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Chairman's welcome

Welcome to our spring 2019 newsletter. This is the third newsletter that we have produced in our new format, and I hope you enjoy its content. Feedback on the earlier newsletters has been extremely positive, but please do keep your comments coming.

As in the past, the newsletter is organised around the key areas of focus for the society: planning, heritage, environment and events. We also share insights into some of the other societies that make our town such a rich environment in which to live, and in this edition we feature Haslemere Musical Society.

In our planning section, John Greer outlines some of the major planning applications on which the Society has commented and is continuing to comment. Principal amongst these is the Georgian House Hotel, an application about which opinions are sharply divided.

As has been well publicised, this is a subject on which I find myself taking a very different position to the planning group. Some members have commented that this is an unfortunate state in which to find ourselves, but for my part, I believe that difference of opinion is to be cherished and nurtured and that the important thing is that we should give voice to all views.

Separately, Gareth David provides a fascinating insight into the challenges facing our retailers in the town.

Turning to heritage, Jane Stopford Russell provides a tribute to Jeanne Dolmetsch, a member of this incredibly talented family who have played such an important role in developing the cultural life of Haslemere, who sadly died last year.

My wife Shirley continues her series on the Lost Sons of Haslemere, those who fell in the First World War, and I give some insight into Montgomery's association with Amesbury School, where we will be erecting a blue next year.

Looking at environmental matters, Howard Brown explains how we plan to adopt the town's planters, and Gareth David takes us on a journey on Haslemere's newest bus routes. This leads neatly into the work being undertaken by the Community Rail Partnership, where Nikki Barton gives us an update on the great progress that this initiative has been making.

Turning to events, our AGM in November at which I gave a talk on the Lost Sons of Haslemere, attracted a record turnout including several non-members, many of whom took the decision to join The Society on the night. We subsequently hosted a lunchtime reception for our new members at the Town Hall which was well attended and well received.

At our recent Spring meeting, we heard from Nigel Quick and Dave Elliott, Chairman and Head Ranger respectively of the local branch of the National Trust, about the history of the branch and exciting plans for the future to reintroduce beavers into the local area.

Finally, John Greer has told us that he would like to step down as chairman of the planning group, having held this position for many years. John has invested a huge amount of time into this role, and his comments on important planning applications have on many occasions been influential in improving the quality of many successful applications, and also ensuring that less desirable proposals have been rejected.

I would like to thank John for all his efforts over many years. The search is on to expand our planning group, and, we are keen to explore ways in which the scope of the group can be reimagined. If you would like to be involved, whatever your background, we would love to hear from you.

Enjoy the newsletter!

Chris Harrison

Meet the Trustees

Chris Harrison – *Chairman*

[text needed]

David Dullaway - *Treasurer*

I am a recent addition to the Society and the Board of Trustees, having taken over earlier this year from Brian Deller, the society's treasurer for the past eight years. I am an actuary and with my wife Sonja moved to Haslemere five years ago, when we stopped full-time work. We are keen walkers and sailors and discovered the town Haslemere following many hours stuck in the Hindhead traffic on the way to or from the coast and the South Downs.

Ann Fitchett - *Secretary*

I have owned my house in Shottermill since 1982, but didn't live here permanently until I retired. I worked at King Edward's School, Witley teaching chemistry and as a housemistress and latterly Senior Mistress, part of the Senior Management Team.

Boarding school life was very rewarding, but did not allow time for much involvement outside. Soon after I retired I joined the Haslemere Society, the Twinning Association, the U3A, the Natural History Society and became an active member of St. Stephen's Church. I like gardening, walking my dog, history and travel. Since I don't have a family, friends are very important.

John Greer – *Planning*

[text needed]

Jane Stopford-Russell – *Former Chairman*

I became interested in the Civic Movement while living in Portsmouth, due to the enthusiasm of neighbours. Having joined the Haslemere Society some 12 years ago, I soon became secretary of the Society, and went on to become Chairman, recently retiring after six years in the Chair.

We have lived in Haslemere since 1997 and in recent years the younger generation of the family have also chosen to set up residence here to enjoy all that the town has to offer. I support many of the other voluntary organisations in the town, and have been Chairman of the Arts Society Haslemere.

Dawn Brown - Membership

For more than 30 years, I have been providing business support to senior figures. With a commercial and Government background I am now working in the educational sector. I use my extensive skill set to support the administration of the Haslemere Society. This involves using the latest technology across the Office 365 suite and the latest web administration.

I am also conversant in database management and web design, which is now also applied to the Society. My skill set and experience has honoured me with the status of IAM Fellow and recently a Fellow of the Global PA Association.

I have been married to Howard for 35 years with a married daughter who attended The Royal School in Haslemere and have now recently gained a new grandson. My interests include skiing, snorkelling, yoga and indoor cycling. I am passionate about preserving Haslemere's wonderful Green Belt for our future generations.

Howard W. Brown - Environment

As a qualified electrical & electronics engineer and an active environmental engineer, my skill-set is applicable at both work and at home. As a previous Managing Director of two companies, I have a plethora of useful business skills and latterly use my skills as a lead business development manager within National Standards. I currently engage with most UK industry sectors and link closely with multiple key Government departments from environmental to defence.

My main interest lies in the local countryside and protecting the environment from excess development and preserving our local town character. My key driver in life is to ensure the whole local environment is protected and we retain dark skies for my own and fellow star gazers; ensure sustainable planning; actively protect wildlife and ensure that life in rural Surrey is maintained for residents and visitors alike.

Gareth David – Newsletter Editor

I have lived in Haslemere for the past 28 years and was a daily commuter to London until two years ago, working in corporate and financial public relations after an earlier career in newspaper journalism. Since ceasing full-time work I have focused on writing, with my second book on railways due to be published in June and a history of Croydon's Tramlink due to be published in 2020. I am married to Clare, the Society's Honorary Examiner (auditor), with four grown up children, was a co-founder of the Haslemere Rail Users' Group and am a Sidesman at St. Bartholomew's Church

PLANNING REPORT

Georgian House Hotel

The Society has opposed this planning application for the past year, as per the three letters to WBC which are available on our web site. We continue to oppose it for the following fundamental reasons:

We consider that a replacement of the 43 hotel rooms with a 'pub with 12 rooms' will not serve the economic needs of Haslemere, a Gateway town to the South Downs National Park.

We believe there is a continuing requirement for 3* hotel accommodation in the centre of Haslemere as is evidenced by the room occupancy rates at The Georgian, notwithstanding the very poor state of the property.

To preserve the character and ambience of this area we do not consider it appropriate to construct residential accommodation within the curtilage of this cherished and historic listed building in the town centre conservation area. The proposed construction of three three-storey town houses behind Tudor Cottage and adjacent to the Greensands Way public footpath is particularly egregious.

No convincing evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the 43-room hotel is not viable. Waverley's planning strategy policy LT2, specifically aims to protect town centre visitor accommodation within the borough and requires applications for change of use to provide '...sound evidence as to the non-viability of the current use.' No such evidence has been provided. Many local hotels are expanding and refurbishing, indicating that properly run hotel accommodation is profitable.

The reduction of 45 parking spaces to only 12 spaces for a pub with 12 rooms, 40 restaurant covers and 25 bar covers is totally inadequate and unacceptable. This is because the town centre public car parks are regularly used to capacity.

Cirrus, the proposed operator of the 'pub with 12 rooms' and many other pub chains consider it necessary to provide far greater amounts of parking at their premises well in excess of SCC basic requirements. This leads us to question the fundamental viability of the proposed 'pub and rooms' scheme, which could jeopardise the hotel's future.

The proposed residential work will require large vehicle access over the adjacent public car park with the unacceptable loss of many parking spaces for a significant period of time, affecting local traders and the public. This is not addressed in the application.

We are convinced that the hotel has been purchased by two experienced and committed property developers with little, if any, hotel management experience. There are grounds to indicate that Mark McVeigh, a principal shareholder in Lionhouse Hotel Ltd which was put into administration after only two years, and is now a principal shareholder in the current owner Lannister House (1782)Ltd, intended to generate profit from residential property development from the outset as opposed to 'saving the hotel'.

Richard Angel, the other principal promoter of the scheme, describes himself as passionate about real estate development in his CV. The clear neglect of the property since its purchase in 2015 and the poor standard of service on offer, is indicated by the many visitors' adverse comments in Trip Advisor, Expedia etc and is evidence that there is no real intention to make the hotel succeed.

