

Covid-19 Support

We are now approaching the colder weather under renewed Covid-19 restrictions.

In these challenging and anxious times help is available from different organisations.

Our website has links to practical and wellbeing guidance from the GBC *Community Wellbeing Team's* regular newsletters and from NHS Surrey's *Maintaining Independence and Wellbeing* factsheet.

You can also request practical help from MRA's *Coronavirus Volunteer Support Group*.

Contact us by emailing:

Coronavirussupport@merrowresidents.org or by leaving a message on 07928 809458.

Friends of St John's Church

Lockdown has highlighted the fact that the Church and its grounds need to be cared for until life returns to some form of normality and then for future generations. The Registered Charity *Friends of the Church of St John's the Evangelist, Merrow* (known as *Friends of St John's* (FoStJ)) has been formed by members of the community to assist in maintaining and preserving the buildings and grounds of the magnificent Grade II listed church, for the benefit of the local community as a whole.

In the past the Church would have been the focal point for many activities, not just births, marriages and death. Markets, community meetings and gatherings would have been

held in the church itself. FoStJ would like *St John's* to become the focus of 'village' life once again with recitals, lectures, exhibitions and small markets within the church building itself or *St John's Centre* hall, and for the Church to be seen as a community resource for all.

Presently the magnificent pipe organ in the church tower is being cleaned, upgraded and serviced. It is hoped that the mammoth task of cleaning and refurbishing some 800 pipes, re-wiring and replacing the controls will be completed by the Autumn.

We are planning an organ recital together with an interesting historical talk about the organ and its operation as soon as public assemblies allow.



A brief history of the church, whose site is thought to date from the 12th Century, can be found at www.fostj.org together with details of how to become a Member of FoStJ for £5 a year. For further details, and for email updates contact secretary@fostj.org.

Chris Shorter *Chairman FoStJ*

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

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GBC Cllr Jan Harwood (Liberal Democrat)

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GBC Cllr Steven Lee (Liberal Democrat)

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MP Angela Richardson (Conservative)

angela.richardson.mp@parliament.uk

MRA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2020-2021

Chairman	Andrew Strawson
Vice-Chairman	Vacant
Treasurer	Dave Smith
Environment Officer	Stephen Rudd
Membership Secretary	Claire Rymell
Secretary	Henriette Whitehead-van Prooije
Webmaster	Dave Smith
Publicity Officer	Julia Ellis
Committee Members	Keith Meldrum, Gordon Farquharson, Denise Hilton, Chris Holliday, Lorna Seymour and John Pitkin

For more information on MRA's activities see www.merrowresidents.org

Subscriptions

If you haven't paid your annual subscription for 2020 you will have received a reminder letter with this newsletter. Preferably pay by bank transfer Sort Code **30-93-74 A/c 01511541** with your surname, initials and postcode as the reference to identify you on our bank statement or by enclosing a cheque to "Merrow Residents' Association" **MRA Treasurer, 6 Swaynes Lane, Guildford GU1 2XX.**

To receive emails from MRA of events/local issues contact secretary@merrowresidents.org and include your full name and address.

Merrow Life is published by Merrow Residents' Association for circulation to its members. Unless stated, the views expressed may not always represent the views of the Committee of the Association or those of individual members of the Committee. Any enquiries can be sent to secretary@merrowresidents.org or to 28 Trodds Lane Guildford GU1 2XR



MRA AUTUMN EVENT

via Zoom on
Monday 19th October at 8.00pm

'Merrow Downs - Flora, Butterflies & Conservation'

An illustrated talk by Ken and Gillian Elsom on the more unusual species of plants and butterflies found on Merrow Downs, and how they are being conserved.

For joining details and help to use Zoom please email secretary@merrowresidents.org

THIS IS AN OPEN MEETING - ALL MEMBERS,
FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS WELCOME!!

MERROW LIFE

The Newsletter of the



MERROW RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

your community voice for over 50 years

Autumn 2020

Issue No 48

www.merrowresidents.org

Don't
forget

Autumn
Meeting
Monday
19th October

Chairman's Notes

What can we say about 2020? It has been an extraordinary and exceptional year and has completely dislocated normal life as we used to know it. We send our sympathy and best wishes to the entire community. There has been much pain and suffering, to health, wealth and to happiness and our sincerest kind wishes go out to all. Thousands of others have written about it already and in excruciating detail - monitoring, measuring and critiquing the steps taken in every country and corner of the world. I can add nothing to this accumulated wisdom except to comment about some of our own direct experiences here in Merrow and to consider a few of the local impacts.

A main highlight was the success achieved by the *Coronavirus Support Volunteers* group that MRA set up at the start of lockdown. We provided services necessary at a local level, not available from GBC, SCC or the government support initiatives.

