

The Seventy Third Annual Report

of

THE  
**HASLEMERE**  
SOCIETY



*FOR HASLEMERE  
past, present and future*

**1st July 2007 to 30th June 2008**

Registered charity number 0255287

*The Haslemere Society (registered charity number 0255287)  
is a member of the Civic Trust,  
the Federation of Sussex Amenity Societies  
and the Haslemere Initiative. It is affiliated to the  
Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and the  
Haslemere Educational Museum.*

Our membership grows steadily, and most of our two mailings a year are delivered by hand, courtesy of committee members and non-committee members, in order to cut down on postage costs. This is not an arduous task, as it is shared between many people, and can be an interesting and instructive way of getting to know what might be an otherwise unknown part of Haslemere and Hindhead - as well as including exercise and fresh air and therefore *a good thing*. Please let Diana (01428 654 681) know if you would be willing to help with deliveries - you would be given a bundle of between 4 and 15 envelopes, with plenty of notice and a few days to complete the task.

*POST FOR THE SOCIETY may be sent/delivered to  
Haslemere Educational Museum, for collection by  
committee members:*

*The Haslemere Society  
C/o Haslemere Educational Museum  
78 High Street, Haslemere  
Surrey GU27 2LA  
[www.haslemere.com/haslemeresociety](http://www.haslemere.com/haslemeresociety)*

# The Seventy Third Annual Report

1st July 2007 to 30th June 2008

## *President*

Robert Serman FRICS\*

## *Chairman*

David Smith BSc FCA

## *Secretary*

Jane Stopford-Russell

## *Treasurer*

Julie Stark

## *Membership Officer*

Diana Serman

## *Committee*

Christopher Ashton-Jones

John Greer\*

Sheila Johnston\*

Debbie Peet

Michael Dover

Chris Harrison\*

Michael Lockwood

## *Hon. Auditor*

Clare David MA ACA

\* *Planning Sub-Committee*

## **Annual General Meeting**

The 74th Annual General Meeting will be held on  
Friday 28th November 2008 at 7.30pm  
in Haslemere Hall, Bridge Road.

### **Agenda**

1. Welcome by the President
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting  
of 9th November 2007
3. Report by the Chairman
4. Report by the Treasurer
5. Election of the Officers and Committee
6. Illustrated talk by Dr John Godfrey on  
The South Downs National Park

*The subscriptions of many members who  
pay annually by cheque (or with cash) are  
due on 1st December and may be paid to  
Diana Serman at the AGM if convenient.*

## THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Many of you who came to the last AGM will have been aware of the overcrowding at our usual venue, the Museum. To have more than 100 members attending the meeting meant that we nearly breached the Museum's capacity. This prompted us to take the radical step of moving our two annual meetings, the Spring Meeting and the AGM, to Haslemere Hall.

It is particularly heartening to recognise the active support we have among our membership. The decision to leave the Museum was not taken lightly and we intend to continue to hold our Summer Party on its lawn with the most delightful views as we have done for many years. Now that we have a larger venue, I would like to urge any members who may not have been attracted by an annual general meeting to join us. We try to keep the statutory business of the meeting to a minimum to allow time for the always interesting illustrated talk by our guest speaker and for a general update on matters concerning our town.

As well as struggling with the inevitable onslaught of planning applications around the town during this last year, the committee decided, on behalf of the Society, to replace the dead cherry tree opposite the police station, with a false acacia. We were helped by Homewood Fencing, who provided the chestnut paling fence to protect the tree, which is thriving.

My colleague, John Greer, writes on planning matters, and it is worth reporting that the current owner of Undershaw (Conan-Doyle's former home) may be prepared to sell to a consortium. It is intent on preserving the building as a hotel, as well as creating a wedding venue and a Sherlock Holmes Museum with public access. The committee has been involved and is very supportive of this scheme. I can also report that plans for a new two-storey station car park are moving towards fruition. These plans will not please everyone, but it is essential to address the problem of commuter parking on residential roads around the town. I also believe that the harsh lines of the new building can be softened considerably by the sympathetic planting of suitable shrubs.

The Chairman of the Lynchmere Society has proposed some joint events between our two societies. The Lynchmere Society is a body established in 1991 to foster interest in local and natural history. In 1997 it was able to purchase 307 acres of Common Land covering Lynchmere, Stanley and Marley Commons, which it has registered as a Local Nature Reserve. Our members are invited to join a guided walk of the Commons on 26th October which will be led by Mark Allery, responsible for maintaining the Common on behalf of the Lynchmere Society, and possessing a wealth of knowledge on its natural history, so the walk should be fascinating. Details are provided later in the report.

I hope it will be possible to arrange future joint events. As the closest of our neighbours with similar conservation aims, I think it right that we should co-operate and support each other. You will find a leaflet about the Lynchmere Society enclosed with this report.

