



**NEWSLETTER no. 126
and Annual Report
November 2020**

Message from the President

I am distressed to think I may be the *last* President of the Reigate Society. That could easily happen unless replacements are found soon for Michael and Bridget Doughty, Chairman and Secretary respectively of the group. They have both done absolutely terrific work the last few years keeping the Society going. I am sure all members will join me in thanking them very much for what they have done, and for the cheerful and professional way they have approached their duties. It is understandable that they wish to hand the reins over. Please consider if *you* could fill one or other of these posts. If no-one is found, the Society dies next year. And that would be a tragedy in my view. Let me give an example that explains why.

Earlier this year - just after the first Covid lockdown ended - an issue arose in Reigate which the presence of the Society helped to resolve. Surrey County Council, making use of a special new Government funding programme, introduced with minimal notice a new cycle and pedestrian arrangement that reduced the roadway available to vehicles to one lane. Huge congestion was the immediate result, and several shops were left without their loading bays. Speaking with the considerable weight of the Reigate Society behind me, I contacted the Council Leader, Tim Oliver, who gave up a couple of hours on a Sunday morning to come to see for himself the adverse effects of the ill-considered scheme. He quickly ordered it removed, and two lanes were restored after only three days.

It was another example of why the Society has had an important role to play in the lives of our towns. Now, the priority is to replace Michael and Bridget. They will explain what is required, and I hope they will agree when I say the work involved is not too arduous or time-consuming. It is vital, though.

As we struggle through the strange and difficult times we are facing, may I offer Society members and your families very best wishes, with the hope that all stay well and safe.

NICHOLAS OWEN

ACTING CHAIRMAN'S NOTES – MICHAEL C.DOUGHTY

Since the Covid 19 lockdown in March 2020 Reigate Society has operated on a care and maintenance basis. All Open meetings including the AGM have had to be cancelled and Council and GP meetings cannot take place. The sections of the Society which are continuing to operate using alternative methods of communication are Architecture and Planning chaired by Tim Lee; Transport, chaired by Bruce Healey and the Redhill Committee which is chaired by Pippa Martin. They, themselves will provide a precis of how things stand with them in the following pages.

The Annual General Meeting for 2020 will continue to be postponed until it is possible to hold this in a suitable form. This newsletter must serve as a much slimmed down version of the Annual Report. We trust that you will continue to remain members in these difficult times. However, I must appeal again for volunteers to come forward to fill the offices of Chairman and Honorary Secretary. Unless these posts are filled the Society must close and preparations for folding it up will be put into action in 2021.

There are currently several important matters affecting the Borough which demonstrate the need for the Society to remain active so I urge you to consider carefully my comments above. Surrey County Council plans to develop a new purpose built premises for the Priory School to move into in approximately 3 years' time which is a momentous change. This also brings the concern for the future use of Reigate Priory itself. We are writing to SCC & RBBC to continue to be a voice for the Community on such an important matter. We have also learnt that the Reigate Priory Museum will not be able to open again in 2021 as had been hoped and that space has now been taken over by the school for extra teaching space during an indefinite period.

As for the full year from 2019 to 2020 there were highlights some of which you will have read about in the January newsletter when we reported on the very successful Members Evening at Reigate Manor in October 2019 with the presentation of the Reigate Society Civic Awards and Mark Davison's talk on his metal detecting hobby of a lifetime.

The December Open Meeting hosted a talk by Nigel Ellis then a Team Leader with the RBBC Green Spaces Team who gave us an enthusiastic insight into the work involved in the protection and upkeep of trees and hedges and woodland areas of the Borough. The January Open Meeting saw a talk by James Poole on The Childrens Trust, Tadworth Court and the special work with children with brain injury based at this historic local building. Nicholas Owen also shared a few words with us about his involvement with and enthusiasm for the Charity. The February Open Meeting also drew a good number of attendees. Peter Barclay of GACC (Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign) gave us a frank and open picture of Gatwick's effect on the local area over time and alerted us to the need to be ever vigilant and aware of this in order to protect the local rural and urban communities. We wrote to the Transport secretary in support of GACC's demands for greater scrutiny of the Airport's expansion plans. Peter Barclay's and GACC's years of experience and knowledge of aviation matters and the effects of airport development at Gatwick are invaluable to the community in giving us a voice.

