

The Yateley Society



Dr. Richard Johnston

Number

Membership Expires end September 02

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Society



ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDING
31 DECEMBER 2001

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1. INTRODUCTION.

This year there have been, thankfully, no changes within the organisation of the Society, which has ensured continuity, and business has gone ahead without the need for special committee meetings and other distractions.

It has been a year of great success for Yateley and the Society in some areas, and a bit disappointment for the Society as well.

On the success side planning was at the top. Society research and evidence helped to win the day in some very important planning cases, notably Clarke's (Mushroom) Farm and Silver Fox Farm. The disappointment, also in planning, came from the threat of repeated proposals and appeals for some developments already firmly defeated at least once. Surely the planning rules need tightening!

Our Society is run, and the work done, by volunteers working in their own time and largely in parallel with their daily work. A surprising amount of work has been accomplished in a variety of fields, the many active members deserve a heartfelt vote of thanks. We also owe thanks to those who support the Society more passively, their subscriptions keep the wheels turning.

The more we look at Yateley, the more we find to do to meet the Society's aims. I realise that, like all of us, you have limited time available, but anybody wishing to get involved in any aspect of the Society's activities would be welcomed with open arms!

The lack of a Society exhibition and Library Talk this year meant that our publicity was reduced, but on the credit side it freed some extra effort for the very important planning business. The usual amount of work associated with an exhibition and talk will have to be done however, as we are committed to participate in 'Local History Week 2002', a national celebration of local history in May of 2002. Needless to say, the work is already well in hand.

Historical research has continued, to some extent driven by preparation for the Local History Week 2002, and there has been further progress in the field of

Oral History. There has also been another delve into the murky depths of the churchyard rubbish heap!

Conservation working parties have been held each month, supported by the regular stalwarts but without the hoped for assistance from local schools. We get the satisfaction of being able to see that we have made a difference each month, and it is a good way to get exercise. Come along and see what we do!

What has happened to the footways survey? Not quite as much as I had hoped; but more information has been gathered and experiments carried out to assess possible formats for publication. Some discussion with Yateley Town Council, who suggested the project, is probably the next step.

Finally, my thanks to the other Officers and the Executive Committee for their unwavering support during the year.

2. ADMINISTRATION.

The Officers of the Society during 2001 were: Chairman - Tony Hocking; Vice Chairman - Roger Coombes; Honorary Secretary - Richard Johnston; Honorary Treasurer - Peter Tipton.

Executive Committee members were:

Graham Brown (Membership Secretary); Jo Hill (Stop Press Editor and Programme); Colin Medley; Philip Todd.

Jo Hill has proved to be a most valuable addition to the team, not only has she re-vitalised the Stop Press, organised the meetings programme and been active on the planning front, but she has represented the Society with sales and publicity stalls at various functions.

It is worth noting that only 4 non-officer Committee members were enrolled. This is the bare minimum called for by the Society Constitution, a further 4 are allowed; members are urged to consider joining the Committee in 2002 to improve the representation of the membership as a whole. Please contact any Executive Committee member if you can help.

There were 8 Executive Committee meetings (Nos. 170 to 177) during the year in the regular series for Society management. There were no special meetings as the need did not arise.

The Chairman, Officers and Executive Committee thank everyone who contributed to the Society in any way during the past year, and look forward to further co-operation in 2002.

3. MEMBERSHIP.

At the end of 2001 we had 78 household memberships, and many other individual members, totalling 213 in good standing and entitled to vote.

Membership had increased by 8 since the last annual report, which returned our membership to 1999 levels.

The changeover to fixed date membership renewal, which started with the March renewals, went well. All memberships that are renewed annually by cash should be paid by end-September 2002. (Reminders will be included in the Stop Press.)

4. PLANNING.

The Society's planning activities continued to suffer from too few people being actively involved, and it has been possible only to follow up the most important or most pressing planning issues. The heavy spate of significant planning applications affecting Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings continued to predominate. If the Society is to maintain its competence in this core area in the longer term, it is important that new people come forward to learn and fully participate in the process. We are very grateful for the one new volunteer this year, but the list of tasks has still outstripped the effort available.

The year started with the Clarks Farm Public Inquiry, which took about seven days, and which was a most intense battle. The Inspector found against the appellants on almost every significant issue in a masterly decision letter. Particular reasons for rejection were the urbanisation effect of the proposed development on the Yateley/Darby Green strategic gap, and traffic generation. Richard Johnston gave a lecture on its implications at a public meeting in July. Unfortunately the appellant has taken the decision to judicial review, which is to be heard in January. This case exposed serious shortcomings in Hart District's Local Plan policies, especially as regards transport.

