

FEDORA

FEDERATION OF OXSHOTT RESIDENTS AND ASSOCIATIONS



A VOICE FOR OXSHOTT

www.fedora.org.uk

Spring 2017

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To advertise in the next FEDORA magazine, in Autumn 2017, please contact advertising@fedora.org.uk. The magazine is produced on a non-profit basis, keeping advertising rates as low as possible, and is delivered to 2750 households in the Oxshott - Cobham area.

Further information is also available on our website or to contact FEDORA members you can e-mail to the appropriate position above, @fedora.org.uk; e.g. planning@fedora.org.uk or chairman@fedora.org.uk, etc., or for general enquiries info@fedora.org.uk.

FEDORA

FEDERATION OF OXSHOTT RESIDENTS
AND ASSOCIATIONS

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, 23rd May, 2016
7.30 for 8.00pm

OXSHOTT VILLAGE CENTRE

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Chairman's Comments

by David A. D. Cooke

Public Consultations

Two important periods of Public Consultation have just come to an end. Thanks to all those who took the time and trouble to voice their opinions.

The first concerns upgrading of the M25 Junction 10 with the A3, a scheme which will cost what seems the enormous sum of between £100 and £250 million depending on which option is chosen.

The current arrangement with four sets of traffic lights on a roundabout leads to long tailbacks, especially during the rush hour.

There were 3 options. On each option there were dedicated left turn free flowing slip roads, closure of the Wisley and Elm Lanes junctions with the A3 to be replaced by slip roads to the Ripley roundabout and also a dedicated exit lane to the roundabout at Painshill.

The cheapest option was just to lengthen the roundabout in an east / west direction to accommodate more traffic on the roundabout.

The second option was to provide flyovers on two of the busiest four right hand turns, that going from the A3 westbound to the M25 northbound and from the A3 eastbound to the M25 southbound. The two remaining right hand turns would use the existing roundabout as at present.

The third and most expensive option, which has all but been ruled out already is a full free flowing intersection similar to that of the M25 with the M3. It also requires the most amount of land.

It seems that the mid-range option would be the one to aim for. Results of the consultation will be announced in the summer of 2017, construction will start in 2019/2020 and be open for traffic in 2022/2023.

The second consultation concerns Elmbridge's proposed Strategic Plan where under pressure from the government to provide more housing they have proposed to remove Green Belt status from three areas, Knowle Park and the Brickpit, Chippings Farm and the Fairmile hotel, and another in Long Ditton.

FEDORA has combined with Stoke D'Abernon RA, Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust and Cobham and Downside RA to co-ordinate and maximize the public response. The arguments seem to depend on whether there are "exceptional" circumstances justifying the removal of Green Belt status and the validity of the scoring system which led these areas to be classified as

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“weakly” performing. FEDORA believes that further housing should only be provided from more intense development of urban and brownfield sites even if this means taller buildings. If the precedent of this removal of Green Belt were to be sanctioned one could see that more houses would still be needed and the next piece of Green Belt would go and so on. This is quite apart from an already overloaded infrastructure in terms of roads, schools and doctors surgeries etc.

This poem, sent to me by an Oxshott resident, is also relevant:

Leave Them A Flower

by Wally Whyton

Leave them a flower, some grass and a hedgerow
A hill and a valley, a view to the sea
These things are not yours to destroy as you want to
A gift given once for eternity

I speak on behalf of the next generation
My sons and daughters, their children to come
What will you leave them for their recreation
An oil slick, a pylon, an industrial slum

You plunder and pillage, you tear and you tunnel
Trees lying toppled, roots finger the sky
Building a land for machines and computers
In the name of progress the farms have to die

Fish in the ocean polluted and poisoned
The sand on the beaches stinking and black
And you with your tankers, your banks and investments
Say, Never worry, the birds will come back

When the last flower has dropped its last petal
When the last concrete is finally laid
The moon will shine cold on a nightmarish landscape
Your gift to your children, this world that you made

It will be interesting to see how Elmbridge responds to the pressure from government on one side demanding more housing and residents pressure on the other unwilling to give up Green Belt areas. The draft local plan will be published in the summer for another round of consultation but room for manoeuvre after this is likely to be more limited.

Roads

FEDORA has proposed to Surrey County Council that a new link be made from the A309 onto the A3 westbound near the Hook roundabout. It is hoped this would reduce some of the traffic coming along Fair Oak Lane.

It so happens that the Council were already considering ways of reducing

traffic through Esher, so this proposal might get a more sympathetic hearing. We shall have to wait and see.

New RAs

FEDORA was pleased to welcome Chatsworth Place and Silverdale Avenue as new RA members of FEDORA. Bevendean decided not to renew but we hope to welcome them back soon.

Donations

Since the autumn publication of the magazine FEDORA has given a donation to support the Oxshott Christmas evening, Christmas trees and battery lights to fit in the flagpole holders outside shops to augment the Elmbridge Christmas display, and a contribution to the continued operation of the Chatterbus linking Oxshott and Weybridge.

Dates for your diary

Mon 1 May	Oxshott Village Day
Tue 23 May	FEDORA AGM
Sun 30 Jul	Prudential RideLondon-Surrey

More Active Members needed

FEDORA comprises volunteers who give up their time to deal with community matters. We all have our own other lives to lead, which means not everyone is available all the time, We are also all getting older and so always need new younger blood, especially from those who can attend our regular six weekly evening meetings. Polly Zabari has been our secretary for many years but has now retired. Many thanks to Polly for her sterling contribution. We therefore particularly need a secretary who can attend these meetings and write up and circulate minutes and agendas. This position can be either voluntary or paid at normal rates. If you would like to give it a try please contact me on davidadcooke@btinternet.com or telephone me on 01372 842873.

IN THE MARKET

The Spring market is almost upon us and we have a number of buyers registered who are keen to purchase their next home.

