Why our river needs some TLS

Society Chair, Barry Judd welcomed the 50 or so members and friends to the last meeting on December 8, and introduced Jason Debney, Co-ordinator of the Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS). Jason explained the background to the TLS which started in 1994, and covers the Thames area from Kew to the middle of Hurst Park. The aim now is to increase this area to Weybridge, ending at the old Wey bridge and Town Lock of the River Wey Navigation.

The area around Richmond Hill was known as the Arcadian Rural Paradise, and the royal palaces along the Thames, with the other large houses and estates connected the landscape for the nobility. Gradually others enjoyed the rural Thames, but over time the ‘rural bliss and escape from the hustle and bustle of city life’ was lost. However, in 1902 local spaces were protected, and the landscape connected, providing as Jason believed, the best parks and river landscapes in the world.

The TLS is not just a vision but a day to day link with Environment Agency, National Trust, and other funding partners, 180 local groups, supported by a grant of £76,000, plus £3,000 from Surrey County Council and a generous £7,000 from Elmbridge Borough Council. There are three members of staff, and £20m has been raised since 2000. A staggering 160,000 volunteer hours have been recorded.

A survey of each area is undertaken in a similar way to a Conservation Area Appraisal, and strategies for implementing the proposals are detailed. An example of TLS work is the opening of the view from Richmond Park to St Paul’s Cathedral – some 10 miles away. Towpaths are managed, litter collected, and even the Thames and jetsam left by full moon high tides are gathered. This work has resulted in an 85% reduction in litter and is undertaken by volunteers, probation prisoners and vulnerable young people. Vegetation is managed but not ‘manicured,’ trees are cared for, potholes filled, street lights painted, scrub cleared, hedgerows layered and planted. Biodiversity is managed in different habitats – first by monitoring, then researching, and then managed. The zebra mussel from Russia is an example of a problem causing invasive species – 5 years ago there were none, but recently in an area of one square metre of river bed 500 zebra mussels have been removed.

Please turn to Page 2

Blacksmith brothers retire

Tony Davis, the champion of the project on which he has been working for more than five years writes that he has spoken with the Environment Agency regarding the on-going maintenance of the new moorings and the plans to improve the car park by Weybridge Ladies Amateur Rowing Club, also the bend by The Minnow (formerly The Lincoln Arms Hotel) in Thames Street.

The Environment Agency (EA) has undertaken planting of trees and shrubs along the toepath between this car park and the next one where the picnic area and landscaping has already been undertaken. This work was through Tony’s lobbying of Elmbridge Borough Council and the EA on behalf of Weybridge Society, which resulted in the eventual excellent outcome of this now much used area. Stunning views of the river have been opened up, and the hedges around the entrance from Walton Lane have been reduced to improve sight lines and safety.

Near the new moorings a large notice board has been erected, and it remains to be seen if Weybridge Society will be able to display notices there – or if it will be purely for Environment Agency and bank-side information. At the time of writing there are two directional notices – both pointing towards Reading one in each direction. It appears however to be a recycled notice board from further up the Thames – very welcome in Weybridge nevertheless.

Tony hopes to recruit volunteers from Weybridge Society to do some maintenance work, such as cutting back scrub and litter picking along our stretch of the towpath, once or twice a year. Please let him or the Secretary know if you would like to help.

Do you have a contribution for inclusion in the next newsletter? Maybe you or your friends are involved in a local activity that may be of interest to our members. Email your contribution with photos if possible to: walkerman2000@mac.com. Starting with WS in the header field.

YOUR NEXT AGM

The Annual General Meeting of Weybridge Society will be held on Wednesday, April 13, 2011 at 8pm in The Hall of Christ the Prince of Peace Church off Portmore Park Road, Weybridge

Please make a note of this date in your diary as this newsletter serves as the formal notice of the AGM. The agenda, minutes of the previous AGM and chairman’s report will be presented at the meeting.

Following the business part of the meeting, members are invited to submit ‘Any Questions’ to the officers, committee and panel members present.

If you have a detailed question to which you would like an in-depth reply, please submit it to the Secretary in advance of the meeting. Also, any nominations for committee and panel members to serve on the main committee may also be submitted to the Secretary in writing before the meeting. In addition to the main committee which is elected at the AGM, there are panel groups for education, transport, planning and marketing and the chair or lead representative of each panel is a member of the main committee. All those currently on the main committee are willing to stand again – Barry Judd, Derek Lindfield, Andrew Davis, Carolyn Pennycook, Maggie Alderman, Anne Lindsay, Raymond Spary, Richard Marshell, Annette Davies, Trevor Tarring and Joe Hall. Officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary) are elected at the first committee meeting after the AGM from the members elected then. Individual responsibilities such as membership, distribution, events, etc, are also confirmed at this meeting.

