

1997 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 28th Annual General Meeting of the Association was held, for the first time in its history, in Merrow Village Hall on the 26th of November 1997 attended by just over 100 members. Mr & Mrs Rzechorzek representing the Boxgrove Park Association also attended as did Cllr. Tig Shepperd, with apologies being received from Cllrs. Allan and Brougham (both being detained at other meetings) and from 20 members.

In the absence abroad of Patrick Robson, the Chair was taken by the Vice-Chairman George Gunson who gave the Annual Report reviewing the past year's activities. In particular he referred to:

- * The welcome increase in membership which now stands at around 800 (from 500 households) which represents some 13% of the Merrow Ward electorate

- * The success in getting some maintenance and kerbing work carried out in Trodds Lane and the setting up by the Council of a Feasibility Study on the road

- * The dismissal of the planning appeal against the refusal of a change of use of No.207 Epsom Road (Debra charity shop) to a restaurant, which was due in no small measure to the evidence given at the Planning Inquiry by the Association's Chairman Patrick Robson;

- * The MRA submission on the electoral review proposals for Merrow Ward - see article elsewhere in this issue;

and he invited members to read the article in the Autumn Newsletter on Merrow Downs and to understand the residents' paramount rights over the Downs.

The Treasurer (Jonathan Jessup) presented the annual accounts and

announced that having served for the five years he originally promised, he now wished to stand down.

The Officers and Committee for the coming year were then elected although at the meeting there were no nominations for Treasurer or Publicity Officer - the latter becoming vacant because Tony Hills was obliged to stand down on account of new business commitments. Mr Gunson paid tribute to the work of Mr Jessup and Mr Hills and thanked the retiring Committee members for their services - Mrs Hillary Gibbons, Keith Hawes, Ian Macfarlane, plus the long serving co-opted member Ray Hitchmough, and Sgt. Peter Groves of the Guildford Police for his liaison work with the Committee. Mr Gunson also called for a volunteer to take on a new post of Membership Secretary which was being created to relieve the Treasurer of that aspect of the work, but no one came forward.

Officers re-elected:

Chairman - Patrick Robson

Vice-Chairman - George Gunson

Secretary - Dennis Mabey

Road Safety Officer -

Mrs Catherine Smith

Committee Members:

Continuing: Peter Bingley, Mike Drayson, Andy Williams.

Elected: Mrs Linda Hills, Peter Reeve, Mrs. Claire Rymell.

(Post-meeting Note. Subsequent to the Meeting Mr Gunson volunteered to resign his position as Vice-Chairman and take over that of Treasurer and Mrs Linda Hills volunteered to take on the post of Publicity Officer. The Committee gratefully accepted these offers and since this left two vacancies Mrs Liz Williams and Malcolm

Hinkly were co-opted onto the Committee with the latter agreeing to take on the new role of Membership Secretary.)

The meeting then considered a proposed amendment of the Association's Constitution to enable the AGM to be held in the Spring rather than on a dark evening in November. This was agreed nem con and the effect will be that the financial year begins on January 1st each year and the AGM will be held within four calendar months (i.e. by the end of April) commencing in 1999. As a consequence of this change there will not be an AGM in 1998 but it is planned to hold a members' meeting in the Autumn which it is hoped will become an annual event replacing the former Spring meeting.

Mr Gunson drew attention to the update article on Merrow and the Millennium which appeared in the *Autumn Newsletter* and of the intention that a community magazine be produced initially under the auspices of the MRA. This was to be self-funded and was not intended to replace the *Merrow Life* newsletter.

Mrs Sue Stranger who was masterminding the publication was then invited to outline the proposed contents of the magazine and she emphasised that its success depended on the co-operation and support of all organisations from whom there must be a flow of information. Readers will be aware, of course, that under its title *Merrow Matters* two issues have now been successfully launched.

The evening concluded with what has become a very enjoyable traditional cheese and wine social. ❖

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Hon. Treasurer would welcome payment of your 1998 subscription if it is still outstanding. Please send your cheques (Household Membership £3. Single Membership £2) to: Mr G Gunson,

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MERROW LIFE

The Newsletter of the Merrow Residents' Association
Summer 1998
Issue No. 4

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Since the last AGM in November 1997, there has been much activity - quite a lot of it behind the scenes - but without doubt the matter which became the key issue for Merrow residents was the West Clandon Chalkpit appeal dealt with by public Inquiry on 9th and 10th June. (A report is included elsewhere in this *Merrow Life*.) The MRA has been involved in other planning matters, with speed monitoring in Trodds Lane, parking problems on Epsom Road at the parade of shops and around the Merrow Park Surgery, access to the proposed Clandon Park Golf Course and protection of various footpaths and bridleways.