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Unwrapping the parcel

by Stephen Spark

'Parcel 14': bland, forgettable, devoid of history or emotion, it's the sort of name that suits developers and their town hall acolytes when they have plans to hatch. Our Parcel 14 – some 65 hectares (161 acres) bounded by Littleheath Lane and Heathfield on the Oxshott side, Blundel Lane and the railway on the east, Water Lane and Fairmile on the west, and Lodge Close and Knowle Park to the south – faces losing its Green Belt protection on the grounds that it is “weakly performing”. But what exactly does that mean?

Suzanne Parkes, deputy planning policy manager at Elmbridge, explained that to qualify as Green Belt under the government's National Planning Policy Framework, land must achieve one or more of the following purposes:

1. Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
2. Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
3. Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
4. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
5. Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Each purpose is scored between 1 and 5. A high score (4 or 5) for at least one purpose indicates 'strong' Green Belt; a score of 3 against at least one purpose is counted as 'moderately performing' land, while 1 or 2 across all the five purposes characterise “weakly performing” Green Belt.

Amid the waste-heap of words under which the council has buried its plans there are these vital paragraphs (somewhat abridged) giving the scores for Parcel 14 and the reasons for them.

Purpose 1 (a) – FAIL: The local area is not at the edge of a large built-up area.

Purpose 1 (b) – 0: The local area is not at the edge of a large built-up area.

Purpose 2 – 1: The local area forms a less essential part of the gap between the settlements of Cobham / Oxshott and Leatherhead / Fetcham.... development here is unlikely to cause the merging of these settlements.

Purpose 3 – 2: 2.5% of the local area is covered by development. Much of the local areas [sic] consists of estate parkland associated with the Knowle Hill Park private estate, as well as a substantial area of woodland at Fairmile Park in the north and rough scrubland fields to the south, interspersed with patches of woodland.

Built development is dispersed throughout the parcel, including ancillary buildings for the Scout camp, Knowle Hill Park and various outbuildings, as well as scattered dwelling houses. The area is almost completely

enclosed by Cobham / Oxshott and has relatively weak links to the wider Green Belt, interrupted by both Blundell [sic] Lane and the railway line.

Overall, the highly managed status of much of the land, as well its surrounding urban context has a significant impact on the character of the local area, despite low coverage of built form. The local area has a semi-urban character.

Readers can decide for themselves whether this forms a coherent argument or is a mass of contradictions and inaccuracy – for example, by considering Cobham, Oxshott and Stoke D'Abernon as a single settlement.

My own relationship with Parcel 14 predates the formation of Elmbridge Council, as I grew up in Stoke D'Abernon in the 1960s, when the fields facing Blundel Lane were still farmed, though probably not very profitably. The soil was poor, while any crop that reached full height was flattened by the wind. In the Seventies the horses came, swiftly followed by developers, whose schemes were rejected because narrow, twisty Blundel Lane was considered inadequate even in those less traffic-plagued days. For those in the know, though, the fields produced abundant crops of mushrooms, which were brought home in triumph to be fried in butter and enjoyed atop fresh toast, and fat, juicy blackberries that went into jams and summer puddings.

Every autumn a heap of old timber rose steadily in the nearest field until the match was struck for our local Guy Fawkes Night blaze, while older boys flung bangers around in the stubble. In summer, one of the fields next to Fairmile Lane rang with childish shouts and squeals for Brooklands School's sports day.

In those carefree days we could walk the dog up the rough track to Polyapes when the campsite was not in use. In the hard winter of 1962/63, the track formed an exhilarating sledge run, while in warmer weather rabbits frolicked on the smooth sward around the war memorial. The bronze statue of a young scout, by Samuel William Ward Willis, was cast at Arthur Burton's Thames Ditton foundry and unveiled by Lord Ashcombe in 1929. Its loss to metal thieves, who brutally hacked the figure from its granite plinth in 2007, seemed like a sacrilege and an end of innocence.

The Polyapes track was once John Earley Cook's private coaching road from Blundel Lane to the back entrance of his home, Knowle Hill House. As well as providing a challenging and scenic drive for his coach and four, it also allowed him to avoid bumping over the railway lines at Cook's Crossing. When Blundel Lane railway bridge was closed for 'repairs' in 2006 a succession of 4 x 4 drivers blindly followed their satnavs and raced up to Polyapes, only to have to reverse back down sheepishly moments later.

As a wealthy and well-travelled young man, Cook had bought the 50-acre Knowle Hill estate in 1857. He progressively improved the house and grounds, creating the parkland we know today and laying out ornamental gardens on the wooded knoll that gave the house its name. He also expanded a simple brick kiln into a proper brickworks that was served by its own long siding from

Oxshott station. Known as a benevolent employer, he built for his workers the single-storey cottages in Littleheath Lane and provided a corrugated iron community room and school for the brickmakers' children.

Cook died without an heir, but he had expected his widow – his second wife, half his age – would take on the house, brickworks and staff after his death. Instead, she lost no time in sailing off to America and finding herself the first of two new husbands. The house was sold quite quickly to Charles William Hay, but the brickworks became a millstone around the executors' necks and it was not until 1913 that they offloaded it on to William Elijah Benton at a knockdown price. Little more than a year later the First World War broke out and the site became a munitions dump. The last of the explosives were carried away from the claypit in 1921.

Meanwhile, Knowle Hill House had been adapted to a new purpose. At the beginning of the 20th century, London hospitals were suffering from what health officials now call 'bed-blocking'. A society lady, Etheldred Fraser Tytler, formed a committee of the great and the good to provide a place where patients could recuperate in tranquil surroundings. Fundraising went slowly and the committee despaired of ever being able to buy and maintain a 'home of recovery'. But then, on 9 July 1909, a mystery benefactor pledged an astonishing £100,000 to the cause.