It is appreciated that there are some who support the application. This is possibly because the promoters have put forward a self-serving version of the circumstances of the Georgian and have created a misleading impression of their consortium being made up of local families interested in the hotel's future. The Society's interest is critically to appraise the risks to one of the town's most iconic assets, to support the town's economy and to preserve its character and amenity for all to enjoy.

Red Court, Scotland Lane

Red Court is not under a planning application as of March 2019. It is however listed in the draft (yet to be approved) Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) as a potential site for the development of

50 houses under ref. DS15. It is listed in the *Haslemere Vision* draft Neighbourhood Local Plan as a 'Reserve Plot'.

The 38Ha site on Scotland Lane, formerly Red Court, has been split and 5.5Ha of the area is AGLV candidate AONB but under Waverley Policy RE3 is listed as 'should be treated as AONB'. It also falls under the Wealden Heath II SPA protected 5km zone and is covered by legislation to protect multiple bird species.

The Reserve Plot status requires that all potential urban and brownfield sites in the Local Plan are used first to protect the green spaces of Haslemere and this land should only be considered for development (subject to normal planning policies) if the required housing numbers are not being met on a five year rolling target.

This raises another issue. If all planned future housing development takes place within the town boundary, there is the distinct risk that the character and amenity of our town will be badly damaged and its old and inadequate infrastructure will not function as is already happening. It is therefore necessary to consider developing areas currently not within urban Haslemere; but where?

Access to Red Court is only through narrow country lanes with multiple pinch points and single track in parts. Alternative routes would need to be cross full AONB land rich in wildlife, wooded green meadows and carving up some 12Ha of AONB, laying waste to a total of 50Ha due to the topography.

Other sites should be considered for possible future housing development to prevent Haslemere losing its character and amenity with less impact in locations where access is less difficult. The area between The Edge and the A3 is one which should be considered in the new draft of LPP2 in lieu of Red Court.

A wider proposal being mentioned, which is not in LPP2, is to use all the AONB green meadows south of Scotland Lane to build 150 dwellings taking away a further 3Ha of valuable nesting trees which needs to be resisted.

The Heights School

The applicant reduced the number of proposed residential units by two (!) but the application has been refused as overdevelopment (the basis of our objection to the application). A recent recommendation by the Historic Buildings Officer to retain the existing building which he feels is of interest has been a surprise and added to the reasons for refusal.

Lythe Hill Hotel

The proposed scheme has been reduced in scale and we wrote to WBC planners in January with some further detailed observations and indicated our support for the scheme (as we have in principle previously) subject to these points being addressed – noise, road safety, bus stop provision etc. The application has been approved by the WBC Planning Committee to benefit the Haslemere economy although recommended for refusal by the planning dept.

Longdene House

A hybrid application to build seven houses in the grounds of the house has just been made – comments are required by 5 April.

Sturt Farm (135 houses)

Having progressed the planning application from Outline Permission and approval of Reserved Matters, the site is now up for sale.

Wey Hill (Fairground) Car Park

The Inspector has allowed WBC's application to remove the Common Land status and soil investigations have been carried out in preparation for resurfacing and P & D parking being set up. No sign yet of any new yellow line street parking restrictions.

77-79 Wey Hill

A meeting with WBC officials was held in the Town Hall on 17 January to discuss the dreadful appearance of the conversion and Change of Use from Retail to Residential that they had approved without the necessary diligence.

The meeting was chaired by a Waverley Councillor, instead of a neutral Town Clerk, who many felt tried to protect the WBC representatives, including the Chief Planning Officer, who were under fire for allowing this.

Many weeks have passed with no real progress or satisfaction from WBC which has resulted in several strong letters to WBC and Councillors. The owners have now appointed an architect, who is in discussion with WBC. Three months have elapsed without any remedial actions.

48 Petworth Road

Permission for two large houses having been granted, the site is up for sale by the speculator/owner

John Greer

What future for retailing in Haslemere?

Closure of all but one of the town's banks, the recent loss of Classic Cookware and imminent closure of the Clayton jewellery shop have got many people asking about the town's future as a retail destination. In an attempt to identify their key issues and concerns, the Newsletter has been talking to a range of people involved in commerce to get a sense of their mood, and their views on what needs to be done to safeguard the town's future.

Calling time

One of those closing down is Keith Clayton, who is calling time on his **Clayton** jewellery business and retiring, after 14 years in the town. He has tried unsuccessfully to find a taker for his business over the past six months, has seen trade fall by 50% since a peak in 2012, and believes that there are some fundamental issues holding Haslemere back:

"Like much of retailing, trade in Haslemere used to be very good. It is not just online jewellery trade that has hit us, but online everything, which brings less people into the town. But there are other factors – when a pharmacy was opened at the Health Centre, for example, it meant that loads of people did not need to come into the town to get their prescriptions.

"Then there is the inevitable car parking issue – half the time there is not enough of it in Haslemere, and there is not enough here to warrant the cost of the parking. The worst thing

that happened was for Waitrose to open, because the car park fills up with Waitrose customers, who simply visit the store and then go home again.

"When I opened 14 years ago, Haslemere was motoring forward. Sports Locker opened, Amazing Grace opened, Fat Face opened, and everything was looking good and the town became a place to go to. The Rewards scheme [*described below*] worked well, and we were one of the businesses at the forefront of that initiative, but a lot of the shopkeepers did not really understand it.

"Looking back over ten years, I don't think that Haslemere has made enough of itself or that the shopkeepers have been pro-active enough. I tried to organise meetings for them, but nobody was that interested. Even creating a map with local shops identified on it, like many others towns have, would be helpful, but no one would pick up and run with it.

"Apart from Melanie Odell [*interviewed below*], the town has never had a figurehead – nobody has put their head above the parapet and said 'come on guys, this is what we need to be doing' – there has not been a leader. Now my view is that it is all too late, shopping habits have changed dramatically.

"When you count up the number of shops in Haslemere, that is excluding coffee shops, estate agents and hairdressers, but simply places that would draw people here to buy things, for a town of this size there are very few. There has never been enough here to make people think, 'yes – I must go to Haslemere'. It's also unfortunate that Haslemere is split up, with the town centre at one end and Wey Hill at the other"

Another business recently lost to the town is **Classic Cookware**, whose proprietor Anne Joyce spoke to the Newsletter on the eve of closing its doors for the final time on 22 March. With the shop's lease expiring, she was retiring after 15 years, having seen trade decline over the past three to four years and also failed to sell the business.

She had one particularly worrying concern about the retail outlook in Haslemere: "I feel that there is nothing for younger people in the town – we are missing a generation of shoppers in the High Street. There is nothing to bring them in and I don't know what would bring them in, but there is a generation that just shops online."

Staying positive

More upbeat about retailing in the town is Clive Rollinson, who has run the fashion shop **Woody & Morris** with his wife Mel for the past ten years: "People who blame online shopping for everything are wide of the mark. Online is not growing exponentially, and has been pretty static at around the 20% mark for a while now. In a recent interview the head of Amazon said that there were some sectors like books where it is more and some where it is less, but overall the figure is around 20%.

"Fashion retail – both men's and women's – is one of those sectors where there are a lot of people who want to touch and feel what they are buying, so that if you have the right product and you communicate – that is the key – shoppers will come. We still have a very solid and regular group of customers, and send our fortnightly newsletter to more than 2,000 local email addresses. You have got to tell people what you are doing and you have got to be active on social media, particularly Instagram, which is a very visual medium.

"Haslemere has a great selection of independent shops, but what we need is more shops that make coming into the town an occasion and entertainment and that give you a reason to stay in the town for longer. We remain upbeat and positive, but it isn't enough just to

open your doors and expect people to come, we need to bang the drum locally and tell people it's a case of 'use it or lose it'. If people don't use local facilities, they will wither."

Equally upbeat in his assessment of Haslemere as a retail destination is Ian Rowley, energetic proprietor of long-established **Haslemere Bookshop** for the past four years. Like Woody & Morris, he keeps in touch with customers via social media and a regular email newsletter, and cultivates a loyal following, in the face of fierce competition online and from chain booksellers, in a number of ways.

