



The  
Yateley  
Society

# Newsletter

Issue 120 April 2015

[www.yateleysociety.org.uk](http://www.yateleysociety.org.uk)



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## Message from the Chairman

It gives me great pleasure to be writing my piece for Jo Mercado's first newsletter as editor. As members who attended the AGM in February will know already, Jo was elected as a Trustee and therefore onto the Executive Committee, having already volunteered to take over as Newsletter Editor from Chris Willis. In welcoming Jo I also express my thanks, on behalf of members, to Chris for keeping the newsletter going through last year, and to Mike Mann who had been a Trustee for two years. We will not be losing their services altogether, I am glad to say, because Chris will still be managing the distribution of the paper copies of the newsletter and Mike continues as Leader of the Conservation Volunteers.

The EC remains at eight members, and I will repeat what was said at the AGM - that we have room for up to four more, and anyone who can offer their services or skills and time to help in the management of the Society would be more than welcome to join us. We have the authority to co-opt, so election is not essential until next year's AGM.

I welcome recently joined members and look forward to seeing you all at this year's events. Assistance with arranging the programme would be much appreciated; as you will read elsewhere in this issue, the Society intends to have a stall at this year's May Fayre on the Green.

I was extremely disappointed to miss the March meeting due to a severe bout of sciatica which has rendered me housebound for over four weeks. Even more so, although highly delighted of course, when I learned that Abby's presentation of old photographs had an audience of over 50, which surpasses our average attendance of 15 and eclipses even recent AGMs for popularity.



I must express thanks to Abby for suggesting and arranging this talk and discussion, which developed from interest being expressed, largely by non-members of the Society who have been following our Facebook and Twitter pages. As we have only recently taken steps to expand our involvement with these forms of social media in an attempt to improve our communication this has been justified by the interest and the outcome at this meeting. It is very rewarding, particularly if it is sustained at subsequent meetings.

I am not yet sure how many of the new faces on 19th March have now joined or are intending to join the Society but if you are one of them then I welcome you most warmly. I also invite you to give us your ideas and suggestions for future activities. "New blood" is just what we have been crying out for!

Roger Coombes



## Message from the Editor

Welcome to the latest Yateley Society Newsletter! I am thrilled to have this opportunity to contribute towards the town where I grew up, and grateful to be elected on to the Executive Committee. My thanks to Chris and the rest of the EC for the warm welcome and support, which has helped me adjust to this new role.

Moving here from Middlesex as a quiet, seven year old was a daunting experience, but thanks to Yateley's friendly community spirit, my family quickly settled into our new life, and remained here ever-since. Now thirty years later, as I slowly begin to loosen the apron strings, it feels surreal to watch my son making his way through the same schools I attended and enjoying the same local events that I enjoyed as a child (such as the annual May Fayre on The Green).

Becoming a part of the Society has already taught me a lot about Yateley's history and conservation areas; I look forward to extending that knowledge further while supporting the Society in its charitable objectives, preserving our local heritage for future generations.

Joanne Mercado

### Volunteers Needed

Each year, the Society attends local fayres in order to introduce ourselves and our work to the public.

The May Fayre will be held by Yateley Lions on Monday 4th May, and we are seeking volunteers to help out on the stall. Whether you can help out for an hour or longer, we are grateful for any supporters.

To volunteer, speak to Abby at the next meeting, or email [contact@yateleysociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@yateleysociety.org.uk)



*It wouldn't be Mayday without a visit to the May Fayre on The Green (as demonstrated by this early photo of the editor!)*

### Get Involved

If you have any articles, notices or even photographs that you would like to share in future newsletters then please get in touch with the editor.

Alternatively, if you have any ideas or suggestions for future meetings then please let us know.

Contact details can be found on the back page.

### Changes to monthly meeting

As of April, the Society will meet on the **fourth Thursday** of the month instead of the third. It is hoped that this change will make it easier for people to attend, as the previous date would clash with other meetings.

Venue and time remains the same. A timetable of events is on the last page of the newsletter.