Within a few days the donor was revealed as Ernest Frederick Schiff, an Austrian-born stockbroker, who had been seeking a way of commemorating his deceased elder brother, Alfred. Schiff and his trusty superintendent Lt Col John Willoughby Wray began searching for a suitable property and soon lighted upon Bevendean, former home of that doyen of Oxshott life, Basil Pym Ellis. As rumours spread that Bevendean was to be sold, furious villagers turned on Ellis's widow. She denied she was selling up, but Schiff had already put down 10% deposit to secure the 23-bedroom mansion.

It was not the ire of Oxshott residents that stopped Schiff, but the restrictive covenants that the Office of Woods & Forests (today's Crown Estate) had placed like booby traps all over its Esher Estate. The OWF refused to countenance any form of medical establishment in the village.

Undaunted, Schiff and Wray – who clearly made a good team – cast their net again and found that both Stoke Lodge and Knowle Hill were up for sale. By the end of the year the trust was the proud owner of Knowle Hill House, newly renamed the Schiff Home of Recovery. The 62-bed establishment complete with motor ambulance, operating theatre, pianola and several cows for the park – opened its doors on 11 November 1910.

That was a prescient date, for exactly eight weary years later the Armistice brought the Great War to an end. During the conflict, the Home had played a pivotal role in restoring to health the many wounded soldiers brought to Knowle Hill by train and ambulance. By coincidence, the same day saw the opening of the Home's new Arnold Wing, named after Ernest Penrose Arnold, a relative of the poet and sometime Cobham resident Matthew Arnold.

The Schiff provided the same valuable service in the Second World War, and did so for many years after its absorption into the National Health Service. But eventually the bean-counters struck. In 1977 Mid Surrey Health District decided that the Schiff Home should be sacrificed to allow expansion of West Park Hospital in Epsom. The health authority stopped all but essential maintenance and then justified closure on the grounds that it was “dilapidated, badly sited and under used... tucked away in a residential backwater”.

Despite strenuous protests, the doors closed on 20 July 1980, triggering a decade of debate, false hopes and doubling-dealing over the fate of the house and its land. Rosemary Simmons Trust envisaged it housing 50 elderly people, while Redwood Properties proposed building 130 homes on the 15-acre Knowle Hill House site, but promised to hand over the 35-acre park to Elmbridge Council. In 1982 developer Octagon bought the estate and applied to build 63 homes while retaining the park, but the following year it said it would convert the house to offices.

Two years later Octagon sold out to medical charity the Wellcome Foundation, which wanted to move its headquarters to Knowle Hill. Local people became suspicious when Wellcome banned the press from its meetings with councillors and residents’ association (RA) leaders. Behind closed doors they agreed to demolish Cook’s old house, saying it “had no particular merit at all”, and plans emerged for an office block sporting a vast Crystal Palace-style atrium soaring over the trees, designed by celebrity architect Richard Rogers. Despite Surrey County Council and grassroots campaigners protesting that the development would violate Green Belt restrictions, Elmbridge and the RAs nailed their colours to the Foundation’s mast. Their enthusiasm began to appear naïve (at best) as it became clear that Wellcome had no intention of sticking to the planning permission it was seeking.

After its deceptions began to be revealed in the local press, Wellcome realised the game was up and in August 1988 threw in the towel, selling the site back to Octagon. By this time, the house had become derelict, so it was replaced with a well-mannered two-storey office building designed by Broadway Malyan. In 1991 it became the European HQ of agro-industrial giant Cargill.

For more than two decades Cargill remained a largely unobtrusive neighbour, so the company’s announcement that it was departing in 2015 came as a shock. The new owner, Millgate Homes, demolished Cargill’s offices and is building in their place a large residential block and a few houses in traditional style and materials. On 2 February, sighs of relief could be heard across the neighbourhood as Millgate announced: “The paddocks at Knowle Hill Park will not be developed now or at any time in the future... Furthermore a restriction will be placed on the paddock in perpetuity.” As the Scouts have let it be known that they do not intend to give up Polyapes, the council’s development gravy train would seem to be slithering to a halt.

As for the Oxshott end of the ‘parcel’, another stack of munitions had to be cleared away before the brickworks could start up again after 1945. Latterly it produced ornamental bricks for Claygate Fireplaces, but the clay was running out and the brickfield’s neighbours refused to sell their land to provide

any more raw material. The end came in 1965 when a crowd of onlookers watched the great brickworks chimney come crashing down. All traces of the kilns disappeared under the houses of Heathfield, Hawkhurst and Somerville Road.

Half a century later, the raw, bare claypit has matured into a glittering gem of a lake that teems with fish and attracts water-loving birds, insects and flora. Dragonflies in brilliant electric blue and green and red dart among the reeds, while in the autumn the observant naturalist can spot a variety of fungi amid the leaf litter.

The lake overflows into the pretty little stream known as the 'Fairmile Ditch', which the Environment Agency nonetheless classifies as a 'main river'. In the great floods of September 1968 the swollen stream spilled across Blundel Lane, inundating houses and pouring in a torrent down the railway cutting all the way to Cobham station, where it washed away a bridge in its headlong rush to join the Mole.

In response, a huge flood alleviation scheme was initiated in the 1970s. It achieved its aims, though at the expense of the sticklebacks and freshwater shrimps that colonised the stream's lower reaches. Now, though, there are signs that the old flooding spots along Blundel Lane are reasserting themselves, thanks to poor maintenance of ditches and storm drains. Worryingly, orange-coloured water sometimes pours out of one of the Parcel 14 fields, reminding us that this was once a council waste tip. If it proves to be contaminated runoff the council may face an expensive remediation bill.

The future of Parcel 14 will, of course, be decided by logical arguments and solid evidence. But I cannot help thinking that there is something more connecting us to this land than can be explained by surveyors, accountants and engineers alone.

