Claygate Courier

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THREATS ON ALL SIDES

Developers circle Claygate after the Government rips up Green Belt protections

Claygate is now threatened with development of the Green Belt on all sides. The Parish Council has been warning of the Government's proposal to disregard the Green Belt status of land within walking distance of train stations and, in August, plans were published – and its worst fears realised.

Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework mean Green Belt status is disregarded if the land is "within reasonable walking distance of a well-connected station". Claygate station falls within the definition of "well-connected", and the definition of "reasonable walking distance" is set at "around 800 metres". Being Green Belt therefore no longer necessarily protects open land from development.

The view from the bridge over the railway at the station shows how this affects Claygate. Looking away from the village, to the west, is Loseberry Farm,

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



John Burns, who chairs Claygate Parish Council, highlights the issues that affect the village

My first report for the Courier must begin with our great thanks to Donna Holt, the previous Parish Council Chair, for having taken on this challenging role at a difficult time and carrying it out so successfully. I have had the luck to come to the Chair with a solid foundation, in no small part the result of Donna's hard work, together with an exceptional team of fellow councillors.

Following the retirement of Donna and Councillor Hadleigh Moon, we would like to express our sincere thanks to them both for their dedication, hard work and support over the years. Their contribution to the Parish Council has been greatly valued, and we wish them every success for the future.

The Parish Council is pleased to announce that two new councillors have been co-opted to join – Jo Payten and Ian Cunningham. We warmly welcome them and look forward to working together.

I have greatly appreciated the collaboration and active participation with the Parish Council by our Surrey County Councillor and Elmbridge Borough Councillors, especially as local government reorganisation has created considerable uncertainty. Our future East Surrey Councillors are the already well established Andy Burton and Alex Coomes.

Working with Andy as our Surrey County Councillor, we have made significant progress in addressing a number of highway-related issues. These include improvements to accident black spots on Red Lane, the completion of the Church Road pedestrian crossing near the Recreation Ground and investigations into an additional crossing point on Oaken Lane (see Pages 10-11).

Progress on both the proposed new crossing and the associated improvements to Oaken Lane, which will make the area more accessible for residents of Wingham Court, wheelchair users and other pedestrians, has been made possible through councillors approaching Elmbridge's Public Realm and Active Travel Fund. Working with Surrey Highways, we plan to apply for funding for these projects.

These are the positives; but there are challenges. All Claygate should be well aware of the threat to our precious Green Belt land at every point of the compass. In particular, the Crown Estate, as owner of the Loseberry Farm lands, alarmed the whole community with its preliminary consideration of massive house building on the farm, just across the railway line.

Claygate has risen, much as in the past to similar threats, and a Save Claygate Green Belt (SCGB) organisation has emerged with epic force and dedication. I am delighted that it has integrated so well with the Parish Council, so that the expertise in both bodies can support each other.

We are all conscious of the fact that the Loseberry "site" is not the only one posing threats. The Parish Council and SCGB are therefore committed to preparing evidence, arguments and resources needed to resist encroachment on the Green Belt.

At this point, I would like to highlight the importance of an active Parish Council, drawing on the wide range of knowledge, experience and skills that its members bring for the benefit of the whole community.

It will be needed next year – an exceptional one for Claygate. A Parish Council election will be held and some of the current councillors will be retiring after many years of dedicated service. We are encouraging residents to consider whether they could take on this rewarding role (see Page 13). We need engaged residents, including those already involved with SCGB and other community organisations, to come forward and speak to me or other councillors about what is involved in serving on the Parish Council.

Last but not least, the role of the Parish Council is likely to expand as a result of local government reorganisation (see Page 12). Services such as Citizens Advice and community transport schemes are currently supported in part by borough and district councils, and there is no guarantee that the new unitary authority will maintain that support across all areas.

More directly, the Parish Council is the first tier of democratic accountability and often the first place residents turn when they need help or representation. Beyond that, will be our two East Surrey councillors. Their workload will be substantial as they take on responsibilities previously shared by an estimated seven Elmbridge councillors and our Surrey County Councillor.

The Parish Council's responsibilities are also likely to grow, creating additional demands on both councillors and the Parish Clerk. Furthermore, some costs that were previously shared or supported through arrangements with Elmbridge may no longer be available under the new structure. We must therefore prepare for a moderate increase in the parish precept (see Page 14).

This presents both a significant challenge and an enormous opportunity. It is a chance for Claygate residents to make their priorities clear, build on the work already undertaken through the Claygate Residents' Survey and the Village Vision, and ensure that those aspirations are translated into action.

UNDER SIEGE: THREATS TO THE GREEN BELT ON ALL SIDES

From Page 1

about 500 metres wide; looking south along the railway line is the bridge at the end of Claremont Road, less than 700 metres away. This shows that all of Loseberry Farm is at risk.

