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GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

newsletter

MARCH – MAY 2014

## Guildford Environmental Forum's response to the new Local Plan

Last autumn Guildford Borough Council (GBC) undertook a consultation process at the start of creating a new Local Plan (see GEF newsletter, September 2013 pp. 6-7).

The GEF Executive prepared a 6,000-word response to this consultation. The article below by Raymond Smith is a shortened version which draws out the key themes. The full response is available on our website.

### **Growth?**

The fundamental position of GEF is that the Local Plan should not aim at economic growth nor at population growth beyond that which follows from the existing population, that it should not seek to increase consumerism, that it should protect the environment of Guildford for its residents, and that it should aim at a future where the community is able to live within its resources. Guildford is already amongst the wealthiest districts in the country, and attempting to focus more development in the area represents greed. It is fundamental to the intent of landscape protection that it can limit growth and the plan needs to acknowledge that environmentally sustainable growth may not be possible in most locations and that therefore any growth will be necessarily limited.

The Plan should only aim for such new infrastructure as is needed for locally needed development, not to facilitate other growth. Its aim should be to: "Maximise efficient use of existing infrastructure and secure extra infrastructure needed to improve existing poor quality urban areas and address Guildford's traffic problems."

### **Green Belt**

We do not see that it is appropriate to designate Green Belt land at all for future development. Some land such as that on the hilltop sites in the Pewley

area is especially unacceptable, but we also see that there is a threat of joining Guildford with Aldershot, with the proposed potential development areas on this corridor.

If any Green Belt land were to be used then it should be:

- at high density to meet the actual housing need of the Borough, rather than low density for the market which would result in suburban sprawl
- designated at the outset as having a minimum of 50% affordable housing, so that the normally massive increase in land value over agricultural prices would be limited in the light of this requirement
- with all buildings being constructed to maximise their potential for renewable energy recovery and minimised energy use
- with all roof areas not needed for solar energy recovery or essential services covered with "green" or "living" roofs
- without any street lighting installed on developments built on current (or subsequently former) Green Belt land.
- supplied with appropriate sustainable transport connections to local employment centres from the start.

We do not accept the proposal to remove many of the proposed "inset" villages from the Green Belt. Our villages within the Green Belt should stay there in order to ensure that they can contribute

to the long-term maintenance of the openness of the Green Belt, and its future enhancement, for successive generations of visitors.

Although Wisley airfield (where the possibility of development has been raised) may be partly concreted over, we make the point that ground cover is not likely to be seen from ground level at most nearby off-site locations. The expectation when airfields were created was that they would be returned to agriculture and this is the way that this land should be seen. We see a composting facility in principle as being an agricultural use. Without substantial public transport provision a settlement at Wisley Airfield would be near 100% car-based as there is no employment in the vicinity. The M25 to Heathrow Airport is already heavily congested of course.

### New building

**New building of dwellings** should only aim at meeting the existing needs of the area, and should focus on affordable housing – having small percentages of affordable housing within development projects is insufficient. All new buildings should be at high density, although with adequate living space, and with the highest standards of environmentally sustainable construction, especially limiting use of good agricultural land, or land of high landscape or wildlife value. We believe that high density can be achieved which also provides each dwelling with green spaces. (The BedZed development in Beddington is one example of such an approach.)

GEF believes that GBC must re-balance the mix of housing by actively discouraging the development of more large houses, especially as they have high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and positively encourage any new building to be of smaller and more sustainable and affordable homes. Such a mix of homes is clearly desirable, and would at present reflect current needs, rather than the marketability of new dwellings to people who may be attracted to the area by them. Future needs can only be assessed in the future, and will need ongoing reassessment. Assumptions about future need should not be based on a growth scenario.

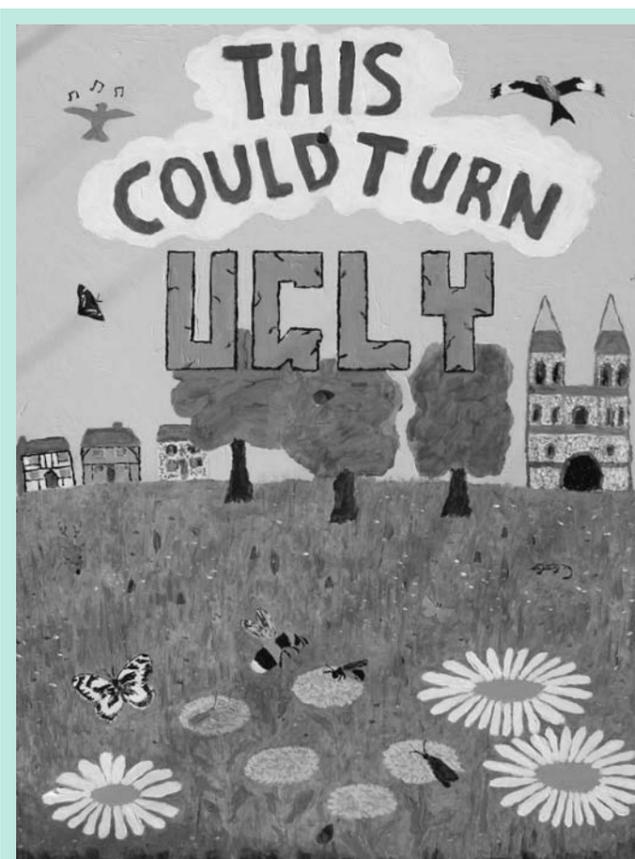
We consider that all new development should be of the highest environmental standard, but acknowledge that in some areas of established local or historical character this should be conformed with. High quality design includes the minimisation of energy use as well as energy harvesting. Energy use minimisation need not intrude on the localisation of character of new buildings.