Many years ago, after dusk had fallen one winter evening I was walking along the footpath from Stoke to Irene Road. In the darkest part of the wood I found blocking my path the most enormous dog, perfectly black, a veritable Hound of the Baskervilles. I was rooted to the spot with indecision and fear. After a moment of almost electric tension, the animal passed me without a sound. When I turned round there was nothing to be seen and not a rustle to be heard.

Only later did I learn that the Black Dog is a potent beast in English folklore. It is not invariably malevolent, so perhaps this is the time to summon it back to protect our precious green 'parcel'.



Autumnal colours at Knowle Hill Park, which the council believes has “a semi-urban character”. Maps and documents indicate that the land has changed very little over the past 130 years (Stephen Spark, 17 November 2006)



This is the southern end of the carriage drive Cook built from Water Lane to Blundel Lane. Access issues sank previous attempts at developing the fields on either side (Stephen Spark, 13 May 2006)



The Polyapes fields and the Green Belt land south of the railway form a continuous landscape – the picture gives the lie to the council’s statement that Parcel 14 “has relatively weak links to the wider Green Belt, interrupted by both Blundell [sic] Lane and the railway line” (Stephen Spark, 10 September 2006)



Knowle Hill gets its name from the little hillock called the Knoll, which John Earley Cook beautified with winding paths and ornamental shrubberies. The northern portion of his carriage drive – now a much-used, if unofficial, footpath to Water Lane – lies on the far side of the hedge (Stephen Spark, 7 April 2006)

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Oxshott Heath and the Conservators

by David Votier

In and around 1900 Oxshott Heath was owned by the Duke of Albany, a son-in-law of Queen Victoria. He apparently had no interest in the Heath, and certainly did nothing to maintain it. With the arrival of the railway in Oxshott, leading to large parties of Londoners descending on the Heath at weekends for picnics, it rapidly became untidy and crying out for someone to look after it.

Local residents decided that it should be they who took charge of the Heath. They petitioned Parliament and in 1904 the Conservators came into being, charged with the management and maintenance of the Heath. When, following WWI and the confiscation of enemy property (the Duke of Albany being a German subject) the Heath was purchased by Esher Urban District Council, the Conservators remained in place with their remit unaltered.

The Conservators, who are all of course volunteers, have always been funded by local residents' contributions, together with grants from time to time from the Forestry Commission and more regularly from EBC, together with donations from film companies, legacies and a share of any monies paid to the Council for easements etc.

In the early years, despite Oxshott being a much smaller community, many hundreds of local residents supported the Conservators. It is a sad reflection of the present population that the number of contributors today is under 90. This means that our annual expenditure usually exceeds our income by some £10k. It will not be long before we run out of money.

Our donors at present contribute about £6500 to our funds, and EBC contributes a similar amount. The combined contribution is £3k short of what we pay our Warden. Sadly he has been absent for most of last year, following a serious illness, but even when he is on site he is able to do little more than routine maintenance, given that he has to look after some 200 acres. The substantial amount of forestry work we were called on to do in 2015 meant that expenditure in that year substantially exceeded income, despite the fact that we received a large sum from the Council following the granting of an easement across the Heath.

So what do we do when the money runs out? It is unrealistic to expect any greater donations from subscribers – in order to do what is necessary to maintain the Heath to a high standard – and it should be remembered that it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest - we estimate that either we need to find ten times the number of subscribers or ask our present subscribers to increase their donations ten-fold!

In 1904 the community needed the Conservators, since nobody else was in a position to look after the Heath. It could be argued that when Esher UDC bought the Heath in the early 1920s the management and maintenance of it should have passed to them. Indeed, it seems to be the view of the majority of

residents that this is in fact the case – that is why it is impossible to persuade new residents to contribute. They already pay a hefty Council Tax, and surely that covers looking after the Heath?

The Conservators have come to the view that maintaining the Heath is a two-man job, and we have previously suggested that we need to raise at least an extra £25k per year, and probably a lot more. Sadly the present Conservators have neither the expertise nor the contacts to enable them to raise this sort of money. We believe that there are three possible solutions to the problem.

- (i) Soldier on as we are, and hope something will turn up – unrealistic.
- (ii) Replace the present Conservators with a group of people who not only have an interest in the continuing health of the Heath but also have the fund-raising expertise that is needed.
- (iii) Wind up the Conservators and place the maintenance and management of the Heath in the hands of the owners of the Heath, Elmbridge Borough Council, who have the manpower, experience and wherewithal to cope, and arguably should have assumed this responsibility when they assumed ownership in the 1920s. (Local people could retain an interest in the Heath by participating for example in a “Friends of Oxshott Heath” group.)

At present the Conservators favour option (iii), and have the support of the majority of Subscribers in this. No final decision has been taken as yet, however, and residents may have a view as to what should be done. In May we will hold our Triennial General Meeting, at which a new raft of Conservators will be elected. If any reader believes they have the skill and expertise to raise the substantial sum of money needed for the Conservators to continue they might like to put themselves forward for election as a Conservator in May.



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Did you know that Oxshott has its own Choral Society?

by Jean Hodgkiss



The Choir has a long history in Oxshott having been founded over 80 years ago, (in 1936). It was also one of the first choirs to become part of the Leith Hill Musical Festival inaugurated by the Vaughan Williams family in 1905. Over this period there have only been two short breaks, (one due to World War II and then between 1970 –1975).

In 1975 the current Conductor Valerie Beynon ARCM DDMES reformed the society, and since then the choir has gone from strength to strength.

The choir is made up of committed and enthusiastic individuals of all ages with different levels of musical ability (and has over 65 members). Every Wednesday evening between 8pm to 10pm they come together at St Andrew's Church Hall in Oakshade Road, Oxshott to practise. In 2016 the choir was delighted to receive a grant of £2000 from FEDORA on behalf of Oxshott's residents and are using the money to build their repertoire and buy new music to perform.