Finally I should like to remind members of the importance of the year 2009 to the Society. It is the 125th anniversary of its foundation by Sir Robert Hunter, who went on to found the National Trust a few years later. 2009 will also be the year of the Haslemere Festival (please see important Festival information on the back page) and it is my hope that some of our anniversary events can be arranged to fit in with this third Festival.

*David Smith*

### **A WALK AROUND LYNCHMERE & STANLEY COMMONS (Practical details)**

The Lynchmere Society has arranged a 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hour guided walk with Mark Allery on Sunday October 26th, our members are invited to join them. The walk, which should show the autumn heather at its best, will be along some hilly footpaths which may be rough and muddy, so stout walking boots or wellingtons, will be needed, particularly if the weather has been wet (surely not!). Please park alongside the Lynchmere Green Road and meet at 2.15 pm at the Lynchmere Society notice board on Lynchmere Commons, by the entrance track on the Lynchmere Green Road, midway between the B2131 and Lynchmere Corner. (From the Shottermill direction, this road is NOT the left turn by Hammer Hill, but the second left turn about half a mile further along the B2131.)

Should it be necessary to cancel or postpone the walk, a notice will be placed on the notice board. Contact telephone numbers are: David Smith 01428-661 379 and Mark Allery 01428-641 708

**THE AGM: Friday 28th November 2008 at 7.30 pm** (reminder card enclosed), again at our new venue, Haslemere Hall, and this year the heating will be working!

Our speaker, Dr John Godfrey, is an expert on the South Downs as well as being a local historian of note. He has kindly agreed to come and give us his unbiased thoughts and views - both literary and photographic - on the case for and against the creation of a new National Park on our doorstep.

Dr Godfrey is a witty and entertaining speaker who is a master of his subject. Whatever your thoughts on the matter, you will find his talk stimulating and entertaining. It will be followed by canapés and a glass or two of wine. We look forward to seeing you there.

## **THE 2008 SPRING MEETING**

Judith Patrick's Architectural Arts and Crafts in S E England at the Spring Meeting informed and delighted us, although Judith quite expected her audience to be taking notes during her talk. Though sprinkled with humour, her lectures are not to be treated lightly! However she was later persuaded to produce a list of the places she had mentioned, for those members neither equipped with pen and paper nor the ability to write in the dark ...

*Diana Serman*

## **THE 2008 SUMMER PARTY**

This year's Society Summer Party was again held in the delightful grounds of the Haslemere Museum, and over 100 members and their guests were entertained by a sparkling performance from the Haslemere Town Band. We were delighted that Jeremy Hunt MP, Melanie Odell, Deputy Mayor, and Kathy Moore, representing the Haslemere Town Council Officers, were able to join us, together with our friends from other local Societies. The weather was kind and though it grew quite cool as dusk descended, the party continued in full swing until well past 9 o'clock. Several party goers commented on the quality and quantity of the food and the younger members of the Band ensured that nothing was wasted!

*Peter Hampson*

## **THE SUMMER OUTING**

Our outing by coach this year was, as ever, cheerful and friendly, and began with Eton College, where we had a splendid guide who gave us some of the history of the college as well as regaling us with the all-important boys' stories, as when for example, propelled into action by constant hunger (with never enough food - and none at all on Fridays), the boys captured a pregnant pig, kept her until she gave birth, ate the piglets, and with commendable foresight, returned the sow to the wild for her next pregnancy.

With sunshine for the rest of the day, we drove to nearby Beaconsfield on its market day, and enjoyed this lovely small town for a couple of hours, with plenty of places for lunch (no suckling pig), before continuing to Bekonskot Model Village, the oldest in the world, which entranced even the most sophisticated of our grown up members and the most blasé of our younger visitors.

*Diana Serman*

## TWO NEW BLUE PLAQUES

The Society will shortly be unveiling two new plaques. The first of these will commemorate George Eliot's stay at Brookbank, in Liphook Road, in the summer of 1871. The current owners, Melanie and Bill Pitcairn, attended the exhibition at Haslemere Museum called 'People and Places', and left a message to say that they would be very interested in a plaque. We felt that this was a good opportunity to expand the scheme.

George Eliot's association with Brookbank is well known. Although she lived there for less than a year, her stay was an important one because she wrote much of 'Middlemarch' while there. At the time she was living with her lover, causing much scandal, and her stay in Shottermill provided her with some privacy. Nevertheless, a number of important figures visited during her stay and she also visited Tennyson. The plaque will be unveiled at a brief ceremony at 3.30 pm on Saturday 25th October. Members are welcome to attend. Melanie and Bill will put on a small exhibition of pictures and literary extracts, and participants will be able to tour this lovely small house.