The appeal for housing at Robins Grove Park was refused, but there has continued to be pressure for development of the site, and the situation remains outstanding at the time of writing (Dec 2001) following a new application from Hart Housing Association.

An application for further housing in Yateley Hall Park, to the detriment of the setting of our most important listed building; and an application for Silver Fox Farm, which would have threatened the Castle Bottom National Nature Reserve, were both refused.

The application to refurbish and extend the White Lion was finally granted by Hart DC, but the owners made alterations beyond what the plans permitted, and did not take effective enforcement action. This was yet another case where the Society believes Hart District Council - particularly its officers - has failed in its statutory duty in respect of the protection of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

An application for housing behind Barclay House was refused after a long campaign, with Councillors inserting stronger reasons for refusal than had been suggested by the Hart D.C. officers.

The Society continued to be unhappy with the way in which some applications were being handled by Hart District Council, and a meeting was held with Hart officers in January 2001, which appeared likely to result in improvements. As may be seen from the White Lion episode, in particular, the situation continued to be unsatisfactory. However, there has now been a change of the senior planning officer in charge of Development Control, who appears to have a better attitude to listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, and so, rather than continue with an Ombudsman case, which was considered more than once during the year, it is hoped to have further discussions with Hart DC.

The Society contributed to and commented upon a Draft Darby Green Conservation Area Statement produced during the year, but this remains outstanding at the time of writing.

The Society continues to be concerned about and actively involved with such matters as the common, the airfield, and Blackbushe Metals, and initiatives for improving Yateley's "Town Centre".

Public Meetings relevant to planning were included in the Society monthly meetings programme during the year: there was an excellent talk from English Heritage about their view of Conservation Areas, the above mentioned meeting about the Clarks Farm Appeal, and a meeting to discuss the character of Yateley's three Conservation Areas and the public conception of their purpose and protection.

5. HISTORY.

The level of history interest in the Society remains strong, but this has been a quieter year, as there were no exhibitions because the annual exhibition has been deferred until May 2002 to coincide with the national "Local History Week".

Individuals continued their research projects during the year, and most effort has gone into researching some important local families such as FitzRoy, Cave and Bunch; partly with the "Local History Week" in mind, and partly as contributions to an attempt to record the stories of the major families connected with Yateley's past.

More oral history recordings were made during the year. Some of the material recorded formed an Oral History contribution to the Hampshire Archives Trust.

At last, the churchyard memorials in the rubbish tip were removed and laid out nearby in November, allowing the graveyard survey started in 1997 to be completed - unfortunately some important memorials remain missing and are assumed to have been destroyed during the building of the last church extension.

The Society has been helping the Hampshire Gardens Trust with their review of historic gardens in Hart District - with particular reference to Firgrove Manor, Eversley, following a planning application.

Talks about the History of Yateley were given to local groups at Hook and Hawley, as well as in Yateley.

6. YATELEY HISTORY PROJECT DATABASE

During the year some more new material was accumulated from a variety of sources. Because of the large backlog of materials it has not yet proved possible to produce an updated CD-ROM.

7. CONSERVATION.

Conservation working parties on Yateley Common took place every month of the year. The main work items were clearance of scrub birch, always the predominant task, thinning gorse and pine, and path clearance. As ever, the working parties were in direct support of, and supervised by, the Country Park Rangers.

Several months were devoted to the Castle Bottom National Nature Reserve. Part of the site which had been scraped to remove bracken was suffering from rapid growth of birch seedlings and saplings; these required removal to allow heather to regenerate. A second site, which occupied us in the later part of the year, was South of the track above Brandy Bottom; here several areas we had helped clear in past years had once more become covered with birch scrub and gorse. This regrowth of scrub is part of the natural process and we have learnt

to accept that we have to go back to old work sites at regular intervals. It is encouraging, however, to see that heather is growing well wherever it gets the chance. These scrub removal sessions were often accompanied by bonfires, which added to the enjoyment.

Path clearance also kept us occupied, this was a summer job as it causes little disturbance to the birds, and often gives us some welcome shade while working! It is very necessary as rapid growth in the spring soon blocks paths and bridle ways and hinders free access to the common.

This year the majority of the work has been carried out by the long-term stalwarts, the efforts to recruit school students failed to bear much fruit; but we have still got an amazing amount done with clear evidence that our efforts make a real difference. We are told that some new students may appear in 2002. The hours this year amounted to 345.

