

# THE RIDDLEDOWN RECORDER

A half-yearly publication of the Riddlesdown Residents' Association

No. 187 October 2008















INSIDE: Parking around the station • Planning applications  
Purley and COPRA • Paved front gardens  
PLUS: Fun Day pictures • The City Livery Companies  
The Croydon Aztec Centre • Early Days at Gatwick  
Common Knowledge ...and more



# RIDDLEDOWN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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*Cover photograph: Morning sunlight at the railway bridge in Lower Barn Road.  
(See Page 6 for a different view)*

## EDITOR'S NOTES

As usual the activities of the Committee on your behalf are very evident from their reports, starting on Page 4.

### John Chitty

A sad event earlier this year was the death of John Chitty, our writer on wine. A brief obituary is on Page 13.

### Membership

The Committee hopes that non-members of the Association will be encouraged by this magazine to join the Association, one of the strongest and most active in the Croydon area. The higher our membership – currently at well over 90% – the stronger will be our ability to successfully take on the issues affecting our community.

Membership per household is only £3 each year (with concessions). For this, you get two issues of this magazine each year. These and our website (see below) contain useful information on a wide range of subjects. Membership is very good value for money so why not join the Association now. Ring John Rapp or any Committee member for details.

### Finally...

Thanks to our contributors and early good wishes from all of us on the RRA Committee for Christmas and the New Year – and please keep or start sending in material for future magazines.

*Nick Bygrave*

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You may write to **Riddlesdown Residents' Association** at any of the following addresses: **66 Westfield Avenue, Sanderstead, CR2 9JU,**

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Please mark your letter with the committee member's name, if applicable.

You can also use the Website Message Board's open or private email facilities.

RRA Notice Boards are situated by Riddlesdown Pharmacy, by the Church Hall and by Saban's Newsagents. We also use the boards on St. Edmund's Green and in the station waiting room.

**Website: [www.riddlesdownresidents.org.uk](http://www.riddlesdownresidents.org.uk)**

**Email: [RRA@bygraven.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:RRA@bygraven.fsnet.co.uk)**

## **THE COMMITTEE REPORTS...**

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### **Chairman**

Welcome to the October 2008 edition of the Riddlesdown Recorder.

### **Commuter Parking**

This is fast becoming the area of most concern to many residents living close to the station. Hardly a week goes by without at least one resident contacting the Association to voice their concerns.

I think I need say straight away that this is a really difficult area for the Association to be involved in unless there is a clear consensus of opinion on what needs to be done.

From the telephone calls received there appear to be two main issues – the increasing level of commuter parking in the relatively narrow roads close to the station, and the safety issues associated with parking close to road junctions.

On the latter, I understand that there have been several accidents close to the junction of Brancaster Lane and Riddlesdown Avenue. The Council is currently in the process of considering if improvements can be made at this junction. However, the issue of commuter parking is a little more difficult to solve.

In the last year, two double-yellow line schemes have been introduced as a direct result of representation from residents.

I have already said that parking schemes can be very contentious and that this is not an area in which the Association can lead unless it has an overwhelming mandate from the residents involved.

The Association is looking for guidance and we would like to know what you think. For example, would it be sensible to organise a meeting to share views and ideas (these of course could include doing nothing) for the residents most affected in the roads around the station?

To ensure that we have a real understanding of what you want us to do, a simple tick box questionnaire will be distributed with this issue of the Recorder.

Roads included within our area will be: Lower Barn Road, Rydal Close, Barn Crescent, Dalton Close, Coombe Wood Hill, Hill Close, Riddlesdown Avenue and Brancaster Lane.

Phil Thomas also writes on this matter later.

### **Purley and COPRA**

With the Tesco development now on hold, the recently formed coalition of local residents associations (COPRA) has turned its attention to the regeneration of Purley's town centre. COPRA has met local councillors and the consultants engaged by Croydon to develop the plans for the town's regeneration. Our discussions have covered a range of issues but high on the list was that there should be no loss of existing facilities and that a swimming pool for Purley is a must – not necessarily the existing one or on the same site, but certainly situated close to the town centre.

Car parks must be safe, affordable and user friendly, with more short-term road parking places and no reduction in the total number of parking places available.

The town centre should be broadly based around the High Street and not around Tesco's as in the original plan. Possible pedestrianization of all or part of the High Street should be user friendly and a pleasant place to visit, with improved street furniture, lighting and pavements and, above all, it should be a place for all age groups.

More encouragement is needed for new businesses and shops, with improved access to public transport – including the station.

There could be a small cinema similar to the David Lean, with around 100 seats and a multi-purpose open space facility similar to the Clock Clocktower café. This should be for meeting, socialising, coffee, light lunch, free walk-in events, art and music, both at lunchtimes and in the evening.

Finally, there needs to be an integrated

approach to the development of the town centre with consideration to the hospital site, Tesco's and the original Sainsbury site, to ensure Purley is a safe and pleasant place to visit.

### **Lower Barn Road**

Last year Wimpey submitted a planning application to build twelve two-bedroom flats on the small area of woodland adjacent to the parade of shops in Lower Barn Road.

The Association made a formal objection and the application was refused. Wimpey have since appealed to the Secretary of State and the matter was due to be decided at a public planning inquiry at the Town Hall on 12 July. However, since my last report there has been a legal dispute between Wimpey and the golf club concerning the land's ownership. With this matter still outstanding, and not likely to be resolved quickly, the inquiry has been postponed. We shall keep you informed of any developments via the website and the RRA notice boards.

### **Mitchley Woods**

Since my last report in April little has changed. The Association continues to monitor the situation closely and keep in contact with the current landowners. It has been interesting to note recent media reports that some people who speculatively bought up small plots of green belt around the UK are now facing potential financial losses.

The slow-down in the housing market and a commitment from both national and local government to defend the green belt is reassuring and leaves us confident that we can maintain our local green belt land. The fighting fund donated by the residents of Riddlesdown and others has given us the opportunity to bid for the land when it eventually comes back on the market.

To repeat the statement I made in the last Recorder, the Association has been fighting to save our local green belt since 1974; we are in for the long haul and with

your help we can and must win.

We will keep you informed of any developments via our website.

### **Fun Day**

At the risk of repeating myself yet again, it just gets bigger and better every year.

Around 900 people enjoyed a picnic on the Downs and relaxed to the sounds of a jazz band. There were donkey rides, Punch and Judy, swing boats, tractor rides and so much more. If you are not convinced, take a look at this year's Fun Day pictures on Pages 19 and 20, or in colour on our website. Check out the next issue of the Recorder for the 2009 Fun Day date.

### **Committee**

In my last report I appealed for people to join the committee. I am pleased to say we have recruited two new members but still need a few more. It is not hard work and if you are interested or would like more information please give me a ring.

*Brian Longman*

### **Planning and Environmental Matters**

As usual all the planning applications in the RRA area are updated weekly on our website:

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

It is noticeable that there has been a marked drop in the number of local applications being submitted in the last six months or so. A sign of the times perhaps!

### **Woodland adjoining 108/110, Lower Barn Road (The Parade of Shops)**

As you may recall, I wrote in the last issue that Taylor Wimpey submitted a planning application for the erection of two two-storey buildings, comprising a total of twelve two-bedroom flats, the formation of an access road and provision of associated parking on the woodland next to the shops. The Council's Planning Committee rejected the application in November 2007.

As we expected, Taylor Wimpey lodged

an Appeal with the Secretary of State on 2 April 2008. The RRA wrote to the Planning Inspector and highlighted our further concerns. These related primarily to the continuing land ownership dispute between the applicant and the Purley Downs Golf Club, where we commented that the applicant, to our knowledge, had not maintained or repaired the fencing, trees or any part of the land for at least the last 50 years; yet within four days of refusal of the planning application by the Council, the applicant's contractor entered the site and felled many mature trees – this despite Croydon Council refusing the application on environmental grounds.

We raised again the risk of flooding. In the previous 17 months or so, the carriageway and pavements immediately in front of and beside the proposed site had flooded on at least four recent occasions. We also reminded the Inspector that the proposed development site does provide 'run off' from this flooded highway area and any development on the land could hinder this and perhaps create new problems.

We again highlighted the fact that the 15m high 3G mast on the back edge of the footpath, immediately in front of the proposed development, would be within two to three metres of at least three of the proposed flats and within ten metres of all the remaining seven flats. We did comment that, by felling the remaining trees on the site, the street scene for this mast would be changed and the mast would no longer merge into the woodland behind.