Looking north, and just beyond the end of Station Road, is the land north of Raleigh Drive, 600 metres away, where outline permission for 60 houses has already been granted. And looking north-east, over Station Way towards the far end of The Avenue, is Oaken Lane, just 600 metres away. On the far side of Oaken Lane is the edge of the Green Belt behind Wingham Court care home. All of this green land is within 800 metres of the station.

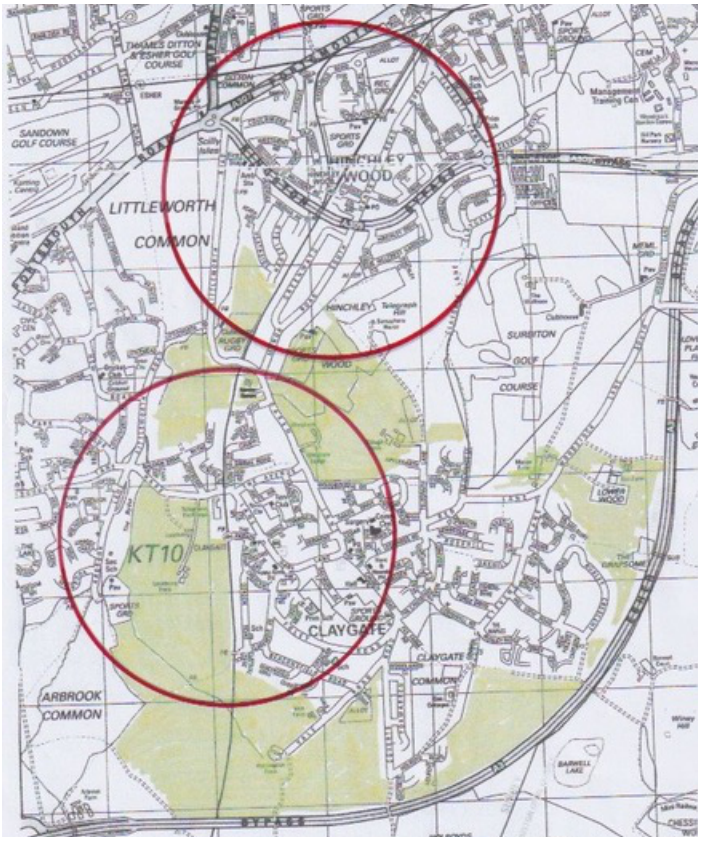
In addition to the Raleigh Drive application, the Parish Council expects to see applications for development on the fields of Elm Farm, off Woodstock Lane, and Loseberry Farm, owned by the Crown Estate. The latter is expected to be a major application for up to 500 houses, increasing the size of Claygate by about 20 per cent.

A further threat on the north side is posed by attempts to extend Heathside in Hinchley Wood south westwards into the Green Belt towards Claygate. The Parish Council has recently vigorously objected to such an application.

And on the eastern boundary, the Council has objected to the Royal Borough of Kingston's proposal in its draft Local Plan to re-designate some areas of Green Belt just the other side of the A3 as "Grey Belt", and available for development. These include Hook Park, currently the subject of a substantial planning application (see Page 9).

There is already in force a direction requiring a planning authority that proposes to refuse an application for 150 or more dwellings to consult the Secretary of State first, by which it means an inspector – perhaps the same inspector who would hear an appeal if the application was refused.

A further tightening of the screws occurs on October 31, when new regulations come into force that will significantly restrict the ability of elected councillors to call in contentious planning applications to planning committees: only an application which "raises an issue of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area, or raises a significant planning matter", and which falls within certain listed categories, may be determined by a planning committee. Even then, a nominated planning officer has a right of veto. The list of categories includes listed building consents, full applications following outline permission for large developments of 500 or more houses, and major applications for 10 or more houses. Applications for fewer than 10 houses, and ordinary householder applications such as extensions, have to be decided by a planning officer and cannot be referred to a planning committee.



The circles are drawn 800 metres from Claygate and Hinchley Wood stations, showing how much Green Belt is now under threat

This is a significant and undesirable weakening of local democratic controls and may mean, for example, that any eventual full application for Raleigh Drive housing will be determined by officers, not by elected representatives.

Apart from the narrow corridor of Hare Lane and Raleigh Drive, Claygate is surrounded by Green Belt – one of the features that make it special. Much of it is now at risk. As Malcolm Peebles said in "The Claygate Book": "It is surely a matter of some pride and satisfaction that … one can still enjoy such rural scenes as Loseberry Farm has to offer so close to London – long may it, and for that matter all our other farms, continue to prosper." The Parish Council, supported by Save Claygate Green Belt, will continue to oppose developments on the Green Belt.

