



HURSTPIERPOINT SOCIETY

Charity No. 263520

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1997

THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON MONDAY 17 MARCH AT 8 PM

The Annual General Meeting will be held in the Parish Room, and our Speaker this year will be Mr Andrew Hair, Project Coordinator of the Hurst 2000 Group. His title will be "Hurst 2000, Your Village", fairly self-explanatory, and he will be helped by members of the Youth Group whose cooperation and inspiration are vital for the future positive development of our village.

This annual survey of our activities also provides residents with a chance to air their views on local matters, controversial or otherwise. In addition we need new committee members, and people who are willing to take on the functional jobs of delivering newsletters, collecting subscriptions and enlisting new members. If you have names to put forward for the committee, please submit them, after obtaining the consent of the person named, to Mrs Anne Cole, at 7 Hassocks Road, by Friday 28 February 1997. Wine and snacks ~~will~~ be served in the course of the evening.

In the Open Space Magazine, of Autumn 1996, there is a very useful tip. "A parish council was keen to get more local people to attend its annual meeting. So the day before the meeting they sent two men out to measure the village green, put little white sticks in it. etc. The next evening the village hall was packed for the AGM, everyone wanting to know what was happening to their green. The chairman said 'nothing is happening to it, but thank you all for coming tonight.' It shows the affection in which the green is held. And it's one way of getting people to attend a meeting."

THE SOCIETY'S CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of the Society has been under review during the year. Drawn up in the Sixties its outline of the Society's objects was so restrictive that it was felt a review would be advantageous. Mr Lindsay Keith has chaired a committee consisting of Geoffrey Bowles, Clive Forster and Anne Cole, and having received a model from the Charity Commission and suggested minor alterations, mainly to encompass the donating of funds to various good causes, the committee hopes to submit the revised document to the Annual General Meeting for approval. We are very grateful to Lindsay for all the work he has put in.

SPECIAL AUTUMN MEETING

A comfortably packed meeting at the Scout HQ listened attentively to the views of the three prospective Parliamentary Candidates, Messrs Black, Flight and Goss, ably chaired by Lindsay Keith. Questions ranged widely - levels of Parliamentary salaries, water supplies in the area (a constant and evasively answered query), transport and Gatwick enlargement, housing versus vine growing in the Sussex countryside. to name but a few. Mr Goss's suggestion of an airport in the Channel seemed to be compounding rather than solving a series of problems. A vote of thanks was proposed to the candidates and the chairman.

VILLAGE MATTERS

Mrs Vivienne Ansell has volunteered to help Mrs Anne Cole in typing, letter writing and general secretarial matters and it is hoped that this will help to share the rather onerous load.

Don't forget the Photographic Competition that we hope to mount at the St Lawrence Fair - 'Aspects of the village and its immediate neighbourhood in all weathers and seasons'. No limit is placed on the size of initial entries. though the conventional print size of 150 mm x 100 mm is a guide. Winning entries will be enlarged and displayed at this year's Fair.

Stepping Stones on the Village Garden. We have obtained an estimate for taking up the existing stones, supplying additional slabs to fill the gaps and relaying, and hope to encourage the PCC to accept the offer in the near future, or it will be withdrawn.

MID SUSSEX DRAFT STRUCTURE PLAN

About 70 people and a strong representation from your committee went to the December meeting held by the District Council in the Primary School. After a slide presentation by the Mid Sussex District Council representatives some fairly hostile comment was made. This was largely as a result of a recent suggestion by the PCC about a possible extension of Trinity Road. The residents closely involved were assured that this was no part of the proposed Draft Structure plan, and more equable discussion ensued. Some interesting anomalies were revealed: the road to the Scout HQ is the wrong side of the tree - some glitch with the developers of the new housing there; in order to have further parking space near the HQ an extra small housing development has been granted planning permission: although Water Authorities are consulted over proposed housing there does not seem to be an exact balancing of present resources against possible future demand, sources will be found, although where and how is far from clear: there is a strategic gap between Hurstpierpoint and Burgess Hill, a green crescent for which additional land was bought, but does it have any legal force? It has the force of the Town and Country Planning Act, but could be threatened if a greater demand for housing were imposed by the County Council. All of which requires us to be constantly and exceedingly vigilant and to try to anticipate and forestall erosions of Village liberties before they occur.

As comments on this plan have to be sent in by the end of February, a small sub committee consisting of Lady Barnes, Jan Salter, and under the chairmanship of Tim Nelson, has been empowered to draw up the Society's response. Residents should write to MSDC with their views as soon as possible. In our view it is unnecessary to encourage further economic development in West Sussex as expansion at Gatwick will automatically enlarge local economic growth, and inviting new business will only produce new inward migration, more housing and further deterioration in the countryside.

PLANNING

Harper and Ede site at Ubley's Farm: the Society will watch out for detailed plans on such a key site.

Dene Hospital: Planning application for 25 houses. This was refused by MSDC, and the applicants are going to appeal.

Holy Trinity Church Hall: the Society was alarmed at the possible increase in traffic and noise, but has had a reassuring reply from Mr Ian Nelson.

Community Shop. 78 High Street: we supported the continuing use as a shop, and the application to change to office 'use was refused by Mid Sussex District Council. The new owners plan to appeal against this refusal.