However, to cap it all, on 11 July, Taylor Wimpey's contractor entered the site again and felled further trees just behind and beside the mast!

The Local Public Inquiry was initially set for 16 July and then 12 August but these dates were postponed. The RRA has just learnt, the Purley Downs Golf Club was successful in their claim and they are now the registered owners of the land.

However they are now actively

encouraging Taylor Wimpey to continue with the appeal. If successful the Club intend to sell to a



The July 2007 flooding  
(Photograph by Alan Barnes, Buttermere Gardens)

developer/builder. This is disappointing news and the RRA will continue to fight the application at the new appeal set for Tuesday 28 October 2008.

#### **68 and 81 Westfield Avenue**

I reported last time on two planning applications that had been submitted for back land development in this road. The first site was at No 81 which had had two previous applications turned down by the Council and one of them refused on appeal to the Planning Inspector. A subsequent application was submitted on 22 April 2008 for the erection of a three-bedroom detached chalet bungalow at rear, the formation of vehicular access on to Copthorne Rise and provision of associated parking. The Council again refused this application.

The second location related to No 68

and was for a second application for the erection of a two-bedroom detached chalet bungalow at the rear with the formation of a vehicular access onto Court Hill. The applicants appealed on this refusal and the Planning Inspector has now dismissed this appeal. A subsequent planning application was submitted on 12 June for the erection of a two-bedroom detached chalet bungalow at the rear, the formation of vehicular access on to Court Hill and provision of associated parking. Again the Council has refused this application.

The RRA has not objected to either of these applications as it is not normally our policy to become involved in schemes involving small, single, residential schemes.

### **30/32 St James Road**

I also wrote previously about this site which is just outside our area but does back on to houses in Downs Court Road. The proposal was for the demolition of the existing buildings (Nos. 30 and 32) and the erection of two two-storey buildings with ten two-bedroom flats and four one-bedroom flats, formation of vehicular access and provision of fourteen car parking spaces. There were 31 objections on this application together with a referral from Councillor Graham Bass, and objections from our MP Richard Ottaway, the RRA and also the Kenley and District Residents Association. The Council refused this application, principally on the grounds of pedestrian and highway hazards, that the development would be out of keeping with the street scene of the adjoining locality and it would also have a detrimental affect on adjoining properties by reason of visual intrusion, loss of privacy and disturbance.

However, we have learnt that the application has gone to Appeal on 7 August. We await the outcome.

### **29 Dalegarth Gardens**

Three applications have been submitted

over the past few years for some form of development on this site, but all applications have been refused. The latest is for a detached three-bedroom house with vehicular access on to Ingleboro Drive and associated parking.

The Council again refused this application but we learnt that it went to Appeal with the Planning Inspector on 21 July.

### **Telecommunications mast at rear of 91/93 Brancaster Lane**

In April, an application was submitted to the Council for a 15-metre-high telecommunication mast, adjacent to the railway line at the rear of Nos 91/93. It is proposed to site the mast adjacent to the downside track (golf course side). National Rail were seeking any observations from the Council on this application; because it was a permitted development under the Planning Laws that allow Railway Companies the right to erect certain equipment without planning permission, it wasn't advertised in the normal way. As this is a private mast for railway use only, the RRA did not object but we did raise comments as to why it had to be 15 metres high as it will protrude above the tree line and be seen by many houses higher up the valley. We hope our comments have been passed on to National Rail. The Council responded to National Rail that they had no observations to make and it will no doubt be erected shortly.

### **Parking in roads adjoining Riddlesdown Station**

Some residents may have noticed that the Council has recently installed double yellow lines in the Dalton Close cul-de-sac and returning at the junction into Lower Barn Road near Riddlesdown Station. Apparently this action followed a complaint from a resident in Dalton Close that lorries, the dustcart and emergency vehicles could not enter or deliver to four houses at the back of Dalton Close

because of parking, mainly by commuters.

Although the RRA could not argue that Dalton Close is narrow, we did raise the question as to why the Planning and Highways Departments had allowed such a narrow access road to be built adjoining the Station, where commuter parking would be an issue, in the mid-1990s!

We also raised objections with the Council in March about the double yellow lines returning into Lower Barn Road as, to our knowledge, there has never been a serious accident at this junction. The section of road between the railway bridge and the four-way junction of Coombe Wood Hill, Riddlesdown Avenue and Brancaster Lane is not as wide as the remainder of Lower Barn Road.

We did also tell the Council that we believed parking would therefore occur on the north side of Lower Barn Road and pinch-parking could be a problem with lorries, ambulances, fire engines and dustcarts unable to pass through. It could have far more serious consequences for many more residents in the Riddlesdown area should any emergency vehicle be delayed attending an incident.

Unfortunately, the Council didn't take on board our concerns and installed these double yellow lines regardless. However, since then, a number of vehicles are now being parked in Lower Barn Road for the full length on the north side, in front of Nos. 130 & 132 and beside 141 Brancaster Lane and, on the south side, beside 48 Coombe Wood Hill. In some cases they are creating obstructions on the road and stopping lorries and emergency vehicles from passing through the gaps. A fire engine and some large lorries are three metres (about ten feet) wide and need this gap to pass through safely.

The RRA and Councillor Lynne Hale have been in contact with the Council about this and they have admitted that there is now a new problem and are looking at a longer-term solution. This may well mean placing some further

double yellow lines on part of the north side and maybe on the south side near the four-way junction.

As an interim measure, the Council's traffic wardens have now started issuing warning notices to any vehicle parked in



Dalton Close double-yellow-lined

this section of Lower Barn Road which, in their opinion, is causing an obstruction, advising the drivers that the Police will take action to issue fixed penalty notices or remove vehicles.

Only the Police can issue fixed penalty notices and remove vehicles causing an obstruction, and not the Council. The Police have been told by the Council of this problem and they could remove, or issue penalty notices, to *all* vehicles causing the obstruction, regardless of who came second and caused the obstruction. This could mean that you parked on one side of the road first when the other side was clear but someone else has come along later and parked opposite or diagonally opposite you. It could also mean that if your vehicle is removed, it will cost about



£250, plus any daily storage charges, to get your vehicle back.

Unfortunately, on one day in August the Council wrongly issued warning notices to vehicles parked in the section of Lower Barn Road between the shops and Rydal Close and this caused a number of telephone calls to the Council and the RRA!

As Dalton Close now has these double yellow lines, it may also mean that vehicles that previously parked here could now park opposite one another in other areas of Riddlesdown, on narrow roads like Coombe Wood Hill, Riddlesdown Avenue and slightly further afield in Buttermere Gardens and Dalegarth Gardens, where the Police could take similar action.

The moral of the story is – beware if you park in a narrow road in Riddlesdown that you, or someone else, doesn't cause an obstruction. It may cost you a lot of money to get your vehicle back. Also, remember if you park near the Station that it could also be your home that is on fire one day, or it is you who could be involved in a local road accident and require an ambulance or fire engine in an emergency, but the emergency services are delayed due to inconsiderate parking by some drivers in our narrow streets.

As the Chairman has said in his report, the RRA has also received a number of complaints from residents about general commuter parking in the roads surrounding the Station. This is causing danger to residents who use their driveways and have their sightlines blocked by commuters parking on the highway or preventing residents from parking near their homes.

The Riddlesdown area now seems to attract a huge number of commuters from outside the area (as well as some from close by) as our roads are around one of the last Stations in the south of the Borough that has free parking, even though the Zone 6 has now been extended to Upper Warlingham and Caterham.

We are currently working with the Council's Parking Division and Ward Councillors Lynne Hale and Donald Speakman to try and find a solution to this. It is also worth remembering that drivers have no right whatsoever to park a vehicle on the highway that causes an obstruction and that technically the Police could prosecute each and every driver who parks their car on the highway, although, of course, in reality this rarely happens.

### **Paving over front gardens**

You may have seen some publicity over the last few months that the Government is considering bringing in Planning Controls to stem the practice of creating hard stands in front gardens. According to the Government, more and more householders are laying hard surfaces in their front gardens to provide off-road parking. At present there are no restrictions on a householder's ability to do this.

They say hard surfaces lead to accelerated run-off of surface water, which can overload sewerage systems, in more urban areas.

The Government intends in future that paving of front gardens will not be a permitted development under the Planning Acts and permission will have to be sought.

