



WEST END VILLAGE SOCIETY

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— Your village, your voice

Digital-Only Bulletin

November 2025 Bulletin No. 2

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Our Amazing Heathlands

"I like nothing more than crawling on the ground" declared Michael Jones, Education Officer of Thames Basin Heaths Partnership. He was talking to West End Village Society (WEVS) on 22 September about our amazing local heathlands. From ground level Michael can spot a remarkable variety of insects, other invertebrates, reptiles, carnivorous plants such as the sundew, rare birds such as the nightjar, and other small living things.

He showed some astonishing photographs and video. A wood-lark so perfectly camouflaged on the ground that it was hard to pick out in the photograph even though we knew it was there somewhere. In a gruesome video clip we saw in close-up a Green Tiger Beetle chomping away at a helpless wood ant. The Tiger Beetle is a ferocious predator that can run sixty body lengths a second to ambush its prey!



Green Tiger Beetle

The talk was notable for Michael's sheer enthusiasm. He enthused about walking on the heathland as a wonderful way of getting fresh air and experiencing some of the wonders of nature. He also described the importance of the heathland in our part of Surrey and neighbouring areas of Berkshire and Hampshire. It is a rare habitat. Only 15% of the heathland

existing in this area 200 years ago now survives.

The heaths are under a number of threats, including climate change, fires (usually started by humans, accidentally or otherwise), encroaching by development, and loose dogs which can disturb or even kill the wildlife on the ground, especially in the breeding season of March to September. Michael asked that dog owners keep their dogs to the paths, prevent them chasing livestock or wildlife, and always use bag and bin.



Nightjar

Michael's principal role is his education work in visiting schools and other organisations (such as WEVS). He has been to many schools in the Thames Basin to talk about the heathland and to run projects with schools – though this hasn't yet included any schools in West End or neighbouring areas. He would be delighted to have an invitation!

Michael's colleague Nicola Buckland will be contributing an article for our next 12-page Newsletter in January.

This talk was part of a series of occasional WEVS talks. Others have included identifying and dealing with scam messages, the history and mystery of maps, and heat pumps – a varied list!



Michael Jones (right) with Pete Jones (no relation), WEVS Chairman

Front page photograph: Brentmoor Heath looking towards the four Bronze Age barrows which lie behind the white information board

About this digital-only Bulletin: Guy Consterdine, Editor

This is the second issue of a series of bulletins published online only, exclusively for WEVS members. The aim is to provide updates of information and reminders of forthcoming events. It will also treble WEVS' communications with its members – that is, the majority for whom we have email addresses. The bulletins are exclusively in emailable digital form because it avoids burdening our hardworking volunteer distributors of our printed newsletters with more work to do than we can reasonably ask; and for speed of delivery.

At least one bulletin, but usually two or three, will appear during the intervals between our long-established 12-page newsletters which traditionally

are published in May (before the village fete), August/September (before the Ag & Hort Show) and January (before the WEVS AGM).

Those members for whom we do not have an email address, or who are not sure if we have it, are encouraged to email us at comms@wevs.org.uk in order to receive the bulletins. As membership is for households each household member may receive their own copy of the bulletins if we receive the relevant email details.

Email addresses are used solely for communicating with members. They are not used for any other purpose.

Articles without author bylines are written by me.

Remembrance; Gardening

WEVS on Remembrance Sunday

WEVS presented a wreath at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday, 9th November. Jan Smith, Secretary of WEVS, is pictured laying it on the Society's behalf.



Garden Club

A few days before Remembrance Sunday a working party of the Village Garden Club spent time preparing the area around the War Memorial, and "made a fabulous job of it" as one Parish Councillor remarked. The photograph shows the scene on Remembrance Sunday morning before the memorial service took place.