Would you like to join the Weybridge Society?

By joining us you will be able to add your voice and weight to our campaigns. The Society has been going for over 50 years and during that time has gained the respect of borough and county councillors. We support new initiatives and guard against inappropriate development. We also work closely with Neighbourhood Watch and the police to ensure a safe and secure environment for all who live and work in Weybridge.

Please contact any member listed on Page 2 for details.

Spring 2011

Hon. Patron - Michael Aspel, OBE

Your Residents’ Association – Working to keep Weybridge a pleasant place to live
Thames Landscape Strategy

Continued from page one: 15,000 were found! Himalayan Balsam, an extensively invasive plant, is cleared by volunteers. A rare species, the ‘German hairy snail’ was discovered, and is now protected and monitored. Bird boxes are erected, and it is hoped to build a sand martin bank which will be monitored by web-cam. Bats are protected and monitored, and street lights affect them and a project to put up ‘bat friendly’ lights is proposed.

TLS runs education sessions in schools and on the river, and encourages community events. Public access is important – walkers, runners and cyclists are catered for with signage and interpretation boards, improved paths and car parks.

Jason talked about climate change and how the River Thames has been affected in the last 10 years, and also the Lower Thames Strategy and flood management (a project to which Weybridge Society had made representations) specifically in respect of the proposed widening of the Desborough Cut.

The suggested improvements to Desborough Island were touched upon, please see page 7 for Weybridge Society members’ comments.

All the strategies which had been and continued to be implemented in the Kew to Hurst Park section of the Thames were anticipated for the Hurst Park to Weybridge area, and a report would be drawn up by summer 2011, when it would be published for consultation. Jason explained that involvement of local groups and volunteers was essential for the success of the Thames Landscape Strategy in the Weybridge area, and asked that his contact details be published here: www.thames-landscape-strategy.org.uk.

TLY Holly Lodge, Richmond Park, and telephone: 07761169343.

The lively questions session that followed confirmed the enthusiasm which Jason’s excellent illustrated presentation had inspired. Tony Davis, the lead member of Weybridge Society’s Thames Gate-wey project offered to meet with Jason ‘on site’ and walk the area, and this he was pleased to accept. Barry Judd thanked Jason and pledged the Society’s support for the Thames Landscape Strategy in Weybridge.

Carolyn Pennycook

Remember women on March 8

When I suggested a piece to mark the International Women’s Day (IWD) centenary on 8th March, there was a number of friends but I think it relevant to Weybridge. My heart sank. Not one campaigner KT13 woman sprang to mind. Happily the wonderful staff at Elmbridge Museum kindly offered to rescue (thank you) producing four, two of which feature here.

For those of you thinking “IWD? Huh?”, IWD was conceived in the early 1900s as a holiday and in a few, the equivalent of Mother Sunday. You can mark the day by giving the important women in your life a hug.

The Mimosa flower, a symbol of International Women’s Day small gift or flowers or wear a Mimosa buttonhole to show solidarity with women in the World still fighting against hardship and exploitation.

scene set, on we go:

Frederica, Duchess of York:

On moving here I assumed ‘The Monument’ was a war memorial when of course it remembers a lady who lived exercising every Christian virtue and died universally regretted.

Frustratingly the inscription says nothing about what moved people to mark her passing in stone. Frederica’s obituary gives a clue. At her funeral 4 mothers on horseback and 40 more led the procession.

Having no children of her own, the Duchess had paid to support and educate the children of others less fortunate than her. At her stately home (Outlands Park Hotel is on the site now) she threw a party each Christmas and on her birthday to which the people from the (village that Weybridge then was) came to feast, dance and leave their troubles behind.

Amy Gentry:

Born in 1904, Amy of course had grown up in a boat holding on Hamble Island. Women were not allowed to row competitively so there was no real outlet for Amy’s talents, already very apparent when she took part in a regatta in 1914. When a “Victory” regatta was arranged in Weybridge, as a bit of a novelty act, the organisers decided to stage a Ladies Fours race. The rest, as they say, is history. Amy drummed up not just one crew but four. A Ladies “wing” was duly added to the Weybridge Men’s Rowing Club and in 1925 Weybridge Ladies Amateur Rowing Club was formed.

The Duchess was known here to do justice to the clubs achievements or, indeed, to Amy’s who was an undefeated single skulls World Champion. One of the clippings I liked that mentioned Amy was ‘rowing down a river’. Keeping up her breathing and develop her lungs, Amy took up singing and became so good at that she won a gold medal in a singing competition. I would like to have met her.

