

The One Hundred and Thirtieth Annual Report

of

THE
HASLEMERE
SOCIETY



*FOR HASLEMERE
past, present and future*

1st July 2014 to 30th June 2015

Registered charity number 255287

*The Haslemere Society (registered charity number 255287)
is a member of Civic Voice and the Open Spaces Society. It is affiliated
to the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and the
Haslemere Educational Museum.*

**Most of our two mailings a year are delivered by hand,
courtesy of committee members and non-committee
members, in order to cut down on postage costs.**

**This is not an
arduous task, as it is shared among many helpers, and
can be an interesting and instructive way of getting to
know what might be an otherwise unknown part of
Haslemere and Hindhead - as well as including exercise
and fresh air and being therefore a *good thing***

**Please let Diana Serman know
(Tel: 01428-654 681, email: RGandDC@haslemere.com)
if you would be willing to help with deliveries.**

**You would be given a bundle
of between 4 and 15 envelopes, with plenty of notice
and a few days to complete the task.**

THE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH ANNUAL REPORT

1st July 2014 to 30th June 2015

President

ROBERT SERMAN MBE FRICS*

Chairman

JANE STOPFORD RUSSELL

Vice Chairman

JOHN GREER*

Treasurer

BRIAN DELLER

Secretary

ANN FITCHETT

Membership Officer

DIANA SERMAN

Committee

CATHERINE EYRE (co-opted).
CHRISTOPHER HARRISON*.
CERI-JANE O'HARA

TONY BENNETT*
CYNDY LANCASTER (co-opted)
MIKE O'NEIL.

Hon Auditor

CLARE DAVID MA ACA

*Planning Committee

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 131st Annual General Meeting will be held on
Friday 20th November 2015 at 7.30pm
In Haslemere Hall, Bridge Road.

AGENDA

1. Welcome by the president
2. Apologies
3. Chairman's report
4. Treasurer's report and accounts
5. Election of president, chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer, secretary and auditor
6. Any other business
7. Speaker is David Forbes-Nixon who will explain the acquisition of the Undershaw Hotel, Hindhead and the plan to convert it to a special school whilst preserving the heritage of the former home of the author Conan Doyle.

THE SPEAKER AT THIS YEAR'S AGM

Our speaker at the AGM is David Forbes-Nixon, the man behind the purchase and restoration of Undershaw, the house built by Arthur Conan Doyle in 1897. David will tell us about his involvement with Stepping Stones, the remarkable school in Hindhead for children with learning difficulties. David, a wealthy philanthropist, was inspired to buy the old house after he found out that the existing premises occupied by Stepping Stones in Tower Road was running out of space. That accommodation, together with the Cookie Bar in Royal Parade, had been funded by another local philanthropic individual, Larry Sullivan. The story of the trials and tribulations of the re-birth of Undershaw is unbelievable and our speaker is well placed to tell us about it.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dear Members,

How quickly the year has gone and it is again time to sum up the past twelve months.

We have had a few committee changes during the year. We have the pleasure of welcoming, Catherine Eyre and Cyndy Lancaster, whose skills and enthusiasm have already been most effective and beneficial to the Society. We were sorry to receive the resignations of Joe Macdonald and Michael Dover due to competing pressures on their time. After 10 years on the committee Diana Serman has decided to retire at the forthcoming AGM. She has kindly offered to continue managing the membership. Her diligence will be sorely missed however, particularly her interesting summer outings.

We are very keen to have the support of the membership particularly when we are taking an active part in town matters. Many of you offered supported when news of the obstruction of the footpath beside Lloyds Bank in the High street reached us. Although this path has been used by residents for generations it had never been registered. We, together with our Surrey County Councillor, raised petitions and alerted the Rights of Way staff to set the registration process in motion. At the time of writing nothing has been decided as the SCC local area committee is not meeting to discuss the matter until the end of September.

In July we learned that SCC were intending the following month to remove the characterful bracketed street lights in the High Street Conservation Area [without planning permission] and replace these with new lighting columns. The Society immediately enquired as to the necessity for doing this which would also add to the street clutter. At a subsequent meeting with SCC, WBC [who had previously approved the proposals], the contractor and HTC we learned that this was the final piece of work in a two year PFI contract entered into by SCC to renew street lighting throughout the county and maintain it for 20 years. We were also told that the existing lights had to be replaced for contractual, safety, and statutory compliance reasons and that the maintenance contract would only cover the new lighting. Work was due to start almost immediately and the Society was regrettably unable to negotiate a change from these established intentions. In view of this we have decided to invite the present Surrey County Councillor, to give us a brief update at our AGM's to keep us informed.

Over the past year the Society has continued to comment on planning applications which would have a significant effect on the amenity and character of the town and we hope that our comments have had some bearing on the planning

decisions by WBC. Our planning team, devote a great deal of time to giving informed comments with the view of protecting the community and character of the town. It is often disappointing that our objections fail due to the Government reducing the grounds for doing so and the lack of an accepted Waverly plan. You as individuals can also send in your own comments, all of which adds weight to opinions.