## March Meeting

*It was standing room only at The Red Cross Centre on 19th March, where Society members and non-members gathered to delve into the archives of Yateley's past.*

We were treated to a slide show kindly organised and presented by Membership Secretary Abby Roper. Historical photographs gave the audience an idea of how Yateley village looked from the late 19th century through to the post-war period when the population dramatically increased. They revealed previous businesses surrounding Church End, such as the original post office, where Forge Court now stands, and the White Lion Coachhouse, which housed the Reading Bus. We traced our way along Cricket Hill towards the A30 (a quiet road in those days due to the popularity of the railway!) and through Frogmore to 'The Old Tin Church' at Darby Green. Peter Tipton and Philip Todd revealed some interesting postcards, sent from Yateley Villagers, and images of children standing outside the Village Hall School.

The audience were encouraged to share their own photos and memories of Yateley; Paul Simpson, who unfortunately was unable to attend, provided us with photos of the Nissen Huts that were used as military housing during the second world war. David Ashworth shared some remarkable discoveries having researched the Stilwell family and their home of 'Hilfield'. Rare photographs revealed internal and external aspects of the property, and the devastating burnt-out remains following an arson attack.

It was exciting to see such a high level of interest in Yateley's past, encouraging people to explore their local history and inspiring new members to join the Society.

*JM*



***Hall Lane Junction***

**Postcards and booklets containing historical facts of Church End, Cricket Hill and Yateley Hall, are available to purchase from the Yateley Society. Contact details are on the back page, or visit our stall at the Yateley May Fayre.**

### Planning Matters

There are a number of major planning applications currently in the system which affect Yateley and its surrounding area; (1) The Urnfield, Yateley – 150 homes, (2) Hawley Park Farm, Hawley – 126 homes and (3) Marsh Lane, Eversley – 120 homes.

The current position is as follows:-

- The Urnfield. The application has been rejected by Hart District Council; we await any further action/appeal by the developer.
- Hawley Park Farm. Following local MP Sir Gerald Howarth requesting that the Secretary of State calls in the application, following approval by Hart District Council, it has been decided by the Secretary of State not to call in the application. The Section 25 holding notice has been withdrawn.
- Marsh Lane. Still a preliminary application. We await the outcome of any discussions with the Council.

These applications are just part of the picture throughout Hart and illustrate how much our open land is under pressure to build new houses without any thought of the effect it will have on the local communities.

### YATELEY COMMON – WHAT DO WE WANT IT FOR?

The origins of heathland go back more than four millennia to the tribes which cleared and grazed the poor sandy soils. By the time of the Norman Conquest, these areas of poor acid heath were considered as 'waste of the manor'. In the 10<sup>th</sup> C the land, part of the Manor and Hundred of Crondall, was gifted by King Edgar to the Cathedral of Winchester and up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> C it was still owned by the church and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England who were Lords of the Manor. In 1927 the Commissioners, under the Law of Property Act 1925, gave rights of access to HCC owned parts of Yateley Common under s193 of the Act. The 'waste of the manor', which became known as 'common land', was thus protected by law and Yateley Common was registered under the Commons Act 1965 and subsequently the Commons Act 2006. How this protection works (or doesn't work!) is another story.

Yateley Common comprises over 1000 acres of land and forms part of a rare internationally protected habitat known as lowland heath. Because it has evolved as land managed by man lowland heath is not natural habitat and will degrade if left unmanaged. Symptoms of degradation of lowland heath are the invasion of young birch and other trees, gorse, bracken and coarse grasses. Eventually, if not managed, the open heath will revert to densely packed woodland as seen today over much of the common. Such woodland shades out the low growing heathland flora requiring a warm, dry soil, and the fauna which relies on such flora.

In 1951, 513 acres of the common, was sold to Yateley Town Council comprising of an area from Reading Road to the western boundary of Blackbushe Airport. YTC subsequently sold it on to Hampshire County Council in 1964 for £450. (This too is another story.) One of the conditions of sale was that this part of the Common should be maintained in perpetuity as a public open space and that Yateley Town Council be associated with its management. This resulted in setting up the Yateley Common Management Committee.

## PLANNING & CONSERVATION

This lowland heath, known as the Thames Basin Heaths (TBH), of which Yateley Common is part, was classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA) in 2005 under the EU Birds Directive 2009/147/EC for the conservation of wild birds namely the Nightjar, Dartford Warbler and Woodlark, all being endangered ground nesting birds.