Clyde Dyson

You are what you eat, digest and absorb

DID YOU know that as you age, your levels of stomach acid are likely to drop? Stomach acid is vital for digesting food; defending against bacteria; and absorbing certain nutrients. An excess, or more commonly a deficiency, can be linked to many issues including indigestion, osteoporosis, constipation, low energy, poor skin, body odour and brittle nails.

If we do not have enough stomach acid, food may not be digested properly and can trigger an overgrowth of bacteria or food intolerances, which can manifest as bloating, wind and stomach cramps.

Indigestion is often attributed to excess levels of acid, but more commonly, levels are low and subsequently trigger heartburn and burping or bloating after meals. Bad bacteria thrive when stomach acid is low and Helicobacter pylori becomes increasingly common as we age, can cause inflammation and is strongly associated with stomach ulcers.

Stomach acid is necessary for the absorption of iron, calcium, zinc, vitamin B12 and poor absorption of such nutrients can impact the health of our bones, muscles, immune system.

Amanda Cleghorn is a qualified nutritional therapist who can suggest simple ways to test your stomach acid, as well as dietary and lifestyle measures to try to maintain appropriate levels. Based at Weybridge Natural Therapies www.weybridgenaturaltherapies.com, Amanda is available to discuss any health issues and like Andrea Lecky, registered osteopath, is offering a £5 discount to members for a private consultation. Please see www.figtrenutritiation.co.uk or call 0800 433 4523.

Amanda Cleghorn, Nutritional Therapist

Michael Aspel on the radio

OUR patron, TV and radio personality Michael Aspel appeared on Brooklands Radio recently, talking about his life and career and played some of his favourite tracks.

The Weybridge resident, whose TV credits include This Is Your Life and Antiques Roadshow, began his broadcasting career on radio, as an actor in Children’s Hour. He went on to present a daily morning show on Capital Radio for nearly 10 years in the 70s.

Michael, who was awarded the OBE in 1993 for services to broadcasting, said: “Brooklands Radio does a great job and I’m more than pleased to be a guest on the station. It’s 55 years since I made my first broadcast, and to be back at the mic so near home will be a real treat for me.”

Brooklands Radio is an online station and has been streaming online, after failed attempts to win an FM community radio licence for North Surrey.

to listen in log on to: www.brooklandsradio.co.uk

What our members do

MANY of you may know of the tremendous task Dr Dave Brown recently set himself, which was to cycle 100,000 sponsored miles for the Sam Beare Hospice and Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research. You will, no doubt, read about his challenge in the local press.

He himself, was diagnosed with cancer and endured successful treatment at St Peter’s Hospital. That was 13 years ago.

His amazing 100,000 mile goal was achieved just before Christmas and his fundraising figure amounted to more than £18,000, which was donated equally between the Sam Beare Hospice and Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research. Dave hopes to raise even more.

Dave also helps the Weybridge Society too, by delivering the newsletter near his Oaklands home, and he will probably be a familiar face to our members in that area. Good luck with your fundraising Dave.

www.weybridgesociety.org.uk

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From Mickey Mouse to Gone with the wind

With the future of Weybridge Hall in Church Street currently in the balance, Carolyn Pennycook looks back at the history of this building nestled in Weybridge town centre conservation area.

HE QUEEN’S Parade of which Weybridge Hall was built in 1899 by Horace Thompson, and in 1920 a cinema named ‘The Kinema’, being converted from two unused shops.

In 1927 it was refitted by WG Tarrant, the well known local builder, to seat 500 people. In 1929 it was sold to the County chain of cinemas and renamed King George’s Cinema, in 1937 the name was changed again to The County, a name which survived until it closed in the 1950s and the building was purchased by Walton and Weybridge Urban District Council to provide the public hall it is today.

Films shown at the official opening of the Kinema in June 1920 were ‘Across Canada with the Prince of Wales’ and Mary Pickford in ‘Rose du Barry’, tints of French grey embellishments.

The first ‘talkies’ were shown there in 1927 and the film was reputed to be ‘Rose du Barry and two tints of French grey embellishments’.

The last ‘talkies’ were shown in 1927 and the last film was reputed to be ‘Gone with the Wind’. The Children’s Club was called The Mickey Mouse Club.

In its later life as a village hall it was regularly used for events such as horticultural shows, lectures, jumble sales, film society meetings, dances, concerts and even blood donor sessions. In the 1980s Weybridge Society through the enthusiasm and hard work of member Jim Buckley brought the cinema back to life by having film shows on a number of occasions, showing up-to-date movies such as The Mission with Robert De Niro and Jeremy Irons; Back to Yesterday, Never Say Never Again (then the latest James Bond release); The Shooting Party – and for the children ‘Buggles’ and a morning Children’s Film Show. Tickets cost £2.50 for adults and £1.00 for children, and the Society even supplied soup and rolls to help ward off the winter chill!