Have you been to one of their Concerts?

The choir's season runs from September to June and each year members work on their pieces for the three main performances:

December Christmas Concert in St Andrew's Church, Oxshott

Oxshott's Christmas Carol concert is very popular. It is held every December and tickets sell out before the night of the performance. Christmas 2016 was no exception. Singing to a packed venue, the choir performed Pergolesi – Magnificat and JS Bach – Sleepers Wake in the first half and after the interval

finished the concert with familiar Christmas Carols. One of the highlights of the concert was singing a new piece 'Christmas Sanctus' by Lee Dengler which was purchased with the grant donated by FEDORA.

April Leith Hill Musical Festival in Dorking Halls, Dorking

The famous Leith Hill Musical Festival (LHMF) is held annually and is established as one of England's leading choral events. The festival runs over three days and Oxshott compete in Division 1 on Friday 7th April. Competitions take place in the morning between the four Surrey Choirs and in the evening the choirs come together (just under 200 singers) to perform to the public with a live orchestra. Last year Oxshott were the proud winners of the Men's competition and winners of the Dorking Chamber of Commerce Silver Cock for achieving the second highest Aggregate.

For this year's Open Class section of the competition, Oxshott will perform another new piece of music purchased from the FEDORA grant, 'The Ground' by Ola Gjeilo. The combined choirs evening performance will be Mendelssohn's Elijah.

Further information/tickets **contact:**

Box Office: 01403 240093

boxoffice@lhmf.org

www.lhmf.org.uk

June A Summer Concert not to be missed

'An Evening with Mozart' Saturday 10th June 2017 at 7.30pm

This summer Oxshott Choral Society are singing with Horsley Choral Society and together they are putting on a concert at St John's School Leatherhead.

The 2017 concert is to be special and a performance not to be missed. The choir will be singing with professional soloists Mozart's Requiem accompanied by a live orchestra 'The Raven's Ensemble' and Simon Bland on the wonderful new organ which St John's School have just installed.

Tickets - Adults £15 Children £8

Box Office: 01932 862759

What else goes on?

Yearly Social Event: After the Leith Hill Musical Festival is over the choir take a well-earned rest and enjoy a social event together before the start of the summer season.

Touring: This year a singing tour has been arranged and members of the choir are going to Madrid for 5 days in October, where they will be performing Mozart's Requiem.

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Are you interested in Joining?

If you are interested in joining or knowing more about the choir you can:

- Meet members at the Oxshott Village Day on 1st May where the society will be running a stall **and selling tickets for their Summer concert**
- Contact the Secretary on 01372 842300 or visit the Website: www.oxshottchoral.org.uk

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The Difference We Can All Make to ensure Oxshott stays an Attractive village

by Keith Chapman, Chatsworth Place, Oxshott

Invariably we will always hear conversations about whether Surrey County Council or Elmbridge Council are doing enough to ensure we continue to live in an attractive village. Given the amount most of us are paying in Council Tax we should have high expectations on the services they deliver. Equally however we need to recognise that both organisations have done much to ensure we as local citizens can bring to their attention matters that need to be addressed. So the following is a reminder of what YOU can do.

1. Fly Tipping - responsibility across Oxshott where you see Fly Tipping rests with Elmbridge Council. If you use the online reporting system on the Elmbridge Council website I have found the items will be cleared with 24 hours. All credit to Elmbridge for such prompt action.

2. Lighting - lighting is the responsibility of Surrey County Council (SCC) - so if you see a light out go online to the Surrey Council website where you will see you have the facility online to report the lamp in question to SCC.

3. Potholes and Road Painting - again responsibility for the Roads rests with Surrey County Council. So if you see a pothole or believe the painting on the Roads needs to be addressed use again the online reporting facility. Again I found Surrey Highways acted promptly to improve road markings at the junction of the A244 and Fairoak Lane.

4. Blocked Drains - again responsibility for clearing the drains lies with Surrey Highways and again Surrey Council have provided you with the facility to go online to identify the blocked drain and to ask them to clear it.

So these are just some examples of the difference WE can make. Finally one area all of us can help address is the area leading from and to Oxshott Station. The road to the Station and the footpath from the Station are both the responsibility of South West Trains. So if you see rubbish left or leaves after the Autumn not cleared away have a friendly word with the Station Manager when you see him - the more pressure we provide the more likelihood SWT will take some action.

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St Andrew's Pre-School

by Emma Gadbury and Kate Joiner

If you visit St Andrew's Church any morning during the week you'll doubtless hear the sound of small children hard at play. Monday to Friday the hall is bulging with enthusiastic youngsters enjoying themselves at St Andrew's Pre-School.

Back in 1982 the Reverend John Green and Doreen Bailey had a vision to establish a community playgroup to give the youngest children in Oxshott a place to come and learn through play prior to starting at 'big school'. So started St Andrew's Playgroup.

The pre-school is set up as a non profit making charity receiving funding from Surrey County Council in order to be able to provide free hours of childcare to three and four year olds; and two year olds under certain circumstances. Volunteer trustees assist with the running of the pre-school and we are fortunate to have a very active group of parent supporters involved with fundraising to buy much needed resources for the children to enjoy. All parents are also given the opportunity to accompanying children on outings, as well as give talks at pre-school sessions – we've had visits from a cyclist, postman, doctor and vet, amongst others.

For many Oxshott parents the pre-school plays a vital role in providing the early years education of their children. Our aim is to give a well rounded start to life by building a careful blend of academic and social skills in a stimulating, nurturing and enabling environment; and we do it all with a lot of fun!

When the playgroup started 34 years ago, it enjoyed the support of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and indeed, still does today. In 1996 the name changed to St Andrew's Pre-School, but this has been a minor change compared to all the standards and regulations that have been put in place by the Government over recent years.