The Garden Club's regular monthly meeting in December will be its Christmas Dinner at Chobham Golf Club (bookings close on 1st December). The January meeting, at 7.50pm in Tringham Hall on Tuesday 27th January, will include a talk by Timothy Walker on "Tenerife – a honeypot of plants and an evolutionary laboratory".



West Surrey to replace SHBC and SCC

Surrey Heath Borough Council is to be abolished, and Surrey County Council too. Announced at the end of October, it is the result of the Government's drive towards 'unitary' councils, cutting out one layer of local administration. Instead of having three layers of local government – County Council, Borough/District councils and parish councils – there will be two layers: Unitary Authorities and parish councils.

In the case of Surrey, from April 2027 the county will be divided into two: West Surrey and East Surrey. West Surrey will embrace the areas of Surrey Heath, Guildford, Woking, Runnymede, Spelthorne and Waverley.

Here is a WEVS summary of the situation, drawn from a range of sources.

Reasons for the change

There are two main reasons for this big change. One is greater efficiency and cost-saving through simplifying government and reducing duplication. The 11 Borough/District councils each have large administrative and other staffs, covering the same functions 11 times. Replacing all this and the county council by two unitary councils will greatly reduce the headcount and other duplicated activities. It should thereby save significant costs.

The other reason is to have "decisions being made closer to the people they affect". This is only half true. Decisions made by SCC (see separate panel) will indeed be made by an authority somewhat closer to residents through dealing with only our western half of the county. In contrast, everything currently handled by Surrey Heath Borough Council and the other District councils (see panel) will be made further away from residents. SHBC's local knowledge, and that of the other Borough/District Councils, will be lost.

Parish councils will remain unchanged, but in the absence of the middle tier of local government they will deal with the top tier council and so their roles may evolve and become more significant.

An additional way of dealing with the gap between parish and unitary authority is likely to be Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACS). The idea is to support community engagement by giving

towns, villages and parishes a formal voice within the new unitary authorities. The NACs would be intended to partially replace some functions of Borough/District councils in representing local interests to the unitary authorities. NACS would not have decision-making powers; they would be advisory. This concept needs piloting and refining, and in the summer pilots began in three areas: East Elmbridge; Dorking and villages: and Caterham, Warlington and North Tandridge. Farnham was added in September. SCC will review results in December.

Timetable

The timetable is that elections to the West Surrey and East Surrey councils will take place in May 2026, to give the newly-elected 'shadow councillors' a year in which to manage the changeover due to take place on 1 April 2027. There will be a massive amount to do, merging budgets, staff, buildings, IT systems and so on.

Controversy

While the decision to implement the changes has been made, it remains controversial.

West Surrey will have a big financial problem. Woking Council has debts of about £2.1 billion. For Spelthorne it is about £1.1 billion and for Runnymede about £0.6 billion. In addition SCC has around £1.2 billion of debt, some of which will have to be allocated to West Surrey. Central Government has decided to write off £500,000 of Woking's debt, but it looks as though West Surrey Council could be bankrupt from the start unless the Government intervenes further.

Will the savings from abolishing the middle tier of local government be used to pay off this debt? Will Council Tax have to rise to help pay it off? A number of Councillors from Guildford and Waverley councils, which are not in debt, are angry that residents in council areas that have been well managed are going to be left paying some of the bill of the profligate areas. One said "I don't see why in Guildford we should have any obligation to pay the debt of Woking".

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West Surrey to replace SHBC and SCC: continued

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government originally indicated that Surrey would have its own Mayor, as many other unitary authorities do. However the recent announcement made no mention of it. The Ministry has since

declared they were “not promising a Mayor”, though it is still under consideration. This has angered a number of County Councillors. There is also some discussion of a possible strategic authority operating across Surrey as a whole.