The March Open meeting then had to be cancelled as lockdown started and the period of skeleton operations began which is ongoing for months ahead. It will be a new Chairman who leads the Society forward into another phase once the pandemic is under control.

Michael Doughty

Acting Chairman

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ACTING SECRETARY'S NOTES – BRIDGET DOUGHTY 01737-240974

The Chairman's notes contain the record of Society activities that have taken place since October 2019 and the current situation for Reigate Society since the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. You will also be aware that Heritage Open day events were considerably curtailed this year. The Undercroft was not opened and there was no brochure produced. However, the Society hopes to continue its support in the future.

The last Reigate Society Council Meeting was held on 5th March just before lockdown. Since then members of the Council are kept informed of any issues of importance to the Society and have been contacted by email or telephone as the need arises.

The Natural Amenities Committee is currently inactive.

Email and the website will be key methods of contact for the Society in these difficult times. If you have not previously provided a contact email address to the Society please consider doing so now and respond to Robert Bogin as requested.

Bridget Doughty

TREASURER'S NOTES – ROBERT BOGIN 07989-408834

We are almost 7 months into the current year and net income stands at around £2000 and Society funds at just over £10000.

Our activities have been severely curtailed by the pandemic so there have been no venue or speaker costs and similarly printing and postage costs are nil.

Subscriptions for the year 2020-2021 are running at £1650 less than 2019-2020. This is understandable with the lack of activity and we thank all those who have paid their subscriptions.

REGISTRAR'S NOTES – ROBERT BOGIN

Number of members stands at 457 comprising 142 single memberships, 141 family memberships, 19 corporate and 8 others - thus a total of 310 memberships.

115 members have not yet renewed for the current year 2020-2021. If anyone wishes to renew but is unsure whether they have done so or not please contact me by telephone or email to robert.bogin@btinternet.com.

If you receive this newsletter by post it means we do not have an email address for you. Printing and distribution are more difficult during the current situation so if you do have an email address please send it to robert.bogin@btinternet.com

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING - CHAIR: TIM LEE 01737-243540

Committee meetings going online:

Due to the current situation regarding Covid 19, we have been holding our regular monthly committee meetings on zoom which I am glad to say, while not all members are able to attend, we are carrying on with our review and commenting on planning applications and discussing all other matters arising or ongoing in the area.

Planning applications:

Applications to erect signage for shop fronts on the High Street and Church Street have continued as the sharp turnaround of businesses, restaurants and cafes continues.

Notably, an application to change of signage to The Red Cross Inn on the High Street, which has recently changed ownership is still being determined by the council with a first attempt being rejected as the new cross emblem was not acceptable in terms of its orientation and size.

Three new Murals on the Brewery Yard wall created by local artist Adam Green were installed after getting planning approval. They were later taken down for re-fitting into their frames. According to the website, the addition of a sound narration by Nicholas Owen is an exciting part of the project. With it you are able to listen to the story of Reigate's brewing history while enjoying the paintings. A great interactive idea that could be used for other parts of historic Reigate maybe.

There are still other historical buildings that are empty currently such as the NatWest building as well as The Barons building on Church Street, which in November 2019 had a change of use from A1 retail to B1a business granted and currently is covered in scaffolding and being worked on.

Prior approval has been granted for the demolition of 1-2 Rosebank Cottages on Cockshott Hill following their award of local listing status earlier in the year. We await a further planning application for proposals for new houses on the site but hope that these historic cottages, that were two of the first buildings to be erected in that area can be retained.