We do not accept that there is a case for building on greenfield sites around Guildford; however, if such building is undertaken then it should be such as to maximise its potential for energy harvesting

and minimising its wildlife impact. In these cases the massive increase in land value from agricultural to built use would be more than sufficient to pay for any extra initial costs of high standard of construction and there is no “market” argument against their use.

### Climate change

**GEF believes strongly** that the proposals in the Consultation document in respect of climate change are almost totally inadequate and that carbon emissions are likely to increase per person and thus in total with any significant new development, unless there is a much more comprehensive plan. GEF would propose that GBC should urgently develop a renewable energy strategy that identifies suitable sites for renewable energy and promotes the development of CHP networks. More encouragement is needed for solar panels, heat pumps and other renewable sources. As a priority, Guildford should have a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Government target to reduce emissions in total by 34% by 2020. To achieve this, there is unlikely to be any room for a significant increase in the number of homes.



**The threats to the Green Belt seen in the build-up to the Local Plan have led to a high level of interest, including a protest march to the GBC offices in November to hand in a petition. GEF member Harry Eve was on the march and painted this poster for it, to express his fears that the Green Belt might soon not look as good as it does now.**

### Wildlife

**The Plan should ensure** that all development proposals identify positive measures to protect and improve biodiversity. The Green Belt should be seen as a biodiversity resource, not simply as a recreational one. The eco-system services that it provides should be acknowledged, but it must also be accepted that its wildlife has a right to exist independently of the services which it provides.

### Transport

**We do feel that more prominence** should be given to the problems of high traffic congestion and argue that congestion must be seen as a constraint on future development, so that pressure on the existing roads and rail facilities does not destroy today's quality of life. Emphasis should be on improved public transport, for example the commuter potential of the North Downs Line, given improved services. Increase pedestrianised areas and provide more open public spaces. We need car parking solutions that do not have large footprints and are largely hidden from view. Freiburg has a good example that in part uses green walls.

Consideration should be given to developments having to provide some support for public transport. New developments should facilitate a greater use of car clubs. In general of course we support the principle of encouraging environmentally sustainable transport options. There is a need for well-founded data on the journeys that are being made and the optimum alternative methods that could be adopted.

Generally we support efforts to enhance public transport in principle. We emphasise that it is vital that a welcoming and effective bus interchange is maintained in the core of the town (not in a peripheral location).

There is a need to improve our communities' experience of changing between bus and train services in Guildford town centre by increasing

efficiency and coordination and providing better ways for people to access rail services. Any development in the railway station area, or of the gyratory system, should work on the basis of improving the accessibility of the station to through buses. However, whilst the modal shift of train users to buses from cars for their access of railway services is to be supported, this should not be at the expense of established bus users.

### Town centre

**We consider the proposed expansion** of the town centre boundaries to be wholly inappropriate, including as it does large areas of residential land as well as some open space. This is most obvious on the south eastern and south western corners, the north western corner and the eastern extremity. This is likely to lead to the facilitation of conversion of land allocated for housing to retail use, by confusing calculations and diluting the concentration of retail use over a larger area.

### Tourism

**Encouraging tourism must be done** in ways that do not endanger the natural environment, the historic environment and the otherwise significant built environment. This applies also to any activities that are promoted as eco-tourism. Leisure activities should also not cause degradation of the quality of life of residents. We do recognise that tourism, arts and cultural development can be used to develop people's appreciation of their environment.

### Conclusion

**In conclusion, GEF realises** that the success of our businesses and university and the attractiveness of the Guildford countryside and its location mean that some growth in the near future is very probable, but that growth should be confined to that which is internally generated within the existing community and its resources.

## SURREY'S LANDSCAPE HAS

- 73%** designated as 'greenbelt' land (protected from development)
- 25%** within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- 22%** woodland, including more 'ancient woodland' than anywhere else in England
- 13%** of the UK's remaining lowland heathland, an international rare habitat
- 10%** designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), about 16,700 hectares
- 5%** internationally recognised for outstanding biodiversity

[Source: Surrey Wildlife Trust]

See page 7 for our Treasurer's latest report on the Forum's finances.  
(No, we're not asking for a higher subscription !)