The group has an Ofsted inspection on a regular basis. At the last inspection we were pleased to achieve a 'good' standard. We continue to evaluate the way that we do things to ensure that we offer the best early years experience for both children and families at the setting.

The pre-school usually has about 40 children on its register, but takes a maximum of 30 children on any one day. There is a dedicated team of ten staff who work on various days of the week. They provide a creative and caring environment for the children to enjoy. It is also testament to this environment that our staff have very long standing associations with the pre-school; four of whom have been involved with the pre-school for over 15 years and one of those for over 30!

Despite all the Government's requirements for standards, the group has been able to maintain its ethos of learning through play, which is largely why the group is so popular.



The children watching their old lawn being removed

We are so thankful to have received funding from FEDORA to lay an artificial lawn over a mossy and slippery tarmac play area in the autumn. The children are fortunate to have a lovely outdoor play area behind the church that they use throughout their day, year round and during all weather. The new lawn has really transformed this and creates another lovely space for outdoor play and learning.



The children enjoying their new lawn

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From Your Elmbridge Councillor Oliver Chappell

With the comment “I will copy in below the gist of what I am writing to residents on the matter. It is the most difficult subject any of us, resident or council, has had to deal with over the last years I’m sure.”

Elmbridge Greenbelt is there for a good reason. It improves the quality of life of residents through green, natural, unbuilt up space, and it separates each village or town from the next, restricting urban sprawl. It should stay this way. In addition our borough is at or beyond capacity with regard to infrastructure for Greenbelt development. We were historically a semi-rural area and the infrastructure has not kept up with the growing number of residents, in particular outside of settlement centres. On top of this we get overspill from major roads like the A3 and M25.

I shall fully study and consider all the options on the table which the council or other bodies present but I am fundamentally opposed to building on Greenbelt land, and would support any other measures in preference, presuming that these are necessary to fulfil commitments to provide extra housing. Each proposal needs to be considered on its merits alone and as such it is very hard to generalise. I should add that I also fundamentally recognise the problems with housing in particular in the South East of England and it needs to be addressed for the problems it causes: difficulty in housing much needed public sector workers, a lack of home ownership, a silent transfer of wealth from young to old, and young people in particular living with relatives or far from where they work or have family.

We have been required by government to include Greenbelt in our assessment for a new Local Plan and that is what Elmbridge has done. For this reason the public consultation process is also in place, to gather local opinion on the matter.

It is important to say that doing nothing on housing policy still carries an inherent risk to us all. The danger is that if we stand firm against absolutely everything then central government or another authority will impose a solution on us. I am of the opinion that we are better to shape the process into something acceptable, though maybe not ideal, than to play for high stakes and hope the problem goes away or goes somewhere else. I don’t think that will happen. Any imposed solution will certainly centre around quick fixes in big numbers in one place and at the cost of the Greenbelt, and not a slower process we can shape over time.

Any solution which takes time to implement may also be saved by developments in the housing market. I believe prices and demand cannot continue to rise at this pace forever.

My view is that if necessary the least objectionable plan is one where housing needs are met with the least amount of disruption to residents and damage to the surrounding area, our living space. In practice that means that change needs to be very evenly spread throughout Elmbridge (and in settlements and more rural areas) to avoid conflict and that fundamentally the increase in housing has to be met through increased density.

To be clear that doesn’t mean a garden-development free for all, it means allowing town centre and village centre development which is more dense (and higher) than would currently be permitted. Radiating out from these centres we could be more

liberal with density. Additionally this creates housing units of the type most needed, makes the centres of our settlements more urban and leaves the rural areas and the spaces between settlements much as they currently are, or with smaller plots as long as the character of the area is preserved.

Even in smaller settlements such as Oxshott there have recently been some well executed centre new builds which do not look out of place and are much denser than the surrounding area.

Some initial analysis indicates that this way the number of extra units we are expected to create is attainable.

In addition there are also some innovative options where the council or other public bodies could contribute, for example there has been a proposal to redevelop train station parking into underground parking with flats overground.

With this in mind, I think the Elmbridge process to date was correctly executed but that the instruction was flawed.

There was a process which was kept largely confidential (also from councillors) whereby the council chose certain sites of “weakly performing” Greenbelt. It was, probably understandably, done this way so that there was no commercial advantage available for anyone looking to buy or sell any of the sites which could have been chosen. I have no reason to believe that the council didn’t do a fair or accurate job of identifying what they believed to be the sites where the Greenbelt zoning brought the least benefits to residents. But that doesn’t distract from the fact that it was an inappropriate plan of action in the first place.

I believe the reason most residents, or their ancestors, moved to Elmbridge is because of the lifestyle it offers - we have more green space and nature than a city would. We accept that we may have to commute to London or another city to work but do this willingly to be able to live here and for many raise a family here. Removing the spaces in and between our villages and towns speaks against this rationale.

I hope this casts some light on what I think at this important time. I’m very interested to hear all opinions and even more interested to hear potential solutions as I want to accurately represent what residents want. Please keep in touch.

With Best Regards
Oliver Chappell

Notes from your Surrey County Councillor Mike Bennison

Local plan from Elmbridge Borough Council

As you are well aware Elmbridge Borough Council are proposing to remove Green Belt status from two large areas in the Cobham, Stoke D'Abernon and Oxshott area. These areas are best known as:

The Fairmile & Chippings Farm (near the Portsmouth Road)

Knowle Hill Park & Polyapes (near Blundel Lane, Littleheath Lane and Water Lane)

There is a third in Long Ditton near the A3 'Ace of Spades'.

I spoke from the heart at the recent public meeting held at the church in Stoke Road. I stand by everything that I said, one of the owners of part of the land said that they were no longer considering applying for planning permission. However this leaves a large area on Blundel Lane and straddling the path up to the Scout war memorial.