We have been involved with Guildford in Bloom, changes to the Electoral Boundaries and to the Mobile Library - all of these are reported separately

You will all have seen the second issue of *Merrow Matters* which came out in May and I would like to pay tribute to Editors Sue Stranger and Anne Cooper who have worked so hard to make it a success. When the MRA decided to go ahead with

this project and give financial backing to the editors we did not expect it to pay its way, at least for the first year, and it is a real achievement that it has covered its costs from the start. It is good to see so much local advertising support and there is no doubt *Merrow Matters* fulfils an important function in Merrow with the wide range of information and events it carries. It is also gaining good editorial support with its general interest articles. Well done Sue and Anne, I have heard many favourable comments, so keep it up and good luck with future editions.

It is encouraging to note that membership of the MRA has held up at over the 800 mark but there are a number of subscriptions still outstanding for 1998. For those who have not yet paid, please do not wait until you get a reminder - which costs time and money - but send your subscription now to our Treasurer, George Gunson. The officers and committee can then use their time more productively protecting your interests as residents of Merrow.

Finally, we have a report from our Secretary, Dennis Mabey, on the AGM held on 26th November, 1997.

Patrick Robson



Guildford in Bloom



As many of you will have read from the second issue of *Merrow Matters*, the MRA is actively supporting the 1998 Guildford in Bloom project which includes sponsoring the Merrow roundabout (with Dragons Leisure Club) and our own hanging basket on the Merrow village sign.

Merrow will play a vital role in the competition in which Guildford will be judged for the best large town in the South East and we want to encourage both businesses, which include the Merrow retail shop outlets on the Epsom Road, as well as domestic gardens particularly along the route which has

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MERROW STREET MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

As many readers will know, Surrey County Council Community Services have announced an intention to replace the present Trailer Library Service with an Urban Mobile Library. This will carry a stock of 3,500 books compared to 4,500 and is proposed to be on site in the Merrow Street lay-by on Tuesdays between 9.30 - 1.0 and 4.15 - 6.0

Whilst recognising the Council's current budgetary constraints, your Committee decided to make representations to the Library Services Manager and to our County Councillor (Nick Brougham), with particular emphasis on the need for an earlier afternoon timing for school children and their parents.

As a result a revised arrangement is now proposed which caters for the similar needs of Onslow Village, with whom Merrow will be required to share the mobile library each Tuesday. This is an *alternate week's* solution to retain the above timing for week one and a revised timing for Merrow of 9.30 - 12.00 and 3.15 - 6.00 for week two.

It is agreed to be a most unsatisfactory compromise but may have to be accepted for a trial period after 21st September. ❖

WEST CLANDON CHALKPIT APPEAL

When the Woodlands Park Clay Target Shooting Ground appealed against the Guildford Borough Council Planning Committee decision to refuse planning permission in 1997 for a group of six shooting ranges on the infilled ground of the West Clandon chalkpit, it was the intention of the Planning Inspectorate that this appeal would be heard by means of written representations. (This is a simpler and cheaper process than a Public Inquiry.) However, in view of the very high level of interest shown by residents of Merrow and West Clandon and by local organisations, the Secretary of State decided the appeal should be conducted by a Public Inquiry which was held in the Guildford Borough Council Chamber on 9th and 10th June.

The Statistics were:

Letters of objection - 194

Local organisations objecting - 19

Letters of support - 1

Local organisations supporting - 1

It is encouraging that so many Merrow residents (nearly 150) wrote in and I am grateful for the response to my letter explaining the position delivered to some 300 of the most affected households in Merrow. It is also gratifying how many local organisations responded both by letters of objection and by their

presence at the appeal hearing.

Support for the appellant, not surprisingly, came from the Surrey Branch of the Clay Target Shooting Association and also one misguided resident of East Horsley (well out of earshot!) who did not appreciate the chalkpit was to be filled in before the shooting ranges were established. However, it was rather surprising that one or two local sporting clubs did not bother to respond at all.

The Inspector, Mrs O'Rourke, without doubt was very professional and very competent and made sure that everyone who wished to express a view was given the chance to do so. She conducted the appeal in a thorough and effective manner. Guildford Borough Council representatives had prepared comprehensive documentation in support of their reasons for refusal of the application but the appellant, Mr Huggins conducted his own case with his architect and seemed to rely on only two assumptions, producing very little documentation:

1. The citizens of Merrow and West Clandon had not objected to the Guildford Gun Club using the chalkpit for the past 40 years and therefore did not consider there was a noise problem and
2. Earth bunds 7.0 metres high would provide sufficient protec-

tion to the proposed ranges on both safety and noise grounds since they apparently did so at two other clay target shooting grounds.