His strategy is to do the things that they can't, such as running author events, book signings etc. to build a relationship with customers and attract new ones into the shop; developing links with local schools, and collaborating with a diverse range of other local businesses. One recent example was with Crossways Fruiterers at Fernhurst in connection with a book called the *The Green Roasting Tin*, where the fruit shop is recommending it for its brilliant recipes, and the bookshop was telling buyers of the book to go to Crossways to get ingredients for its recipes.

"We have to stock what people want to buy, but what we don't do is compete with online and multiple retailers on their own terms, so we can't compete on price or discounting so have to do things that they cannot do. A lot of it is about creating a relationship between customers and the shop to develop loyalty, but having a physical shop means people can come in and browse, and discover books which they might not have been suggested to them if they were online.

"Sometimes people come in looking for recommendations, so there is the whole issue of friendly service. People will often come in and want help in tracking down a book they heard a snippet of on the radio and quite often we can help track them down. We also need to make the shop and its windows interesting, so that the stock turns over and is presented in an attractive way.

"There are a number of schools that send children here with a teacher to choose reading books and then parents and grandparents come in to our children's section. Obviously the more young readers we can attract in the better. We also have author events in the shop, because we need to be doing interesting things to attract people into the shop.

Rowley is ever on the look-out for more tie-ups like the successful one with Crossways Fruiterers: "To make it work we need a business or an activity or a group that has a book that they really like and which links to what they do. So taking fitness training, for example, if a fitness business identified a recommended book then we could do a cross-promotion with that business.

"There are always going to be shops that close because people are retiring, maybe because they have had enough or maybe it's become too difficult to continue. The mix is going to have to change, and we've lost the banks, but then you see new shops opening. We should worry if we were to see a lot of empty shops, but at the moment there aren't, and there are far fewer than in other places."

The bigger picture

Chamber of Trade President, Craig McGowan, believes that it is the national picture which dictates the retail landscape locally, so that if people want to buy through Amazon then the only way to counter that is for retailers to up their game. He recognises that there are people who worry about Haslemere, but says those people should go up north and really see the problem of deserted high streets.

"Haslemere is in an economic bubble – I keep reminding people to look around and see the number of owner-managed shops that we have got, and how long they have all been trading. Haslemere and Wey Hill are successful compared to the rest of the country and compared to Cranleigh, Godalming and Farnham we are really buzzing. Our vacancy rate (3%) is one-third of what it is in the other three of the borough's towns, which are all between 6-9%.

"It is not easy being a retailer, but the doom and gloom that is talked can often end up doing the town a disservice. You have to compare Haslemere to other towns. It does have its own problems, such as car parking, which is insufficient, and then there is the prospect of a huge new town centre in Bordon that will no doubt prove attractive to many people, with more parking and 'cheaper' shops.

"I moved to Haslemere in 1999 and it has changed in character over those 20 years, personally I think it has changed for the better. Back then it was a quiet sleepy little town, but now it is thriving, and there are lots more young families and young people. Towns have to keep allowing development, it has got to be disciplined and managed but we cannot keep objecting to everything, which is what the Chamber has sensed over the years."

Someone with strong views on what is needed is Melanie Odell, who has run computer businesses in Haslemere for 30 years (Grayswood Computer Services and Church Micros), sits on the Town Council, and has been Mayor of Haslemere three times and President of the Chamber of Trade twice. She points out that you can buy pretty much anything you were looking for in Haslemere, does not see the current situation as critical, but adds that the town does not want to lose too many more independent shops, a critical factor in keeping the town different from its rivals.

Rewarding loyalty

Cllr. Odell was the driving force behind *Haslemere Rewards* an initiative many will remember that involved the issue of loyalty cards by some 40 local businesses, including a number in Grayshott, which ran for a number of years and attracted national media interest and was copied by a number of other towns.

"The Rewards card came at a time when supermarkets were driving a trend towards out of town trading", she recalls. "We won a national award [Action for Market Towns Award 2006], and were then expected to go around the country and talk about the scheme to encourage them to launch similar schemes.

"I went as far afield as Scotland, Wales and Devon promoting the scheme, which was geared principally towards small towns. Everywhere I went the issue was the same – development of out-of-town stores – so that was the main driver for independent retailers to work together. I would say that independents, which are really what Haslemere has to offer, do best when there is a problem. It is when they will spare the time to work together and see the benefit in working together.

"Haslemere Rewards brought retailers together and the nice thing about it was that it could be tailored to your business, it wasn't just a case of everyone having to give a 5% or 10% discount, you could offer whatever you wanted to offer the customer.

So why did the Rewards scheme fold after five years? "Unfortunately third party who ran the scheme (Savvy) did not understand the issues facing independent retailers. They provided the technology, but the technology eventually went out of date and Savvy started asking for higher and higher rentals for new terminals."

Car parking

This remains one of the principal issues facing the town, and one where the Town Council seems permanently at loggerheads with Waverley Borough Council. The last three town mayors have all made representations to Waverley, and been told assured that, so long as overall revenue does not fall, it will accept any changes proposed by the Town Council.

Odell mentions the small Tanners Lane car park, which she maintains should not be used by rail commuters, and also suggests that the cost of parking in the Weydown Road car park should be increased to match the charge in the station car park and so encourage rail users to park there.

She argues that Tanners Lane should be reserved for those working in the town's shops, and that Chestnut Avenue car park should offer free parking for half an hour or £1.00 for two hours. Such changes would not cost Waverley in lost revenue, and might even increase it, but every time it has been suggested, Waverley has ignored it.

Chamber of Trade President, Craig McGowan, says another tier on the station car park is going to be needed. He adds that the Chamber is talking to the owners of space behind Collingwood Bachelor with a view to taking that over as parking for Chamber members, which would move their cars out of the Tanners Lane and Chestnut Avenue car parks and release capacity for shoppers. Another tier on the Weydown Road car park is also on the cards, to create 94 new spaces.

McGowan says the Fairground car park must remain, pointing out that commuters have to park somewhere, and arguing that they do bring money into the town: "At weekends they come in and spend money. And, during the week their partners and families are attracted by the types of shops Haslemere has to offer. Space NK is an example of a London business that has come to the town because commuters will have seen the brand in London.

Bank closures

Haslemere has been hard hit by the loss of all but one of its retail banks, with HSBC, Barclays, NatWest and Santander all leaving the town over the past year, and the last of these [Santander], being particularly bad news for Wey Hill. Such has been local disenchantment with this loss of service that our one remaining bank, Lloyds, is understood to have gained some 500 new customers.

Developing tourism

Plans for the Georgian Hotel have sharply divided local opinion, with the substantial reduction in rooms and space likely to affect its future use for weddings and other major local functions. Melanie Odell says she knows of visitors to the long-established Christmas Market (she is the joint organiser) who come to the town especially for the occasion because they can stay at the hotel.

"The Christmas Market and the Charter fair bring money into the town. There is only so much voluntary effort that can go into them, but we have a brilliant team. After 20 years it has become increasingly difficult to organise, with the cost of insurance and the challenge of arranging road closures."

"Initiatives like the hounds and the hares do help promote Haslemere, and for the past couple of years we have done an Easter bunny trail around the town's shops, where competitors have to go to each shop, even if it is closed. Children love it, so will drag parents along.

She fondly recalls what was known as the *Haslemere Initiative*, a grouping of organisations to promote the town, which included the three tiers of Council (county, borough and town), the Chamber of Trade, Haslemere Society and local schools. It was behind the rewards scheme as well as the Christmas Market and won support from the county and borough councils, in marked contrast to the current situation when everyone is bickering about a range of local issues.

Permitted Development

Odell points to Beacon Hill as a community that has been destroyed by the relaxation of planning laws and the ability to convert retail properties into residential units under what is known as “permitted development”. It is a policy that has also allowed the eye-sore development of new flats at 77/79 Wey Hill, immediately opposite ***Silk Road***.

“I feel passionate about Beacon Hill because when I was chairman of the *Haslemere Initiative* we got a £40,000 grant from the South East England Development Project (SEEDA) to match local contributions in order to fund new street furniture lighting and a zebra crossing – all things the community had wanted for a decade. At the first meeting I attended, the local community was saying that it simply wouldn’t happen.

“But these things did happen and every shop was full and was positive. Look at the place now and it is dead, because all the shops and the pub have been turned into housing. It’s appalling and is the loss of a community. Even the local butcher closed down in December, although the owners are retaining the shop and will not allow it to be turned into more residential space.”