One developer owns land on either side of this track, and the Scouts have indicated that they would rather have land than money. So hopefully they will hold out against any efforts to build on that land. Basically the bridge in Blundel Lane is a disaster, without adding possibly a thousand cars to it. I have been trying for several years to get a pedestrian/cycle/equestrian bridge built alongside it, to no avail. I even investigated traffic lights but due to the nature of the bridge there are too many sight line problems so this cannot happen.

I cannot understand why Elmbridge has highlighted these three plots of land, there certainly are other alternatives to this one. In particular I have investigated in great depth about building over many of our car parks including the one in Walton by the station.

I chaired a small committee and we had arranged for a plan by a developer to put a thin metal structure over the top of the car park and place on it portable living units to a very high standard, these would be offered as affordable units at sensible rents for which 20% will be held back for five years and then given to the residents in order for them to use as a deposit for a flat. In the meantime Elmbridge Borough Council would be given a cash injection of an immediate £5 million. at the end of 20 years all the units will be given free to the council. If this were done on many of our car parks it would serve to provide a large number of the units required by the government. On top of this the government has seriously suggested digging underground car parks at the major stations and building affordable houses above.

These are just two of the examples, which could help protect our Green Belt. On top of this you try getting an appointment at a doctor's surgery at the moment often 2 to 3 weeks let alone adding the two Cobham suggested areas, plus Wisley which could amount to a possible 9000 cars if you take two cars per family, you try finding a parking space in Oxshott or Cobham at

the present time.

Street lighting: I was instrumental in getting the brand-new streetlights in Oxshott. Unfortunately due to the severe financial restraints in Surrey by successive governments most of the lights will be switched out after midnight to 5 o'clock in the morning, obviously this will not happen in certain congested areas and any possible crime area. Each light has a Wi-Fi connection on it which means that the main office knows when a light has gone out, at a meeting the other day I was told a scout group needed to depart from their hut in the very early hours of the morning. The lights were switched on in an individual basis.

I do have a funding allocation of approximately £10,000 in order to help with local issues. Last year I gave £1000 to the Oxshott Scout group, above and beyond my help with their rope courses and new railings et cetera, and they have been considering having to replace their very very old building. I offered £600 towards the plans, but they've been put on hold for a considerable time. However when I visited the Scout Hut I was well aware of the disgusting state of the garages just next to the gate, and the possibility of fly tipping and even an abandoned car. I regularly report this to the housing association.

Roads: - The latest addition to the road I have had resurfaced is Sheath Lane, where I've managed to get some very large patches done. This considerably improved the road. One of its difficulties is that as a concrete road which for some reason or other highways put a thin layer of tarmac over it many many years ago. It is slowly wearing off so it looks bad but it's not actually a problem as far as highways are concerned. I spent quite a lot of time investigating new methods of coating roads and discovered a new one whereby the problem of the tar attaching to a concrete road is overcome by heating the road itself and then placing hot tar on top of it with a sandwich in between. Hopefully this is going to be a success and can be used elsewhere. At the moment I am experimenting with it on a road in Hinchley Wood.

If you have an issue of concern or need help with a problem, please contact me:

Phone: 01932 866367

E-mail: mike@frozenimage.co.uk or michael.bennison@surreycc.gov.uk

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OXSHOTT VILLAGE DAY 2017

BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY 1ST MAY

by Felicity Bond

Join us in celebrating ten years of Village Day on Monday 1st May! As usual this will be a splendid day out for all the family, a chance to meet up with friends and enjoy a relaxing time in a safe and happy environment.

The first Village Day in 2007 was designed to enable the entire community to come together, to have a fun day out and to raise money for a local charity. Around 500 people attended that original event, and over the years it has become a much-loved part of the community calendar. In recent years, we have attracted 5,000 visitors, mainly from the Oxshott and Cobham area, but also from further afield.

The costs of mounting Village Day are not inconsiderable, so at first our donations were modest, but nevertheless gratefully received by small charities to whom they made a real difference. We are also entirely weather-dependent – some of you will recall how we were ‘rained-off’ in May 2012 – so takings vary year to year. Since 2007, we have given nearly £17,000 to local causes – including St. Andrews Pre-School, Royal Kent School, Oxshott Heath Conservators and The Cobham Area Foodbank.

As always, we are hoping for sunny skies, and urge you to join us and give generously to support this year’s chosen charity – Princess Alice Hospice. This local, well-known charitable organisation supports the terminally ill and their families at a difficult time by providing free, high-quality, compassionate care. We are delighted to be associated with such a worthwhile cause.

So come along on 1st May, 11:00am until 5:00pm at the Village Sports Club on Steels Lane. Find out more at www.oxshottvillageday.com or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Oxshott Village Day Celebrating 10 Years!

**Bank Holiday
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11:00 am to 5:00 pm



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BRIDGE CHAT

by R. Clair Sexton EBU Professional Teacher

TRIAL BIDS

This is probably for the more advanced players among you, maybe those who have reached an Intermediate level.

Trial Bids are often a misunderstood area of bidding. They occur only after a sequence when a suit has been raised from the 1 to 2 - level e.g. **1H - 2H, or 1D - 2D.**

There are some differences between the interpretation of a major or minor suit raise, so let us look at the principles involved.

Major suits

After his first suit has been raised to the 2 level, a simple bid of a second suit by opener is forcing. e.g. **1H - 2H, 3C**

This bid is inviting responder to push on with a suitable hand - hence named a '**Trial Bid**'.

Since the initial raise to 2H could have been made on only 3 card support, the trial bid by opener will normally be based on a 5 card holding. (Which means that with only a 4-card suit, opener would normally press on with a rebid of 2NT (17-18HCP) or 3NT (19HCP).

In traditional Acol, a 'Trial bid' is made in a suit in which the opener would particularly welcome some assistance. Such a suit would normally be 3 cards or longer, with two losers.