While the SPA provides additional protection for this part of Yateley Common there is a conundrum in-so-much that while protection as common land guarantees public access, the aim of the Birds Directive and SPA is to achieve the opposite by minimising public access to the birds breeding sites. Limiting the number of people accessing the common would, however, prove difficult with the amount of new house building identified in the old, now revoked, South East Plan, therefore, a set of avoidance measures was drawn up to protect the TBHSPA. An Appropriate Assessment was carried out and concluded that new housing development would have an adverse impact, therefore, developers would have to comply with a number of avoidance measures. These are (1) the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green-space (SANG), (2) access management and (3) habitat management. Habitat management is long term and whether these avoidance measures work is another separate story. These avoidance measures apply to a number of exclusion zones around the SPA which are summarised as follows:-

- No house building in the SPA area.
- 400 metres exclusion zone around the SPA. There is a general presumption of no housing development unless it can be shown by Appropriate Assessment there is no adverse impact on the SPA.
- 400m - 5km zone of influence around the SPA for all housing developments. Avoidance strategy to be achieved by the provision of SANG, 8Ha of SANG per 1000 population.
- 5 - 7km zone of influence around the SPA for all housing developments in excess of 50 homes. Avoidance strategy may be applied; to be assessed on a case by case basis.

It is clear, therefore, that protection under the EU Birds Directive is important, not only for the Common, but very importantly for the number and type of housing developments within the zone of influence; which is nearly all of Yateley. However, one important part of the revoked South East Plan has been retained, and that is NRM6 - the avoidance strategy pertaining to the TBHSPA. It is Hart Council's view that any significant increase in the number of new homes above that in the revoked South East Plan would require a new Appropriate Assessment and this is embedded within their current Interim Housing Policy. As that housing total is likely to be surpassed by any new major unscheduled housing development in Hart, a new Appropriate Assessment needs to be carried out. But will it? (Another story)

Many have made their views known with regard to grazing and fencing as a means of managing the Common in order to return it to its former heathland habitat. Some are against and some are in support. The cut off date for making representation was March 27<sup>th</sup>. However, we expect the Planning Inspectorate to announce a date for a public inquiry in the near future so the debate will roll on. This leads us back to the title question, what do we want the common for, unlimited recreation or the protection of endangered birds? Can we have both? Perhaps the public inquiry will address the whole issue.

**Barry Moody**

26<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

**WHAT'S HAPPENING?**

*Our monthly meetings are held at 7.45pm on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Red Cross Centre, Monteagle Lane, Yateley, GU46 6LU (Unless otherwise stated). Members and non-members welcome, admission free. **Please note that there will be no meeting in August.***

Thu 23rd April	Our first meeting on the fourth Thursday of the month. We hope to welcome members and non-members who have previously had to miss out on our previous regular meeting slot.
Mon 4th May	May Fayre on the Green. We have a stall at this event, so please visit us and show your support. It will also be an opportunity to meet committee members, to share ideas and get the latest news on Society events. If you are able to help on the stall please get in touch.

**'WALK THE PATH'**

The Blackwater Valley Conservation Trust (BVCT) still have places left for their 10 - mile walk along the river from Sandhurst to Swallowfield on Sunday 26th April.

They also have a Circular Walk around Fleet Pond, led by Clive Andrews, on Saturday 18th April.

For further details, and to register for these events, visit their website: [www.bvct.org.uk](http://www.bvct.org.uk)

**EXERCISE THE BODY AND CONSCIENCE!**

*The Conservation Group normally meets at Wyndhams Pool, Cricket Hill 10am - on the last Sunday of each month.*

*Everyone is welcome to join in the fun.*

*The aim is to help the Yateley Rangers in all sorts of tasks in the upkeep of Yateley Common.*

*To find out more, please call Mike Mann on 01252 877741*

**Membership Renewal**

In order to carry on receiving the benefits of being a member of Yateley Society, please make sure that your renewal is up to date. We are a charitable organisation and therefore rely on your support to continue our work. Thank you.

**Society contact details:**

Email: [contact@yateleysociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@yateleysociety.org.uk)

You can also contact us via the website, [www.yateleysociety.org.uk](http://www.yateleysociety.org.uk) or our facebook page.

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