If permission is granted, any material used will have to allow water to drain away naturally. This can be achieved in a number of ways – most simply by ensuring that water runs off to an unpaved area such as an earth border or grass verge or alternatively using materials that allow the water to drain through – known as SUDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems).

The Government did suggest this regulation may come into force in October 2008 but, at the time of writing, this has not been confirmed. My view is that unless these hard stands are controlled under the Building Regulations, no one

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will check on-site that they are drained correctly.

Planners may make the aesthetic decisions but only Building Control Officers can inspect and enforce the materials used. The planners and politicians also need to accept that, in the real world, many households now have more than one vehicle and, especially on new developments, the allocated parking space of maybe one vehicle per unit, and no visitor or delivery parking, is insufficient and will lead to more vehicles being parked on our already congested roads.

*Phil Thomas*

### **Membership**

As many of you know, I feel free to talk to any resident about how our community's life can be enhanced. I know that almost everyone appreciates life in Riddlesdown.

Over the past few months I have been very busy both with work and family matters, and find that there is often more to do than is good for me, giving me the problem of losing focus on what is important. (Margaret says that when John is doing too much work he forgets the important things.)

I am now in my mid-fifties and would like to start working with someone who also appreciates Riddlesdown life and will be in place for me to take a back seat when I get my Freedom Pass.

If you would like to explore whether you could be that someone, please contact Brian or me.

*John Rapp*

### **Transport**

I am writing this on the last day of the 2008 Olympics. One thing that is clear is the need that will exist to move many people around London in 2012. The word 'legacy' is used when talking about the good things to be left for the people of London to enjoy.

While watching for the improvements

needed to make using public transport second nature for Londoners before the start of 2012, I have seen encouraging signs. I have also seen a need to help transport providers to recognise the underlying needs that will still be with us in 2013.

A constant dialogue between RRA and transport providers is useful, and anyone who uses the public transport provided to the Riddlesdown Community is welcome to share thoughts with the Committee.

*John Rapp*

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## JOHN CHITTY

We are sorry to record the death in June of John Chitty of Riddlesdown Avenue, after a long illness. If for nothing else, his name may be familiar as the author of a fascinating series of articles on wine in the Riddlesdown Recorder over the past few years. He explained the techniques of wine growing, went into the differences between the products of the great wine-producing areas of the world, and offered practical opinions on wines to try out.

Wine was not only of personal interest to him; before his retirement from the NAAFI, the official trading organisation of HM Forces, it was a great part of his working life. As a wine expert he was required to select wines for the various NAAFI catering outlets and often to



lecture to their staff and customers.

One of John's other interests was his involvement with the United Nations Association for whom he regularly helped to arrange very popular school debating competitions in the area.

Also, over the past several years, he was a tireless collector for charities, raising thousands of pounds for cancer research and landmine clearance, among others.

John, a great supporter of the RRA, is survived by his wife, Diana, a Committee member for many years, working with the Council to keep the environment in good order.

The RRA sends its sympathy to Diana, her two daughters and their families.



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## THE CITY LIVERY COMPANIES

by John Jeffrey-Cook  
formerly of Riddlesdown Road

Although many European cities have guilds, the City of London is unique in having so many – 107 and growing, with 40 Halls.

As early as 237AD in Roman times a British merchant in Bordeaux boasted membership of guilds at Lincoln and York. Craftsmen and tradesmen banded together in guilds to train apprentices, regulate competition and maintain high standards. Penalties for shoddy work or short weight were severe, hence the term baker's dozen.

The Weavers Company received a royal charter in 1155; by 1500, 25 London guilds had received charters.

The order of precedence in City processions was coveted; in 1226 the Goldsmiths and the Taylors fought; afterwards 13 men were hanged. In 1340 the Skinners and the Fishmongers fought and two Fishmongers were hanged.

In 1484 the Lord Mayor, Robert Billesdon, decreed that the Merchant Taylors and Skinners Masters should entertain each other every year; this brought peace between them. Both companies claimed sixth place so he also ruled that they should take precedence in alternate years, resulting in the expression 'at sixes and sevens'.

In 1515 the Lord Mayor set the order of precedence for all 48 companies. The merchant guilds were rich, and provided more Aldermen, so they ranked ahead of older craft guilds like the Weavers.

In medieval times, great households provided their retainers with 'livery', namely food, drink and clothing. The term was later restricted to clothing, and guilds who adopted it became

known as livery companies. In 1560 the Court of Aldermen decreed that no more companies should assume a livery without its consent. The colourful robes are now worn only by Masters, Wardens and Clerks, but new liverymen are ceremonially 'robed'.

Grants of livery since 1712 have limited the number of liverymen: the maximum is 500, or 350 for a new company, but a company may also have freemen, and a few have yeomen. Livery status also attracts the title 'the Worshipful Company'.

In many companies, women were equally eligible with men, particularly widows who took over their husbands' trades; the Barber-Surgeons had free sisters as early as 1390. The Princess Royal is a liveryman of five companies.

Some City guilds with less familiar names include the Bowyers (bow makers), Broderers (embroidery), Coopers (barrel makers), Cordwainers (workers in leather from Cordoba), Curriers (curers of leather), Fletchers (arrow makers), Girdlers (belt makers) and Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers (braid for uniforms). Others are Joiners and Ceilers (woodwork and carving), Loriners (horses' harnesses), Mercers (merchants), Pattenmakers

# WESSONS

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(footwear), Poulterers (poulterers), Scriveners (writers of documents), Turners (woodturners) and Upholders (upholsterers).

At a time when there was no social security, the guilds provided for sick members, widows and orphans, and the aged. Members bequeathed property to their guild for charitable uses. Richard Whittington, the best-known liveryman of all, bequeathed almshouses. City guilds founded many public schools. Today the companies give £41 million a year to charity and support 38 almshouses providing 830 homes.

Some guilds have lost their trades but foster the modern equivalents; the Horners, for example, support the plastics industry. Some still have commercial responsibilities: the Goldsmiths run the London Assay Office, the Fishmongers maintain quality control at Billingsgate Market, the Vintners implement EU wine regulations, the Gunmakers test guns sold in the UK, and the Apothecaries, Farriers, Scriveners (notaries), and Spectacle Makers hold qualifying examinations.

As London prospered and the population grew, building spread outside the City walls (the 'square mile'). In 1633 and 1634 the Court of Aldermen made a historic decision not to try to exercise its authority outside the City.

The Great Fire of 1666 weakened the livery companies, not so much because, out of 51 halls, 44 were burnt down (41 were rebuilt) but because, pending rebuilding, many craftsmen and merchants had to move outside the City. Some enjoyed their new freedom from the controls in the City and never returned. Stuart kings extorted 'loans' and called in charters, charging heavily for replacements; this bankrupted some companies. The Industrial Revolution introduced mass production methods, further weakening the craft guilds.

After the Fan Makers received their charter in 1709, no new guilds were

formed for over 200 years, although some were granted livery. Some guilds merged or disappeared, such as the Silkmen, Pinmakers, Hatband Makers and Longbowstring Makers. Royal Commissions of 1833-37 and 1884 concluded that the extensive charitable works of the surviving companies justified their continuance.

In 1926 the Guild of Master Mariners was founded and received livery in 1931; they rank No 78. Others followed leading to 30 modern companies, the latest being the Tax Advisers. Today 26,000 liverymen are entitled to vote 'in Common Hall assembled' (Guildhall pictured above) to elect the two Sheriffs each Midsummer Day (24 June) and the Lord Mayor each Michaelmas (29 September), a privilege granted by King John in 1215.

*John Jeffrey-Cook was Founder Clerk  
of the Worshipful Company of Tax Advisers 1996-  
2001*



The Coat of Arms, Guild of Tax Advisers

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The meetings are held at the Group's Headquarters:  
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## THE MATTRESS DOCTORS

*Do you know what's in your mattress? Michael Sell, who runs a mattress cleaning service in Riddlesdown with his wife Catherine, thinks you 'mite' like to know.*

**A**t certain times of the year, particularly in the Spring, many people turn their thoughts to house cleaning. You probably clean everything else in your home regularly but what about your mattress? It is very likely that your mattress is the most unhygienic place of all in your house.

Even if only a few months old, the average mattress contains up to two million dust mites; they each produce 750 times their own body weight of excrement during their short life span and they shed their skin as they grow. This becomes airborne as we move around in bed (bed linen is no protection) and we breathe it in. The allergens contained in this dust can cause or aggravate the symptoms of asthma, eczema, hay fever and other respiratory and skin allergies. Eighty-five percent of allergy sufferers are allergic to dust mites and their symptoms can be relieved by reducing their exposure to dust mites.