We are pleased that another Blue Plaque will be unveiled in September connected with the Peasant Art movement. More about that at the AGM on November 20th and we look forward to meeting you all afterwards over a glass of wine in Haslemere Hall.

Jane Stopford Russell

THE SUMMER PARTY

Summer partygoers this year were treated to a fascinating insight into the architecture of St Christopher's church, on the green at the top end of Wey Hill. After delicious canapés (as always) and drinks, Mrs Frankie Gaiter, a past churchwarden at St Christopher's, gave us the background.

To accommodate a Haslemere population expanding rapidly with the coming of the railway, Charles Spooner, architect, craftsman, teacher and active socialist was commissioned to build a new church for the parish. It was completed in 1904, at a cost of £4,200.

Spooner was an adherent of the Arts & Crafts ethic with its focus on practicality and high quality materials. St Christopher's reflects this, built with beautifully crafted local stone and timber. And it has high quality interior fittings by Spooner, sometimes in collaboration with his wife, the artist Minnie Dibden Davison. Particularly noteworthy is the single barrel vaulted roof to both the nave and the chancel, with a beautiful floral and heart design. Sadly, two of Spooner's original features, a bronze statue of St Christopher and a hexagonal stone lantern have been stolen but exact replicas have replaced them since the theft.

Recently maintenance and upgrading work has been undertaken to ensure the church meets the needs of its twenty-first century parishioners. Churchwarden Clive Hawkins described the lengths to which the church office holders went to guarantee that the materials and building practices were a true reflection of the aesthetic to which Spooner aspired – even to the extent to having a 'bottom committee' to test the width, back rest angle and overall comfort of the beautiful new oak chairs.

By the end of the evening the weather was sufficiently kind to allow us the opportunity of viewing some of St Christopher's external features with its attractive chequerboard decoration on the west gable end and tower parapet. So ended another excellent Haslemere Society summer party, with its special mix of conviviality coupled with learning more about the beautiful town in which we are so fortunate to live.

Sue Guerrier

PLANNING REPORT

The target/need to build 700 – 800 houses in Haslemere in the next 15 years is exercising a lot of thought on where to build and the effect on local infrastructure and character of the town. Both the new Waverley Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan which will set out how this development can be achieved are still in preparation and until these are approved there is a lack of protection or guidance on how to deal with applications for large scale housing development; Sturt Road being an example.

Another application for a large housing development at Chasemore in Hindhead, which The Society objected to, and a public consultation on residential development of the Andrews site at Hindhead are indicative of the pressures from developers following up on this announced target.

Recently there have been examples of poor quality design in planning applications for housing at Coombe Lea, Critchmere Lane and the conversion of the Police Station. The Society has put forward strong reasoned objections to such poor and inappropriate design for these applications and we are pleased to report that these have been refused by WBC as well as Marston Lodge adjacent to the Weydown Road industrial estate which we were unable to comment on within the prescribed time limit. At the time of writing a revised design for the Police Station development has just been submitted by the developer but this fails to address all our concerns.

The Society supported the application to convert and develop Undershaw in order to arrest the continuing decay over the very long planning and litigation period and to return the buildings into useful and functioning premises for the Stepping Stones School. Work on this is well underway and it is disappointing that a Judicial Review of WBC's planning approval has been granted. We also note that a Judicial Review of the planning approval of the Sturt Road application has upheld WBC's approval. These reviews are very costly and time consuming.

The Society learned of the intention to erect new lighting columns in the Town Centre Conservation Area only days before commencement of the work and immediately called for a meeting with SCC to see if the characterful bracketed lights could be retained and prevent the increase in street clutter which would result. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to alter the intentions of a major contract entered into by SCC more than two years ago for new county wide lighting and a 20 year maintenance programme. However the choice of lighting columns and their positioning blend reasonably well into the High Street.

John Greer

BLUE PLAQUES

The society will be unveiling another blue plaque in September. This time we are celebrating the Peasant's Arts Industries, which is an important and often overlooked part of Haslemere's heritage. Committee member Catherine Eyre has taken a keen interest in the movement and has become a leading authority on its history.

Jackie Gray, the owner of Greenbushes in Foundry Lane will be erecting the plaque. Her house was Luther Hooper's weaving house which was at the centre of the movement.

Greenbushes was established in the late 1890's. Inspired by the Arts & Crafts Movement, The Peasant Arts Society's founders, Joseph King MP and his wife Maude, Godfrey Blount and his wife Ethel (Maude's sister) and Greville MacDonald (Joseph King's cousin) were writers and artists who all had a significant impact upon the local area. The movement promoted traditional crafts in the face of the emergence of mass produced consumer products. A number of their finer works are held in a collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Readers who are interested to learn more are encouraged to visit <http://peasant-arts.blogspot.co.uk/> for more information.