“We have managed to do what is known as an Article four in Beacon Hill – that is where Borough Council can apply to have an area removed from a Permitted Development Order, but it is too late. What should happen is that we have Article four on the High Street, West Street and Wey Hill, but Waverley says that can’t be done until after the trial exercise at Beacon Hill. It doesn’t stop conversion to residential use it simply means that planning permission is required.”

Wey Hill

Looking at the future of retailing in Haslemere, it is important not to overlook Wey Hill, an eclectic mixture of shops specialising in music and art, the sort of things you would not find in other towns. Among its most vocal champions is another former Mayor, Sahran Abeyundara, who for the past nine years has run ***Silk Road***, a very successful interior design business, which boasts an international clientele.

“At one time everyone thought that the High Street was the more sustainable end of town and the more glamorous end to be in. But reality has proved quite different, in the sense that, even though it is still a lot more glamorous than Wey Hill, if you look at the demographic of shops in the high street, it’s only about 32% local independent retailers, compared to over 95% of shops in Wey Hill, where the only non-local shops are the Co-Op Funeral Care, Santander Bank [*about to close*] and the new convenience store.

“I look at Wey Hill as an owner-run business area, which evolves with the times and is more sustainable than shops which are part of large corporates and find it harder to evolve their offering as they are part of a bigger organisation. It is hard for us, because people that should be spending with us are tending to buy online, so we have had to evolve, and now only sell things which are not available online.

“People don’t realise how phenomenal we are in Wey Hill. Take **Chamberlain Music**, for example, they are the world’s fourth largest Yamaha dealer in the world and the UK’s largest music retailer. The **Health Food Shop** has won best health food shop nationwide for the last three years and the **Rug Gallery** is one of only three rug companies nationwide to stock the types of rugs it sells. Here in Wey Hill we are designing interiors for hotels all over Asia and embassies in London.

Abeyundara laments the divide that exists between the High Street and Wey Hill, and believes that a mixed car parking and leisure redevelopment of the fairground site, as well as development on the derelict site adjacent to Majestic Wine, would go a long way towards bridging what he sees as a great divide. He describes as demoralising a recent renewal of street lighting, which saw heritage-style lighting installed in the High Street, but unattractive utilitarian lights put up in Wey Hill.

“We need to stop looking at this as a town of two halves and start working to integrate, so the same street furniture in both, the way Wey Hill is treated needs to be the same as the High Street. If you look at property values, those in places like Lion Lane have risen vastly more over the past five years than on any streets at the High Street end of town. This is not the poorer end of town, it is the Bohemian, arty quarter – just look at the number of design-led shops here compared to the High Street.”

Like Melanie Odell, he wants Waverley to move faster to gain powers to overturn “permitted development” in Haslemere, to prevent the conversion of more business premises to residential: “WBC is saying that it will wait until it has done this in Hindhead [Beacon Hill] before it is enacted in the rest of Haslemere, but by that time it is going to be too late because, like the aberration opposite (77/79 Wey Hill), we will have lost vital retail space - it needs to happen now.”

Business Improvement District (BID)

One significant new initiative is proposals for a BID, a concept where all the businesses in an area agree to a supplementary 1% on their business rates, capped at a maximum figure, in order to fund a company that is set up to support the town or area. The idea was introduced to Haslemere traders at a meeting in early February, and it will be up to bodies like the Chamber of Trade to encourage members to support it.

Chamber of Trade President Crag McGowan says an initial attempt to launch a BID in Haslemere was made three years ago, but that did not make much progress. “This new effort is being made by Waverley and is involving the four Chambers of Trade in the borough for a potential Waverley-wide bid” he explains.

“There seems to be a little bit more interest this time – the consultants who have been appointed to carry out the initial surveys have held four meetings – those at Farnham, Cranleigh and Godalming each had around 15 attendees, but in Haslemere there were 35-40 people. The next step will be for the consultants to report back on the findings of their meetings with individual high street businesses. Then we will decide if it is still worth pursuing.

“What we get out of it is a lump sum of money that the business community can spend on whatever it decides it wants to spend the money on, with a Board appointed to manage the money. Past projects that have been suggested include CCTV systems, building new toilets at Wey Hill, employing a PR company to promote Haslemere and a part-time town manager. Most people can see the potential benefits, but it is an additional cost.”

"If the consultants are positive, we will start identifying some specific projects, and then it goes to the business community and a vote. If 51% or more say yes then it goes for approval and then next time Waverley collect the rates they will add on 1% and transfer the lump sum to us to spend according to the business plan. We are probably still 18 months away from it being implemented.

Rates relief

A timely and welcome boost to local retailers has come in their latest business rates bills – the National non-domestic rating bill, as it is formally known. Following announcement by the Chancellor in his autumn 2018 Budget, a one-third discount in business rates has been introduced for two years, affecting all those businesses with a rateable value of less than £51,000, which would include most Haslemere retailers.

Gareth David

Jeanne Dolmetsch remembered

Haslemere Society was sorry to record the death last autumn of one of our highly respected and much loved members, Jeanne Dolmetsch. The Society was very pleased to have had the opportunity to place a blue plaque at Jesses, the Dolmetsch family home in Grayswood Road, Haslemere in April 2011.

This highly musical French family, of international renown, arrived here from London in 1917 where they subsequently established their musical instrument business. The house remains in the family to this day, some of whom are also members of our Society.

Jeanne-Marie was the elder twin daughter of Dr Carl Dolmetsch, son of Arnold Dolmetsch. She was educated locally at St Ives and the Royal school before moving on to study violin and piano at the Royal Academy of music. Jeanne had already performed on concert platforms playing the recorder and viola in her early teens.

In later life she combined the skills of an instrument maker with those of professional musician. From the 1960s she and her twin sister, Marguerite, joined musical colleagues to perform programmes of early music to clubs and societies throughout the UK and overseas.

She became a leading figure in the revival of interest in early music and, for more than 40 years, researched, scripted and presented many hundreds of lectures on aspects of musical and cultural history, illustrated with live and pre-recorded music and sumptuous slides.

Each summer she would assist her father in directing the annual Haslemere Festival of Early Music which her grandfather Arnold had established here in 1925. She succeeded as director in 1997, when she also became musical director of The Dolmetsch Foundation, which publishes an annual journal subscribed to by university and music schools throughout the world.

This important musical family became a treasured part of the twentieth century history of our town. The Haslemere Society receives regular enquiries via their website, from musicians worldwide, asking for help in contacting the foundation to gain further information about their Dolmetsch instruments.

Jane Stopford-Russell

Lost Sons of Haslemere – a story from the Haslemere War Memorial

Sergeant William Reginald Harris (15 Mar 1890 – 7 Aug 1915)

“Reggie”, as he was known, was born in the White Horse Hotel in Haslemere High Street on 15th March 1890, just a few steps from the War Memorial on which his name is inscribed, but his brief life was to take him to parts of the world very far away.

The White Horse (right), circa 1890

At the time of his birth, the White Horse was owned by the Friary Brewery Company, and run by Reggie’s parents William and Jane. Jane had previously run the hotel with her first husband, John Charman. Reggie was part of what in the modern world is termed a “blended family”, as his mother’s first husband had also been married before. As a result he had two brothers, two half-sisters and three step-siblings.

The family left the White Horse for a brief retirement in Godstone, but by 1911 Reggie’s parents and younger brother had moved back to Haslemere, to “Fryleigh” in Well Lane, which they ran as a small private hotel.

Fryleigh, Well Lane, Haslemere, 1899

The house still stands, and is partly occupied by the Citizen’s Advice Bureau. Reggie did not return to Haslemere with his parents, but remained behind in Godstone, where he worked as a carpenter. While he was there he became a part-time soldier, joining the 4th Battalion, The Queen’s Royal West Surrey Regiment, part of the Territorial Force set up in 1908, which was based at Croydon. “Saturday night soldiering” as it was called, was a popular pastime for young men, the primary role being home defence if war broke out.

It was a serious commitment, with expenses paid training one or two nights a week at the local Drill Hall; but there would also have been camaraderie, a bit of fun, and an annual summer camp away, during which the participants were paid as regular soldiers. They were also paid a bonus for regular attendance.

Reggie was not satisfied with his life in England, and on 29th November 1912 boarded the P & O migrant ship “Beltana” in London, headed for a new life in Australia. The ship was far from the “Titanic” league of luxury, with all 1,100 berths being third class. Six weeks later he arrived in Sydney, after stopping at Cape Town, Durban, Fremantle and Melbourne on the way.