Responsibilities

Surrey County Council	Borough/District Councils
Education Social Care Highways and Transport Libraries Fire and Rescue Services Waste Disposal (strategic) Public Health Trading Standards Registration of births, deaths, marriages Strategic and infrastructure planning	<i>Surrey has 11 Borough/District Councils.</i> Housing Planning and Development Control Environmental Health Waste Collection and Recycling Council Tax and Business Rates collection Leisure and Recreation Car Parks and Local Transport Public Conveniences Arts and Museums

Bulb Planting

WEVS has a tradition of planting bulbs to provide cheerful breathtaking swathes of colour around the village each Spring. The tradition began in 2016 when it was WEVS’ Project of the Year. Since then further plantings have taken place, making an impressive total of more than 130,000 bulbs.

In early November this year a WEVS working party undertook a new planting of crocuses at Fellow Green. The cost of the bulbs was met by part of Tony Akerman’s daughters’ generous donation to WEVS as a memorial of their father (see page 9 of WEVS Newsletter no.207, Autumn 2025).



Other News

SHBC's review of parishes: no change for West End

Tying in with the reorganisation of Surrey's local government, Surrey Heath Borough Council (SHBC) is in the midst of a borough-wide review of parish boundaries and structures, a study known as a Community Governance Review (CGR). The aim is to ensure parishes reflect community identity and that their organisation can support effective service delivery. If necessary, parishes could be merged, broken up or have boundaries altered.

A public consultation on initial proposals began in July and closed in September. WEVS examined

these proposals and we were pleased to see that there were no plans to change West End's parish boundaries – recognising that West End is an established community in its own right.

SHBC has found that it is taking longer than anticipated to assess the results of the public consultation. Consequently the further draft recommendations, due on 22 October, are not yet available. Once published there will be a second public consultation. Final recommendations will then be drawn up, and considered by the Full Council. This will take the process into 2026.

Surrey Heath Local Plan:

Inspector's examination extended

The Local Plan, which aims to shape Surrey Heath's development for the period 2019 to 2038, entered its final phase in September - independent examination by a Planning Inspector. The examination is taking longer than anticipated, and an extra session has been arranged for December.

The effect on the Plan of abolishing the Borough of Surrey Heath and absorbing the area into the new

West Surrey 'county' from 2027 will need to be worked out.

For more on the Local Plan, including the four sites in West End identified as realistic prospects for development (totalling 37 houses), see page 6 of our Autumn 2025 Newsletter, no.207. For full details of the Inspector's examination process visit: www.localplanservices.co.uk/shlocalplanexamination

30 new houses at Scotts Grove

Planning permission was granted on 22 October for 30 new houses at Castle Grove Nursery at Scotts Grove, Chobham. The plot, east of Tenakers Nursery, stands on the road between Beldam Bridge and Chobham and is regularly passed by West Enders. The old nursery buildings have been derelict for a long time and will be demolished. A planning application for 40 houses some years ago was refused on appeal, mainly because the Planning

Inspector considered it "inappropriate development in the Green Belt". Under new planning regulations the plot was classified as 'grey belt', and the Borough's Planning Committee felt they had little choice but to grant outline permission. The main objections centred on congestion and traffic hazard (another 60+ cars), visibility and pedestrian safety. It will be a year or more before building starts as all aspects of design have yet to be settled.

The Compost Centre has closed

This source of natural compost and a variety of other fertilisers has been a valuable facility for West Enders for many years. Operated in Priest Lane at the far end of Lucas Green Road by

Harrington & Jessop Ltd, the company announced it had "ceased trading" and thanked customers for their support over four decades. The closure took effect from the beginning of October.



West End Social Club is your local community hive of activity for entertainment and social events which you can enjoy with friends and family. The club has a garden area and disabled access. Our

bar has a wide range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic

drinks, hot drinks and bar snacks all at very competitive prices. We also have two halls which can be hired, both with stages and dance floors.

There is a lot going on! See the panel below. For further details on any entry charges or times etc please check our website

www.westendsocialclub.co.uk or phone

01276 858501 or you can call in and speak to a member of the Bar Staff.

