

WEYBRIDGE SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 9^H APRIL 2015

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It is my pleasure to present the Chairman's annual report for the year just ending. This is my second year as Chairman and I would like to thank Richard Marshall as vice chairman and Carolyn Pennycook as Secretary in particular for their support. However as I am sure you will all know Carolyn died suddenly in early February and as the Society we send John and his family our deepest sympathies. It would be wrong of me not to spend the first part of my report paying tribute to Carolyn's immense contribution to the Society.

Carolyn was Secretary for 14 years, an outstanding contribution which was based on her fondness of Weybridge, the place and the people. She had lived in Weybridge since she was 11 and had developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of the area which helped the Society and of course her role in the Weybridge Museum. Everything that Carolyn did was carried out with care, passion and when needed a great sense of humour; she made the task of being Chairman less onerous which for me as a relatively new member of the Society was invaluable. Carolyn's contribution to the Society and Weybridge is unlikely to be matched for many years. A number of members have suggested that some form of permanent tribute to Carolyn should be located within Weybridge; this we will explore with John at an appropriate time.

In my report for last year I mentioned that our formal complaint about the handling of the second Morrisons' application to Elmbridge had been rejected by the Council but that to Surrey was still on-going. In June of last year Surrey concluded that our complaint had no basis, this was despite the significant omissions and errors in its assessment. Surrey did not comment on the errors that had been identified by the Society, it merely stated that it did not undertake an audit process. Subsequently a complaint was made to the Local Government Ombudsman; recently the LGO stated that it will not pursue the objection as no injustice has been suffered by the complainant that is us Weybridge Residents. The lack of injustice is based on currently there is little or no added congestion created by the store. We believe that this is due to the store under trading to the levels that the original forecasts and modelling were assuming. The Ombudsman's decision is somewhat bizarre as in our view as the injustice was caused at the time of the assessment not what has happened in reality. As you will appreciate this is not the outcome we were targeting but there is probably little more we now can do formally. However it does still raises concerns as to whether there will be improvements in traffic flow assessments undertaken by Surrey if another major development is planned. As an example, although not in Elmbridge, the proposed development of 2100 dwellings on the Old Wisley airfield is such a development which would have knock-on effects on the infrastructure within Weybridge. The Society is watching carefully the developments on this application; we are in contact with Cobham Heritage Trust with whom we have a common interest.

Several other notable Planning Applications have arisen in the year; I would like to mention two, Heathside School and the Honda Garage. The Heathside Application related to an increase in the number of students; there were many objections (including one from the Society) to the increase on the basis that the current congestion and safety concerns in

Brooklands Lane and the surrounding area have not been addressed. Promises were made by Surrey and the School to examine the possibilities of using access through Brooklands College to ameliorate the congestion but little has come of this. In March the West Area Planning Sub-Committee rejected the application on the basis of an incomplete travel plan. The Society, together with many of the objectors, welcome the expansion of an excellent school but only when the congestion and safety concerns have been properly addressed, a requirement that was placed by the Planning Inspector nearly 10 years ago and has never been addressed. I would like to say thanks to Peter Vey for all his effort involved in responding to this application.

The second major application was for a 5 storey block of 51 flats plus two retail outlets on the Honda garage site in Queens Road. This was opposed by the Society on the grounds massing, insufficient parking and its effect on local infrastructure. The Application was rejected by WAPS in March mainly because of massing and its large residential density compared to the norms in Weybridge. We expect the developer to submit an alternative proposal and will be keeping a close watch on developments. These are only two of the planning applications which have been assessed by the Planning Panel throughout the year. The excellent work undertaken by the Planning Panel continues and I would like to thank the chairmen of the planning panels namely Peter White, Geoff Banks and Raymond Spary for all their efforts.

We continue to improve communication with our members through increasing our email contact list; this enables us to send brief news alerts to some 200 addressees in a fast and cost-effective manner. We do hope those that receive these eblast messages find them useful. We think they are valuable and would welcome more emails contacts that we can add to our list. Some 30 of our members now receive their Newsletter electronically; if any of you wish to do likewise please contact a member of the Committee. I would like to say a big thanks to Steve McCarthy our webmaster who has continued to work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure its smooth operation; Steve, many thanks for your efforts. The Society's Twitter account continues to keep people informed of local events and news; many thanks to Sally Bean for managing the account for the Society. We have continued to produce 4 newsletters per year and I hope you all agree to a high standard. This year Joe Hall and Carolyn have been undertaking the editor's role, so thanks to Joe for his efforts. I would like to thank Willie Lister for all his efforts in guest editing the piece in the winter edition that covered 35 years of the Society's history- a monumental task so once again thanks Willie. Our next edition is being guest edited by Trevor Tarring assisted by Haley Jenkins; thereafter Haley will be continuing as Editor of the newsletter. We extend a warm welcome to Haley who has just agreed to become Editor for the Winter Edition and beyond. Her youth will be invaluable in helping us to target membership growth amongst the younger generations of Weybridge.