Civic Awards 2020:

Unfortunately, due to the current situation we were unable to complete the judging for our Civic Awards for 2020 but do hope to carry out the awards in 2021. As always, any nominations for next year's awards from all members of the Reigate Society are very welcome.

Other local Architecture and Planning news:

With the help of the committee's members, we have now updated and published our description of what the Architecture and Planning Committee does on the Reigate Society website describing the roles, tasks and responsibilities of the Architecture and Planning Committee. These can be seen here:-

<https://www.reigatesociety.org.uk/about/#top>

In Redhill, The old Longmead Educational building has now been demolished by Surrey County Council much to the dismay and disappointment of the local residents and following a strong lobbying of SCC and online campaign. Several local architects, including myself were involved in presenting ideas of how the existing building could be used by the community but unfortunately demolition went ahead after the statutory listing application was rejected.

The Reigate Society installation in Priory Park has been subject to ongoing damage and while some remedial repairs have been carried out, a more permanent method of repair is currently being considered.

Civic Voice and the new Government Planning white paper:

The Committee has also been involved with joining some of the Civic voice's seminars online about the new white paper by the government on a revision of the planning system as we know it. Civic Voice are calling for Civic societies to be allowed a more formal status in the planning process. The general view is that while the government are trying to streamline outline planning for developers of large sites and simplify planning policy with a more code based system, the heritage side of things will remain largely the same which Civic Voice are arguing needs to change. Members of the committee have been submitting their comments to Civic Voice before they submit them to the government.

TRANSPORT

- CHAIR: BRUCE HEALEY 01737-240577

Roads

The road works on Reigate Hill appear to be on schedule and are expected to complete in early to mid December.

The cycle lane introduced on Reigate High Street in July was imposed at short notice and apparently without any sort of an impact analysis. The effect of concentrating 4 lanes of traffic from Bell Street and Church Street into one lane should have been obvious. The lane was removed a few days later after swift action from MP Crispin Blunt and others.

The speed restrictions on the M23 were removed in mid September as the 'smart' motorway fully opened. The lack of a hard shoulder is unwelcome to the emergency services and we hope that this does not lead to a rise in serious incidents. The improvements to the junctions at Merstham and Gatwick in particular should reduce the tendency for traffic jams.

It is estimated that traffic levels are 80% of pre-Covid-19 levels although the M23 in rush hour is far quieter owing to the much reduced level of traffic using Gatwick.

Public Transport

During the Covid-19 outbreak, the usage of roads has recovered much more quickly than other modes of transport. It is understandable that people would prefer their own vehicles rather than mix with others. A number of studies have shown that public transport poses far less of a risk for catching the virus than many other forms of gathering. Nonetheless, with the second wave of the virus, the Government advice is to avoid public transport whereas the use of restaurants (which pose a greater risk) not discouraged.

Air

Air travel has been particularly badly hit by Covid-19 with global traffic levels reported to be 60-70% down. The airlines seem to be able to avoid social distancing rules on flights and of course everyone removes their masks when eating.

THE REIGATE SOCIETY

Website:

www.reigatesociety.org.uk

Facebook

www.facebook.com/The-Reigate-Society-219293171582356/



TRANSPORT

- CHAIR: BRUCE HEALEY 01737-240577

(Report continued)

Rail

The consultation into Reigate Platform 3 showed an overwhelmingly positive reaction although it came as a shock that any plans to resignal the level crossing to reduce barrier closure times had been excluded. After representations from MP Crispin Blunt, Councillor Gareth Owen, Reigate Society President Nicholas Owen and others, Network Rail have agreed to reconsider.

Work has started on rebuilding Gatwick Airport Station. The aim is to double the area of the concourse and widen platforms 5 and 6. This means a slight reduction in service while some platforms are out of action. The work is due to complete in September 2023.