The migrant ship “Beltana”

Unfortunately, we know nothing of Reggie’s life between landing in Sydney on 13th January 1913, and enlisting in the Australian army on 29th August 1914. Australia was still short of skilled labour, so as a carpenter, Reggie would certainly have had no problem finding a job.

At the outbreak of the war, the Australian army consisted mainly of a small, part-time, militia and an even smaller number of regular personnel who were employed in coastal defence. So, when the Australian Prime Minister, Joseph Cook, made the offer of an expeditionary force of 20,000 men, volunteers had to be found quickly.

Fortunately, despite the war coming as a something of a bolt from the blue for many Australians, a wave of patriotic zeal swept the country and there was no shortage of recruits

eager to defend the "mother country". Reggie must have felt it was his duty to enlist straight away, and to put to good use the training he had had in the Territorial Force at home in Surrey.

He was accepted into the 3rd Battalion of the Australian Imperial Force, part of the 1st Infantry Brigade, at Victoria Barracks in Sydney. His fellow recruits in the ranks came from all walks of life. The occupations of the first dozen on the original roll call were: teacher, railway clerk, commercial traveller, medical practitioner, civil servant, miner, police constable, bricklayer, factory manager tramway employee and labourer.

In the early days their quarters would have been pretty rough, as the men were camped out at Randwick Racecourse. "Camped" was a euphemism for sleeping in their clothes on the wooden steps of the grandstand. The battalion needed 1200 men, and at first the stringent medical examination passed only four out of fifty.

Failure was mostly due to bad teeth and feet, and so it was decided to pass men who were otherwise physically fit on the condition that they had their teeth "treated" and saw the chiropodist. The dental clinic was christened "the Chamber of Horrors". The medical officer wrote: *"Shoals of victims were lined up waiting their turn. In the afternoon they would turn up with swollen faces and bleeding, lacerated gums, having had a dozen or more roots dug out"*.

There was very little time for training. On October 15th news was received that the battalion would embark on the 19th on the troopship "Euripides", which was bound for Egypt.

The troopship "Euripides"

On the 26th October the ship reached Albany, in Western Australia, where a rendezvous took place with 37 other Australian and New Zealand troopships that formed a convoy, protected by British, Australian and Japanese warships. Once out at sea, the convoy covered an area of 15 miles long and 12 miles wide. One of the officers wrote rather poetically about the next phase of the voyage:

"On we go slowly over a huge desert of ocean – day after day, week after week, at about ten knots – the fastest speed of the slowest boat. Each morning as I awake I gaze out of my porthole and see the "Orvioto" ploughing slowly forward – and the other liner beyond that one – each ship exactly in her appointed place, where I had left her the night before. It gives a curious sense of inevitable destiny – a mysterious background to the dull routine. Drifting, drifting, always drifting forward – to that unknown something – war."

The weather grew relentlessly hotter as they crossed the equator on November 13th, and there was a lot of sickness on board. The men were very crowded and the heat was stifling below deck. Two men died of pneumonia, and were buried at sea. Colombo in Ceylon was reached on the 15th, and Aden on the 25th.

By the time they reached the Suez Canal on 1st December the heat was described as almost unbearable. At last, on 3rd December, the convoy reached Alexandria, where the 1st Infantry Brigade, including the 3rd battalion disembarked. They were bound for a training camp at Mena, just outside Cairo, almost literally in the shadow of the Great Pyramid.

To Reggie, who would have had the traditional Victorian child's instruction in the stories of the Bible, to find himself in the land of the Pharaohs must have seemed an extraordinarily exotic experience.

Training now began in earnest, and it was hard work in the scorching desert sand. Reggie of course, had seen it all before, albeit in the rather different environment of Caterham. His previous experience meant that he was quickly promoted to sergeant.

There was plenty of leave given to the men, at first only in the precincts of the camp where they scrambled over the Pyramids and the Sphinx. As the weeks went by they were allowed into Cairo, to visit the bazaars, the gardens, mosques, the citadel, bars and restaurants, although the two leading hotels (Shepherd's and the Grand Continental) were for officer's only. One account says cryptically "*The temptations of an Eastern city claimed not a few, and some thus early became casualties and were returned to Australia without firing a shot.*"

While Reggie was training in the desert and sightseeing in Cairo, a plan was crystallising in the mind of Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty that would ultimately seal his fate and that of 130,841 other men on both sides, including Charles Kingshott who is also on the Haslemere memorial. By late 1914 the Western Front was stalemated. In the East, Russian forces in the Caucasus were under severe pressure from the Turks, and so Russia requested that the Allies should open a "second front" against Turkey. Churchill's strategic eye roved to the heavily defended Dardanelle Straits which ultimately connect the Mediterranean to Constantinople and the Black Sea via the Sea of Marmara.

After a naval attack on the Straits by an Anglo-French fleet in March 1915 proved to be a fiasco, a second plan was devised to send in ground forces on the hilly Gallipoli peninsular. 75,000 British, Australian, New Zealand, Indian and French troops were committed to the campaign which would go down in history as one of the great military failures.

On 5th April 1915, Reggie and the rest of the battalion boarded the "*Derfflinger*", a captured German liner, at Alexandria bound for Lemnos, an island close to the Gallipoli Peninsular. The three days journey across the beautiful Aegean was an idyllic one, passing many small islands along the way. To quote from an account of Lemnos written later: "*The sloping green hills of the island were in marked contrast to the sun scorched plains of Egypt, which had been our world for so long. Patches of highly coloured poppies gave the landscape a very necessary relief.*"

To us Lemnos was a veritable Garden of Eden. What wonderful sunsets, and how we remember them! The harbour reminded us of Sydney. But there were no sharks at Lemnos, and the men were allowed to enjoy their swimming parades in safety." The harbour was crammed with vessels of every description as the forces gathered for the onslaught to come.

It was now well known to everyone in the battalion that an attempt was to be made to storm the heights of Gallipoli after an amphibious landing. There followed three weeks of intensive training. Landing operations had to be rehearsed several times, which involved scrambling down the sides of the Derfflinger on rope ladders into small boats, followed by disembarkation practise on the harbour foreshore.

The night before the landing, Reggie and the rest of the NCOs had a bit of a party in the sergeants' mess. It was reported that they sang, danced and behaved like schoolboys on the eve of breaking up from school for the holidays. Letting off a bit of steam is quite understandable. There must have been many mixed feelings during the jollifications; relief that the months of waiting were over, but nervous anticipation of what was to come.

The Derfflinger sailed just after midnight on 25th April. Everyone had lain down to sleep, or attempt to sleep, in their clothes. Reveille sounded at 4am, and by dawn they could see the shore a couple of miles away. The initial bombardment had begun, and the boom of the guns after the flashes could easily be heard. Unfortunately, the Turks were all too aware of the coming attack, and had deployed 60,000 men in small groups along the coastline to defend possible landing sites.

The 3rd battalion were heading for the beach later named Anzac Cove. Each man was weighed down with a rifle, a full pack, three day's rations, 250 rounds of ammunition and picks and shovels for entrenching as they transferred to a destroyer, then when closer to land, via ladders to small shore-going boats. The boats couldn't be beached, so they had to wade the last few yards.

Landing at Anzac Cove

They were not among the first wave ashore, so had an easier time of it than those poor unfortunates who had arrived at dawn. The sound of incessant rifle and machine gun fire could be heard in the hills above, and it was clear that the more advanced parties had made some headway but were involved in fierce skirmishing. The orders were "push on at all costs", and that is exactly what they did.

There followed four hellish days and nights of fierce fighting. One officer later wrote: "*The crescendo of rifle and machine-gun fire, the moan and sharp crack or thud of Turkish bullets as they struck the ground or human flesh, the screech and crash of Turkish shrapnel, the bark and whip of spiteful machine guns, and the whine and roar of the heavy guns from the battleships – all this made it a nerve and soul wracking ordeal for new and unblooded troops.*

The ear-splitting detonations of great guns and huge shells were echoed and re-echoed from cliff to cliff, until they seemed to shake the whole countryside. The only cover available, in the main, was low scrub and slight folds in the ground; real shelter there was none. The troops sniped whenever a target offered, and scraped anxiously with their entrenching tools the protection for their aching bodies that even shallow holes offered."