Carolyn Pennycook

FOLLOWING a successful seminar last spring, the Surrey History Trust (SHT) is currently undertaking an audit of plaques and other historical commemorative material.

I know of several plaques attached to Weybridge houses. Eastlands in Brooklands Lane has four, including one to the actress Fanny Kemble; Another slightly battered blue plaque to E M Forster, who wrote there between 1904 and 1925 which adorns a house opposite the Ship Hotel, in Thames Street, Weybridge.

There is also another blue plaque in Oaklands Chase dedicated to Emile Zola.

The Elmbidge 100 project may well produce plaques, either temporary or permanent to commemorate famous citizens in significant locations.

Plaques do encourage a sense of heritage and interest to the passer-by, resident or tourist.

Once the Surrey History Trust audit of plaques is complete we shall turn our attention to promoting new ones through local societies and individuals. The trust has produced some guidelines which we hope will be taken into consideration.

It is our view, which is also shared by English Heritage, that plaques should be readily seen from the public path or road, without having to venture onto private property.

I would be very grateful if members could send me details of any other plaques that they know about, particularly in the Weybridge area.

My e-mail address is: heather@thew hawkers.co.uk

Heather D Hawker
Planning applications

Weybridge Nort & South

The complicated history of 21 planning applications and 3 appeals on this narrow site of the old bakery, adjacent to the entrance of Weybridge Hospital is complete. Residents are now moving into the houses which are still behind the tall fence.

20&20A CHURCH STREET
This site, formerly the playing fields of Wallop School, has been defined as Strategic Open Urban Land (SOUL). There have now been 8 applications and 1 appeal for houses to be built on this land.

We are pleased to inform you that the seventh application for 5 houses, was refused by the inspector on appeal. We now expect the preferred application for 4 houses offering 70% of the private land for public use to be completed.

UNIT 4 ST. MARTINS COURT YORK RD.
This latest two applications for the development on this site were refused by Elmbridge Council. The Weybridge Society took an active roll in speaking at the appeal in support of the objections raised by local residents. Unfortunately the slightly less dominant building was permitted.


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CHURCHFIELD HOUSE (ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE) (2009/1319, 2299 2010/1410,1411)

Weybridge Society has had significant success in limiting the impact of the proposed signs on this important Grade II listed building. The detail of the final design of the signs is now under discussion between the owners, Weybridge Conservation Committee and the Weybridge Society.

31-33 RADNOR RD (2008/0861, 2627 & 2010/0387, 1454)
The residents of Radnor Road have opposed all proposals for this site, the latest of which is to replace a commercial building with 8 flats and a house. Weybridge Society also objected that such a development would not fit in with the street scene and would create problems with parking. The latest application has been refused by the Elmbridge Council and is now the subject of an appeal.

22 MAYFIELD RD (2010/1688)
This application is for a detached two storey building with additional rooms in the roof space containing 6 flats with basement parking. The Weybridge Society has objected to the above application in support of the very large number of local residents. In our opinion the proposed development is not only out of character with the road, which comprises a variety of large and small family residences, but also is over dominant, being effectively a 3 storey structure and also has potential flooding issues.

The application has been refused by the Elmbridge Council but is now subject to an appeal.

This Cottage backs on to the River Wey and the Conservation Area. The application is for a detached two storey house with basement, integral garage and additional rooms in the roof space. The Weybridge Society objected on the grounds of the bulk, height and massing as well as the underground voids containing sealed living accommodation and thus reducing the flood plain.

HAND & SPEAR OLD HEATH RD (2010/3112)
The Planning Panel will be objecting in support of the local residents who are concerned about this application which is to install 3 Mobile Phone antennas on the chimney of this listed building.

St. George’s Hill

Planning Application 2010/3010 Heatherley St. George’s Road

Another application has now been submitted to develop this site.

The proposal is to build a pair of semi-detached houses, and two detached houses.

We have objected to this application on the grounds that we believe proposals are out of character with the other houses on the south side of the road and are too tall and large for the location, and would be to the detriment of the street scene. The proposals represent an overdevelopment of this small site.

The previous application 2010/1212 for a similar proposal was refused by the council on the grounds that the proposals represented a “cramped overdevelopment of the site.

An appeal against this decision has been registered by the applicant, and we await the Inspector’s decision.

Ray Sparry
Geoff Banks

Elmbridge: The Beverly Hills of England

People living in Elmbridge might do well to forget the old adage about the grass being greener on the other side of their neighbouring borough’s fence. The borough has, for the third year running, been ranked as the number one place to live in Great Britain.