Anne Lindsay has ensured that the newsletter is delivered to all members; she continues to be expert at attaching sticky labels; many thanks Anne for all your efforts. Associated with Anne's activities we must not forget the newsletter distributors- many thanks to all of you for help in this task. In many ways you are the "face" of the Society to our members and the committee welcomes any feedback that you may have as a result of delivering the newsletter. Together with all members of the Society we would welcome your assistance in helping to recruit members especially from younger generations.

An important part of the Society's activities are its events and we must thank Annette Davies for all her efforts in organising them. In October we had a talk on "Weybridge Rowing Past and Present" given by John Turnbull Vice-President of Weybridge Rowing Club and

Chairman of Weyfarers Rowing Club. The talk highlighted the rich history and association that Weybridge has with rowing on the Thames by both male and female crews. In November the Society supported a World War One Evening organised by Heathside School, it featured a talk by David Rose a local historian with a special interest in the Weybridge/Guildford Area in WW1. In January this year Julian Pooley, Head of Public Services at the Surrey History Centre gave a fascinating talk on “Preserving the Past for the future” which covered how Surrey looks after its valuable artefacts. Many were surprised by the vast range of documents housed by the Centre on 6 miles of shelving covering over 900 years of history. Annette is planning some more events this year so please make sure you keep a look out for notice of these events in the newsletter or via eblast emails.

Many of you will know that last year we unfortunately had to cancel the “Summer Party” this was due to lack of numbers wishing to attend. I know that many who had signed up for the Party were disappointed but the number wishing to come was not sufficient to make the considerable amount of effort and expense in setting up the event worthwhile, especially as we always wish to donate any surplus to charity. I am pleased to say last years’ experience hasn’t daunted Anne Lindsey’s enthusiasm to hold the party and this year it will be held on Sunday July 5th. Please make a note in your diaries.

On behalf of the Society Tony Davis continues to lead the Society’s involvement with the Thames Gate-Wey project. Just to remind members the aim of this project is to improve the environment at the confluence of the Wey and Thames rivers. This includes a new picnic area, landscaping and a new landing stage which have been completed and eventually an improved car park opposite the Minnow; it has been proposed that this area should be called “Weybridge Point”. There is now a reasonable possibility that the car park improvement phase of the project will receive Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding later this year which would enable the project to proceed. We extend our thanks to Tony for his enthusiasm and considerable patience in keeping this project moving forward. Let’s hope next year the project will be well underway.

This year we also gave our usual prizes to Heathside School, details can be found in the Annual Accounts.

Later in tonight’s meeting we will be hearing a short update on the progress of becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation or CIO. I would like to thank Richard Marshall for his significant effort in producing the “Objects”; these cover the aims of the Charity and as you will hear later very much mirror the current objectives of the Society. Richard has also spent much time ensuring that the “small print” meets the required standard. We have had useful discussions with Cobham Heritage Trust who were a registered charity and recently changed to the new CIO status. I would like to offer a special thanks to Richard for all his hard and diligent work on this initiative.

I am pleased to say that all the other current committee members have agreed to be put forward for election to the committee. On your behalf I would like to thank the current committee for all their time and effort during the year, without them the Society would not function. In particular I would like to mention Trevor Tarring our minutes’ secretary and John Hanafin our Treasurer who has done an admirable job despite having a significant eye problem; we wish John a speedy recovery.

I mentioned last year the need for additional committee members; the sad loss of Carolyn makes this need even more urgent. The Committee would welcome additional members

joining the committee and with one eye on the future we would like to see younger generations joining our ranks not just the committee but the society as a whole. I am pleased to announce that we have had one success in recruiting for the Main Committee. Sue Ells, a Society member for some years, has been an observer at the last couple of Committee meetings. Sue has significant experience in non-executive and consultative roles; currently she is a non-executive director of Ashford and St Peters NHS Foundation Hospitals Trust and has worked for local authorities in the past. As such Sue will augment the current committee's background and expertise and I am very pleased that she has agreed to stand for the committee. However we still need more members on the committee with an emphasis on recruiting from the younger generations. One of the key reasons for becoming a CIO is to attract significant bequests; major increases in the Society's funds would enable us to get involved in larger projects and we would like to ensure that any such projects are for the benefit of all generations in the community. Attracting members from younger generations onto the committee would enable us to balance the total needs across all ages within the community.

For the coming year there is one initiative that I would specifically like to mention. Many of you will know that the Boundaries Commission is minded to reduce the number of Elmbridge Councillors from 60 to 48. The preliminary consultation process has been completed and the Boundaries Commission is now considering the evidence put before it with a view of presenting its draft proposal at the end of June for public consultation before a decision is made at the end of September. Local elections on the basis of the newly adopted wards is planned to take place in 2016. The Society will be undertaking a full review of the Commission's proposals.

Finally, thanks to all our members for their friendly support and open discussion.

Dave Arnold

Chairman Weybridge Society