Upcoming Events at the Social Club

NOVEMBER		DECEMBER	
Sat 29th	Alan Lovell Live (Swinging Blue Jeans band member)	Weds 24th	Flying Visit Live Music - Christmas Eve
Sun 30th	Open Mic/Jam afternoon, share	Sat 27th	Quiz Night
DECEMBER		Weds 31st	Bullseye Live Music - New Years
Fri 5th	Bingo Night	JANUARY	
Sat 6th	Heartfakers Live (Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers Tribute)	Sat 3rd	The Sounds of Sinatra with Paul Hudson Live Music
Sat 13th	Quiz Night	Sat 10th	Quiz Night
Sun 14th	South of the River Live Music	Sun 11th	Jeff Gallant Live Music (Country)
	Chris Harris Live Country Music (Evening)	Sat 17th	Retro Project Live Music Charity Event in aid of Cancer Research
Fri 19th	Skittles Night	Sat 24th	J45's Live Music
Sat 20th	Backtrack Live Music (Members Christmas Party)	Sun 25th	Open Mic/Jam afternoon, share your musical skills
Sun 21st	Open Mic/Jam afternoon share	Sat 31st	Appaloosa Live Music

Christmas Tree Festival and Boxing Day Walk

Come and see the WEVS tree and all the other 30+ trees at the **Christmas Tree Festival** at Holy Trinity Church. It's on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 December during 11.30-6.30 each day.

Weather permitting, WEVS will be holding its traditional **Boxing Day Walk**, an event which began in WEVS' early days of the 1970s and has continued

almost unbroken ever since. Participants assemble in the car park of Tringham Hall on 26 December for a 10:30 start or opposite the Hare & Hounds at 10:40, suitably attired with warm clothing and sensible footwear. The sociable walk will be around one and a half hours.

WEVS contact details

Visit WEVS on wevs.org.uk and our Facebook page: facebook.com/WestEndVillageSociety

Contact WEVS at comms@wevs.org.uk

WEVS History Project

The WEVS History Project, our Project of the Year for 2025, has so far built up a collection of around 700 digitised historic photographs, and about 60 print documents which have been scanned, since the Project launched in February.

The Project team are reviewing software which will enable us to make all the photos and documents searchable on the WEVS website: that is, users will enter search terms to find all items that match the chosen criteria. We are aiming to launch it in 2026.

We have used a selection of the photographs for displays at the village Fete in June and the Ag & Hort Show in September, standing alongside John Smith's magnificent display of photographs.

A new development is that the WEVS History Project team is taking over the maintenance of the display of West End photographs at the Heritage Gallery in Surrey Heath Museum, at 33 Obelisk Way, Camberley - located not far from the Boots shop.

WEVS is very grateful to all who have contributed to our collection of historic photos and documents, but of course we would like many more. We encourage all residents and local organisations to send us any photographs they have of events, people or views in West End, from the early years of photography through to the present, and of course into the future as the months go by. They can be in

any form: prints, slides or negatives, or digital images. Prints, negatives and slides will be digitised and the originals returned. The information we would like about each image (as far as possible) is title, photographer, date, and description. Please contact us at historyproject@wevs.org.uk to arrange delivery/collection of photographs or documents.

By giving us these items donors are acknowledging that they may be used in public on our website or in displays, newsletters or other media.

We aim to create an exciting and accessible archive of West End's past with your help!

Skating on the pond

As we enter another winter, let's hope it's not as cold as January 1985. It's many years since it was possible to slide on ice on the village pond. This photo was taken on 19 January 1985, when the temperature dropped several degrees below freezing in a long very cold spell of snow and ice. I counted 24 people on the thick ice at one time. A well-used slide is visible and a game of football is going on. There is comparatively little vegetation around the pond edges. A group of saplings stands just beyond. Tringham Hall is just visible through the gloom but the tennis courts had not yet been built, let alone the much later skatepark.