William Cecil Marshall is a less well-known figure in Haslemere's history although in his day he was a well-known architect, designing a number of important buildings at Cambridge University. A friend of Darwin, Marshall designed and lived at what is now the Hindhead Music Centre. He was also a finalist in the first men's Wimbledon Singles Championship, although he lost in straight sets.

Marshall's daughter, Frances Partridge, also acquired fame as an author, and as a minor member of the 'Bloomsbury Set', of which she was the last surviving member. She died in 2004 at the age of 103.

The Society was keen to recognise Marshall, particularly because the Hindhead Music Centre plays a key part in the cultural life of our area, and the plaque will be seen by its many visitors. Ann Hughes-Chamberlain, who owns and runs the Centre will host a brief ceremony at 3.00 pm on Saturday 1st November. Once again, members are very welcome to come along.

In the coming months we plan to contact a number of owners of houses which have connections with significant people, but if anyone feels that there is a house worthy of a plaque, they should contact Chris Harrison. Any members who wish to come to the unveiling ceremonies should also contact Chris, so that catering arrangements can be made: [chrisaharrison@gmail.com](mailto:chrisaharrison@gmail.com)

*Chris Harrison*

## **BBC RADIO 4 'ANY QUESTIONS' - Coming to Haslemere in May 2009**

Mention has been made already of the 125th anniversary of the Society in 2009 and one of the ways in which we thought we should mark the event was to invite the BBC Radio 4 to hold 'Any Questions' in Haslemere.

The natural choice of venue is Haslemere Hall and we have fortunately been able to book the hall for **Friday 1st May**. Obviously we shall look forward to welcoming a capacity audience to the recording. The BBC will print tickets and give them to us (as promoters) to give out, so please put the date in your 2009 diary now!

## **TOWN PLANNING MATTERS**

The Planning Sub-committee was established some 18 months ago to review local planning applications and, where appropriate, to express the Society's views to Waverley Borough Council. The guiding principles in considering applications are whether an application will affect the heritage, amenity and environment of the town. While the Society welcomes improvement, it is clear that current development pressures are posing threats to the amenity and attractiveness of Haslemere and we have a role to play in resisting these where they are clearly inappropriate.

Over the past year the Planning Sub-committee has submitted comments to Waverley Planners on many planning applications affecting areas around Kings Road, Lion Lane and Hill Road. Our views have also been sent to the Planning Inspectorate in cases where appeals have been lodged. After much official deliberation we are pleased that Wakeners Court (an attractive Edwardian House) has been saved from demolition. As noted above by the Chairman, the Undershaw saga continues, but appears encouraging.

Town Centre Conservation Area proposals are of particular interest to the Society. Following the Borough Council's refusal of the application to redevelop the old and decrepit electrical shop on Lower Street, we are hopeful that a more practical and sensitive scheme of redevelopment can be agreed in the near future to remove this unattractive feature.

The Society's booklet advising members about how they might respond/object to planning applications was published in January and is available free of charge from the Haslemere Society website.

*John Greer*

## **STURT FARM AND THE CASE FOR KEY WORKER HOUSING THERE**

You may have seen the correspondence in the Haslemere Herald about this provocative issue. There are several controversial aspects to the proposal: Is it desirable to build a housing estate solely for key workers? Is this choice of site appropriate? How do we quantify the real need which exists in the community? The expression Key-worker is emotive and needs to be defined more robustly; many low-paid workers are important to the community, and this Society is not elitist in its views, particularly about housing need.

The subject is too complex to cover adequately in this annual report but the Society's position is clear and positive: There is almost certainly a need for greater provision of subsidised affordable housing in the Haslemere area, and we have been contributing to the debate in a practical way (by being represented on the Haslemere Initiative Affordable Housing sub group) and one site, at Grayswood, is at an advanced stage of negotiation.

Using scarce land in Haslemere to meet social housing needs for other parts of Surrey clearly makes little sense. One way in which real progress could be made would be by lowering the threshold at which developers have to make provision for social housing. At present, any scheme in Waverley Borough having fewer than fifteen houses is exempt. The Society feels that Waverley should adopt a significantly lower threshold, as some other local authorities have, and require developers to provide one social housing unit for many fewer than the (currently) fifteen open market houses. This would tend to make land prices more realistic because the opportunity to make grossly inflated profits would be reduced, as would the incentive to sell building land.

The arguments against developing Sturt Farm are strong, briefly:

The character of Haslemere's urban or town fringe needs to be respected. Urban sprawl must be avoided by not allowing developments on the fringe. As an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and one of Great Landscape Value, classifications which provide more robust defence than mere Green Belt status, the decision to build cannot be taken lightly: there has to be a clear 'national need'.

Sturt Road is narrow and undulating and carries a significant amount of traffic. Surrey County Council Highways Department state (01/09/08) on the WBC website, that creating an access at a point with substandard visibility and an accident history, conflicts with policy and provides grounds for their refusing consent. We await WBC's considered views on the application prior to its committee's decision.