# News from Wey Valley Energy Co-operative

IN 2011 A GROUP OF local individuals from Guildford and Godalming set up a community energy co-operative in order to raise money to install solar PV panels on local secondary schools in Surrey. The group were very successful and managed to raise £625,000 by offering investors a fair return of 5-6% on their investment, and they installed solar PV arrays of between 17 and 50kW on six local secondary schools in Surrey (Rodborough School, Milford; Broadwater School, Farncombe; Woolmer Hill School, Haslemere; Guildford County School; Godalming College; Beacon School, Banstead). This makes the group one of the largest and most experienced community energy co-operatives in the UK. In 2013 the WVSS co-operative generated a total of 217,252 kWh of renewable electricity.

In addition to the solar PV installations, the WVSS energy co-operative have also helped to re-light a primary school, in Harmondsworth near Heathrow, with LED lighting. This was the first project of its kind to be completed by a community energy co-op. The installation of LED lighting looks set to reduce the school's energy consumption on lighting by two-thirds.

After the success of the first project the group have helped share their experience with other individuals and community groups, giving them advice and guidance. We are extremely proud when we see those groups taking their projects forward, establishing their own share offers and building their own renewable energy generation sites.



New LED lighting in this primary school will cut its lighting costs by two-thirds.

The Wey Valley Solar team are not going to stop at just one project. They have plans for another solar PV scheme, working with more schools in the south-east. The project is called the Schools Energy Co-operative and will hopefully include schools from Sussex, Hampshire, Berkshire and Surrey. Working with Energy4All and others, they are also just about to launch a share issue for Nottinghamshire Renewable Energy Co-operative which will install 750

kW of solar panels on 13 health centres in Nottinghamshire, cutting the energy bills of the health service, improving sustainability, paying a return of around 5% to investors and paying all other profits towards tackling fuel poverty in the areas served by the health centres. The health centres are not located in prosperous areas, so for this project to work it will need support from across the country, not just the immediate locality. Since the project is modular, every £1 invested means more solar panels are installed.

They are also working on a renewable heat project called Wey Valley Wood Fuel Energy Co-operative. This co-operative will fund the replacement of fossil-fuelled boilers with a sustainable wood fuel alternative. The energy provided will be sold at a lower cost than the equivalent price of oil or LPG. Creating a market for locally produced wood chip will bring neglected woodlands back into sustainable production, which in turn will help reduce carbon emissions and improve biodiversity.

The first major project will install two 199kW boilers fuelled by wood chip, supplying heat to 16 homes and a residential complex near Alford, Surrey, for retired merchant seamen which is run by a charity called Care Ashore (formerly the Merchant Seamen's War

Memorial Society). Plans are now at a fairly advanced stage and, subject to obtaining the necessary planning permission and reaching final agreement with Care Ashore, we hope to launch the share offer for this co-operative in the first half of 2014. Including local wood supply and district heating within its scope makes this a pioneering project for community funding. A share issue is anticipated to be made in about May to raise the funds to enable this project to happen.

For more information about these projects, and community renewable energy generally, contact Rachael Hunter on [Rachael@Weyvalleysolar.co.uk](mailto:Rachael@Weyvalleysolar.co.uk) or call 01483 421580.

## Thoughts of home

In a poignant attempt to capture a memory of England amid the horror of the First World War, soldiers transplanted common plants such as primrose, cuckoo pint and celandine from the surrounding fields into little plots alongside the trenches. This became known as 'trench gardening'.

(Source: BBC Wildlife, Feb '14)

## Rhino poaching

In 2013, the number of rhinoceros killed in South Africa soared to 1,004. The rapid growth in poaching for the valuable horn threatens to wipe out the country's entire population of white and black rhinos.

(Source: Independent, 18 Jan '14)

## FACTS & FIGURES

### An obscene trade - 1

Anson Wong, a Malaysian who is one of Asia's most notorious animal traffickers, was caught trying to smuggle 95 boa constrictors through Kuala Lumpur airport.

(Source: Independent, 23 Nov '13)

### An obscene trade - 2

One wildlife smuggler managed to traffic 500 chimpanzees out of Guinea before he was caught.

(Source: BBC Wildlife, Nov '13)

### An obscene trade - 3

The value of the illegal wildlife trade is \$19 billion - the fourth largest illicit global trade.

(Source: WWF, Jan '13)



Wood engraving by C Dillion McGurk, c1920

# Our elm trees - a renaissance or a final bough?

John Bannister

I HAVE WRITTEN PREVIOUSLY about the Rosamund Community Garden in these pages, but you may not have realised that the garden itself occupies only a small part of a glorious 19 acres of downland belonging to the same charitable landowner. A growing band of volunteers working with Transition Guildford, under the guidance of Kate Millington, is running the fruit and vegetable garden but also helping to manage all 19 acres for the benefit of local wildlife. In this we are ably supported by Surrey Wildlife Trust.