St George's Home: The saga continues. The Westminster Care Group has withdrawn its offer. This presumably leaves a gaping hole in the County Council's Social Services budget and an enormous opportunity for the village to try to influence the course of future events. An 8 acre area lies behind the present boarded-up building. part of it beyond the built-up designated village area. Previous planning permission - now lapsed - was for a purpose built community home for 48 elderly residents, whose bedsitter rooms would allow them to retain some of their furniture and their independent activity, while communal dining and reception facilities gave them support when necessary. Also trained staff could provide medical and nursing care in a small hospital unit. Your committee, at a recent meeting, agreed that we should pursue this project outline, incorporating ideas and practices from similar retirement complexes in New Zealand and other places, while seeking to keep the total number within reasonable bounds. This was set out as our suggestion for the site, rather than presenting a totally negative outlook (which would be rapidly steamrollered by 'Market Forces' and/or the County Council). It was agreed to approach Age Concern for their suggestions; equally well society members can produce ideas at the Annual General Meeting. Setting these ideas on paper also falls to the committee under Tim Nelson, while Geoffrey Bowles will stress the green belt zoning of the land in letters to MSDC, WSCC and the Parish Council.

CHANCTONBURY RING

Having climbed up and walked round Chanctonbury Ring only two days before the great storm of 16 October 1987 I was very interested to read an article by archaeologist Mark Taylor in Tree News of Autumn 1996, from which the following account has been derived.

In 1760 Charles Goring, great great grandfather of the present owner of the Wiston Estate, Mr Harry Goring, planted a ring of seedling beeches on top of the hill, near Steyning, nearly 240 metres above sea level. "Such was his love of trees that he carried up bottles of water to nurture the seedlings in dry weather - no mean achievement as any visitor climbing the hill today will confirm" (and long before any restrictions imposed by hosepipe bans). Before this the hill was open chalk grassland, surmounted by the earthwork rampart of a small prehistoric enclosure. "Within little more than a century the Ring had come to be seen as a potent symbol of the Downland landscape, instantly recognizable over a wide area of surrounding country, and even visible as a landmark to sailors." Then came the storm of 1987. More than 100 of the beech trees were blown down, and in January 1990 another storm took out a further 30, already weakened by the first storm. As there was only a shallow covering of turf and topsoil (in some places about 10-15 cm) over the chalk, the root systems fanned out shallowly in a wide root plate, and consequently had little to hang on to.

Some steps had already been taken in anticipation of the need to replace decayed, vandalised and wind damaged trees by 1977, but first a programme of archaeological recording was planned, made more imperative by the successive storms. The whole of the Ring and the ground within it is scheduled as an ancient monument, and protected under the 1979 Act. "Traditionally, the earthwork rampart at Chanctonbury has been interpreted as an Iron Age Hill Fort, but there are signs that it may go back further and date to the late Bronze Age (c1000 BC), having perhaps a ceremonial rather than a defensive function." Archaeological evaluations in 1989, and two following years, found the foundations of a further building in addition to the 2 structures, remains of temples, already known; a rectangular room was attached to a structure not unlike a 50p coin in outline. Of great interest was the discovery of large quantities of pig teeth and bones, possibly suggesting a shrine associated with a cult venerating the animal. Added to the number of finds of small bronze boars over the years in East and West Sussex, including one recently at the nearby village of Washington, there is a strong possibility that these point to a

cult of the pig point to a cult of the pig in late Iron Age and Roman times. The trees which survived the storms are still at risk of falling, either singly or collectively in a further turbulence. Having grown as part of a clump they are naturally spindly and somewhat isolated. But there is some hope of the revival of a hilltop tree clump. "Fencing off the replanted areas from public access, and grazing animals has had a noticeable impact. The greater openness to light plus the longer grass inside the enclosure has encouraged natural regeneration of tree seedlings to supplement the newly planted trees." However it is not just the watchful eye that is needed recent summer droughts illustrate another problem. We need to emulate Charles Goring's dedication in keeping his seedlings watered in 1760!

HURST 2000 UPDATE

TRAFFIC

As a result of the very successful Exhibition held in the library during December the Group has found a Traffic Engineer who is to expand and cost their ideas. A Grant or sponsorship is being sought to fund his activities. The various suggestions have been prioritised as to effectiveness, time taken, popularity and cost. The first steps to try to relieve some problems are hoped to be: the re-marking of Trinity Road car park to provide more parking; for safety reasons to reverse the direction of the current one-way system at the northern end of Western Road; and, on a trial basis, widen the pavement near Hamilton Lodge Interiors.

COMMUNICATION

A summer family event and other activities are under consideration to coincide with the St Lawrence Fair, and investigations for Millennium Celebrations are in hand.

HIGH STREET

The Business Directory has now been published - did you realise there are over 260 businesses in the village area?! A Public Trade Fair is being organised to boost local economy - please support this worthwhile venture. Watch the Press for further details. A "High Street Appearance" Study is under way.

LEISURE

Consultants are working on a feasibility study for renovating and extending the provision of facilities at the Village Centre. The Group are trying to achieve their aim, namely that the Village Centre should be the heart of the village, be attractive, and available for maximum use by villagers.

MUSEUM

Do go along to their next Exhibition to be mounted in the Library from 15 February to 1 March. Entitled "Pesketts - A Village Tailor".

YOUTH COUNCIL

Talks are being held with the Parish Council about broadening facilities and activity opportunities in the village. There are about 500 'young people' in your village who need your support. A Red Nose Day event is being organised for 4 March in the Scout HQ. Discussions about turning the Youth Council into a Charity are nearly complete.