GWR trains have started introducing 3 trains per hour on the Reading to Redhill services. This adds to the time that Reigate level crossing barriers are closed. Owing to the rebuilding of Gatwick Airport station, the additional trains will terminate at Redhill. When this work is complete, these extra trains will continue to Gatwick. The 4 car class 769 are now expected to be introduced in the New Year although yet further delays would not be a surprise.

Rail usage is back up to over 40% of pre Covid-19 levels. With increased working from home, it would seem that rush hour levels are unlikely to fully recover at least in the foreseeable future. There are some signs that leisure travel is holding up rather better.

The onset of Covid-19 and the reduction in emissions has intensified the desire to maintain this reduction. The rail industry in general is looking at further electrification work. Studies are ongoing to look at third rail systems to find a method of making them safer in the event of trespass. The result of this might make the North Downs Line a priority candidate for electrification.

In conjunction with the Tonbridge to Reigate Community Rail Partnership, the Reigate Society has designed a poster for Redhill Station highlighting the part played by the Station in the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk in 1940. With over a third of a million troops arriving at the Channel ports in 10 days, it was a considerable challenge to move them to army camps mostly in the South East. The poster is about half way along Platform 3.

Buses

The use of the local buses has been similarly affected by the virus. During the roadworks on Reigate Hill the southbound routes 420 and 460 are travelling via Pebble Hill and the A25. The 460 is not serving Lower Kingswood.

Website and Facebook

The website has been moved over to a new hosting service.

REDHILL COMMITTEE CHAIR: PIPPA MARTIN 01737-763395

We have two new members on the Redhill Committee which now numbers ten.

Having been empty since 2007 the Longmead centre which was an historic Edwardian building serving as a school and adult education centre for over a century was demolished in September at a cost of £280,000. Despite protests from the Borough, Reigate Society, several heritage societies, letters to the Surrey Mirror, Crispin Blunt MP and a petition which collected over 1,000 signatures Surrey County felt the building had deteriorated too far. Local architects had submitted alternative plans for its restoration with retail units and affordable housing. Surrey County Council have plans for a car park, a single storey building and a poly tunnel. The poly tunnel is believed to replace the garden at Colesmead which the council runs as 'Surrey Choices' providing employment for the disabled. The positive effect of attracting so much attention to the campaign was the formation of the Redhill and Reigate Community Trust which is endeavouring to protect the borough's heritage.

The Belfry Centre reported a very challenging few months due to the Covid virus. It had to be very flexible and create a new pattern of shopping to comply with Government regulations. Until the beginning of October no shops had pulled out of the centre. 6 shopkeepers in Station Road West submitted a petition to the Council complaining that some of the market stalls were affecting their trade.

Plans for the demolition and submitted plans for the reconstruction of Shrewsbury Court Independent Hospital were discussed. The borough had objected twice to the designs on the grounds of size and the front façade. The committee felt the plans were not unreasonable.

The Salvation Army Citadel in Grove Hill Road was built one year after the formation of the Salvation Army in 1878. It has the date 1879 on the front façade. The Redhill and Reigate Community Trust is submitting to the Council a plea for its retention as a community asset and to stop further demolition of Redhill's heritage and the unsympathetic construction of new buildings unfit for the community.

The Picture House, a Crest Nicholson development, is virtually completed. It has 138 one and two bedroom apartments. Six of them are to be sold as affordable housing through a local housing society and are situated on the ground floor along with the 25 parking spaces. There is no basement due to flooding problems. 25 of the apartments are to be sold on the Government's "Help to Buy scheme". The two bedroom apartments with a parking space cost £389,000 plus ground rent and service charges. The Chairman viewed the apartments and they are well fitted with a practical use of space. Thirty five have been sold to date. The development is not unattractive. Each flat has a balcony either looking out over Marketfield Way to the west or the railway embankment to the east. The finish is in a mixture of red and yellow-grey brick. Flowers and shrubs have been planted at the front.