It is perhaps relevant to note that the appellant provided no evidence to support his assumptions and called no expert witnesses.

It would be invidious to mention the names of a dozen or so persons who spoke most eloquently in objecting to the appeal but I have no doubt they have helped our cause. On behalf of the residents of Merrow, I thank them for their support and also all those residents who took the trouble to turn up to the Inquiry. The Guildford Borough Planning team felt their presence had carried considerable weight with the Inspector.

It would be unwise to offer an opinion on the result, which we will not get for around two months, except to state that if logic carries much weight, then the objectors have a strong case. However, we must be aware that many appeals are decided on matters of policy and technicality rather than simple logic and we must therefore wait patiently for the inspector's report and decision.

I will publicise the result as soon as it is known.

Patrick Robson



Guildford in Bloom

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now been finalised.

On Monday 13th July between 10.00 and 11.00am, the judges will travel past the Spectrum and into Merrow via the Stoke Park roundabout and up Boxgrove Road, along Duncan Drive, Collingwood Crescent, Boxgrove

Lane, Merrow Copse, Merrow Woods, Great Goodwin Drive, Bushy Hill Drive, Epsom Road Parade, Park Lane, Partridge Way, Kingfisher Drive, back into Park Lane and under the railway bridge into Burpham.



ELECTORAL REVIEW OF GUILDFORD

In the Autumn Newsletter we reported on the Borough Council's draft proposals for changes to the current Merrow & Burpham ward and the Association's response in so far as the proposed new Merrow ward was concerned. It is pleasing to report that in its submission to the Local Government Commission the Council accepted the principal changes we had suggested.

The Commission has now published its Report and the following is an extract relating to Merrow: "Merrow & Burpham is currently a three member ward which is significantly under-represented, with each councillor on average representing over 50% more electors than the borough average. The

Borough Council recognised that Merrow and Burpham are two separate communities and proposed dividing the existing ward into two new wards, using the railway line as a defined boundary between the two The Council allocated an additional two councillors to the area, resulting in a three-member Merrow ward and a two-member Burpham ward.

The Council proposed that the boundary between Christchurch ward and the two new wards would go north and east along Merrow Downs from Warren Road towards the allotment gardens, then north to Epsom Road. It also proposed to include numbers 121 to 143 (odd numbers) on Epsom Road and all of

Orchard Close in Merrow ward, thereby utilising much of the existing boundary. This boundary also formed part of the Merrow Residents' Association's proposals for Merrow ward. After considering carefully all the representations received, we have decided to endorse the Borough Council's proposals for the three wards of Burpham, Christchurch and Merrow, which would achieve good electoral equality the Borough Council's proposals would utilise clear boundaries, having regard to community identities, and appear to have some support locally following the Council's consultation exercise. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Merrow ward would be equal to the borough average and 3% below in 2002."

It will give some satisfaction to members that, although in the context of the review overall the MRA proposals were of a minor nature, our views have been taken into account.

Subject to the Secretary of State's endorsement of the Report, therefore, Merrow may now expect at long last to enjoy a proper degree of representation on the Borough Council.



OTHER MERROW MATTERS

West Clandon Pay & Play Golf Course

This development, which has outline planning consent, using the fields between Merrow (Trodds Lane) and the West Clandon Chalkpit, has been held up pending agreement over access to the course from the A246 Guildford/Clandon Road. We understand that agreement between Lord Onslow and the Surrey County Highways Department has now been reached and, as a result, it is anticipated construction of the golf course will commence before the end of the year.

Police Office

The Merrow Police Office, based at Bushy Hill School, continues to be manned by Pc Dyer and is open one or two days a week but not at a specified time. The MRA strongly supports the police initiative which gives Merrow its own "man on the beat" and the work being done to foster the youth of Merrow.

In-Line Skating

This youth activity, which was so successful last summer, is being held again on Wednesday evenings in the playground of Bushy Hill School and proving just as popular with some 50 skaters plus youth workers each week.

History of Merrow

In June 1991, the MRA produced a 16 page booklet entitled *Merrow Downs - A Chronological History*

which sets out the ownership of the Downs back to 1100 and gives a detailed history from 1600 onwards.

This is now out of print and the Committee would like to produce an updated version in time for the Millennium.

If any reader has any historical documentation or research papers which may be of assistance in compiling a new version of the booklet, would you please contact the Secretary, Dennis Mabey.

For the *Autumn Event* to be held on Tuesday 22nd September at 7.30pm at Jeffries Hall, St Pius X Church, Horseshoe Lane East, Matthew Alexander, Curator of the Guildford Museum will give an illustrated talk on "The History of Guildford & Merrow". Details are given elsewhere in this issue.