The recent Quality of Life Survey, carried out by Halifax, took into account local performance across a number of different indicators, like the housing market, labour market and standard of healthcare and education.

It was found that 95 per cent of residents in towns like Walton, Weybridge and Esher reported to be in good health and the area’s life expectancy is higher than average at 81.4 years.

School qualifications in the borough were also found to be above average, with 77 per cent of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A-C, compared to 74 per cent for the rest of the country.

Leader of Elmbridge Council Councillor John O’Reilly said: “I’m absolutely delighted Elmbridge has topped this poll again.

“All the council’s hard work in enhancing the borough in collaboration with our residents and businesses will have no doubt contributed to this fine result.”

The area has been dubbed England’s answer to Beverly Hills, with residents such as Rolling Stones bassist Ronnie Wood, Tottenham goalkeeper, Peter Crouch and Jamie and Louise Redknapp all calling the borough home. Robert Moran, chief executive of the borough council, believes it is Elmbridge’s “unique mix” which makes it such a desirable and prosperous place to live.

He said: “It’s a place people want to move to and, once here, they want to stay. Elmbridge residents have high expectations and as a local authority we try to meet these in all that we do.

“Elmbridge offers a unique mix of towns and villages, a wealth of common land and open spaces, good motorways and airport access, all within a comfortable 30 minute commute of London.”
The allotments are owned by the Weybridge Land Charity and are situated in the centre of Weybridge. Plots are let to people residing in the KT13 area. Owners grow a large variety of vegetables and fruit to help feed their families. Children are also very enthusiastic and to encourage them we have regular little competitions for the largest pumpkin and the tallest sunflower, they get some incredible results – the largest pumpkin produced on site so far was 68 kilos! We encourage local gardeners to join our association, Weybridge Allotment Holders and Gardeners Association (WAHGA) for a small fee which enables them to purchase seeds, composts, seed potatoes, onions and garlic for spring planting, from our Trading Hut at competitive prices.

We do have a waiting list for plots, if you live in KT13 and would like to be put on the list please call in to our trading hut at the top of Curzon Road on a Saturday or Sunday morning between 10am and 12 noon. We operate a ‘Use it or Lose it policy’, it’s unfair to have unattended plots when people are waiting.

Unfortunately we sometimes suffer from vandalism and stealing so local Community police keep an eye on the site. Stealing produce from plot owners is a despicable act as the growers put a lot of time and effort into their crops.

We are proud to have two sponsored plots for the use of Walton Leigh School. The project was originally started by Carillion and RHS Wisley in 2005 and we are grateful that other companies have since participated in making the plots even more user friendly.

Walton-Leigh School is dedicated to Special Needs Students, many of which have Profound Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). We are fortunate that Wates Living Space (affordable housing contractors) together with their colleagues from Ground Construction Limited (GCL) elected to use their Community Day to help pupils from Walton-Leigh School both at the school and their Allotment plot at Churchfields.

A large patio area was laid at the school which makes life a lot easier for wheelchair students and staff. A shed and benches were also painted in lively colours which have brightened up an otherwise dull area. The students enthusiastically assisted in the rubbering down and painting activities.

At the allotment four more large Raised Beds were made and filled with good quality soil. The areas surrounding the beds were paved to enable easy wheelchair access for the students and dedicated staff. Again, the students thoroughly enjoyed helping with all the jobs. All are now looking forward to planning and planting their new beds.

Head Teacher, Linda Curtis, is very pleased that her students are interested in growing fruit, vegetables and flowers, which they will harvest and take back to school.

Linda can see the results in the school Tech Room where the students are taught to prepare and cook their home grown produce. Also they occasionally prepare a meal for the staff and make cakes and pies for Parents’ Evenings and other school events.

Walton Leigh has an after school Food Club where students make all sorts of dishes to take home to their parents. They also make splendid Christmas Cakes at the festive season. To crown it all they have produced a Cookery Book and all the recipes have been successfully made in school. The Book costs £5 per copy and all the proceeds go to the school.

The school has a Gardening Club which is held on the first Sunday in the month (weather permitting) where parents are encouraged to bring their children down to the allotment to help weed, plant and harvest.

At the end of last year a team from Office Network spent a busy day in frightful weather digging, mowing, painting and planting with the help of some of the students from the School. All the bulbs they planted are now popping up.

The Community Day Support help is greatly appreciated. We have found that the participants get a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction from supporting Walton Leigh School and the appreciative staff and students.

We have a visit from St. James’ School in Weybridge every year, usually around 60 year one and two children. They seem to really enjoy the visit and go back to school with sticks of rhubarb or a bean and any other treasures they collect on the way round. We are always impressed with the questions we are asked. They also have their own allotment at school.