There were several attacks and counterattacks by both sides. Eventually, despite the tortuous terrain, trenches were dug and a bridgehead was formed, but after an advance of only about a thousand yards. Some of the men were at breaking point when at last, the battalion was relieved by Royal Marines on 29th April, and they were able to return to the beach for two days rest. A muster parade revealed that the casualties had been 3 officers killed and 13 wounded; 36 other ranks killed, 180 wounded and 69 missing.

The next fortnight was spent digging in for dear life, deepening and reinforcing the trenches. The heat was intense, and the flies unbearable. Many of the dead from the landings were still unburied, and inevitably, sickness added to the casualties.

Meanwhile, the Turks were bringing in thousands of reinforcements in preparation for an attempt to drive the invaders back into the sea. The main weight of the attack was prepared

for the most vulnerable sections of the ANZAC line, and one of those, unfortunately, was to be the gap between sections held by the 3rd and 2nd Battalions. At 2.45am on 19th May, the Turks advanced in considerable force and in successive lines. They were driven back by intense and deadly fire:

"Our chaps were magnificent. Every man for whom there was room was firing, across the trench at the line of fire from the dark ground, as fast as he could press the trigger and draw back the bolt to reload. When a rifle got too hot to hold, or jammed, the man below on the trench floor would hand up his weapon with additional cartridges. The machine guns too, poured back at the enemy a hail of lead. Many of our fine chaps died that died shot through the head. But immediately there would be another man to jump up on the step and take the place of him who fell. Every man knew full well that, if the Turks broke through, the 3rd Battalion would be wiped out to a man."

Reggie wasn't killed that day, but he was wounded, shot in the head (there were no steel helmets issued this early in the war). A dressing station had been set up on the beach, and stretcher bearers had to carry him two and a half miles down steep mountainous tracks. He was taken back by boat to the 16th station hospital at Mudros on Lemnos. After a month, astonishingly, he had recovered enough to be discharged and returned to active duty.

Wounded being evacuated to Lemnos from Anzac Cove

Complete deadlock had been achieved on the Gallipoli Peninsular. In an attempt to break it, a plan was hatched for the British to land at Suvla Bay, north of the Australian position. In order to divert the Turks attention, the 1st Australian Brigade, including the 3rd Battalion would simultaneously attack the Turkish trenches at Lone Pine, an area approximately in the centre of their lines.

Lone Pine was named for a solitary tree that remained in mournful isolation after the Turks had cut down all those surrounding it to roof over their trenches. The pine was destroyed in the battle to come, but some cones were retrieved by surviving soldiers and taken back to Australia, and seedlings raised and planted at many war memorials and cemeteries. A lone Pine tree has become a symbol of remembrance in Australia.

Zero hour for the attack was fixed for 5.30pm on Friday, August 6th, preceded by an intensive bombardment for an hour. The earlier part of the day was spent oiling and refurbishing rifles, sharpening bayonets and in some cases writing letters home in case the worst happened. Others instead went for a quiet refreshing swim in the Aegean.

By 4.30pm everyone was crowded shoulder to shoulder, with fixed bayonets, on the fire-steps of the front line, waiting for the signal. Once the three shrill blasts were heard at 5.30, they were on their way. The ensuing massacre was vividly described by one of the men: *"Everywhere whistles were blowing. The covering artillery fire ceased. We were scrambling, hands and knees, up the trench side – we were kneeling – we were walking – we were running The Lone Pine was out there – in front.*

As we scrambled over the parapet or emerged from the underground line there came immediately from the Turkish lines opposite the roar of continuous, rapid rifle fire and the just distinguishable staccato note of angry machine gun, tap-tap-tapping, it seemed in furious rage. Here – there- men staggered, crumpled, pitched forward, sagged sideways. Men shouted, men laughed. Men groaned.

Shells came shrieking. One came to decapitate a bugler – the headless body ran on for several yards before it stopped and dropped. In front khaki-clad figures struggling on the parapet of the first Turkish trench. The glint of steel. Red flashes from a thousand rifle barrels. Khaki figures that were not moving. Men lying huddled together as if waiting another signal to move forward.

Yes, some were moving – twitching. Others – crawling away – or trying to- maimed- dying. All were perfectly still – a spent wave of dead men. But there were others – they ran – they stumbled – always going forward. The Turkish defence weakened. The khaki figures were at the parapet. They were on the roofs of the covered trenches. They were tearing at beams and sandbags with bleeding hands. They were in the enemy stronghold and their bayonets were bloody – and reeking.”

An idealised painting of the battle by Fred Leist, 1921

It came as a complete surprise to the 3rd Battalion that the Turkish trenches, were in fact a covered fortress, roofed with pine branches. They either had to shoot and dive through loopholes, or push on to the further open trenches and fight their way back through the maze of communication trenches.

One of the captured trenches

Somehow, Reggie was one of the lucky ones to survive this first day of the battle. He was still alive at nightfall, as the battalion prepared to spend the night hanging on to the trenches that they had won at the cost of so many of their comrades' lives. There were intermittent counterattacks from the Turks throughout Saturday and Sunday.

By Sunday evening the battalion had been reduced to less than half of its original strength, and the losses included the Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. E. S. Brown, who was killed by shellfire. At dawn on Monday, the Turks launched another ferocious attack. At one point it looked as if they were going to regain part of the trench system they had lost, but they were repulsed. It was during this episode that the only VC awarded to the battalion during the war was won by Private Hamilton.

At 10.00am the 3rd Battalion was relieved by the 7th Battalion, and the survivors returned to the reserve trenches. The next day, a melancholy muster parade was held and roll call taken. At the end of three days fighting, only 7 out of 23 officers, and 295 out of 736 other ranks remained. Reggie was not one of them. It is not known exactly when, or how he died. It was on the 11th August that the battalion started to carry out the gruesome task of clearing the dead, both Australians and Turks, from the trenches.

The following day 137 bodies were removed. Major Burrett wrote *"Dead are lying on top of each other – fifty seven of them in one small section of trench. They had been dead for four or five days. We had to walk over them. I was sick and so were the men."* On the 13th August a burial service was held, but Reggie's body, even if it had been found, was not identified.

Major McConachy, who had taken over as Commanding Officer was invalided from the peninsula on 5th September, suffering from a nervous breakdown. The British attack at Suvla failed, but at the time the Battle of Lone Pine was described as a glorious victory, and a noble sacrifice. By December 1915, the whole Gallipoli Campaign was recognised as a failure, and all the Allied troops evacuated.

As well as having his name on the Haslemere memorial, Reggie is commemorated on the Lone Pine Memorial, near the battlefield, along with over 4,900 Australian and New Zealand men who died in the area and who have no known grave. The pine tree was planted in 1990. The seed had come from a tree grown from a cone sent back to Australia in 1915 by an Australian soldier.

Epilogue

On Remembrance Sunday, 11th November 2018, as part of the commemoration of the ending of World War 1, sixty-two wreaths were carried to the Haslemere Memorial, just yards from Reggie's birthplace, one for each man from that war whose name is inscribed on it. They were laid gently on the grass in front of the Town Hall, mostly by relatives of the fallen or residents of the houses where the servicemen had lived. Christopher and Carmen Ashton-Jones carried a wreath for Sergeant William Reginald Harris.

Despite the torrents of rain during the night, as we walked solemnly past the waiting crowd in the High Street, the sun shone brightly. After the clock chimed eleven, exactly a century after the slaughter stopped, a large flock of pigeons, startled by the sudden profound silence, fluttered into a patch of blue sky and whirled and gyrated above us. There was a profound sense of sadness, loss, and the frailty and folly of human existence, but above all an overwhelming feeling of peace.

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Shirley Harrison

Environmental Group update

Before the rather mild winter came to Haslemere, the Society's Environmental Group looked at several issues pertaining the town's environment, with our goal being to look at group-based actions which keep Haslemere smart and pleasant for all. I am amazed by the number of visitors to the town recently, so a good appearance is key to returning visitors.

One recurring matter which we could do something about was the four rather large flower-towers dotted around the town, steel structures which contained rather scorched and dead plants. Although we have several dedicated domestic gardeners, we decided to visit the local nurseries to see what we should plant that can survive the 'beast from the east' then a hot summer. The thorny subject of plastic flowers was raised, but we decided Haslemere is not Milton Keynes, but may still adopt some clever composites.