The major achievement was to ensure that groceries and other daily supplies were delivered to the elderly, infirm and those in need (these were described as the 'ordinarily vulnerable' - those who needed help in lockdown but were not covered in the government list of the 'extremely vulnerable').

We remain most grateful to the volunteers who took on the responsibilities of helping with these very real needs and we are also fortunate within Merrow that the number of residents seeking support was typically about half the number of available volunteers. Clearly disappointing for some of the volunteers, but very much better to have the imbalance in numbers in that direction. Their work is currently suspended, but they wait on standby in case of further spikes during the winter.

We also gratefully acknowledge the benefits from working together with *St John's Church* to help identify those needing help and from sharing experiences with *Burpham Community Association* who set up and ran a parallel initiative.

Our delayed virtual 50th AGM in July proved that we could successfully operate socially distanced meetings, via Zoom video conferencing. This works well in the current circumstances, and allows potentially for a very wide attendance (though we do understand that it also can make attendance difficult for some of our membership, which we acknowledge and will be seeking ways to mitigate).

We are now planning our *Autumn Event* online on 19th October and hope that you can join us. The recent restrictions have helped many of us appreciate the natural environment on our doorstep even more. Local residents **Ken** and **Gillian Elsom** have agreed to talk about the butterflies and flora found on *Merrow Downs* and the steps being taken to conserve them.

By holding the event via Zoom we can't on this occasion provide our usual spread of nibbles and drinks but instead you can sit comfortably on your own sofa and join us virtually. We will not be limited by hall size, so this is an opportunity to 'invite' friends and neighbours to introduce them to MRA - the more the merrier! (See the back page for more details)

The MRA's ambitions for 2020 have remained constant. We aim to increase the relevance of the Association to everyone in Merrow, to involve more members more actively in more of our activities and to build out our areas of expertise and interest. Many aspects within this plan have been delayed by lockdown and social distancing, but the plan continues.

Stephen Rudd has taken over the mantle of *Environment Officer* and is developing our relationship with (and our corporate membership of) the *Guildford Environment Forum* providing access to their broad coverage of so many key environmental subjects.

Other MRA activities include reviewing the new planning regulations, the continuing support given to members on local planning issues and the monitoring and commenting on the roll out of the Local Plan, which becomes ever more convoluted.

Membership costs are kept very low and affordable and we believe that the approach that we are following can encourage growth and wider participation across the community.

Our range of activities are reported both in this newsletter and on our newly revamped website.

Andrew Strawson *Chairman*

MRA's Revamped Website

During lockdown we reviewed the design of our website www.merrowresidents.org and decided that it needed a significant updating and freshening up as our original website design has been largely unchanged for over 15 years and a 'fresh coat of paint' probably wasn't enough.

We set up a sub-committee and our Environment Officer **Stephen Rudd** suggested that we seek guidance from a friend who is a professional web site designer.

After some discussion we decided to base a new site on a WordPress software platform through our host provider (*1and1 IONOS*). It offers the benefits of being more up to date and it allows approved individuals to update specific 'web pages' without involving the web master.

At the moment you can preview the 'new look' website from <https://merrowresidents-live-website.com/> Hopefully you will be able to navigate the menus much more easily from any PC, tablet or phone as the new software can recognise the size of your screen and change the lay out to best suit whatever device you are using.

More photos have been added, and if you have taken any of local views or Merrow wildlife that you would like to share with us please send them to me via secretary@merrowresidents.org

We hope you approve of the new look - do please let us know if you have feedback or ideas on what else you would like us to include.

Dave Smith (*present webmaster*)

PLANNING

Urnfield, Downside Road (20/P/00825)

A full planning application was submitted for the creation of a floodlit artificial hockey pitch with a six-lane all weather running track, a football pitch, relocation of cricket nets, extension to the sports pavilion balcony and new javelin, discus, shot put and long jump areas, alongside the creation of a new store building and additional on-site car parking.

The land is already a sports ground and facility for various local schools, owned/tenanted by *Athena Schools Trust* and the *Royal Grammar School*.

This application on the south-western crest of Merrow Downs has resulted in over 500 responses from local residents and school communities. Supporters and objectors have put forward strong views, as well as interested agencies and parties.

MRA submitted an objection for the following reasons:

1 Floodlights

The current proposal does not conserve or enhance the *Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*. The installation of eight 15m high floodlights in this open and prominent position would be highly visible both by day and by night. The floodlights would be lit on autumn and winter afternoons/evenings and light pollution would affect a wide area surrounding Urnfield, impacting on the amenities of many residents downhill to the west and in adjacent roads. We proposed that GBC commission a further independent

study, with onsite testing and assessment of the real visual impact of 15m high structures, and to report on light and structural impacts. Mitigations to these visual impacts should be implemented. We further proposed that clear conditions on floodlight usage times are set out.