It is not just allergy sufferers who can gain from decontaminated mattresses though: families with babies and young children or pregnant women can also benefit greatly.

Studies by prominent authorities have highlighted the dangers. The Department of Microbiology of Leicester University reported that exposure to mites in the first crucial years of life can trigger a lifelong allergy. There is no cure, they said, only prevention by controlling house dust mite populations. The Lancet said that a study has shown that dust mite excrement inhaled by pregnant women can reach the womb and amniotic fluid and be a cause of asthma and allergies in up to 20% of new born babies.

Sleeping in dirty, contaminated beds, which virtually everyone does, is simply unhygienic. As well as the millions of dust mites, mattresses also contain bacteria and viruses which include Micrococcus, Bacillus, Staphylococcus and Coliforms and

many can be dangerous to your health.

Fungi and mould are also present and some of these spores can cause serious allergic reactions. Other 'delights' to be found lurking in your mattress depths are decaying human skin, perspiration salts (which rot the mattress filling) and other dried body fluids.

You may think that you have been sleeping in dirty, contaminated beds for years and suffered no ill effects and in some cases you may be right; however, symptoms of dust mite allergies are not just asthma, eczema and hay fever. If you wake up, morning or night, with a cough, itchy or watery eyes or blocked or runny nose, these could also be an indication of a dust mite allergy and could be eased or eliminated by having your mattress professionally cleaned.

There is nothing new about cleaning mattresses. You may remember your grandparents or possibly your parents dragging theirs outside on a cold day and beating them for half an hour or more. The cold killed the mites and the beating removed the excrement and other contaminants. Obviously we can't do that now because of the weight and composition of the modern mattress, but



A dust mite highly magnified – they are too small to be seen with the naked eye

there is even more need as our modern day environment, created by double glazing and central heating, has resulted in an increase in dust mites, bacteria and viruses in our beds and there has been a corresponding increase in health problems such as asthma, eczema and hay fever.

So, how do you rid your beds of these unwanted 'guests'? Treatment consists of various processes including high frequency vibrations, powerful vacuuming, ultra-violet light sterilisation and preventative

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Our advert gives further contact details.

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## THE MASTER MASON OF MITCHLEY AVENUE

Stewart Harris writes about his work and career

**M**y journey as a stonemason began in 1976 when I worked as a stone sawyer at a firm in Colliers Wood.

Understanding beddings, planes and identifying faults and stone suitability became the foundation of my learning. Hand carving, draughting and setting out were skills honed later at Portland and Sculpture Trust, Lambert College for Stonemasonry, Memorial Arts Charity Lettering and David Ball Restoration.

I have helped to form two companies in the past – as director of Apex Stone Fixing and Capelin Ltd. The former employed a small team of masons undertaking restoration contracts throughout London and the south east, notably two years restoring the London Temple in East Grinstead.

In 1990, during my first year of marriage to my darling wife Susan, the recession began to savage my industry. But an extraordinary opportunity had arisen and my company finally secured a two-year contract to rebuild the car-bombed portico at the Courts of Justice in Belfast and to decorate (or disguise) a massive eight foot thick, 18 foot high reinforced concrete wall. This was designed as a bomb blast wall and in effect designed to absorb any potential car-bomb impact.

Other notable work during this period was on the Queen's residence of Hillsboro Castle. More recently, in 1998, I supervised

a team of masons in the restoration of the Albert Memorial. In recognition, along with various dignitaries, I was invited to meet Her Majesty.

While involved in the restoration and conservation of stone at the Palace of Westminster, St.Pauls Cathedral and St.Pancras station, I would enjoy the company and experiences of fellow masons from other parts of the world.

In 2003 I helped form Scalpellini Ltd., a company with a very talented artist/mason originally from the U.S., commissioned to recarve and replace stone foliage carvings and restoration at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

These days, I am again operating as a sole trader, sub-contracting my skills and 30 years' experience to small stone companies in and around the south east. My work can vary enormously from lettering a memorial stone, producing garden ornaments and sculpture to simply building a Kentish rag wall. I could be on any of our nation's most historic buildings or at a Polish church in Islington, or designing a stone suspended balcony at Pattenham Priory or erecting a folly at Dunottar School in Reigate. Last year I donated a carving of their coat-of-arms to Riddlesdown High School and have also carved for them a Holocaust memorial (*see below*).

For instance, renewing the ball finials –

*see illustration*) that adorn the Royal Pavilion at Brighton would entail profiling of the existing work, documenting dimensions, producing a silicon rubber/plaster cast mould of the original carving and carefully dismantling the weathered urn. Then I would select a squared block, scribe the profile and scribe a leaf-foliage carving to go around a stone sphere. I would refer to the mould for depth and shape as I carved it.

On site, a studio would be in place for me to work the stone, either under tents or simply up high on a scaffold.

People seem to be very interested and curious in what I do. A job well done gives me an enormous sense of satisfaction and of course, as with many masons before me, my work is on display long after I have gone.



A ball finial at the Royal Pavilion.  
Inset: Stewart Harris

In December 2006, a winning sketch of a stone tablet showing six religious symbols by Charlie Vesper Carey, a pupil at Riddlesdown High School, was presented to me. The school governors wanted a memorial to commemorate Holocaust Day. With Charlie's ideas, the subject sensitivity and the surroundings in mind, I presented to the governors a full scale drawing of a monument in a contemporary format, in keeping with a modern school and hopefully something its pupils will find relevant.

The anchor block and base arrived on site at the school as a square block and I hand carved it in the car park.

With the help of Roger, the school caretaker, my wife Susan and daughter Francesca, I secured it in its present location.



The front wheel depicts the symbols of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism. It gently rotates so that any symbol can be shown at any particular position on, for example, a specific day of relevance to one of the religions.

I produced the front and rear wheels from a large slab, destined for the skip, in my workshop at the Brighton Pavilion and

completed the carving and lettering at home in my spare time.

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FUNDAY  
ON THE COMMON  
22 JUNE 2008**

*These photographs are in colour  
on our website*





## COMMON KNOWLEDGE

by Robin Crowther, City Commons Ranger, Riddlesdown, City of London

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### **A New Ranger**

Keep a look out for Luke Barley, who joined City of London staff this summer and will help manage Riddlesdown. Luke says: "My start in conservation came near to my home town of Manchester when I was accepted on to the National Trust's 'Careership' training scheme at Alderley Edge, after volunteering there previously. Prior to that I studied at Sheffield University and spent time studying in California and working in Canada, all experiences that I enjoyed greatly and which pointed me towards the same idea – that I wanted to spend my working life outdoors, in the open spaces that I love and care so much about. So I'm very much looking forward to helping manage these fantastic sites and meeting the volunteers and public who use them."

### **Entrance facelift**

The ageing metal time boards on the Riddlesdown entrance and car park have been replaced with local oak signs which give a more rural first impression of the site. As well as reducing the amount of 'furniture' clutter at the entrance, we have also replaced the metal barriers to Riddlesdown Road (which tend to get rusted up with dog pee!) with an oak bar way. Later this winter we want to complete the works by putting in automated bollards at the car park entrance. This will give us the flexibility to open the car park earlier and, in the height of summer, close it later. It will also mean that the Rangers can concentrate on other duties rather than being tied into morning and evening gate locking shifts.

### **Unlocking the past**

A new historical interpretation panel should shortly be in place on the notice board in the car park. It has been produced as part of the 125th anniversary of the acquisition of the Coulsdon

Commons and displays many interesting old photographs and maps as well as information on the Common. Why not have a look and delve a little deeper into Riddlesdown's secret history?

### **Dangerous Dog Court Order**

The owners of a Staffordshire bull terrier, which attacked four other dogs over the past year as they walked to and from Riddlesdown along Downs Court Road, have now been given a Court Order. Croydon Magistrates Court issued a dog control order instructing the owners to keep the dog muzzled and on a lead at all times when in a public place.

This demonstrates the benefit of the victims reporting the separate incidents to the site Rangers and the Safer Neighbourhood Police Team who were able to take the matter further. Our thanks go to all involved for securing a satisfactory outcome for what was a continuing problem

### **Volunteering matters**

The Riddlesdown Volunteers will now be meeting on the second Thursday of each month from December onwards for a variety of practical conservation tasks on the Common.

On November 5, 6 and 7 we will have a special three day volunteering event to lay the last section of hedgerow by the Donkey Field.

