



The Farnham Society

Chairman's

Report to Annual General Meeting 2022.

If progress is measured by the form of communication at an Annual General Meeting, then we are succeeding having communicated by email in 2020, Zoom in 2021 and now in 2022 being able to meet again, albeit with a remaining need for sensible precautions.

We were all saddened by the death of our President Sir Ray Tindle who has held centre of the public stage in Farnham for many decades. He was the benefactor, guide, encourager and financier to many individuals and organisations way beyond what was public knowledge. Indeed, many of his good deeds were hidden as he deliberately avoided publicity. His personal support to the Society came in many forms and again given without fuss or publicity. He will be much missed.

Another year has passed with some changes at Executive Committee level with the departure of Josh Goddard who has taken up a senior post with The British Museum, Helen Payne our Membership Secretary and finally Paul Fry, both for personal reasons. The good news is that later in the year Helen was able to return and has taken on some of her previous tasks. During Helen's absence we benefited from the support of Marianne Golding, and we remain grateful to her for taking on a wide range of responsibilities. Yolande Hesse has joined the Committee and is chairing the Planning Committee. Ella Cattell has also joined the Planning Committee. John Slater who last year finished a seven year stint with the Executive Committee has now stood down from the Planning Committee but has continued with his role as our representative on the important Farnham Conservation Area Task Group. John has done much for the Society over many years and his agreement to continue in this role is appreciated. It was also a delight that Michael Blower's name now appears on the Farnham Wall of Fame in yet further recognition of his unflagging support for the town of Farnham.

Much thought has been given to the proposed changes to the infrastructure of Farnham and this resulted in a detailed submission to the Farnham Infrastructure Board and full details can be read on our website. For those wearied by many years of consultation and then failure of action, I believe the long wait is likely to end. Whether to everyone's satisfaction is another matter. It boils down to the fact that we are based on a medieval road system designed for driving cattle and overlaid by several A class roads without parallel roads which could be used to deflect traffic from the centre. It is apparent that a traffic free centre of Farnham is not going to happen. The possibility of a road from upper Castle Street to The Hart and possibly then on to West Street would have enabled the end of Castle Street to be virtually traffic free and become a real town centre but that appears to be getting a financial thumbs down. We are therefore left with wider pavements and narrower roads which if sensibly applied and by using high quality material, would at least make the centre of Farnham more pedestrian friendly.

We continue to focus on preserving the heritage of our Conservation Areas and there is a real need to remain watchful. Even a casual glance will detect poorly maintained shops with garish sign and tarmac patched paving. Looking a little closer and it will be found that estate agents hammer signs into the walls of protected buildings and other contractors appear to be unaware or ignore sensible rules which are there to protect these magnificent buildings. We



The Farnham Society

have referred this to Farnham Town Council and Waverley Borough Council drawing attention to these problems. We have also drawn attention to the fact that whilst neighbouring planning authorities use the protective power of what is called Article 4 Direction to prevent ugly intrusions into conservation areas, they have not been invoked by Waverley Planning even where it could have been applied.

David Wylde leads the research into whether the area behind the old Swayne and Jones building can be designated a conservation area. It is full of interesting dwellings and has a strong historical connection with the Bishops of Winchester.

Our interest continues in the method of selection and the distribution of the significant funds generated by the Community Infrastructure Levy. These funds are intended to compensate local people for the adverse impact of a local development, and it is important that these funds are correctly allocated to improve the infrastructure to compensate for the inconvenience caused. At present the process is not transparent and we would welcome being consulted for a view before allocations are made.

Under the continuing leadership of Sue Farrow, Heritage Open Day proved to be another resounding success and attracted compliments on the brochure and the smooth organisation which even overcame the problems associated with the sad death of Her Majesty the Queen. The wonderful support from the many volunteers and property owners ensured that virtually all commitments were met. Yolande Hesse leads our Planning Committee and continues to maintain a watch on problematic planning applications and as previously reported, the need to maintain standards in the conservation areas. Richard Hunt continues to build on our library of interviews with interesting Farnham folk under the title of In Conversation and all can be accessed on our website. John Cattell continues to produce immaculate accounts and fights to improve our investment returns, which is a problem shared with many organisations. Simon Bradbury is effectively our webmaster, social media contributor and editor in chief of our newsletter to name but a few of his many involvements. Helen Payne's return has eased some of the pressures taken on by the Trustees. It is impossible to capture all the responsibilities taken on by Committee Members but without their enthusiasm and flexibility to change, it would be impossible to achieve the ongoing objectives of the Society.

With thoughts of the approaching Coronation, we have offered to finance the manufacturing and the erecting of a town beacon and Farnham Town Council are in discussion with Waverley Borough Council on a possible site in Farnham Park. This beacon would also be available for use at other public gatherings in the future.

The success of preserving Tice's Meadow as a bird sanctuary was a great achievement and in recognition of the efforts of the Trustees, we have provided funds to have floating islands made to provide protection for nesting Terns from hungry predators. In addition to preventing commercial exploitation, the national reputation of this bird sanctuary is drawing many visitors to the area with the associated beneficial effect on local businesses.

In preparing this report and reflecting on the main areas of activity, my thoughts kept returning to the fact that none of this would have happened without the individual efforts of your Committee Members. All inspired by a love of Farnham and the belief that much is being albeit quietly achieved and encouraged by the strong and ongoing support of the membership.



The Farnham Society

Finally, I am confident that your Society is in good order and well prepared to respond to the many changes which will inevitably affect Farnham over the coming months. I hope that you have found this report helpful in recalling some of the events which have occurred since my last report and that you will be able to join us at our Annual General Meeting at the Memorial Hall on the 25th. November.

Best wishes,

Alan Gavaghan.