The Churchfields website is www.Weybridgeoasis.org
Helen Mills – Plotting in the women’s Auxiliary Air Force

Helen Mills was the guest speaker at the Society’s meeting on December 8. Introduced by Rev. Derek Lindfield, Vice Chair, Helen described how she had joined the Women’s Junior Air Corp, based in Walton where she learnt aircraft recognition and morse code and even the inevitable ‘drill’.

She joined the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in 1940s London. Helen’s extensive collection of memorabilia that was exhibited in the hall, included her service cap, which she modelled! skirt and silk stockings, and her RAF badge – there was no WAAF badge. Each WAAF had two pairs of shoes. Once kitted out she had a three-week posting to Morcambe, which entailed more marching drill, injections and lectures, and billeting with a seaside landlady.

Eventually Helen became a ‘plotter’ at Hornchurch, plotting aircraft with hostile planes identified by black and yellow (wasp) markers, whilst the red and white markers were the friendly aircraft. After Hornchurch closed in 1943 her main time was spent at Uxbridge, 60 feet underground, where the information gleaned via Radar was transmitted to the Operators’ Table, allowing the fighter pilots to see the enemy and engage.

The plotting facility was operational 24 hours a day all through the war.

Visits by ‘scrambled eggs’ (so called because of the extensive gold braid on their uniforms) all important senior officers including Air Chief Marshall Hugh Dowding, Keith Park, and Lee Mallory. (Keith Park was a New Zealander and recently his statue occupied the 4th plinth in Trafalgar Square). Winston Churchill also visited – and all watched the plotting operation.

Today there is a memorial at Uxbridge, above the plotting room – still an MOD property in the care of English Heritage, and visits can be made. It is remarkable that the 1939 air conditioning still works!

After VE Day, Helen was redeployed to Gloucester, and demobbed. Helen said she had enjoyed the camaraderie of the service, and having been born in Walton, later moving to Weybridge, she hadn’t experienced ‘the outside’ and her war service had taught her a lot.

In his vote of thanks, Derek Lindfield cited the cost in human life the war had caused both in the air and on land, and how we owe a great deal to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Their service was built on teamwork, discipline and trust.
Delightful Desborough Island is a tranquil open space lying between Walton Lane and the River Thames, with access by two bridges over Desborough Cut, in front of Weybridge, Walton end, and out by the Weybridge end. It is popular, especially with dog walkers and fishermen in the summer, but possibly not so well-known as it deserves.

In mid-December Elmbridge Council issued an outline of ideas on their ideas for improving the area, such as:

- Scrub clearance for enhanced views
- Path improvements to provide a circular route
- Better signposting
- Wheelchair accessibility
- Carefully sited benches with an invitation to interested residents to make comments.

The background to this project is that sometime last year the Council learnt that our water company, Veolia, had some money in their Environmental Improvement Fund that could be made available for such work, so they decided to make a pitch for a grant.

The pitch was submitted by the Elmbridge Countryside management team, with Veolia expressing an interest, but responding, reasonably enough and foreseeably, that they would like to have some feedback on what residents thought before they made a decision.

Hence the public consultation with an extremely short timetable (we had no knowledge of the plans until Jan 6th) inevitable because of the need for Veolia to make a financial decision by a fixed date. As I understand it, the consultation response, with some 80 views expressed has been, according to Council reports, largely positive, although I know from recent personal conversations that some dog walkers are concerned that the ‘wildness aspects’ of the area will be spilt.

The pitch should have been submitted by January 22nd, but the outcome is unknown. Provided the Veolia response is positive the Countryside team will presumably firm up their thoughts, which, hopefully, will be publicised.

Coincidentally, the January 19th Weybridge Society talk was given by Jason Debney, was most encouraging, TLS has been operating very successfully for a number of years so they are very experienced in building community involving and recruiting volunteer labour. It is to be hoped that these two projects can be linked together, so that Weybridge residents get maximum benefit from the limited available funds.

Do you have fond memories of Desborough Island? Why not put pen to paper and share them with our members?

I AND my family have been enjoying Desborough Island since we moved to Weybridge in 1977. Despite the fact that it has a reputation, we have never had any problems, although there are obviously dubious activities that go on particularly in the summer. There is no doubt that single ladies are wary about walking on the island, and they probably keep their misgivings under wraps! There is also a continuing problem with fly tipping!

The Council has given its proposals to improve certain aspects. All I would say is that I would not like the island to be made into a park – it has a lovely wildness which I and many others enjoy. Improving the footpaths would be appreciated, but it should not be made too ‘twee’.

The other issue I have is that the planting by the boundary with the shooting club done a few years ago did not include any blackthorn which gives us the birds sloes! Please can we have some in the Council’s programme.