REDHILL COMMITTEE CHAIR: PIPPA MARTIN 01737-763395

(Report continued)

Marketfield Court, the Crest Lodge construction next to the Picture House of apartments, is still under construction

The Furness House development of 71 flats which is opposite the BP garage is a conversion from an office building. These apartments are considerably smaller and prices start at £200,000.

One side of Brook Road has been demolished with plans for further apartment blocks.

Vinci, the Marketfield Way contractor continues to dig and drive piles. It is to be a complex of 11 retail and restaurant units, a multiplex cinema and 153 apartments with 47 car parking spaces in the basement. It is a Zone 2 flood area! The design is to be in keeping with the Odeon Cinema façade. Unfortunately this was demolished to accommodate the Picture House! An agreement from the Council was secured to display the plans on the hoardings. To date none has appeared. The Committee felt that in Redhill demolition and plans are being rushed through without public consultation and thought given to the needs of the community.

October 30, The Times Report – The National Trust warned that the Government is ‘creating a concrete desert’.

Redhill Aerodrome is re-submitting its plans for development.

The possibility of an award was proposed for the development on the A25 at Devon Crescent and for the YMCA building opened in 2018 by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson and the Duke of Grafton (an architect himself).

It was suggested that plaques should be sited recording eminent people and buildings.

CORPORATE MEMBERS

All phone numbers prefixed 01737 and addresses Reigate unless otherwise stated.

Care Homes of Distinction Ltd	Wray Park, 55 Alma Road RH2 0DN	248245	Care Homes & property development
Crow Watkin	14 Bell Street RH2 7BE	245886	Independent estate agents, surveyors & valuers
Dunottar School	High Trees Road RH2 7EL	761945	Independent secondary school
East Surrey College	Claremont Road, Gatton Point RH1 2JX	772611	College of Further Education
Franchise Accounting Services Ltd	48 Nutfield Road, Merstham RH1 3EP	649839	Accountancy
Micklefield School	10 Somers Road RH2 9DU	242615	Independent preparatory school for boys & girls aged 2 1/2 to 11
Reigate Architects	24 Holmesdale Road RH2 0BQ	243540	Architecture & sustainability
Reigate Art Studios	42 Castle Walk RH2 9PX	(0)7959 829627	Various art classes and studio space for artists,
Reigate Grammar School	Reigate Road RH2 0QS	222231	Grammar School
Reigate Heath Golf Club	Reigate Heath RH2 8QR	226793	Heathland golf course
Reigate Priory Cricket Club	Park Lane RH2 8JX	244477	Cricket club with senior & junior sections
Reigate Priory School	Bell Street RH2 7RL	245065	Junior school
Royal Albert & Alexandra School	Gatton Park RH2 0TW	649050	Boarding school for boys & girls aged 7 to 18
Skipton Building Society	43 Church Street RH2 0AE	245716	Local building society (mortgages & investments)
Stanton Construction	1 Castlefield Road RH2 0SA	227430	Development & construction service, public & commercial sectors
Stentor Music Co. Ltd	Albert Road North RH2 9EZ	240226	Manufacturers and distributors of musical instruments
Stoneman Funeral Service	Doran Court, Reigate Road RH1 6AZ	763456	Funeral directors & memorial craftsmen
TWM Solicitors LLP	40 West Street RH2 9BT	221212	Solicitors
White & Sons	24 High Street RH2 9AY	222600	Independent estate agents, surveyors & valuers

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EMAIL: _____

I enclose our subscription for 2020/2021	Individual	£10
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Cheques to 'The Reigate Society'	Family	£15
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	Corporate	£30
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If you are not a member and would like to join, please tick here _____

Please send cheques and/or completed form to:

Robert Bogin, Townsend House, 64 Church Street, Reigate RH2 0SP

Bank details for direct transfer: Sort code 40-38-10 Account 70690538

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