## Hedgerows

Of the wildlife-friendly improvements we have carried out, the restoration and repair of hedgerows and the planting of new hedges has been the biggest part of what we have achieved so far. If you had to pick one quintessential feature which best epitomises what it is that makes the English rural landscape so special it would have to be our hedgerows. They are virtually unique to England. And although blitzed (short-sightedly) after the war our hedges are once again being recognised for their beauty and their tremendous wildlife value, as well as for the wind protection they provide for stock and food crops. Our latest hedgerow project at the Rosamund Garden site has been to plant 21 tiny elm saplings.

Before 1950 the English landscape was so different from now that only very personal memories remain for those old enough to have witnessed the then relatively unspoilt countryside. One very notable feature of the landscape then was the hundreds of thousands of elm trees that stood in hedgerows and along the byways. I think it's important to hang on to such memories as a benchmark to gauge just how much degradation has occurred in the intervening time.

The killing of the countryside really accelerated after the war. Everything was transformed by the

material "progress" that Americanisation foisted on us. Only the valiant efforts of nature conservation organisations, like Surrey Wildlife Trust, help us to hold on to what nature we still have left. Occasionally you will find a truly enlightened local authority able to see the wood for the trees. In Guildford, sadly, it's really all about environmentally unsustainable growth and 'nature take the hindmost'. As far as the story of our lost elm trees is concerned, Brighton and Hove in Sussex appears to have been one of few enlightened authorities.

## Dutch Elm Disease

Elms were wiped out on a massive scale in Britain back in the 70s and 80s by the elm bark beetle (*Scolytus*) that reached our shores in 1967 on a consignment of logs from North America, and 25 million elms in this country were killed as a result. What we know as Dutch Elm Disease goes by that name because scientists in the Netherlands are credited with the research that finally revealed the mechanisms of the disease - probably not what most people associate with the name. The *Scolytus* beetle carries a fungus which attacks the tiny vessels that pull the life-giving sap up to the leaves. The fungus spreads rapidly, so leaf dieback occurs very quickly. In self-defence the tree produces a gum-like material that blocks the sap vessels. Desperate threats need desperate measures, but it seems the trees' reaction merely hastened their end. The great leviathans, some standing 30 to 35 metres tall, were still there, rooted to the spot, but were dying from the canopy down. The roots fought on and threw up spindly suckers and these are what we sometimes find in our hedgerows today, including in the hedgerows up at our Rosamund Garden. But these suckers don't grow to anything like maturity.

In the area around Brighton and Hove in Sussex

tree specialists and the local council reacted swiftly to enforce stringent control measures (selective felling and tree surgery) to limit the spread of the disease in their area. Hence today you will find the greatest concentration of elms in and around Brighton, some 20,000 of them. The people in this locality treasured their elms and found the resources and effort needed to save as many as they could.

Today it's hard to imagine what a major feature the elm was in our landscape before the disease struck. Every time you look at paintings by Constable there they are, elms dominating the scene like great sentinels, 5 metres in girth rising skyward with, high up, boughs curving out like a graceful vase. The paintings by Constable, Turner, Tunnicliffe and others and the words of writers like Betjeman, H.E.Bates, Henry Williamson and Carol Ann Duffy are all we have left to try and convey to our children and grandchildren what a majestic vista they made.

### What of the future?

Could the elm rise again throughout our landscape? The chances may be very slim, but arborculturalists and nurserymen have been working for years to produce new elms from old that will withstand the Elm Bark Beetle. To prove they might have succeeded they have had to wait 20 or so years for new trees to reach adolescence. With the advent of micro-propagation techniques the growers think they may have managed it, which is why the Conservation Foundation has launched "The Great British Elm Experiment" (see [www.conservationfoundation.co.uk/project\\_info.php?=2](http://www.conservationfoundation.co.uk/project_info.php?=2)).



*Ulmus minor* – the Wych Elm – in Colesden, Beds



*Ulmus glabra* – the Smooth-leaved Elm – in Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria



*Ulmus procera* – the English Elm – at Upper Swell in Gloucestershire

Courtesy of this organisation Frances Halstead from Surrey Wildlife Trust and I have planted 21 tiny elm whips in gaps in the hedgerows around the 19 acres of downland. These whips comprise three derivatives of *Ulmus minor* – Mellis, Boxworth, Colsden, one of *Ulmus glabra* – Kirkby Stephen and one of *Ulmus procera* – Upper Swell. These are varieties of Wych Elm, Smooth-Leaved Elm and English Elm, respectively. The last, English, part of each name signifies the village where an over 60-year-old survivor of the disease still stands and from which the whips have been propagated. The surviving English Elm, for example, stands in Upper Swell in Gloucestershire. This "Experiment" is involving schools, community groups, local authorities and private landowners all over Britain.

I hope all our whips survive and thrive to full maturity and I'm sorry that I won't be around to see how they fare, but I will hand on their care. I will make a train trip to Brighton to see the elms that still remain from our glorious natural past. I must also pay my respects to the English Elm still in its prime in Upper Swell.