We will provide light refreshments and be actively recruiting new local members to the group. If you usually have a few hours to spare on a Thursday why not pop along and see what volunteering on Riddlesdown is all about.

### **Electricity Cable Replacement**

EDF should be replacing the high voltage cable running across Riddlesdown very shortly.

Care will be taken to protect the historical and biological importance of the



### KEEPING THE FLAG FLYING

Riddlesdown has retained its Green Flag – awarded for excellence in open space management under a scheme managed by the Civic Trust in Liverpool. It is the sixth year in a row that Riddlesdown has attained this prestigious status and reflects the commitment that the City of London, Staff and Volunteers have in maintaining this well used and much loved site. All seven open spaces within the City Commons retained their flag this year and some staff and volunteers made the trip up to the awards ceremony in Liverpool to collect the new flag which is now proudly flying from the flag pole.



Robin Crowther (centre) with new ranger Luke Barley (right) and ranger Barry Gutteridge (left), well-known on Riddlesdown from when he worked here some years ago

site but there will be considerable disruption as part of the car park will be used for storage of machines and materials. Please see further information on site as work progresses.

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## THE WONDER YEARS by Simon Kohler

*Simon and his father Dave have been well-known faces around Riddlesdown for many years and their van is often to be seen in the area.*

Growing up in Riddlesdown in the 70s was fun. Life seemed easier back then. Summers seemed longer, days were spent playing on the Downs and I would disappear into the woods all day, my parents never worrying about me. Kids could do that back then.

Evenings were spent playing in the street outside my house in Eskdale Gardens until it grew dark. In the winter it seemed to snow every year, much thicker than it ever does now. I tell my children of how we used to have real snow when I was a boy. We would go sledging on the downs from the top of the hill right down through the woods almost down to Kenley.

My father was the local builder. There was no competition back then and he would do work at practically every house in the area. I remember a story that he still tells to this day. He had taken me round to an old man's house so that he could do an estimate. He told me to stay in the van as the old man 'is a bit funny', using this as an excuse to make me stay there. Of course, once my father was standing at the old man's front door talking, I climbed out of the van, walked up to them both, looked the old man up and down and quizzed "where's he funny Dad?" Of course I was never taken estimating again for quite a while.

Growing up in Riddlesdown in the 80s wasn't quite so much fun. I was a teenager and Riddlesdown was very remote for a lad looking for fun. I would have to walk to Purley where I would meet up with my friends. We would carry our 'beat box' everywhere and attempt to break dance on the smooth tiled

surface at the entrance to the offices at the Purley Oaks roundabout. Weekends were spent scouring the streets in search of elusive parties. The only advantage to living in Riddlesdown that I could see at the time was that the school was a short walk away. This was very handy during games when I was supposed to be running cross-country.

When I turned eighteen and the lure of a local pub beckoned, there wasn't one in Riddlesdown; someone would always have to drive to our 'local'. We chose the Good Companions in Hamsey Green and I have many a fond memory of that time.

I left Riddlesdown in 1989, moving into my own flat in Croydon, although my parents stayed in Eskdale for many more years. I would return often either to visit them or to work in the area. Only a few years ago did my parents decide to make the move out of Riddlesdown to live in Lingfield. My father and I still return periodically to do jobs in the area. We now



Simon Kohler and his father, Dave

trade as 'Kohler Home Improvements' (you may have seen our advert in this magazine) since I decided to update our image. I now live in Godstone with my wife, whom I knew from Riddlesdown School, and our two children.

Now that I am just about to turn 40, another milestone in life, I can reflect back at how growing up in Riddlesdown wasn't so bad at all - I can think of worse places for a kid to grow up. Having lived and worked in Riddlesdown for nearly 40

years, I can say that not much has changed really, only some of the people; the place stays pretty much the same.

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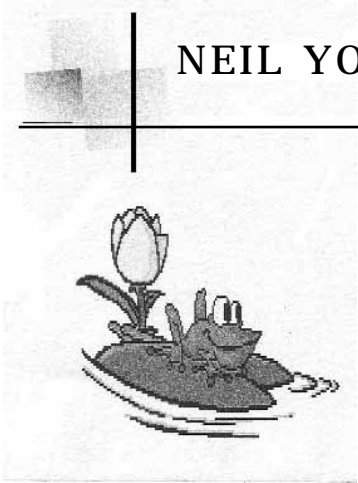
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**RRA WOODLANDS AND COUNTRYSIDE APPEAL**



**PROTECT OUR ANCIENT WOODLAND - MITCHLEY WOODS**

Since launching our appeal in May 2006, we have received over £30,000 in donations and pledges from residents and organisations in and around Riddlesdown. We still need more to put us in a stronger position to secure the woods, and also to build up a fund for purchasing other parts of the local green belt that could well come up for sale in the future. **THE GREEN BELT IS UNDER CONTINUAL THREAT.**

If you can help, please drop a cheque into the box in Wessons Post Office, Lower Barn Road, or in Sabans, Newsagents, Mitchley Avenue, or send it, with this form, to Brian Longman, Chair RRA, 66 Westfield Avenue, Sanderstead CR2 9JU or Nick Bygrave, Treasurer RRA, 44 Riddlesdown Avenue, Purley CR8 1JJ.

I attach a cheque payable to **RRA Woodlands and Countryside Appeal** for an amount of £25  £50  Other £

Your name..... Address.....

.....

Telephone..... Email.....

If the Mitchley Woods bid is unsuccessful, I agree that my contribution may be held and used by the Association for future campaigns to protect the Green Belt of Riddlesdown and surrounding areas.

Yes  No  Signature/Date:

## THE CROYDON AZTEC CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING by Brian Longman

I would like to take this opportunity to move away from RRA business for a moment and tell you about a project very close to my heart. Having cared for a family member with dementia for several years, I became involved in a Croydon project to help people with dementia remain safe and independent in their own homes.

Three years ago Croydon Social Services launched its new community alarm service – Croydon Careline. Today the service is one of the fastest growing in the UK with over 2000 clients. Most of you will recognise the pendant worn around the neck with the big red button that, when pressed, calls for help. The big question is: how much do you know about the new range of services and solutions now offered by Croydon Careline as a result of the Croydon AZTEC project?

The award-winning AZTEC (the name derives from the phrase 'assisted technology') project has long been recognised as one of the UK's leading providers of technology-based equipment for people with dementia. Now the same highly-developed systems are available through Croydon Careline and offer a comprehensive way to manage risk and increase independence within the home.

The systems offered include:

**Smoke and flood detectors** and detectors that monitor for dangerous levels of carbon monoxide.

**Extreme temperature sensors** that warn of potentially hazardous situations such as high, low or rapidly changing

temperatures.

**Systems that sniff for gas** and turn it off automatically if a gas is identified.

**Systems that reduce the risk of falls** by switching on lights as people get out of

bed and raise an alarm if they do not return within a preset time.

**Systems that can automatically**

**page** a carer or friend up to 500 metres away to instantly alert them to a potential risk situation within the home.

**Property exit systems** to alert carers and family members when



The centre offers many less technology-based items such as these bathroom aids

individuals leave their home at inappropriate times of the day or night.

The list is long and all these wireless radio sensors are directly connected via the telephone to Croydon's Social Services Careline team 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

If you would like to see or try these and many more independent living solutions, the AZTEC Centre is located at the Croydon Community Equipment Service in Boulogne Road, Croydon.

The centre is open to the public every Monday and Tuesday from 10am until 3pm and is run jointly by Croydon Council and the voluntary sector.

What is special about the centre is that it gives people the information and knowledge to allow them to make informed choices. People can actually see the equipment, they can try it and can then decide if it could be useful for them.

From simple handrails and aids to get in and out of the bath to the very latest in safety-related technology the centre is for

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- 7:30 am to 7:30 pm

Sunday:

- 7:30 am to 1 pm

everyone in Croydon who needs it.

For more information please call the Centre on 020 8664 8860.