2 Traffic flow and parking

The proposed site developments would increase traffic in Downside Road and neighbouring residential roads. There are no parking restrictions and often cars and visiting service vehicles are parked on both sides. This results in the difficult manoeuvring of coaches and minibuses, which impacts upon the residents' amenities and safety.

The *Environmental Health Department* of GBC and *Sports England* have recently submitted their further comments to GBC, covering lighting, noise pollution and the layout of the proposed sports facilities.

At the time of writing (September 2020) the Planning Officers are considering their recommendation for approval or refusal, which in any event will be put forward to the full Planning Committee for a final decision in due course.

PLANNING RULES from 1st September 2020

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Orders 2020

Two amendments to the 2015 Orders have become law:

1. Homeowners will be able to add up to two additional storeys to their home to create new homes or more

The Local Plan

Little obvious progress has been made with the developments described in the *Guildford Local Plan* although there is a great deal of activity behind the scenes.

The planning application for *Garlick's Arch* on the A247 at Send Marsh/Burnt Common (for 550 homes) has yet to go to the Planning Committee for determination and there have been four separate virtual presentations on the development of the Slyfield site now called the *Weyside Urban Village* (WUV) (for 1,500 homes). This is a massively complex development involving the construction of a new sewage treatment works, the 'sealing' of old sewage lagoons and landfill sites and the construction of the northern end of the *Sustainable Movement Corridor* (to give priority to buses, cyclists and pedestrians) that snakes through Guildford and links the WUV with the University, the Royal Surrey County Hospital and Burpham and may even stretch to Merrow.

Residents' Associations throughout Guildford have been stunned by the new Government proposals to not only review but make fundamental changes to the procedures by which Local Plans are made. This may well have a fundamental impact on Guildford's Local Plan that was adopted in April 2019 which would have to be re-made within 42 months of the new procedures coming into force.

The Government are suggesting that their proposals will simplify the current system and make it easier for developers to develop on land that has been identified for development. The proposals would change the basis on which housing 'need' is calculated to make it more likely that the Government can meet its target of 300,000 new homes per year. This would mean that it is likely that the current housing target for Guildford of 10,678, to be built over 15 years,

would be increased when our Local Plan is re-made. Land will be re-classified and developers will not have to seek outline planning consent for land that is earmarked for development in a revised Local Plan. The proposals would also do away with many of the detailed policies in the Local Plan and therefore some of the control we now have on the quality and appearance of our new houses and blocks of flats would disappear.

There is no suggestion that the *Green Belt* would be affected but we have to look at the detail when it becomes available to ensure that this guarantee is watertight. There are very few positives in the Government proposals which are full of hyperbole and gloss and unsubstantiated assumptions.

This Government review is not only disappointing after all the work that the MRA put into the 2019 Local Plan but deeply worrying since Guildford would have some difficulty in finding additional land for development if our housing target were to be increased without further erosion of the *Green Belt* that is one of the key features of this lovely area in which we are so fortunate to live.

Members may have heard that the Government is also proposing that more unitary authorities should be established that would do away with borough and district councils in favour of one authority which would carry out all the functions which are currently the responsibility of Surrey County Council (SCC) together with all the eleven other local authorities in the county including those of Guildford Borough Council (GBC). This proposal is being supported by SCC but opposed by all major political parties in Guildford and also by GBC itself. It is argued that the establishment of a unitary authority would be more efficient and cost effective but it would certainly increase the degree of separation between residents and decision makers and is likely to be extremely unpopular and divisive.

living space for growing families through the 'permitted development' approval process and without the need for a full planning application, but with a *requirement to carefully consider the impact on neighbours and the appearance of the build*.

2. Full planning applications will not be required to demolish and rebuild unused buildings as homes, and commercial and retail properties can be quickly repurposed to help revive our high streets and town centres.

However, in both situations GBC would have to ensure that the developments meet detailed structural and building requirements.

MRA wrote to the Managing Director of GBC, **James Whiteman**, to seek further guidance and advice for our residents, as the new rules will affect the public in different ways. We are concerned that neighbours and interested parties may not be made aware of the new rules on a development, where previously a full planning application would have been required and notified.

At the time of writing guidance requires GBC to notify only the adjoining property owners. This notification will not be provided to other neighbours or to Residents' Associations. It remains unclear what impact these new rules will have in Merrow and we continue in communication with GBC on this subject.

