

# The Amberley Society

The aim of the Society, is the conservation and improvement of the amenities, character and interests of Amberley and its surroundings

## Newsletter May 2013



Next meeting

Saturday 18th May, 2013

### **Amberley - A Geological Gander**

Guided tours of the village starting from Wisteria Cottage, East Street, looking at stones and fossils with

**Roger Birch**

#### **Amberley — A Geological Gander, with Roger Birch**

All those who enjoyed Roger Birch's popular Amberley Stone talk last October will be pleased to learn we now have the opportunity to accompany him on a short guided walk around the village. As many will remember, Roger's enthusiasm for the subject is infectious and, as a professional teacher and lecturer, has great skills in making the subject both interesting and entertaining. He has made several visits to Amberley in preparation and has discovered a myriad of fascinating stones and fossils to show us. As a change from our usual Friday evening meetings, the 'Geological Gander' tours will be held on a Saturday. At least two tours will be run, as smaller groups will be better and more manageable. It will be necessary to let me know of your intention to come and your preferred choice of time. **Please let me know as soon as possible.**

The options are: 10:30am – 1pm, 2pm – 4:30pm, 5pm – 7:30pm. There will also be a £4 charge, payable on the day. Once I know who would like to join us, I will organise the groups and confirm final details with you.

#### **The Black Horse**

Most of you will have now heard the good news that the Appeal against the refusal by the SDNP/HDC to allow change of use has been dismissed by the Inspector. We welcome his decision and the conclusion to be drawn from his report that, with the right business model, the pub could have a viable future. The next steps towards any re-opening of the Black Horse are complex and much work has been going on behind the scenes to achieve this as soon as possible.

Determination of the latest Listed Building planning application is still pending. Thank you to all who supported the Society, both with letters of objection and attendance at the Appeal hearing. Please ask me if you wish to see a copy of the Appeal report.

#### **Sussex Wildlife Trust donation of a Black Poplar Tree**

Black poplar is the most endangered native timber tree in Britain, with only 33 mature examples remaining in Sussex. They favour damp soil conditions, such as found on the Wildbrooks, and there is an example down by the village pond. The native Black poplar requires very specific conditions to reproduce naturally. In order to conserve the species a restoration strategy has been developed for Sussex involving taking cuttings from mature trees, which have been propagated as stools by the Royal Botanical Gardens at Wakehurst. From the stools, cuttings of young trees are taken. The Sussex Wildlife Trust has kindly given us a young tree about 1.5 metres tall. As mature trees grow to a height of around 30 metres, it was important to find a suitable location and I am pleased to report that our tree has found a good home down on the Wildbrooks in the garden of new member, Neil Hart, at Pine Cottage, Rackham. It has now been planted and fully protected against cattle and deer. Neil is delighted and has promised five-star treatment with plenty of TLC. We hope it establishes to become a distinctive sight and we thank both the Sussex Wildlife Trust and Neil for their generosity.

## South Downs National Park Authority visits

Amberley has recently received two visits by the SDNPA.

On 24<sup>th</sup> April senior members of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) visited the South Downs National Park. Amberley was included in the tour and I was asked to speak outside the Black Horse about our rural community, the 'special qualities' and issues with the Black Horse. Defra visitors included the deputy director - landscape and outdoor recreation, and also the head of protected landscapes. Others present were the director of the English National Park Authorities Association, chief executive SDNPA, chair of SDNPA, area managers of SDNPA and the South Downs National trail officer.

A few days later, on 30th April, members of the SDNPA, together with the chief executive, directors and several officers spent the whole day in the village as part of their Member Development Programme. The event, which we were invited to coordinate, was organised by Nigel James and Simon Mockford, both of whom came to speak at our AGM last February. This latest visit was entitled *Amberley – A Thriving South Downs Community*.

The day started with an overview with illustrated talks in the Church Hall by the Amberley Society and Amberley Parish Council. A walking tour around the village followed, with eleven stopping points where various speakers gave further detail, concentrating on the Park's 'Special Qualities' and items identified in their forthcoming Management Plan. Topics discussed en route included history; environment; thatch and vernacular building materials; Amberley artists, past and present, including Amberley Village Pottery; local businesses, tourism and accommodation; Croft fence restoration; Drewitt's Farm development; Amberley Village Tea Room; and Amberley Village Stores and Post Office. After a short break for lunch in the garden of Wisteria Cottage in East Street, the tour continued to cover affordable housing at Newland Gardens; the school and the Black Horse. The speakers all performed admirably and thanks are due to Tina Bishop, Jason Charman, Michelle Clifford, Richard Howell, Grahame Joseph, Michael Joseph, Guy Leonard, Caroline Seaton, Averil Sessions, Carolyn Shaw, Joe Thompson, Geoff Uren, Colin Woods and Sue Wood.

It was a lovely sunny day and all went well and to schedule. In a letter to the SDNPA chief executive and directors, one of the members wrote:

*"What a wonderful programme Nigel and his team put on for us today together with an impressive Amberley input. The village does seem uniquely to meet all seven 'Special Qualities'.*

*There were a lot of useful learning points and feedback from our hosts, and Nigel summarised them well at the close. I am wondering how we can share them more widely with members and discuss how we are addressing, or are going to, address them.*

*Quite a lot were planning related:*

- *having more input or influence over 'significant' decisions;*
- *improving the performance of councils doing work in our name;*
- *the damage done by small-scale incremental change;*
- *enforcement*

*Others included:*

- *the close interdependency of socio-economic survival*
- *the vulnerability of enterprises like the village store due to very small profit margins*
- *encouraging the continuation of local craft skills by training bursaries*
- *affordable and commercial housing"*

The day was a golden public relations opportunity not only to showcase our village and achievements, but also for the SDNPA to get a better understanding of how we, as a community, operate and thrive. There are many parallels between our aims and those of the SDNPA. Working together, building our relationship and partnership, is both promising and beneficial.

**Please do not forget to let me know as soon as possible if you wish to join us on one of Roger Birch's Geological Gander tours on Saturday, 18th May.**

Grahame Joseph – Chairman

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