For more information on Croydon Careline systems please call Croydon Careline Telecare Service on 020 8654 7166 or e-mail them at [careline@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:careline@croydon.gov.uk)

*I have been to the centre and it is very interesting and worthwhile to see what is on offer there.*

*Editor*

## **FROM THE 1942 ARCHIVES: MITCHLEY AVENUE IN THE WAR**

*In the RRA archive there are only two Riddlesdown Recorders surviving from the period of the 1939-1945 World War, both comprising a single sheet of A4 typed material. They both show that, despite the war, the Association kept to its mandate of looking after the area. In one dated February 1942, the Committee had turned its attention on the state of the surface of Mitchley Avenue and reported as follows:*

*SURFACE:* This time last year the condition of Mitchley Avenue, between Coombe Wood Hill and the Shopping Parade, was deplorable in the extreme owing to the work of making up the road having been suspended. In wet weather it was a quagmire and in dry weather passing vehicles raised such clouds of dust that it was quite impossible for residents to open their windows. In our last issue we commented on the state of affairs in the following terms: 'The Association is not prepared to acquiesce in the view that the war can be made the

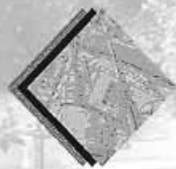
excuse for the continuance of a state of affairs that is little short of scandalous.'

Throughout the next six months, constant pressure was brought to bear on the Urban District Council, both by letter and personal approach to Councillors, to have the work completed. Eventually, in the late summer (*of 1941*), the work was put in hand and, although the specification was drastically modified owing to the difficulty in obtaining materials, the road was satisfactorily surfaced.

*MANHOLES:* More recently it was discovered that the covers of many of the drain manholes alongside the footpath on the south side of Mitchley Avenue, between the bus terminus and the junction of Rectory Park, were either broken or missing, probably as the result of being run over by tanks or other military vehicles. The attention of Messrs Laings (*the estate builders*) was drawn to the danger to children and to persons passing in the 'blackout', as the holes were wide and deep, and in many instances, obscured by long grass. We are happy to report that on receipt of the Association's letter, the firm had the matter attended to immediately.



On the Common looking over to Kenley past the old surveyors' triangulation point



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## ST. EDMUND'S CARING GROUP SUMMER OUTING Wisley Gardens – 21 July 2008

The group had not been to Wisley for its annual outing for about five years and this proved to be a welcome return. On the previous occasion the weather had excelled itself – 92F I seem to remember. This time, although not as hot, it behaved itself impeccably!

Volunteers and clients gathered in the picnic area at about 11.30am. The traditional tasty fare was laid out and was much enjoyed by one and all!

Then to the main business of the day. It is fortunate that the RHS has made wheelchair access to the gardens so easy. The 26-strong group of eleven clients – nine of whom were in wheel-chairs – and



At Wisley: Pat Helmore with Barbara Towler and Julia Rider

fifteen helpers was able to make its leisurely way along the many paths and by-ways, all of them adorned with flowers and shrubs at their best. We wended our way towards Wisley's latest attraction – The Glasshouse. To see this had been the especial wish of the Caring Group's senior client – Pat Helmore – and the experience exceeded our expectations. Set in wonderfully landscaped surroundings the Glasshouse takes pride of place; access to it had been thoughtfully planned and everyone enjoyed the variety of exotica that was on display therein.

This was followed by a leisurely few moments by one of Wisley's many lakes. And then to the important business of afternoon tea in the relative cool of the restaurant. Having fortified the inner person, it was time to visit the well-stocked shop for sundry purchases before beginning the journey home after a splendid day.

I write as a volunteer for the St. Edmund's Caring Group. It is always a pleasure to be involved in occasions such as this but, most importantly of all, grateful thanks must be extended to the co-ordinators for their preparation and unstinting hard work in making these outings possible. Penny, Barbara and Julia – we salute you!

*John Morris*

*PS Thank you to all those who responded to our leaflet through the door; we now have three more volunteers.*

*If you would like to become a volunteer, or need our help, please telephone Julia Rider (8651 6493), Barbara Towler (8660 8653) or Penny Hinton (8660 8239). We'd like to hear from you.*

### A summary of tasks undertaken by St. Edmund's Caring Group in 2007:

**190 medical visits:** Chiropodist 1, Collect prescription 8, Dentist 12, Doctor 91, Hearing Centre 1, Hospital 70, Optician 3, Resource Centre 4.  
**100 other tasks:** DIY 16, Information 3,

Loaning equipment 1, Miscellaneous 14, Support calls 6, Visiting 60.

**525 transport (non-medical):** Bank 2, Hairdressers 52, Lunch Club 302, Outings 21, Shopping 103, Take shopping 45.

**Grand Total of tasks 815.**

**Total Volunteers 32. Clients helped 48.**

## RIDDLEDOWN AND THE 2012 OLYMPICS

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With our success in Beijing very much in mind, together with the need to put on a good show in London in 2012 despite having to make economies, it occurred to me that here the combined forces of Riddlesdown groups could help.

With their local facilities and extensive volunteer groups, their wealth of experience in organising Fun Days and Children's Parties, their green spaces, transport facilities and the already extensive RRA collection of equipment such as bunting, loud-hailer and gazebos, what better use could these be put to than in setting up an out-of-town sports complex to host whatever the main Stratford site can't or won't put on.

A few initial ideas may help.

### Organisation

The first task is to quickly set up the **RRCLRTCSECGPRTWGETCOCO**G (the Riddlesdown Residents City of London Riddlesdown Tennis Clubs St. Edmund's Caring Group Purley Riddlesdown Townswomens Guild etc. Organising Committee of the Olympic Games - the 'etc' covers many others such as the School, the church, other sports clubs, but including these would make the acronym ridiculous).

The Riddlesdown organising committee (Rog for short) will liaise with everyone possible (except the government) and set up Sub-Rogs for each element of the Games and hold meetings whenever it can with whoever is around at the time. They will appoint a school leaver volunteer to do any actual work.

### Finance

The keyword, as with Stratford, will be economy as income will be derived only from local sources as opposed to the whole country or even the rest of London. The RRA subscription, currently £3 per household, will need to rise to somewhere in the region of £25,000 per household for the next 30 years. To share the pain, the events and facilities will need to be cut

down.

For instance, running events will require three to a track; the 100m will be reduced to 50m (although the track up and down the craters on the Common should bring it close to 100m); cycling will use these same craters; the poles in the pole vault will be reduced by half; the triple jump will become the hop and half-a-skip event, and the long jump the 'as long as the longest tape measure we can find' jump, with the athletes landing on an old mattress; the high jump will become the 'quite high' jump; there will only be enough weights for one side for the weight-lifters. The Marathon will be once round the Common and up and down Downs Court Road 87 times.

Swimming, boating and sailing events could be a problem unless it rains and the floods under the bridge can be used.

There will only be one Gold Medal, made of plastic, passed from event to event. Other medals will be replaced by sweets left over from the Fun Day.

Audiences will bring their own seats and food which they will share with the athletes. Close finishes in athletics will be judged from the best audience photo.

### Competitor facilities

The Riddlesdown Olympic Village will be restyled as the Riddlesdown Olympic Campsite with tents and tarpaulins in the woods. With any luck, overflows will be housed in local garages and sheds. Transport will be by the CoL tractor and trailer and SECG volunteers. There will be no special road lanes for Olympic officials or VIPs. They can use the buses.

### Opening ceremony

A video of the Beijing one.

### Closing ceremony

The Beijing one run backwards.

### The Legacy

They might never ask us again.

*Nick Bygrave*

## EARLY DAYS AT GATWICK

by Leslie Oppitz



A down express speeds through Gatwick Racecourse station in LBSCR days. The station became the present Gatwick Airport station on 27 May 1958.

**G**atwick Racecourse station on the main London to Brighton line opened in 1891. Previous race meetings had been held in the Croydon area.

There had been a racecourse at Stroud Green, near Woodside, but this had attracted so much traffic by road and rail that eventually an improved site 'in a quieter location' was chosen at Gatwick. In addition Croydon racecourse had become the scene of much rowdy behaviour from undesirable visitors with the result that it closed in November 1890 while the Gatwick was under construction.

The racecourse owners at Gatwick paid £5,000 to the railway authorities towards the construction of the station, which soon became an important part of the racecourse itself. The station initially served the course only, with frequent excursions on race-days. Three long, covered walkways were constructed to the grandstand.

Not far from the grandstand stood a fine bandstand, obviously a centre of much entertainment in the heyday of racing. This bandstand remains intact today but at its new site in the centre of Queens Square in Crawley. It was

purchased by the local council for a mere £60!

The racecourse achieved much fame throughout its life. During the First World War, the Grand National was transferred from Aintree to Gatwick for the years 1916 to 1918. By 1930, the valuable Grand National Trial was introduced, attracting many famous horses. Special Pullman excursion trains were run on race-days and Gatwick was a popular place indeed!

