabling it to be used without a dome. An engraving shows the observatory and house and is reproduced [on the website] from the Illustrated London News, Volume 59, 1871 (SHC Library J/572/51, J/572/48)

In 1869 Carrington married Rosa Helen Rodway, a marriage that was to embroil him in scandal which dominated the last few years of his life. A full account of this story together with an account of his importance to modern astronomy can be found in: *The Sun Kings: the unexpected tragedy of Richard Carrington and the tale of how Modern Astronomy began* by Stephen Clark (2007) (SHC Library 920CAR)

*We hope that you have found this newsletter of interest. Covid related issues have caused us to do many things differently but your Society has still been active in the background. As we start to get out again and meet you all in person at our events we are all finding pleasure in the human interactions and enjoying our wonderful countryside. Keep safe and watch out for our next e-Newsletter which is scheduled for late November.*