Photographs: www.conservationfoundation.co.uk



## GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

# SUBSCRIPTIONS and FINANCES

**SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2014/15 are due on 11th April, 2014.** The subscription rate is being maintained again at last year's rate of £10pa (£15pa for a household at one address). For all those who have completed standing order mandates and gift aid declarations, there is nothing more that you need do to renew your membership and we thank you very much indeed for completing both returns in the past.

Most other members will receive a reminder by e-mail to pay their subscription and/or to complete a gift aid mandate. If we do not have an e-mail address for you, there will be a reminder form with your posted newsletter and we would be most grateful if these could be returned to me by 31st March, 2014. We encourage members to pay by standing order as it reduces our administration hugely, but if this is not your preference, then please send me a cheque and the gift aid certificate and I will confirm receipt.

### FUTURE FINANCES

We have recently been advised that GEF will no longer continue to receive an annual grant from Guildford Borough Council after March 2014. All the grants monies have been pooled into a new Community Grants Scheme, This offers funding for community projects and initiatives that support the Council's priorities and corporate plan. The council is looking particularly to support projects that will become self-sustaining and will not require

ongoing year-on-year contributions. Happily, GEF has adapted to the new tougher financial climate by increasing subscriptions in 2011 and by securing gift aid recoveries, which have totalled over £1,000 since then. The forecast for 2014/5 is that, without the GBC grant of £950, GEF will incur an ongoing deficit of £700 for the year, which we will finance from existing reserves. Seed-corn environmental projects that we have supported in the past will, in future, need to make those grant applications to GBC themselves.

What we plan to do is to improve the quality and number of our free lectures and events, which are all run at very low cost, often using facilities provided by GBC at no cost to us. If we could increase our membership by just 70 members (or 50%), we would break even. **We are therefore sending you, with this newsletter, an additional copy of our newsletter and a new membership application form.** If you know of anyone in the Guildford area who would like to become a member of GEF for £10pa, then please encourage them to apply for membership. **This is the very best way in which you could help GEF to grow in the future.**

We hope you are getting very good value for your membership of GEF. If you feel your GEF membership is worthwhile, income from additional donations are, of course, most welcome!

*Adrian Thompson, Hon Treasurer*

### Aaaah, how cute!

Keeping primates as pets is banned in many EU member states, but not in the UK. In 2007 the British government removed the licensing requirements for several smaller primate species such as marmosets and capuchins. As a result many animals are suffering due to inadequate understanding of their physical and mental needs.

(Source: BBC Wildlife, Dec '12)

### Gin and tonic? No, just tonic

Traditional gin and tonic is under threat – from wild rabbits. The animals are eating so many juniper berries, used to make the spirit, that the plant could be wiped out. Scientists from the Forestry Commission have started collecting the berries to save for conservation.

(Source: Waitrose Weekend, 30 Jan '14)

## FACTS & FIGURES

### Who cares? – 1

Worldwide, public concern about environmental issues has slumped to a 20-year low since the financial crisis.

(Source: i, 28 Feb '13)

### Who cares? – 2

The biggest threat facing invertebrates today, said founder of Buglife, Alan Stubbs, was "indifference". There was a lack of willingness to understand why invertebrates matter, although they comprise about 97% of all animal life and play a key role in the web of life everywhere.

(Source: Buglife)

# THE VANISHING ISLAND

THE HOG'S BACK AND GUILDFORD HAVE A TIMELESS AND SHARED FOUNDATION

Part 1 of 2 Text and photographs by Forum member Michael Tanner

STAND AWHILE, at the remains of a wintry day, on the granite setts beneath Guildford town clock and look west towards a sun which is sinking behind the arc of a hill. A sky, streaked gold, orange, aquamarine, silhouettes a tall clump of trees perched high on the arc. On its right the arc slopes down into shadow; on its left, climbs towards a summit just out of sight. Give or take half a mile or so, you are looking at the eastern end of what Tom, Dick and Harry call 'The Hog's Back'. The red rear lights of cars stream up the A31, flanking the hill; the looming shapes of two tower blocks occupy the space just in front of where the Hog has rested his snout for hundreds of millennia. Not even the Portsmouth train rumbling through the chalk under his heavy head can disturb him.

In gilded numbers, the clock bears the date 1683 – immeasurably younger than the hill in the fading light. But what are a mere 80 million years to Man who has no visceral comprehension of geological time, whose pitifully short span is chiselled on gravestones in the churchyards of Compton, Puttenham, Seale, all nestling in the leese of the hill's protection, shaded by sombre yews. The creator of *Alice in Wonderland* himself (1832-1898) rests near the very end of this other wonderland, not far from the unnamed remains of Saxon nobles slain in what was probably a treacherous massacre of AD 1036.

Night falls; the hill fades into darkness. Eerily silent, a businessman's jet aligns and dips itself towards Guildford and Heathrow; its passengers pick out the lights of the cars below, flowing homewards along the two dual carriageways, stuck like black plastic tape along the eight-mile ridge of the Hog's Back, half of them heading west towards the setting sun, half east towards the earthbound constellations lit by power stations. Like an enormous star of great import the plane's landing lights seem stationary. Is it navigating by radio signals from one of the four tall masts sprouting like a tuft of bristles from the very Back of the Hog just above Onslow Village?