Around the same time new sounds were being heard overhead with aircraft, including an Avro 504 and a Gipsy Moth, taking to the air. Flying, of course, expanded and soon the racing authorities were claiming that those wishing to enjoy



A general view of Gatwick Racecourse and grandstand in the early 1920s. In the foreground, the auctioneer's stand – the grandstand beyond is now in Queen's Square, Crawley (Both photographs are from the Leslie Oppitz collection)

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a day at Gatwick could now arrive by road, rail or air.

This was not the first time the railways and aircraft had worked together. Since the First World War the railway lines had always proved a reliable, and often the only, navigational aid. Pilots, often lost, would follow the Brighton line northwards as they looked for aerodromes to the south of London.

Soon farmland between the racecourse and nearby Lowfield Heath was bought to develop an aerodrome to be named Gatwick after the course itself. In 1935 Gatwick Racecourse station closed and Tinsley Green railway station opened nearby where the original Beehive control tower still stands. Tinsley Green station was renamed Gatwick Airport on 1 June 1936. Racing continued until the early 1940s by which time the land had been taken over by the Government. With the country at war, priorities perhaps became confused when a final day of training on Spitfires had to be cancelled through a race meeting!

The present Airport station opened on 27 May 1958, the day before the old Airport station (near the Beehive) closed. The Beehive still survives of course and it

has a 'ghost' as a reminder. A number of years ago, workers in a hangar thought they saw a colleague walking towards them in a long, dark coat and trilby hat. But as he reached them he vanished, accompanied by a sudden and chilling drop in temperature. The old days are not forgotten.

From such modest beginnings at Gatwick, it is surely some achievement that today's trains from the airport cater for many thousands of passengers daily. The Gatwick Express started services on 14 May 1984, running non-stop from Gatwick to London.

Today there is only one positive reminder of the past. The old concrete passenger bridge that once spanned the early Gatwick Airport station now crosses the track at Balcombe station in Sussex, seven miles to the south.

*Leslie Oppitz, former resident of Riddlesdown, is also the author of many railway and tramway books including 'Lost Railways of Surrey' published by Countryside Books of Newbury, Berkshire, and available from all good bookshops, priced £9.95.*

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## THE ROMAN ROAD ON RIDDLEDOWN

By Andrew Scott of the Corporation of London

Archaeologists believe that the Bridleway, known as Riddlesdown Road over Riddlesdown, formed part of a Roman road linking London to Portslade, near Brighton, on the south coast. The road was probably built about 150AD and was one of two main routes linking the prosperous corn-growing South Downs and the iron industries of the Weald, with markets in London and across the Channel in Gaul (France).

The exact course of the full length of the Roman road was deduced from a mixture of finding actual remains at certain points including their alignments, i.e. the direction surviving fragments pointed, as well as inferences from straight lengths of modern road and significant place names. Ivan Margary published his account of the road's course in Surrey Archaeological Collections in 1937 on which this article is based.

The nearest section of Roman road to Riddlesdown that has been excavated lies about half a mile north of Caterham station near Tillingdown Hill. Here it was found to be about 25 feet wide and layered with 12 inches of flints. It's thought that rainfall here was higher in the Roman period than it is today and therefore the winter flooding of the Bourne would have been a real obstacle to road builders. In fact it wasn't until 1790 that the Godstone Road was built along its present course in the valley bottom.

So the Romans avoided the wet valley by building their road over Riddlesdown. They probably didn't metal their road, relying on drainage ditches to keep its surface dry. No physical traces of the Roman road have been found here (a possible investigation for the future?). Based on the alignment of Riddlesdown Road over the highest part

of Riddlesdown and the crossing in Purley, Margary was convinced that the original Roman road then continued northwards along the line of the public footpath which continues as Downs Court Road.

Saxon graves were discovered when houses were built along Riddlesdown Road in 1927 and when a trench was dug in their gardens in 1962. Their alignment suggests that a route across Riddlesdown was still in use some 1400 years ago.

Certainly the road over Riddlesdown was the main route for traffic to Brighton and Lewes in the eighteenth century. Horses were changed at the coaching inn at the foot of the steep climb from the Godstone Road on their way to London. This inn is known today as the 'Rose and Crown', but when it was built in 1743 it was known as the 'Rose'. *(It now no longer exists – Editor.)*

Although the construction of the Godstone Road marked its decline as an important road for traffic, motor vehicles continued to use it as late as the 1970s, when it became maintained by Croydon Council as a bridleway.

*(This article is reprinted from the April 2005 Recorder, with thanks again to the author)*



The Via Riddlesdownia – did the legions march up here, perhaps stopping for an ice-cream at Wessonii or a haircut at Tippus Toppus?

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## COMMUNITY PAGES – THINGS TO DO, JOIN, AND HELP WITH

Short pieces on local associations, events and activities are included here free of charge. New material is required for each issue please. Space is limited so please get contributions in early (by end February and/or August) – first come, first served.

**Cantilena** singers  
Cantilena Singers is a friendly, local, ladies choir. On 5 July over 100 friends and supporters gathered in St Matthew's Church, Chichester Road, to hear the choir perform a concert of songs and light music.

The programme included two and three part arrangements of folk songs, traditional pieces and modern favourites. It included 'Linden Lea' by Vaughan Williams and 'People Will Say we're in Love' by Rogers and Hammerstein. It finished with 'I Will Follow You' with the audience joining in the encore.

The annual summer concert is always a fund raising event for the choir's chosen charities. This year The Tadworth & Walton Overseas Aid Trust and Hearing Dogs for Deaf People each received £300 from the proceeds of the concert.

This enjoyable evening was the finale to a successful year which included several seasonal performances before Christmas, informal concerts at a retirement home and success in our performance in classes at the Croydon Music Festival.

In our weekly rehearsals we had fun and improved our technique with clear guidance from our musical director, ably helped by our pianist, who assists us with relaxation and vocal exercises and coaxes us gently through passages with tricky tuning or timing.

Cantilena Singers welcomes new members. We meet on Wednesdays at 7.30pm in the Small Hall, Methodist Church, Limpsfield Road, Sanderstead. (403 bus route). For more information ring Jill on 8763 8971 or 07957 627783

### **PURLEY BURY CROQUET CLUB**

The club has had a successful summer in spite of the weather, with membership at

a record high. We have had mixed results in league matches, but are currently in the regional finals of the Longman Cup.

We enjoyed a visit to the garden at Highgrove at the invitation of H.R.H. Prince Charles.

Our next Chicago Bridge Drive is on Saturday 18 October.

For further details phone Penny on 020 8660 8239, or look on our website: [www.purleyburycroquet.org.uk](http://www.purleyburycroquet.org.uk)

### **PURLEY RIDDLEDOWN TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD**

We celebrated National Townswomen's Day in May with an afternoon tea party, and a presentation, performed by the drama group, of the history of the Townswomen's Guild from the formation of the first guild in 1929 to the present day. It was illustrated with fashion sketches and prints by Mary Ellis showing the kind of clothes that Townswomen would have worn in each decade.

Guild members enjoy a wide variety of activities during each month including Scrabble, drama, pub lunches, country walks and theatre outings.

The monthly meetings always include an interesting talk by a professional speaker, tea and biscuits, time to chat to friends and to meet new people.

The guild meet at St Edmund's Church Hall, Mitchley Avenue, on the first Tuesday of each month at 2pm. New members are always welcome.

For further details please telephone the secretary, Mary Ellis, on 020 8660 1175.

### **EVENING TALKS AT PURLEY LIT**

The Purley Literary Society isn't really 'literary' at all - it organises talks, slide shows and computer videos on all kinds of topics, every other Tuesday evening

from October to March. These are held in Purley United Reformed Church Hall (in the centre of Purley, near car parking and buses) from 8 - 9.30pm. The new programme is:

**7 Oct – Cambodian Odyssey**

Denise Heywood's story of the country, from the wonderful archaeological remains of Angkor Wat temple and the Khmer civilisation, through the terrors of Pol Pot, to today's art and dance renaissance.

**21 Oct – Docklands Light Railway**

Kenneth Fergusson, MD from 1985-90, discusses all the early problems of Britain's first automatic train system and how it expanded over 20 years to become crucial to the 2012 Olympics.

**4 Nov – Modern Art Movements**

Phillipa Bassett illustrates 'The Shock of the New' - how artists from the 1860s to 1920s reacted to rapid change in society, from photography to war.

**18 Nov – Canine Partners**

Malcolm Wells on how dogs are trained to help people who have disabilities.