The solution to the planters is rather two-fold, yes there are plants that are good in many climates and they could be planted and we even had an offer of some free plants and help with arranging them. The key issue, which is not obvious until a professional points it out, is the shape of the bowl on top. Any water will drain rather rapidly from the edges (as well as allowing frost-bite on the roots) as the soil has no depth, so not a great design.

As the weather improves and is steady, unlike the week in February which gave everyone a false sense of Spring, our first task is to update these units and try to persuade the local shops to water them in summer. One planter does have a water hose, installed by a former shop owner.

The next items in our plans are to tackle the harder issues such as the Gibbs Trust railings dividing Charter Walk from the Waitrose carpark; the eroding boundaries and protection of our green-spaces around Haslemere; the retail area plant tubs and lastly the static heritage bins and their polythene liners.

Obviously, volunteers are always welcome.

Howard W. Brown

All aboard Haslemere's newest bus route

Changes to bus routes and times usually means cutbacks and the loss of evening or Sunday journeys, so it was a welcome surprise to discover that - thanks to financial support from Hampshire County Council - Haslemere has recently gained a direct bus connection to Alton and Basingstoke.

From 17 February, former route 18 to Farnham Aldershot was replaced between Bordon and Haslemere by routes 13/23, giving us an hourly weekday link to Alton. Buses run alternately via Liphook (13) or via Grayshott (23) to Whitehill from where the routes combine and run as number 13 on to Alton and Basingstoke.

Journey times of one hour to Alton and around two hours to Basingstoke may sound rather slow, but the Alton trip is faster than the comparable journey by rail, which usually requires two changes of train, and also works out a fair bit cheaper.

Taking the bus, the cheapest option is to buy a "South dayrider gold" ticket for £8.20 using the Stagecoach app (a paper version from the driver costs £8.80) - although anyone with an English concessionary pass obviously travels free. By train, an off-peak day return costs £14.90 (£13.00 with Network Railcard or £9.85 with a Senior Railcard).

This is the first time in decades that the town has had a bus link with Liphook and, by connecting with route 64 in Alton High Street it is now possible to reach Alresford and Winchester from Haslemere, with only one change of bus.

Using the dayrider ticket for a day trip to Winchester is also vastly cheaper than off-peak return by train (£26.00 or £17.15 with any railcard) for a journey of similar duration (around 90 minutes).

Publicity for the new services has been pretty much non-existent - printed bus timetables seem to be unobtainable in town - and, as I suspect few HS members are regular patrons of local bus services, your Newsletter Editor decided to sample the new route by taking a leisurely circular tour by bus to Basingstoke and Winchester.

Setting off from the town centre, the first thing to note is that the 13 bus does not serve the long-established bus lay-by at the foot of Shepherd's Hill, but a new stop that has appeared behind the Town Hall at the corner of College Hill. That is because it runs up Shepherds Hill and via Camelsdale to Liphook.

Catching the first weekday departure of the day from Haslemere on route 13 (10.22), I was the only passenger as far as Liphook, after which patronage seemed to pick up. I counted nine joiners in Liphook, 14 at the numerous stops in Bordon and two more on the way to Alton.

After picking up around ten passengers at stops in Alton, we headed north, passing the Humbly Grove oilfield on the left and later making a detour into RAF Odiham, base for the noisy Chinook helicopters which make regular training flights over our town. There were five joiners at Odiham and a further five in Hook before we made a somewhat delayed arrival in Basingstoke Bus Station at 12.28.

Rather than retrace my steps, or spend time in the rather soulless town, I had consulted my Hampshire bus map and began a circular tour of the county, firstly by catching a 76 bus to Whitchurch, passing through the large and attractive village of Overton, where there were glimpses of the huge Overton Mill, source of all Bank of England banknotes.

Stopping briefly in Whitchurch, the 76 bus driver pointed around a corner to another stop, where within ten minutes I was able to board an 86 bus bound for Winchester, another journey taking about 40 minutes (1.35pm – 2.15pm). After a leisurely walk down the main street (Broadway) I returned to the bus station and took a 67 bus to Alresford (3.00pm – 3.29pm).

Bumping into a fellow Watercress Line volunteer in the main street, I then travelled with him on a 64 bus to Alton (3.40pm - 4.03pm), before ending the day on a 13 bus back to Haslemere. This had come from Alton College, so was full of students as we left Alton, although there were just three of us aboard when we made an on-time arrival at Haslemere Town Hall (5.29pm).

My six-bus, seven-hour epic tour of north Hampshire proved that the new route is a major step forward in improving local public transport, with the direct link to Alton and the simple one-change trip to Winchester creating viable new journey opportunities for environmentally-aware folk like me who try to avoid car use wherever possible!

An added bonus is that most journeys on routes 13/23 are operated by double decker buses, as are all those between Alton and Winchester, so offering a marvellous opportunity to appreciate the passing scenery from a top-deck vantage point!

Gareth David

Montgomery and the Amesbury connection

In the 12 years since I started researching historical figures for the Society's blue plaque scheme, I have been approached about several famous people alleged to have lived locally where subsequent research has shown that the person never actually lived in the town.

I confess that when I was told that Field Marshall Montgomery had lived at Amesbury School, I treated the information with a high level of scepticism: having unearthed nothing from some very limited research I did not pursue the matter.

It was a chance encounter over lunch with Jack Whinney, grandson of Sir Frederick Whinney, the first president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and founder of one of the principal predecessor firms of my old employer Ernst & Young that rekindled my interest.

Jack was a pupil at Amesbury during the Second World War, and recounted how Monty had been a regular visitor, staying at the school when not on active duty. Jack shared with me that he still owned a pen given to him by Monty as an award for good performance.

Of course, if I had taken the trouble to contact the school, I would quickly have learned that Monty's association with the school is something of which they are justly proud.

Dis-abused of my ill-judged scepticism, together with Fay Foster, we approached new head, Sheina Wright, and head of history John Hamilton, who quickly jumped on the idea of a plaque to commemorate Montgomery's association with the school. The plan is erect the plaque during 2020 when the school is celebrating its 150th anniversary.

Working together with the school, we plan to research Monty's association, and produce a small publication which, together with the blue plaque and a small exhibition in the room where Monty stayed will become a permanent reminder of Monty's association with the school and with the Haslemere area.

So, what do we know at this stage about Monty's association with Amesbury?

Monty's son David attended Amesbury School. His wife Betty, who, by Monty's own account had never been well after David's birth, was stung by an insect on the beach at Burnham-on-Sea in 1937, developed septicaemia and never recovered, dying in his arms on 19 October 1937.

In October 1938, Monty was posted to Palestine, and from then until 1942, his son David often had to spend his holidays in holiday homes for children. In August 1942, when Monty went to Africa where he was to achieve fame, Major Reynolds, headmaster of Amesbury School, and his wife agreed to "adopt" David, became firm friends, and in Monty's words, between 1942 and 1948 "Amesbury school came David's home and mine".

One particular anecdote which we are keen to research is the suggestion that Monty spent the night before D-Day at Amesbury, leaving a note on the matron's desk before departure early in the morning to the effect that by the time she read the note, the invasion of Europe would have begun. We are hoping that evidence for this amazing story can be found.

We also know that Monty held briefing sessions for his generals at Amesbury, and that after the war when posted to the Ministry of Defence he used the school as his country office, parking his campaign caravan in the grounds.

At a later stage Monty bought a house in the area, and was a regular visitor to Farnham town centre. He is buried in Binsted churchyard near Farnham.

In due course, we hope to be able to share much more of this exciting story which is such an important part of the heritage of our town. If any of our readers have any information to share that will give colour to the story, we would love to hear from you.

Chris Harrison

Community Rail Partnership Update

Users of Haslemere station will have noticed the recent appearance of a defibrillator at the station entrance, a major initiative that has been championed by the Haslemere Community Rail Partnership (CRP) and funded by a number of sponsors - South Western Railway (SWR), the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP), First Responders and Shottermill Memorial.

The defibrillator is one of a number of significant initiatives by the Haslemere CRP, which has also produced its first "Rail to Ramble" leaflet and map in partnership with the South Downs National Park. The map features two walks from Haslemere Station into the South Downs, including one from Haslemere to Liphook, partly along the Sussex Border Path. A second map is currently in production in partnership with the Surrey Hills, with a range of further Rail to Ramble routes soon to be available online at www.haslemereinfohub.co.uk.