We continue to be interested in more sites for blue plaques and any readers who know of suitable opportunities that meet our criteria, as set out on our website, are encouraged to contact Chris Harrison on chrisaharrison@gmail.com

Chris Harrison

OUTINGS

After about 10 years, I am hanging up my committee badge, although continuing to 'manage' the membership data base, which is far more complicated than it needs to be - but straightening it out is, for the time being, for another day.

So it was my last outing on the last Wednesday in July when we set off in a cosy (cramped) coach to a presentation by Canine Partners in Hewshott. The boisterous enthusiasm of the demonstration dog was a joy to observe, but we were not surprised to learn that he was kept for practical displays rather than sent out to partner a disabled person as a carer (as the more enlightened authorities regard these inspirational and highly individual dogs). The afternoon was comfortably filled with a guided walk of Chichester's city walls. We kept up with the guide as well as we could. There seemed to be nothing she didn't know about the city and she tried to

impart it all. She said we were a lovely group - and so we were. Camaraderie and good humour are a hallmark of our Society.

We have enjoyed some fascinating outings together over these years. Nothing ever went horribly wrong, although we had anxious moments in Portsmouth when we lost a couple of children and later one adult for what seemed a very long time on a day of driving rain, when the leaden sky, the damp buildings and the grey sea seemed to blend into one unforgiving menace.

Billingsgate fish market at the crack of dawn and Worthing's Ambrose Place idiosyncratic narrow back gardens were two of my own favourites, this last was a visit where some also paddled in the sea, many had fish and chips and a few braved a shaky ladder to climb onto the church roof.

I am grateful to have had the privilege of organising these unique Haslemere Society days out.

Diana Serman

TREASURER'S REPORT

The results for last year showed a substantial improvement in our finances, with a profit of £881 compared with a loss of almost identical proportions in 2014.

Subscription income increased by nearly £1,000 due, in part, to the rise in the annual subscription which came into effect at the start of the year and also to the welcome addition of 4 new life members. However, our total membership has fallen by about 10% over the year and if this trend continues there may be cause for some concern in the future. The higher subscription income was partially offset by a fall in the surplus from members' events. In 2014 we held a very successful dinner to celebrate the life of Sir Robert Hunter and there was no comparable activity in the year just ended.

Total expenditure of £3,477 is substantially lower than the previous year, when we incurred significant costs for updating our website and the purchase of additional stationery to reflect the changes in subscriptions. Our costs in 2014/15 are broadly in line with the norm for earlier years and this includes a contribution to Waverley Borough Council for their Design Award scheme.

Our cash position has improved to reflect the profit during the year and we retain our contingency fund of £10,000 which is held on short term deposit.

The accounts are set out below and a signed copy, audited by our Honorary Auditor Mrs. Clare David, will be available to members attending the Annual General Meeting.

Brian Deller

The Haslemere Society

Annual Accounts for the year ended 30th. June 2015

<u>2014</u>	<u>INCOME</u>	<u>2015</u>
£		£
3094	Subscriptions & donations (incl. gift aid)	3094
36	Bank interest	36
668	Members activities & events - surplus	668
49	Other	49
<hr/>		<hr/>
3847	Total Income	3847
<hr/>		<hr/>
	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
245	Insurance	245
-	WBC Design awards	250
1410	Printing & stationary	715
100	Postage & telephone	84
609	Amenities societies	611
1171	Meeting expenses - members & committee	1324
865	Advertising Charter fair & Marketing	114
324	Miscellaneous	134
<hr/>		<hr/>
4724	Total expenditure	3477
<hr/>		<hr/>
-877	Net loss for year	881
<hr/>		<hr/>
	<u>BALANCE SHEET</u>	
12212	Opening Balance	11335
-877	Net loss for year	881
<hr/>		<hr/>
12212	Total funds	12216
<hr/>		<hr/>
	Represented by:	
10000	Bank deposit bonds	10000
1573	Bank current account	1983
-815	Sundry creditors	-478
577	Sundry debtors	711
<hr/>		<hr/>
11335		12216
<hr/>		<hr/>

Signed by: Brian Deller Hon. Treasurer

I certify that the statement set out above corresponds with the books and vouchers presented to me and fairly represents the financial position of the society.

Signed by: Clare David MA, FCA (Hon. Auditor)

HASLEMERE SOCIETY DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

2015

AGM Friday 20th November Haslemere Hall

2016

Spring Meeting Friday 15th April Haslemere Hall

Outing and Summer Party to be arranged

AGM Friday 18th November Haslemere Hall

**POST FOR THE SOCIETY may be sent/delivered to
Haslemere Educational Museum for collection by
Committee members:**

**The Haslemere Society
C/o Haslemere Educational Museum
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Surrey GU27 2LA**

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