So the 'Trial Bid' invites responder to jump to game if:

- he is maximum for his raise to the 2 level or
- he is neither minimum nor maximum but has help for opener in the 'Trial' suit.

For example with:	x KQ10xxx □ Kxx Axx	Jxx Axxx QJxx xx	Bid:	1H - 2H 3D - 4H
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Note that it is the excellent fit in diamonds that makes this such a good game contract.

There are two other sequences that should also be discussed:

(1)	1H - 2H 2S	(2)	1S - 2S 3H
------------	-----------------------------	------------	-----------------------------

Both opener's rebids are 'Trial Bids' but it is possible that they are 4 card suits in their own right. Because of this, if you as responder are **going to bid game**, you should raise the trial bid first (if you have 4 cards) as a 4 - 4 fit, is superior to a 5 - 3 fit. e.g.

AKxx		Qxxx	Bid: 1H - 2H
AJxxx	□	Qxxx	2S - 3S
Kxx		Axx	4S
x		xx	

Since East is worth a jump to 4H over 2S, he can mention his 4-card spade support en route. Note that when played in the 4 - 4 fit, dummy's Diamond loser can be thrown on the fifth Heart. Not so in the 5 - 3 Heart fit!

Another point arises in this further sequence:

1S - 2S Responder's 3D bid is a 'Return Trial Bid'.
3C - 3D

It suggests that, while responder is loath to sign off in 3S, he has not sufficient strength or a sufficiently good fit in Clubs to justify a jump to 4S. It does, in fact, pass the buck back to opener who will have to make the final decision himself. E.g.

A10x	Bid:	1S - 2S
xx		3C - ?
K10xxx		
J9x		

Bid 3D. While you are not completely minimum for your raise to 2S, your holding in Clubs is not sufficiently inspiring to justify a jump to 4S. This 'Return Trial Bid' is used to consult partner.

Minor Suits
 meaning

Here a 'Trial Bid' acquires a slightly different
 e.g. **1C - 2C**
2S

Opener's 2S is still a 'Trial Bid' in the sense that it cannot be passed, but his eyes may not be fixed on a 5C contract. He may be seeking a cheaper game contract in 4S or 3NT e.g. with

Axx	Bid:	1C - 2C
Kx		2D
AJ10		If responder can bid 2H or 2S then
KQxxx		3NT may be the best game contract.

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Play Bowls at Oxshott

by Steve Ellis

Lawn Bowls to give it its full name is a sport for all regardless of age, sex, or physical ability, and is one of a few sports that can truly be played on equal terms by almost anyone. As Men's Captain for this year I am hoping the Men can get a long overdue victory against the Ladies in our annual grudge match especially as my wife is the Ladies Captain! As a Sport, it only takes a few minutes of tuition to learn the basics and be able to bowl, it does however then take the rest of your bowling career to master it!



Bowls is a game for all ages

Bowls can trace its origins at least back to the days of the Roman Empire, and as such we can add its introduction into Britain to yet another thing the Romans did for us! Perhaps the most famous historical game took place in 1588, when Sir Francis Drake insisted on finishing his game at Plymouth even as the invading Spanish Armada approached. My own most famous incident was last year when my Kingston & District singles match was stopped by the noise coming from Sir Andy Murray's helicopter landing on the Oxshott cricket pitch!

The Bowls club is an integral part of the Oxshott Village Sports Club. It is set in its own grounds adjacent to the main club but with its own recently refurbished clubhouse and facilities. The club aims to provide its members with an attractive mixture of social and competitive sport.



Watching bowls from the terrace

Our season runs from mid-April through to the end of September. The club has over 50 local matches along with regular social bowls events on a Monday evening and a Friday afternoon. We also hold regular club drives, a BBQ and a Captains Day event. In addition, our more experienced bowlers enter a wide number of external competitions.

As ever we are looking to recruit new members. As an introduction to the sport, and to our club, we have arranged an Open Day followed by 4 Coaching sessions:

Open Day – Saturday April 29th 11am

Coaching Session 1 – Sunday May 7th 2pm

Coaching Session 2 – Wednesday May 10th 6pm

Coaching Session 3 – Sunday May 14TH 2pm

Coaching Session 4 – Wednesday May 17th 6pm

All you need to play at this stage are a pair of flat shoes

I do hope that some of you are now interested in giving bowls a try. If you are then please contact myself (details below) as this will help considerably with organising our Volunteers for the Open Day.

STEVE ELLIS
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Renewal of your annual FEDORA membership is due for the 12 months from 1st January, 2017. It would be a great help, and would also save considerable postage, if you could kindly use the form below and send your renewal to me as soon as possible. Your membership contribution is important - FEDORA has no other source of funding.

Alternatively you can pay by internet banking Account Name: FEDORA, Sort Code: 20-90-56, Account Number: 80164445, but please use your surname and postcode as reference (so that we know who the payment is from) and send a confirming email (to advise payment) to membership@fedora.org.uk with the information from the form below.

Even if your Residents' Association is already a member of FEDORA, why do you not consider joining so that you personally can be an active participant in FEDORA?

Please don't forget to mention FEDORA to our advertisers when you make an enquiry or use their services. Their support is essential for the magazine to continue.

Thank you very much for your support.

Rita Clarke

2017 Membership Application / Renewal

Please send this form with your remittance (cheques payable to "FEDORA") to:
Rita Clarke, 9 Montrose Gardens, Oxshott, Surrey, KT22 0UU

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Why I Volunteer

Anonymous

It's not for the money, not for the fame.

It's not for any personal gain.

It's just for the love of fellow man,

It's just to lend a helping hand.

It's just to give a little of self.

That's something you can't buy with wealth.

It's not for the medals won with pride.

It's just for the feeling deep inside.

It's that reward deep in your heart,

It's the feeling you have been a part of helping others far and near...

That makes you a great volunteer!

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