Tony Sutton

Weybridge Island improvements

See the Olympics in Weybridge for free

AN OLYMPIC cycling event has been confirmed in Surrey. The Olympic Cycling Road Race will be coming through Weybridge during the Games in July 2012. For many residents this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to witness a worldwide event unfold on their doorstep. With over One billion people watching the Games, and the race route spending over 50% of the race within the Surrey borders, it is a great opportunity to showcase Surrey to the world.

The Olympic Cycling Road Race will be a race of 150 men and 70 women covering up to 240 kilometres of terrain. The race will start in London and go a loop of Surrey speeding through Weybridge before returning to London. With riders reaching speeds of nearly 90 kilometers per hour through Weybridge’s roads it will quite a spectacle.

Have your say

FOLLOWING an invitation which was sent to those who are on the Elmbridge Borough Council’s Residents Panel, I attended the ‘Have Your Say’ meeting on 15 November 2010 in the Walton Centre. Before the meeting proper started residents had the opportunity to speak informally to the 25 or so local councillors who attended.

Robert Moran, Chief Executive of Elmbridge Borough Council introduced the three speakers – Cllr John O’Reilly, leader of the council, Peter Williams, Chair of the Surrey Police Authority and Surrey County Councillor, Ian Lake. He then invited the ‘Who put their case’ prior to opening the discussion and questions session.

Robert Moran gave an overview of how the current financial state was affecting and likely to affect Elmbridge into the future. He explained measures that had already been taken to reduce council expenditure including job sharing with other authorities, reducing hours of some officers and not replacing staff that had left. He said, the continuing unfunded details of the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review were likely to be an ongoing challenge.

Councillor O’Reilly put the Council’s case by explaining how the council tax was divided between Surrey County Council, Elmbridge Borough Council and Surrey Police. Elmbridge is the largest Borough in Surrey, with the lowest ‘per head’ grant, and of the funding available £12m was budgeted for ‘must do’ services, whilst £10m was available for services ‘ERC’ chose to do. An amount of approximately £450,000 was earmarked for the ‘Soul to Street’ strategy to improve Walton High Street, and Cllr O’Reilly stressed the value and importance of volunteers. Cllr Sue Bailey said Surrey was the largest contributor, and he described Surrey as the ‘Golden Goose’ for the country.

The County Council spends £1m a day on care for the vulnerable.

Peter Williams explained the work of the Surrey Police Authority and its funding from Council Tax and Government. Questions from the floor were varied and comprehensive, including grants to the voluntary sector; responsibility for drains, drainage and gullies; increased activities for Centres for the retired; business rates; S50+ group and the provision of better services to the community; parking restrictions and difficulties; library service; Elmbridge Local Committee access; footpath and traffic responsibilities for Weybridge, especially for the partially sighted and handicapped.

When a question of development was raised, including the ‘affordable’ element, Cllr O’Reilly drew attention to and complimented the work on the site in Cobham which had been going on since 1997. He explained measures that had been taken to ensure local involvement and comment on the Core Strategy and Local Development Framework in its various stages of public consultation. In closing remarks Cllr O’Reilly encouraged those present to keep on ‘Having Your Say’ and added that he hoped that similar meetings would be planned in the future.

Carolyn Pennycook
It's always someone at the end of the line

What ever you've done, whatever life's done to you, Samaritans are at the end of the line to listen and support you, Anytime.

Weybridge Samaritans has been in your corner since July 1964 when it was established as a registered charity, to provide confidential emotional support to people in distress in the area. That was nine years after Chad Varah, a vicar in the City, had founded Samaritans in response to the suicide of a 14-year-old girl in his parish.

This girl, like many others, had no-one to turn to when in despair and Chad felt that a safe place for her might have helped. At the time, suicide was illegal in the UK.

We opened in the Sunday school annexe of the Queen’s Road Congregational Church and early callers tell amazing stories of having to walk down a narrow, uphill passage between the annex and the church’s kitchen to fill the kettle for tea.

In those days the centre was open daily from 1 pm to 11 pm after which volunteers went home and the telephone exchange was notified of a volunteer’s home number and he or she would expect to take calls from home, through the night.

Those early Volunteers gave people a safe space to talk about their feelings so they could find objectivity and perhaps a way forward. The confidential emotional support services offered by Weybridge Samaritans today are based on those same principles.

Our vision is a world where fewer people die as a result of suicide and we continue to believe that by providing a safe space for callers to explore their feelings without being judged, and without being given advice, they can find objectivity and possibly a way forward through their difficulties.

Not everyone who calls us is suicidal. Many are struggling to cope with the pressures of life such as bereavement, depression, loneliness, loss, job pressures, redundancy, money worries, relationship problems, illness, gender confusion, addiction.