## A dawn walk

In the half light of a winter's, weekday dawn, you are descending the steep path running from Sunnydown ridge to Polsted Manor and suddenly see, though a gap in the thorns, a spectacle which for a split second you cannot interpret: there about a mile distant to the south west is an endless procession of lights, brilliant in the frosty air; you can only just detect they are moving. Through deep

cuttings in the chalk hill, the procession gradually ascends to its hidden passage over the Hog's Back ridge.

What does this astonishing sight portend? Then the truth dawns – the undeniably dramatic and beautiful sight is the early morning traffic jam of resigned commuters heading to work. An alien might even have supposed it had religious significance; in this era of the Car Cult he might not be so far from the truth. Few Guildfordians will have witnessed this unnatural phenomenon. I wonder what comment John Cobbett would have made.

Sadly, very many do equate the name of 'Hog's Back' solely with traffic and commuting; they see it only through a windscreen. But it has infinitely more dimensions than any arterial road. The name is perhaps unfortunate in its frank earthiness. Who knows what Celt or Saxon farmer coined it? Yet it harbours connotations of affection along with those of familiarity. After all, its outline as seen from flatlands to the North is that of a supine Hog with the perceptible high point on its back (at 149 metres) that a good hog should have. At the Guildford (eastern end) it seems to have splayed forward its short, sturdy forelegs. The western end of the long ridge slopes more gradually.

Despite its name, however, the place holds a myriad subtle qualities and memories which make it a jewel of the acclaimed Surrey Hills; its essential charm refuses all labels. Those who scurry along its spine, at best are only dimly aware of the sweeping views lying to north and south or the settlements nestling into the escarpment immediately below.



"The four radio masts sprouting like a tuft of bristles from the very Back of the Hog"

## The Hog's formation

In a geological context the eight-mile long ridge remains a dramatic record of immense forces deep within the earth's mantle, resulting in the gradual folding and heaving upwards of part of a sea floor consisting of at least 500 metres depth of chalk<sup>1</sup>, on top of which various other alluvial deposits such as sand and silt had added their thickness and terrible compression. Then followed the ages-long work of erosive forces: ice, water, wind, gravity which, after exposing the chalk, reduced its height even further. Finally, along came that upstart arrival, *Homo sapiens sapiens*<sup>2</sup>, so much later in the geological day, himself an erosive and constructive element at one and the same time.

So we inherit the feature, move like ants along and across it, live on it, quarry it, farm it, build on it, from times Neolithic or earlier, down to this 21st century, when our habits and our skills alter at such a pace we are astonished by the changes since our own childhood and frequently seem unable to direct their course. Just what will we pass on to those generations that survive us?

Do we take it for granted that this unique chalk phenomenon will always be there: rising out of mists, sometimes enveloped in them, catching the light of dawn, yielding to those who are patient some of its many secrets, its quintessential magic? Above all, this English landmark demonstrates quite remarkably, at its own pace, the kind of sweet harmony produced when men and nature mould each other in an evolutionary manner, rather than through the machinations of government and the more than brute force of enormous earth-shifting machines. Is it our generation who may betray a remarkable partnership?

## The valley

The variety of this harmony is rather more evident on the southern flanks of the Hog's Back which receive more light and more shelter from north winds but, at about the 85-metre contour for much of their length, there is a valley,

quite pronounced where it runs parallel with the chalk ridge between Compton and Seale. This is where the dark sand and ferruginous sandstone layers come into their own and seem to emulate the chalk with their own lower ridge. It continues to run eastwards well beyond St Catherine's and the Hog's Back.

This feature not only attracted those who sought sand or the iron-containing Carrstone often mingled with the sandstone, but must have given a greater sense of security to would-be settlers, inviting them to stay and gradually form villages like Seale, Puttenham, Compton, St Catherine's, not to mention the very beginnings of Guildford.

Thus the 'chalk' (a blanket term), flint, sand, sandstone, Carrstone, Bargate stone and Gault clay and the adequate loamy material covering these rocks, together with the many springs emerging from the slopes enabled folk, long before the age



Multitudes of footpaths and bridlepaths cross the slopes of the Hog's Back

of commuting, to make a living, and a good one, from the area. You could find, in situ, oak, ash and stone to build cottages and barns, pasture for sheep, cattle, oxen, draught horses, and soil to grow hay, oats, barley, wheat even, not to mention rough areas well suited to pigs and poultry. No doubt there was no shortage of hogs!

It was inevitable that small industries should follow, that churches and public houses should spring up, even priories, that the wealthier should



In Puttenham, probably the most meaningful pub sign in England

erect manor houses and even more sumptuous places such as Loseley House, though that was constructed from the more distant, ready-cut stones of the Cistercian Abbey at Waverley, forcibly evacuated in 1536.

