



## **MINUTES OF THE LEATHERHEAD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION MEETING ON 5<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022.**

PRESENT-Caroline Brown (Chairman), Ray Brown, Bill and Gill Whitman, Louise Herrity, David Brett, David and Carol Stoves, Percy Hawking, Hilary Porter, Lucy Quinnell and Cathy Brett (Speakers), Helen Tribe, Martyn Williams, Tim Hall, John and Pam Wilson, Paula Sabine, Andi Ryan, Fran Smith, Rosemary Henderson, Jane Pratt, Diana Carr, Lesley Peirce, Maureen Conrad, Carol Webster, Bernard Salisbury, Julia Jarrett, Jenny Day, Alison Houslander, Alan and Celia Thornhill, Jenny MacFarlane, David Woodhead, Irene and Ian Seifert, Keira Vyvyan-Robinson (Cllr), Gill and Tim Caffell, Richard Wood.

APOLOGIES-Sarah Buttery, Elaine Arnold, Paul Sutherland-Waite.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT-**

The Chairman (CB) welcomed everyone very warmly, as it was one of the first "normal" meetings since the start of Covid. She was pleased to note that there were some forty members present.

She also welcomed the guest speakers for the evening, being Lucy Quinnell of The Fire & Iron Gallery in Leatherhead and Cathy Brett, the recently appointed curator of the Leatherhead Museum. She confirmed that the speakers would talk on the subject of the apparent close connection between the fictitious setting for Jane Austen's "Emma" and the real-life Leatherhead of the period.

However, she then reported on a long list of issues regarding the appearance of the Town that members had identified earlier in the summer. Some were in respect of privately owned property and some were where either our District Council or our County Council were not, apparently, carrying out their maintenance responsibilities. She bemoaned the negative impression they gave of the Town and queried why no one seemed intent on rectifying them.

She then confirmed that the LRA would be represented at two of the Local Plan hearings being conducted by the Inspector, one in late September and one in late October.

She mentioned that she had four other matters to bring to members' attention, but would do this in the next Bulletin.

More detail on all of the above is contained in the full version of the speech, which is on the LRA web-site filed under "Reports" and then "Chairman."

### **SPEAKERS-**

CB introduced the two speakers (Lucy Quinnell and Cathy Brett).

Lucy introduced herself as always having been interested in history, particularly as she lives in one of Leatherhead's oldest buildings, "Rowhurst." Originally thought to be 16<sup>th</sup> century, testing of some of the timbers actually dates the building to the mid 1300's. She is also a keen environmentalist and, in conjunction with the "Leatherhead and District Community Preservation Society," launched a campaign that saved Teazle

Wood from development in 2012. It transpires that the LDCPS had also been instrumental in saving Norbury Park in 1929 and is currently seeking to preserve Splash Island.

Cathy is an artist, illustrator and environmentalist with a particular interest in helpful social activities like Outreach, and The Big Draw. She has also recently been appointed as the Curator of Leatherhead Museum. She and Lucy have known each other since childhood.

Lucy had studied Jane Austen at University and always had the feeling that the setting for the book "Emma" may well have been Leatherhead (Randalls was the house in the book and one of the most famous events takes place on Box Hill). Seeing the popularity of recent films like "Bridgerton," and "Love Knows Best," she wondered whether there might be a possibility of raising Leatherhead's profile by promoting Leatherhead as the real-life version of the fictitious setting of the book, "Highbury." She, Cathy and others have therefore produced graphics and clothes of the period which promote this idea. These have been on show in the Town and will feature in the forthcoming "Heritage Days ". Apparently, the History Society would like a permanent exhibition devoted to Jane Austen.

Lucy and Cathy continue their research and believe the medieval Swan Hotel in the High Street, may well have been the real-life version of the coaching inn where the ball in Emma took place. Interestingly, although demolished in the thirties, it lives on to a certain degree because its medieval bricks were salvaged and used to build some of the walls in the current Rowhurst forge. Finally, we were all asked to be on the look-out for some vestiges or reference to a shop called "Fords" which has a prominent role in the book and may have referred to a real shop present in Leatherhead at the time.

A model of "Fords " and the Regency costumes and graphics will be on display at Rowhurst Forge on the following dates- Friday 9<sup>th</sup>, Sat. 10<sup>th</sup>, plus 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Sept.

AOB-

Julia Jarrett raised the subject of the next Litter Pick and it was agreed that it would be on Saturday, 15 October with a start in the Station Road side of the Park at 10 am and a finish at 12.30 in the same place. One member particularly requested that some volunteers should do the stretch between Oaklawn Road and the Crematorium. Young Street was also mentioned as being very full of rubbish.

Hilary Porter asked that it should be announced that there will be a workshop to help those who are unable to use the internet, on Wednesday 21st September, at the Fairfield Centre from 2 - 4 p.m., when HSBC, Surrey Disability Alliance and Sight for Surrey will be demonstrating the simplest ( and sometimes free) help and equipment. Help can also be given at home. Facilitated by Mole Valley Access Group and Mole Valley Care. Transport available. Tel: 01372 376247. Carers welcome. (I do apologise for this item being out of date. The reasons were beyond my control but I am sure the groups mentioned above, or Hilary Porter, would be able to give help)

Hilary is hoping that there will be two further workshops, one at the Library and the other in the Education Hub in the High Street.

NEXT MEETING- Meeting for October is now fixed for 17th at 7.30 with Simon Ritchie giving us a talk on the development of Ordnance Survey maps This will be the AGM for 2021. The title is: "A brief history of the Ordnance Survey." We have all heard of or seen "Trig points" but few of us know how far back into history they go, how much work they involve or how many of them survive today.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 21.00