The year's activities concluded with the traditional mulled wine and mince pies at 'coffee break'; and we still completed a full amount of work!

We would very much like to see a few more people helping, so please come along to Wyndhams Pool at 1000am on the last Sunday of the month and get some fresh air and exercise. No previous experience is necessary, and all tools are provided.

To conclude, we were very pleased to be invited to the Country Park Rangers' summer barbecue, it is nice to feel appreciated!

8. YATELEY SOCIETY WEBSITE

The Society website to publicise the Society is being maintained on the Hampshire County Council webserver. This provides information about the Society in general, its publications, provides notice of meetings, and has a local history site within it. It may be found at <http://hants.org.uk/yateley/> The site continues to attract modest interest, and a project to redesign and update the site is currently underway.

9. PUBLICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

Topics and ideas for producing 'Teachers' Packs' on Yateley and its history have been collected during the year, and advice obtained from local teachers. It is hoped that the publication of such packs, and inclusion of the information on the website, will satisfy the demands for help from teachers and pupils, and will interest members of the public in their area.

Three transparent display stands for postcards have been in use during the year. The prototype has been kept for Society meetings, two have been accepted by sales outlets (the Parade Post Office and Balfours near Waitrose).

The Yateley Camera Club has been approached for assistance with pictures for new postcards.

The material for booklets by Valerie Kerslake has been assembled, but production has been delayed by the diversion of vital members to planning activities.

It had been thought that the title of 'A Walk on Cricket Hill' concealed the fact that this is a historical record as well as a walk description; a front-cover sticker making this clearer has been produced and will be attached to future copies.

10. COMMUNICATIONS AND PROGRAMME.

10.1 Communications with Members. There were six Stop Presses issued in 2001, numbers 46 to 53. As reported last year, Stop Press is now the main channel of communication with members, and is usually issued soon after an Executive Committee meeting so that the main topics of the meeting can be brought to your attention.

10.2 Programme.

The year's programme included a slightly reduced variety of activities, consisting mainly of the monthly meetings.

10.2 i) 2001 Talks: The Ryder Social Area at Frogmore Community College was used for all meetings, except for the May meeting which was held at Yateley Fire Station.

January 18th. *'Farnborough Air Sciences Trust (FAST)'* How part of the former Royal Balloon Factory / Aircraft Establishment / Aerospace Establishment is being preserved for posterity, and a history of RAE activities.

February 15th. Yateley Society Annual General Meeting.

May 17th. *'Yateley Fire Service, 25 Years'* Colin Ive gave described the history and workings of our volunteer section of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, and showed us the equipment carried on the fire engine.

June 21st. *'Conservation Areas'* The English Heritage view on the need for Conservation Areas, their purpose, and how they can be protected, with Hart D.C. representatives joining in a discussion of the problems that arise.

July 19th. *'Mushroom Farm Business Park Post Mortem'* The story of the successful defence of Clarks Farm against the proposed development was described, and the possible future for the site was discussed with Hart D.C. representatives.

August No meeting because of the holiday season.

September 27th. *What does 'Conservation Area' mean?* A discussion meeting in which members and visitors were asked their views on what Conservation Areas are, and how they should be managed.

October 18th. *All Creatures great and Small'* The story behind the Blackwater Wildlife Rescue, and what it does. By Carol White, assisted by a pidgeon, a hedgehog and one of her volunteer helpers.

November 15th. *What's going on at Fleet Pond these days?* An illustrated talk on Fleet Pond by Colin Gray, Chairman of the Fleet Pond Society.

December 13th. A discussion evening. This was an impromptu meeting, as various members involved in the original, more festive, arrangements had family problems preventing their attendance.

Conservation Working Parties met on Yateley Common on the last Sunday of each month of the year.

10.2.ii) 2000 Walks: There were no Yateley Society walks in 2001. (Ideas for walks are always welcomed, please contact Tony Hocking on 875 158)

10.2.iii) 2000 Special Events:

January 26th. *The Chairman's Dinner.* For the second year a communal 'pay-your-own-way' dinner was held at The Ely. An improved table layout (a hollow square) made this occasion more successful than in 2000.

July 14th. *The Summer Social.* This year the social was held in the garden of Monteagle House. Our thanks are due to Peter and Elizabeth Tipton for allowing us to upset their routine, for doing all the hard work, and for giving us all a very enjoyable time.

Anthony J F Hocking

Chairman, the Yateley Society

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