**2 Dec – Wilderness Canada**

David Edwards FRGS on what he learned from his adventures in the mountains and ice fields along the Alaska Highway.

In the New Year talks continue with:

**6 Jan – The Most Beautiful Walk in the**

**World** (Kangchenjunga, NE India – Kev

Reynolds); **20 Jan – Great Lovers** (Mary

Forlenza); **3 Feb – To the North Poles!**

(Jan Meek); **17 Feb – Music from the**

**Shows** (Barry Stevens sings); **3 Mar –**

**Bird's Eye View of SE Asia** (Richard

Thomas); **17 Mar – Backstage at the**

**Royal Opera House** (Nigel Bates,

percussionist).

To join Purley Lit for all eleven talks is only £21 (ring Margaret Hall on 8668 1764), or pay £3 at the door. Come early for coffee and biscuits.

**RIDDLESDOWN LAWN TENNIS CLUB**

The Club provides an opportunity to get some exercise and fresh air whilst playing

tennis at your own level. This year we have seen an increase in the number of local residents who have inquired about membership and joined the Club, albeit that many wish only to play with family or friends rather than join in general Club sessions.

There has been an even greater interest from younger residents, particularly during the Wimbledon fortnight, although most appeared to think that they should be allowed to play for free.

It is a fact that we need volunteers and fee paying members to keep the Club running as it is not supported financially by any outside authorities or organisations. Cleankill, a local pest control firm, have sponsored junior tennis over several years, helping to cover the costs of providing coaching, but apart from that, all our funding comes from subscriptions and social fund raising events.

Residents are again urged to join and help keep this local amenity available for future generations. We offer memberships for all levels of play, including beginners and those whose racquets have not seen the light of day for a couple of decades or more. Professional coaching can be arranged.

Further details can be obtained by telephoning 020 8668 4352 or from our web site: [www.riddlesdownlawnclub.com](http://www.riddlesdownlawnclub.com)  
[freeservers.com](http://freeservers.com)



Riddlesdown Lawn Tennis Club,  
Lower Barn Road

## **SANDERSTEAD HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

I am sure all who came to our Summer Flower Show will realise what good heart the Society is in, with membership and exhibitors blooming.

We start our Autumn season of lectures on 13 October at St Mary's Church Hall, Purley Oaks Road, at 8pm with a talk entitled 'Plant Hunting Around the World', to be followed on 10 November by a talk on 'Christmas Customs'.

Membership costs £6 per household and entitles the whole family to enter our two shows, attend five lectures, hire tools, a garden advice service, free entry to National Trust Properties, reduced entry to R.H.S. Wisley and two coach outings each year.

Contact Valerie Burley 020 8651 5837 for membership details.

## **SCALLYWAGS PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP**

**Thursdays 9.30 to 11.30**  
**St Edmund's Church, Mitchley Avenue, Riddlesdown**

Sallywags have had another busy year. We have seen a lot of new faces and this happy group is still thriving. I have often heard parents remark with astonishment how quickly their little ones make themselves at home when they first come to Sallywags – it can only be the warm and welcoming atmosphere that the children respond to so positively. There is always so much to do – play dough, craft activities, singing, ball-play and, of course, just running around and making lots of noise! Also vital is the opportunity to practise those all-important social skills, something that will stand the older children in good stead as we say 'goodbye' to them and wish them well as they look forward to starting school – such an exciting time. It only seems yesterday that these self-same school children, cute and cuddly in their baby-grows, were enjoying

their first roll across the baby mat and their first illegal taste of playdough - such precious times.

You can ring Lisa Finch for further details on 020 8660 9075 or else pop in and meet us – the group is back from Thursday 11 September. Come along and make new friends and share some special time with your little ones.

*Michelle Buckley-Sheldon*

## **R S P B AUTUMN FAIR**

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### Our MP

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### Our Councillors

#### PURLEY

**Graham Bass**, 19 Woodland Way, Purley CR8 2HT. Tel: 8660 7013

Email : graham.bass@croydon.gov.uk

**Derek Millard**, c/o The Town Hall, Katherine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX. Tel: 8660 9329

Email : derek.millard@croydon.gov.uk

**Donald Speakman**, 4 Bencombe Road, Purley, Surrey CR8 4DQ Tel: 8405 6752

Email : donaldspeakman@croydon.gov.uk

#### SANDERSTEAD

**Lynne Hale** c/o Town Hall, Katherine Street Croydon CR0 1NX Tel: 8405 6721

Email : lynne.hale@croydon.gov.uk

**Tim Pollard**, Woodside, 42 Lime Meadow Ave, South Croydon CR2 9AR Tel: 8251 8500

Email : councillor@timpollard.co.uk

**Yvette Hopley** c/o The Town Hall, Katherine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX Tel 8657 0973

Email : yvette.hopley@croydon.gov.uk

### RIDDLEDOWN/LONDON TRAIN TIMES (OFF-PEAK)

**To East Croydon, Victoria (London Bridge):** Weekdays: 0906, 0936 then 6 and 36 mins past the hour until 1606 then (1636), (1706), (1736), then (1822), 1841, 1906, 1936, 2006, 2036, 2106, 2136, 2206, 2236, 2306. Saturdays: 0706, 0736 then same each hour until 2306. Sundays: 0821 then same each hour until 2321.

**From Victoria to Riddlesdown:** Weekdays: 0923, 0953 and then 23 and 53 mins past the hour until 1653 then 1732, 1802, 1824, 1923, 1953, 2023, 2053, 2123, 2153, 2223, 2253, 2324, 2349. Saturdays: 0723, 0753 then 23 and 53 mins past the hour until 2253 then 2324, 2349. Sundays: 0722 and then same each hour until 2222.

**From London Bridge to Riddlesdown:** Weekdays: 1713, 1750, 1853. Saturdays and Sundays: No direct services.

**From East Croydon to Riddlesdown:** 0910, 0940 and then 10 and 40 mins past the hour until 1540, then 1610, 1640, 1710, 1728, 1748, 1805, 1817, 1841, 1910, 1940, 2010, 2040, 2110, 2140, 2210, 2240, 2310, 2343, 0010. Saturdays: 0910, 0940 and then 10 and 40 mins past the hour until 0010. Sundays: 0943 and then same each hour until 2143, then 2245.

*Enquiries: National Rail Enquiries: Tel: 08457 484950, website: [www.nationalrail.co.uk/](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/) or [www.southernrailway.com/](http://www.southernrailway.com/). Southern Customer Services: Tel: 08451 272940*

### AND SOME LOCAL BUS ROUTES AND TIMES

**The 412** starts/ends at West Croydon bus station, passes through High Street/Katherine Street, South Croydon (Swan & Sugar Loaf), Upper Selsdon Road, Selsdon (Farley Road), Sanderstead Church, Riddlesdown (Mitchley Avenue), starting/ending at Tesco's Purley.

Frequencies (mins): Early: 20, Peaks 15, Daytime 15, Evenings 20, Late evenings 30. (Sundays 30).

First and last: from West Croydon: weekdays and Saturdays: 0620, 2355; Sundays: 0655, 2355.

from Tesco's weekdays and Saturdays: 0552, 2327; Sundays: 0627, 2327.

**The 403** starts/ends at West Croydon bus station, passes Fairfield Halls, Park Lane, Swan & Sugar Loaf, Sanderstead Station and Church, Hamsey Green, Warlingham Green and Sainsbury's, Chelsham, Farleigh, starting/ending Chelsham Common.

Frequencies (mins): Early: 20, Peaks 12, Daytime 12, Evenings 15, Late evenings 20. (Sundays 20).

First and last: from West Croydon weekdays and Saturdays: 0530, 2400; Sundays: 0700, 2400.

from Chelsham Common weekdays and Saturdays: 0530, 2400; Sundays: 0650, 2400.

*Enquiries: London Transport 020 7222 1234 [www.transportforall.com/](http://www.transportforall.com/); Ariva 020 8271 0101.*

*(Sources: Trains: Southern timetable; Buses: Out & About (TfL). Timetables change, so, if in doubt, check with the operators. RRA can accept no responsibility for the accuracy of the above information.)*

Our Website: [www.riddlesdownresidents.org.uk](http://www.riddlesdownresidents.org.uk)

Library Closing Days: Purley and Selsdon – Wednesdays; Sanderstead – Thursdays

Croydon Council's telephone number for all enquiries: 020 8686 4433

RRA Committee Meetings 2008: 19 November; 2009: 21 January, 18 March

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