We always suggest that homeowners remain vigilant about any planning applications or developments around them. ❖

As we are finalising this edition of *Merrow Life* there is a war of words raging on the possibility that Guildford Borough Council may disappear within a single new unitary authority. On the one hand you have the leader of SCC who has written to the Department of Housing, Communities & Local Government supporting this initiative whilst on the other all the Borough and District Councils in the County are mounting a robust rebuttal of the suggestion. Then things got more interesting when it was suggested in a leaked email that the Government had gone off the idea but this was swiftly followed by a statement from the leader of SCC that the idea was still live. We shan't know the truth of the matter until the Government's White Paper on *Recovery and Devolution* is published in the autumn. Until then we are all really in the dark.

Keith Meldrum ❖

Merrow Notice Boards

There is currently room on the local notice boards if you want to publicise any non-profit making, community minded endeavours. MRA has access to its own and SCC's notice boards in the following 4 locations –

- Epsom Road outside the Debra shop
- At the junction of Merrow Street/Epsom Road
- Kingfisher Drive at the bottom of Merrow Street
- Merrow Common.

We can also display notices at *Peacock's Delicatessen* and on the Boxgrove Association's board, both at the Boxgrove shops. Please deliver or post six copies of your A4 or A5 posters to **Lorna Seymour** at 11 Trodds Lane, GU1 2XT. ❖

Merrow's New Defibrillator

Beating Hearts Merrow would like to thank the very generous local residents and organisations who have made it possible to purchase a public access defibrillator for Merrow. It will be installed ready for launch on 10th October close to the Epsom Road shops on a wall near to *Close Shave* barber's shop. With very visible signs it will be difficult to miss!

The timing is significant, as it will be a year since **Judith Hunt** had a sudden cardiac arrest and her heart stopped beating. She was resuscitated through use of a defibrillator, which shocks the heart into restarting. After making a full recovery Judith set up *Beating Hearts Merrow* to fundraise for a local defibrillator, and offer *Save a Life* training sessions.

Judith has been completely overwhelmed by the support she's had. "Our target was to raise funds for one defibrillator and now we only need to raise £400 and we can order a second one!"

She is also committed to giving people the confidence to actually use a defibrillator and is holding a mix of in-person and virtual *Save a Life* sessions.

On 10th October when the defibrillator is 'unveiled', advice on using it will be available. Following on from this, virtual *Save a Life* sessions will be held on *Zoom* on Saturday 17th October. For more information see beatingheartsmarrow.uk/ or email savealife@beatingheartsmarrow.uk

MRA would like to congratulate Judith on having provided



Judith with the new defibrillator

the Merrow community with such an important asset. We very much hope that it won't have to be called into use very often, and that it will be prove invaluable in an emergency. ❖

MERROW HISTORY GROUP

The group met three times during the year until the pandemic caused all later meetings to be cancelled. Topics we covered included a talk on smuggling (which had dubious Merrow connections) and on House of Commons Speakers (with definite Merrow connections!) Limited new research has been possible since then although the *Woking History Centre* and the *Guildford Institute*, both useful sources of information, have partially reopened.

During the lockdown we dealt with many of our long-standing repair jobs and then finally our sheds, attics and cupboards were sorted. If you did the same, what treasures did you find? They may be items of local interest that you no longer need to keep but you don't wish to bin. Alternatively, have you unearthed any items we might be interested in but you want to retain?

We have recently seen the sale particulars of *The Gate House*, dated 1936. Located where Gateways is now (off Epsom Road), it was within Merrow at that time. The property was described as "a picturesque country estate of around 9 acres. The main house being in the Jacobean style with 10 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms central heating and an Aga." The whole estate was offered for the sum of £8,500 which included a lodge with six rooms (which still exists), garaging for three cars and stabling for three horses.

A few years ago, a clear out to make space for a local house extension unearthed a unique find. The doors from the delivery van used by *H. Kimber and Sons* (the grocers and bakers whose shop was next door to the old village forge and the current BP garage) were about to go to the tip, but we rescued them. Let us know what you can offer - but not too many scrap doors please!

Please contact **Ian Anderson** iana.anderson@btconnect.com G. 570475 or **Phillip Wilkinson** pandjwilkinson9@gmail.com G. 575125



Kimber's van - with its doors in place!

A First-hand Memory of Kimber's Van

"Bread, and cakes if we were lucky, was delivered daily in a little maroon Ford van by *H Kimber and Sons*. One of the sons was Mr Harold Kimber. I can well remember his weekly calls to collect our grocery order - he was such a cheerful character and always had kind words for us boys. He would come up the drive with pencil behind his ear and order book in hand, approach the back door and knock, then call out 'HK!'. One day I remember that he told my mother of a new line of confectionery - it was the now well known *Kit Kat* bar which then sold at 1d for a small one and 2d for a large one. Yes, we were lucky boys that day. I'm sure that we eagerly awaited the return of the little maroon van that evening with that special order. I expect that many readers will recall that many years later Mr Kimber became Mayor of Guildford."

John Sutton (written in the late 1990s for Merrow Matters) ❖