***Robert Serman***

## **POTHoles AND OTHER COUNCIL ISSUES**

Members may be interested in a new website [fixmystreet.com](http://fixmystreet.com). This easy to use website enables you to highlight problems to Waverley Borough Council, using a very detailed map and postcode system. The website will forward your complaint to WBC, and according to recent press reports, a very high success rate in getting the local authority to take action is reported. All kinds of problems can be notified: potholes, graffiti, fly tipping, broken paving slabs, and faults with street lighting.

## **THE APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN**

Over the years the Society has, either on its own account or with others, enhanced the town by carrying out small improvements. One of the more significant recent projects was the improvement to Weydown Road corner, now named Clement Corner in recognition of part-sponsorship by the firm of that name which has also maintained the area ever since. The time has come to restore the large oak notice board which has suffered in its 6-year life, and we have asked a H.S. member, Paul Huckstep, a skilled joiner, to carry out the work - perhaps with a little unskilled support.

Another project which we have in our sights is the replacement of the seat at Penfolds Corner, in the wall of Penfolds on Lower Street. At the time of writing Haslemere Town Council is trying to establish ownership so that the question of maintenance can be resolved.

An eyesore which makes a painful impact on many is the wildly overgrown embankment on the edge of Sandrock Common where huge brambles hang over the retaining wall and the rather narrow pavement on the south side of Lower Street. Pedestrians feel this impact particularly, as the spiky brambles are difficult to avoid at this time of year. We feel that WBC, which claims to own the wood, should clear and seed this margin with grass so as to provide a more pleasing and less hazardous backdrop.

Nearer the Town Hall (and still in Lower Street), High Pavement boasts an annual riot of weeds which has been cleared from time to time by the Haslemere and District Conservation Volunteers and also by a working party set up especially for the event by the mayor at the time, Councillor Fay Foster. Painting the railings also featured in her project. It is good to see that civic pride has prompted at least one house-holder in Lower Street to clear the weeds in front of their house, but this is a County Council responsibility.

While we do not want the town to be excessively 'urbanised', there comes a point when allowing nature a free hand comes to resemble neglect.

***Robert Serman***

The accounts are set out below. A signed copy, audited by our Honorary Auditor, Mrs Clare David, will be available to members attending the AGM.

## The Haslemere Society

Annual Statement of Account and Balance Sheet  
For the year ended 30th June 2008

2007	<b>INCOME</b>	2008
£		£
3062	Subscriptions incl. Gift Aid	3023
1154	Donations	4
195	Bank Interest	319
62	Members activities & events Surplus	nil
nil	Book, Photos etc Revenue	8
<b>4472</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3354</b>

<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
1659	Surplus for the year	509
899	Printing & Stationery	1068
103	Postage & Telephone	14
271	Amenities Societies	293
192	Projects e.g. Planning, Cons. Area etc	113
535	Meeting expenses- Members & Comm.	793
100	Advertising	195
nil	Insurance	190
513	Charter Fair & Marketing	175
200	Miscellaneous	4
<b>4472</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>3354</b>

<b>BALANCE SHEET</b>		
11191	Opening Balance	12850
1659	Surplus	509
<b>12850</b>		<b>13359</b>

Total funds represented by balance at bank

9161	Deposit account & bonds	10954
3191	Current account	3588
-179	Sundry creditors	-1314
677	Sundry debtors/accrued income	131
<b>12850</b>		<b>13359</b>

**Julie Stark ( Hon. Treasurer)**

## **THE THIRD HASLEMERE FESTIVAL**

**14th to 31st May 2009**

Once again a truly breathtaking programme is being arranged, much of it already in place, with high profile visiting artistes, family and youth events, local drama, music, and cultural events, as well as the Tennyson weekend on the 200 anniversary of the great man's birth. Those who enjoyed the last Festival, in 2006, will not be disappointed, and those who are new to the Haslemere Festival will be impressed and excited by what is on offer.

The organisers are looking for 'Friends of the Festival'. (No festival is totally self-financing.) In return for becoming a 'Friend' you will receive priority booking, 10% discount on ticket sales before May 1st, your first 'Friends' invitation, to whet your appetite, to the Festival Preview evening on November Wednesday 19th at the Georgian House Hotel, and of course, the satisfaction of supporting one of the most inclusive events in Haslemere.

The organisers hope to continue to offer events of interest to 'Friends' between festivals, which will be held on alternate years. The cost is £25.00 p.a. for families, couples and individuals, or £20.00 p.a. by standing order.

To become a 'Friend of the Festival ', please contact  
Diana Serman: 01428-654 681 or [r-d-serman@haslemere.com](mailto:r-d-serman@haslemere.com)