[Part 2 of Michael's article will appear in the June newsletter]

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Chalk – chalk occurs most remarkably in areas of north-western Europe and is particularly evident in south-east England and north-west France. The very special conditions required for its formation include depth of sea water and temperature conducive to the formation of the algae from which it originates. Eminent geologists consider that these conditions will not be repeated in the earth's history, so it is reasonable to consider this 'local' rock unique.

The cretaceous (chalk) layers formed over a period of at least 80 million years. All three types of cretaceous layer are found in or near the Hog's Back, together with at least 10 other layers of different sedimentary rock, including the very evident Folkestone Sand.

The rate of chalk sedimentation has been calculated at 1 cm in every 500 to 1,000 years.

Movement of the deeply underlying tectonic plates (responsible for the rising of the 'Hog's Back ridge) is reckoned to be (normally) as fast as the growing of human finger nails.

<sup>2</sup> *Homo sapiens sapiens* – vide *The Times Concise History of the World*, 2013 edition, page 12, 'Human Origins' map, legend to fossil sites.

## Neonicotinoids and the human food system – where next?

John Bannister

After one of the most successful environmental campaigns in 2013, with good scientific evidence behind it, 15 out of 27 European Member States voted in April for a unilateral ban on the use of certain neonicotinoid pesticides across the EU. However, the vote was not enough to form a qualified majority and the Commission was forced to compromise with a two-year moratorium, which came into force on 1st December 2013. At stake is the future of our pollinators, in particular the honey bee.

The war of words between agrochemical farmers and pesticide companies on the one hand and honey producers and environmentalists on the other has been quite heated and is still escalating. As we've come to expect from this UK government, the Environment Secretary Owen Paterson backed the use of these pesticides. Concern about honey bees started in earnest in 2007 when the term Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) was first coined to label dramatic losses in bee colonies and honey bee populations across the world. One third of our food is pollinated by bees, so the outcome is vital for our food security in a world already suffering billions of hungry stomachs and ever rising population.

The pro-pesticides advocates led by Bayer Crop Science and Syngenta, the only two agrochemical companies that produce neonicotinoids, and backed by the UK government, seem to be relying on the fact that life on this planet is now so highly exposed to all kinds of multiple stresses, pollution, chemicals, degraded habitats and conflict that it is impossible to isolate one group of pesticides as the main cause of anything. We live in an increasingly noxious cocktail of chemicals in our air, water and soil. But some scientists claim they have proved a link between neonicotinoids and CCD.

In November 2013 the National Farmers Union (NFU) announced that it will join forces with Syngenta in launching a legal challenge to the moratorium. NFU President Peter Kendall said "It is critical to farmers that policy makers and regulators take decisions based on sound science. Continual erosion of active ingredients on unjustifiable grounds increases the risk of pest, weed and disease resistance. The NFU is concerned about the impact the restrictions will have on its members' abilities to farm productively and sustainably". I don't believe he is talking for all farmers in this country, particularly not the small-scale farmers. This is the very big, large land-owning, monoculture, low-cost food, EU-hating farmers speaking.

### In the USA

Plants can't move to mate so can't produce fruit or seeds unless pollen from male plants reaches their female partners. Bees are the most effective pollinators or 'messengers of love' between plants. In the film *More than Honey* that we showed on 29 January, we learned a lot about why honey bees are in deep trouble. Man's 'success' at taking over the Earth for his own ends has been at great cost to nature and the health of the planet. Our food system is probably the greatest structural failure that we have unleashed and which is coming back in all kinds of ways to haunt us. The film follows one big honey



thehoneygatherers.com

California in February, up to the apple, pear and apricot hectares in Washington State in late March, then across to North Dakota for the northern summer to make honey. By October they are back where they started in California to recoup their losses ready to go round again.

Commercial orchards are sprayed with fumigants in daytime even while the bees are actively providing their services: the simpleton sprayers would get lost in the orchards at night. Over 65% of all bees in the US are commercially owned and trucked around to provide pollination services. Bees trapped in their hives on the back of a truck for two days can't void their waste and consequently suffer. They also carry their diseases around North America, so for their sins they are treated with chemicals. After their stressful journey those bees that survive are fed sugar water laced with antibiotics to get them into some kind of shape to get off their knees. The awful fact is that honey bees in the US, China, India and elsewhere can no longer survive without drugs. Inevitably, traces of pesticides and antibiotics end up in the honey we eat. Over 50 different chemicals have been found in bee products.