When Weybridge Samaritans was opened by founder of Samaritans, Chad Varah, many of the initial volunteers were members of the church. Samaritans today is not a religious organisation. Our volunteers come from all walks of life.

In 1965, the bursar of St Georges College, Father Aidan Rossiter, enabled Weybridge Samaritans to move to a dedicat ed centre in the grounds of the College. The new centre was open 24 hours a day and was our home till 1982, when it became necessary to move to our current location in Ladder Drive, Addlestone, because of the widening of the road outside the College to accommodate traffic travelling to and from the M25.

Today, 64 years later, the centre is manned by around 100 volunteers of all ages – 18 years and above – and our coverage extends to Elmbridge, Spelthorne and Runnymede. We provide support by phone 01932 844 444, in person to callers to the centre in Ladder Drive, or by email and we will shortly be introducing texting as well. Last year we received 16,500 callers.

When our volunteers are not providing listening emotional support, they are attending village fêtes – like the Weybridge Society Thames-Side Festival last month – visiting Feltham Prison, prisoners are 7 times more likely to take their own lives than an average person, giving emotional health talks to community groups and schools and colleges or fundraising.

Fundraising is an ongoing activity and our volunteers and friends are always thinking up new events to raise the £22,000 a year needed to keep the branch open and supporting callers 24/7. Popular events include our ‘Paws for Support’ annual sponsored dog walk which takes place in Windsor Great Park in May.

We are always looking for more volunteers. To be a volunteer, you have to be able to listen without passing judgement. You will be given full initial training and support.

If you would like more information please contact us on 07948 448 966 or by email on: weybridge@samaritans.org.

If volunteering as a listener is not right for you, but you are interested in getting involved as a fundraiser please do get in touch. We’d be delighted to hear from you.

ACCESSORIE: A Story of Superficial Splendour and history in a handbag

A new exhibition of fabulous frippery is running at Elmbridge Museum, Church Street, Weybridge until 8 June 2011. Come into the Museum’s closet and be seduced by the exquisite costume collection on display. See all manner of accessories – shoes, fans, hats, gloves, purses, watches, jewellery and parasols.

Discover some of the embellishments fashionable men and women have priz ed across the centuries. Amongst the Museum treasures you will find a Roman brooch, a princess’s slipper, a gold mourning ring, Edwardian evening shoes and a veritable clutch of handbags.

If you thought that accessories were simply frivolous and fun, then think again. ‘Accessorise’ reveals how these small possessions tell significant stories about society: shifting gender roles, social moves, conspicuous consumption, materials and manufacture. You really can read history in a handbag.

Carolyn Pennycook

New Sam Beare CEO faces up to challenges

WOKING Hospice and Sam Beare Hospice in Weybridge have appointed a new Chief Executive Officer.

Nigel Harding took over as CEO in November 2010. The appointment came at a time when the Hospices had just completed a very turbulent 18 months. They had been forced to suspend day care services and launch an emergency appeal, which thankfully had seen the local community and Weybridge Society support in many different ways.

Nigel explained, “Since starting work here I have been struck by the commitment of people to their local Hospice and due to this support we are starting 2011 in a much stronger position.

In fact we have just reopened Day Care to the same level as before the appeal which is a wonderful way to start the year. But of course as a charity we are not out of the woods yet as there are still many challenges facing us.”

Nigel added “We still don’t know how government cuts will affect us and how much funding will be available to us in 2011, which is both worrying and frustrating. There is so much more we could and want to do for our community, we want to expand our services so that we can support more patients in their own homes, we have the skills to do this and the will.”

The Hospices are currently operating at maximum capacity on the inpatient units and their community teams are at full stretch. Future plans are to develop their Hospice at Home services, which could help avoid many unsatisfactory admissions into the NHS Hospitals.

Nigel summarised: “My aim is to build on the tremendous support that we have received during 2010, which will allow my specialist team to expand on the services that we offer to the community.”

Nigel grew up on Dartmoor and trained as an Actor. Working in the Performing Arts he previously worked for English National Ballet, London Symphony Orchestra and was instrumental in converting Soho Theatre Company from an old synagogue. He is a keep-fit enthusiast, and has also completed 5 marathons.

Carolyn Pennycook

Carolyn Pennycook

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Elmbridge Museum is open on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 11am to 5pm and from 10am to 1pm, and 2pm to 5pm on Saturdays. It is closed on Thursday, Sunday and Bank Holidays.

Family Fun Days are on the second Saturday of the month, when activities are organised – children 10 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

For further information, visit www.elmbridge.gov.uk/museum, call 01932 843 573 or email ecbmuseum@elmbridge.gov.uk