Having been successfully open throughout the winter – from 10.00 until 12.00 noon on Wednesdays to Saturdays - the CRP now boasts a total of 26 volunteers, including one student undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, and for the summer season from 1 April the hub is opening daily (except Sundays) from 10.00 until 12.00. The CRP would welcome any new volunteers.

Recently volunteers have been working hard on weeding the station flower beds, to bring them up to scratch for the spring/summer season and a key priority of the CRP is to improve the station environment for all travellers. The partnership is seeing a growing number of walkers, often in large groups arriving by train from London, aims to encourage these visitors to support Haslemere's local shops and cafes. The totem large double-sided map on the station forecourt, installed by the CRP in partnership with the South Downs, has proved very popular with visitors.

Response from visitors to its presence has been very positive and its social media profile is growing fast, with more than 1,000 followers on Instagram, facebook and twitter. One notable milestone this year will be the 160th anniversary of Haslemere Station, for which a number of events are being planned.

A major improvement to the hub premises will be the installation of a new double-fronted, double-glazed window, which is currently in production. Another potential upgrade could

come as part of plans by Puccinos café to expand from its current location on platforms 2/3 into the former station bookstall on platform 1, which would allow the hub to expand into the larger area covered by its existing lease.

As CRPs typically encompass more than one station, Haslemere CRP has been looking to extend its remit to other stations along the line. To that end, Milford and Witley Parish Council has agreed in principle to become part of a line CRP, with formal agreement due to be finalised before an ACoRP board meeting in May. Discussions are also underway with Godalming and Farncombe, who are also interested in joining in the future.

Creation of a rail partnership extending from Haslemere to Farncombe station would fill the rail partnership gap to the north and south of Haslemere - between the North Downs CRP (Guildford to Reading and Gatwick stations) and the East Hampshire CRP (Liphook to Rowlands Castle stations).

Looking ahead, Haslemere CRP has its eye on securing financial support from a £10m South Western Railway fund (available over 4 years 2020-2024) called the "Customer and Communities Innovation Fund". This has been established to support projects that are practical, deliverable (within 12/18 months), tangible, leave a legacy post-project, involve community partners, reflect community desire and fit in with SWR and national planning policy priorities.

Expressions of interest need to be submitted by early May, and Haslemere CRP is currently considering a wide range of projects, including improved public transport access from the station to the South Downs, Surrey Hills and National Trust site, better bus-rail connections with real time information screens at bus stops and measures to improve the visitor experience at Haslemere station.

Nikki Barton

Introducing Haslemere Musical Society

[awaiting text]

Events in Haslemere for Spring and Summer 2019 (from mid-April)

We are fortunate in Haslemere to have an extremely wide and varied range of clubs, societies and other activities. We have briefly listed forthcoming events of just some of these. Further information can be obtained from the respective websites.

Haslemere Museum www.haslemeremuseum.co.uk/whatson/whatson.html

- **Exhibitions:**

 - **Photography** (Katherine Hill)

 - **Paintings** (Borderland Artists' Consortium; Georgina Ling; Andrew Bailey; Helen Wellington; Mine Zabci)

- **Family Events and Workshops:**

 - **Early Years** (stories; craft activities) for under 5s. Friday mornings
 - **Museum Explorers** (5-11 years) - monthly Saturday activities based on the collections and exhibitions of the museum, or on seasonal and national events

 - **May Half Term Event:** Farm animals in the garden; art activities.
Thursday 30th May 11am- 3pm

 - **Early Birds:** Wednesday 29th May. Special opening for families with children who have an Autism Spectrum condition

- **Tea and Talk at the Museum:** On the Trail of the Incas Tuesday 28th May 2.30 pm

- **Haslemere Festival:** 11-27 May. The museum will be hosting topical talks
www.haslemerfestival.org.uk

- **Fundraising Plant Sale:** Saturday 11th May 11am- 1pm

- **Open Air Theatre:** The Rude Mechanical Theatre Company. Saturday 8th June
7.30pm . Doors open

for picnics 6.30 pm

- **Haslemere Gin Festival:** Saturday 22nd June 7pm- 11pm in the Museum garden.
Gins, food, music

- **Guided Town Walks:** Haslemere High Street - Sunday 5th May 2.30 pm
Sicklemill, Shottermill and Wey Hill - Sunday 2nd June
2.30 pm

Haslemere Natural History Society www.haslemerenaturalhistorysociety.org.uk

- **AGM :** 27th April 2.15 pm. Followed by a talk by Michael Joseph on wildflower meadows.

Haslemere Town Council www.haslemeretc.org

Meetings are held on Thursdays at 7pm. Dates are those published – for April and May 2019

- **Annual Town Meeting:** 17th April
- **Annual Council Meeting:** 16th May
- **Full Council:** 16th May
- **Grants:** 9th May
- **Planning and Highways:** 25th April; 23rd May

Haslemere Hall www.haslemerhall.co.uk

- **Cinema screenings:** Regular screenings of current films. There were 12 titles listed for April 2019
- **Events via satellite:** Live screenings from the Royal Opera; Royal Ballet; National Theatre; London Palladium; Royal Shakespeare Company; Northern Ballet and Maastricht
- **Live Shows:** Jonathan Veira . Friday 7th June 7.30 pm
- **Haslemere Players:** 'Evening of Love' May 31st; Saturday 1st June

- **Haslemere Thespians:** '84 Charing Cross Road' 9-11th May
- **Kids Symphonic Sundays:** Sunday 28th April

The Arts Society Haslemere www.theartssocietyhaslemere.org

- **21st May:** The Tiger in Asian Art
- **5th June: Study Day:** Masters of Art Nouveau and Art Deco (2 lectures)
- **18th June:** The Anatomical Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci: a Surgeon's View
- **26th June:** Outing: Avington Park near Winchester
- **3rd August:** Outing: Frogmore House, Windsor

Haslemere Musical Society www.hmsoc.org.uk

- **Orchestra and Choral Concert:** Jenkins and Shostakovich – May 4th

Haslemere Art Society www.haslemere.com/artsoc

- **Workshops:** Julia Cassels: 'Loose and Lively in Watercolours' - Sat. 8th June 10-4
Ronnie Ireland: 'Every Picture Tells a Story' – Sat 13th July 10-4
- **Talks and Demonstrations:** 'Three Painters Painting' – Thurs 18th April 7-9 pm
Neville Lyons: 'British War Artists of the Second World War' – Thurs

9th May 2.30– 4.30

Carol Orwin: 'Demonstration of Sculptural Processes' – Thurs 20th

June 7-9 pm

- **Life Group:** weekly on Friday afternoons
- **Art at the Museum:** weekly on Tuesday afternoons

Haslemere Gardening Society www.haslemere-gardening-society.co.uk/events

- **Sat. 8th June:** Coffee morning
- **Visits: Tues 14th May:** Leonardslee Lakes and Gardens; Standen House and Gardens
Mon 17th June: Great Comp Garden; Lullingstone Castle; guided tour of the World Garden, Kent
Wed 17th July: Houghton Lodge Gardens; Waitrose Water Gardens at Longstock Park, Stockbridge, Hants

Haslemere Fringe Festival www.lionfest.co.uk

Events throughout May 2019:

- **Evening Concerts:** Classical, Jazz, Dance, Folk, Opera
- **Weekend and Family Events:** Dog Show, Gruffalo. Classic Cars, Cycling, Triathlon
- **Weekday Talks:** with emphasis on anniversaries and local affairs

Gardens in Haslemere Open to the Public

- **Springwood House :** April 27 – 28th
- **Bardsey:** 12th May; July 6-7th
- **Lowder Mill:** June 1-2
- **The Manor House:** June 23rd
- **Ramster Gardens:** Open to June 9th

Farmers Market

Held in Haslemere High Street on the first Sunday of the month, 10 am – 1.30 pm

- 5th May
- 2nd June
- 7th July
- 4th August

Easter Egg Hunt

National Trust and Cadbury www.nationaltrust.org.uk/events

- 19 – 20th April : Hindhead Commons and Devils Punch Bowl
- 20th April : Swan Barn Farm

Haslemere Library

- **Pebble Rhymetime:** Introduction to songs, rhymes and books with Pebble the penguin. Every Wednesday 10-10.30
- **Crafty storytime:** Themed storytime and related craft activity. Every Friday morning during term time 10.30- 11
- **Chatterbooks:** Reading Group. One Saturday each month: 11.15-11.45

Compiled by Di Keeley