As with so many examples of the lack of respect we show wildlife, we are killing animals before we understand fully how incredible they are, before we even know they exist! Is it possible, researchers speculate, that a colony of bees is not 50,000 individuals randomly working in a largely uncoordinated way but one super-organism? Every bee has 60,000 smell receptors on each antenna and more on its legs, so as it moves around the hive it is assessing in three dimensions whether there are enough eggs, where the queen is, whether food stocks are adequate, whether there is waste to be removed, and and so on. No managers, no bureaucrats, but then I suppose no individualism, no personal greed allowed. And then of course the male drones are all killed after a few lucky ones have mated with the queen – no point in feeding them through the winter. Drones could be described as the equivalent of Cameron's "fornicating welfare scroungers".



mattcolephotography.co.uk

bee business in America trucking 4,000 hives, each with 50,000 bees, from the vast almond and cherry monocultures in

### In China and Australia

Some regions of China are so polluted with chemicals that there are no pollinators left. So pollen is collected by hand from flowers and dabbed onto other flowers by hand. There is an industry collecting and selling pollen for this purpose. China had a campaign some time ago to kill sparrows that ravaged crops. No sparrows meant plagues of insects that were then poisoned with pesticides. The pesticides killed bees and other pollinators. Slowly the amazing diversity of this planet is being reduced to a single mono-species – us, which will collapse when we are done.

Australia is the last continent that doesn't have the *Varroa* mite, which carries one of the diseases endemic to bee hives. Research is being conducted in Oz to try and improve the welfare of honey bees. But of course research is going on in many countries to try and better understand bees and bee welfare. Some have faith in the more aggressive African bee, which may end up being the only honey bee species to survive.

### The deadly legacy of chemicals

Honey bees are far from being the only victims of man's God-like arrogance. The whole chemical-based industrial food system is causing enormous collateral damage. Philip Lymbery, CEO of Compassion in World Farming, has written a book, *Farmageddon*, which we should all read. Lymbery uses the phrase "ecological meltdown" to describe what our food chain is inflicting on the planet. Here is a partial list of problems:

- the wellbeing of farm animals;
- the loss of rainforest to GM soya that feeds European livestock;
- a fifth of all fish caught pulped into fishmeal to feed farmed salmon and pigs;
- a million tonnes of anchoveta a year exported from Peru as animal feed, 13.5% of it to the UK (hoovering up these fish means seabird populations in the area have fallen 95% in 60 years);
- farmed fish riddled with parasites escape and infect wild populations;
- intensively reared pigs maintained with antibiotics and other drugs;
- farmland bird populations down by up to 90% in the last 40 years;
- our meat grown with a third of the world's arable harvests, most of which is wasted as faeces and heat (feeding the world's population is not a problem if we eat less meat and share food crops around more equitably);
- antibiotics routinely used to control superbugs in industrially farmed animals, so ending up in the meat we eat.

Read the book. Eat less and eat organic food. And if anyone would like to borrow *More Than Honey* please contact me – details on back page.



**Guildford Environmental Forum aims to improve the environment in and around Guildford for wildlife and for people and to build a sustainable future.**

Join us in our work for the town and have this newsletter posted to your door four times a year. Forum membership costs only £10 per year or £15 for a couple, and new members are warmly welcomed.

Please contact Adrian Thompson on 01483 222687 or e-mail [adrianthompson46@talktalk.net](mailto:adrianthompson46@talktalk.net)



# CALENDAR

All the Forum's Group meetings are open to the public



### Wednesday 26 March

GEF Biodiversity Group. Jane Hamilton-Cross, Bumble Bee Conservation Trust:  
**"Bumble Bees and How to Help Make Our Environment Better for Them"**.  
1900. Council Chamber, GBC Millmead Offices.

### Tuesday 6 May

GEF Community Projects Group. A talk by Dr Bernie Bulkin:  
**"Shale Gas, Wind and Biomass: Real and Imaginary Environmental Issues"**.  
Bernie has held senior positions in industry, business and academia.  
Until the end of 2013, he was Chair of the Office for Renewable Development at DECC,  
and had been Commissioner for Energy and Transport at the Sustainable Development Commission.  
1900. Committee Room 1, GBC Millmead Offices.

### Tuesday 13 May

GEF Community Projects Group in conjunction with the Guildford Society.  
A talk by Professor Tim Jackson: **"Prosperity Without Growth – Five Years On"**. The GDP model for  
our economy is completely unsustainable, but can we come up with a better alternative in time?  
Tim is Professor of Sustainable Development at the University of Surrey, and was Economics  
Commissioner at the Sustainable Development Commission.  
1900 for 1930. Trinity Centre, Trinity Churchyard by Holy Trinity Church (top of Guildford High Street).

### Saturday 31 May

Transition Guildford with Surrey Wildlife Trust: **Scything for Beginners and Improvers**.  
This is the fourth year of our highly successful one-day courses run by Mark Allery.  
It will run from 1000 to 1600 at our beautiful Rosamund Fruit and Vegetable Community Garden,  
near Longdown Road, Guildford. Learn setting up, mowing techniques, sharpening, safety,  
everything you need to know to get started or to hone your existing skills with the scythe. Cost is  
£25 per head for the day, including light refreshments. Please book with John Bannister, tel 01483 570468.

### Monday 23 June

**GEF Annual General Meeting**  
followed by a talk by Sean Harrison, Woodland Adviser, Surrey Hills AONB:  
**"Management of Woodland in the Surrey Hills"**.  
1900. Council Chamber, GBC Millmead Offices.

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**The views expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of its contributors and Guildford Environmental Forum.**