Anthony Sheppard, Planning Committee Chair and Michael Collon, Planning Committee member

GREEN BELT NEWS ON OTHER PAGES

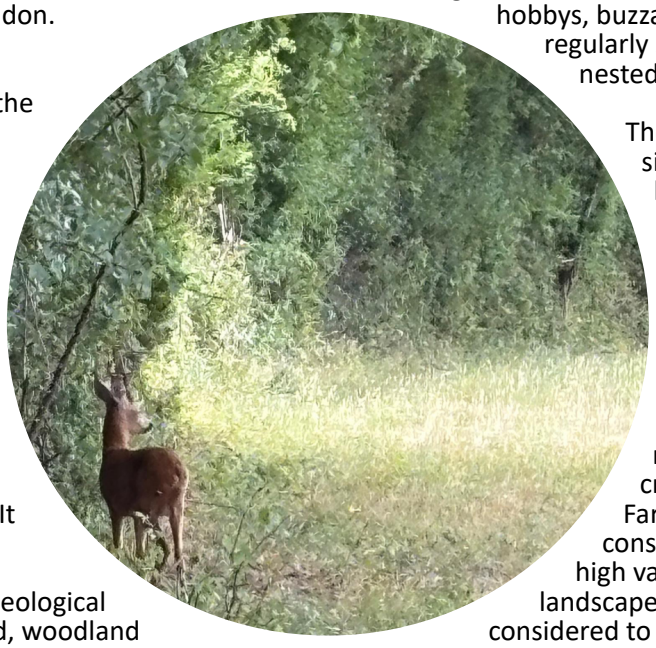
- **Claygate's natural world, Page 4**
- **Who can help us? Page 5**
- **Save Claygate Green Belt, Pages 6-7**
- **We are not alone: anger in Effingham, Hook, Cobham, and Surrey, Pages 8-9**

SURROUNDED BY NATURE – FOR NOW

Claygate is “an island in a green sea”: the Green Belt defines the village character, its community, and its environment, and is home to a huge range of flora and fauna which thrive due to the way in which the land has remained broadly unchanged for hundreds of years.

Claygate is also the nearest village in the Green Belt to south-west London, from where visitors still come to enjoy a day in the country. Green Belt land to the north and east of Claygate, with its accessible paths and tracks, and vistas over farmland from Telegraph Hill (home to badgers), provides a haven for wildlife and a buffer against the encroachment of London.

All of the village’s Green Belt contributes to the protection of the natural world. Land to the west, south and east, the more open part comprising Loseberry Farm, Arbrook Farm, Horringdon Farm and Claygate common, is a key component of the wildlife corridor connecting with Oxshott, Esher, West End, Fairmile and Arbrook Common. Collectively “Esher Commons” is a 360-hectare Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



SSSI status is not granted lightly. It is, to quote Elmbridge’s own description, granted only to “the country’s very best wildlife and geological sites”. Habitats include heathland, woodland and wetlands with a great variety of trees, shrubs and grasses. Rare and threatened plants and fungi are found here and wildlife is diverse, including many bird species, butterflies, reptiles, insects and beetles, badgers, and roe and muntjac deer.

The closest, Arbrook Common, abutting Loseberry and Horringdon farms, is a key part of this SSSI network, combining woodland, wetland and riparian (near water sources) woodland. Forming the boundary between dry and wet land, these areas can be very fertile with high biodiversity. They also play an important role in flood prevention, Elmbridge having considered extending it for this purpose in its strategic flood risk reports.

It is also possible that rare high-value habitats, wood-pasture and parkland, are present within Loseberry Farm and Arbrook Common. The neighbouring fields will have provided sources of plant-based food, insects and prey, to sustain wildlife living in the woods, particularly given the presence of streams such as The Rythe tributary that flows across Horringdon and Loseberry Farms.

As long as the farms have existed, there will have been close wildlife dependence on these fields. Today, a small herd of deer regularly grazes here and evidence of badgers and dormice has been reported. Hawks, hobbys, buzzards, tawny owls and kites are regularly seen hunting here. Kestrels have nested this year near Arbrook Lane.

These fields also have historical significance. Parts of ancient hedgerows and trees can be seen, some following a Saxon Hundred boundary – among the oldest boundaries in the area. These were typically delineated with oak, ash and alder, often following watercourses. The Rythe is one such boundary. Remnants of its marker trees can still be seen crossing the fields of Loseberry Farm, some of which could be considered to be “veteran trees”, high value for wildlife and the landscape. Even when dead, they are considered to be “irreplaceable habitat”.

All of this would be at risk from development. Apart from the concreting over of farmland, wider habitats could be lost or degraded by vehicle pollution and recreational pressures; veteran trees could be lost, watercourses polluted. The Rythe takes the run-off from these clay-based fields and floods at the lower levels of Arbrook Lane and Raleigh Drive. Woodland and heathland, the predominant components of Esher Commons, are also sensitive to air quality which increased traffic would bring.

No amount of artificial “biodiversity net gain” engineering will substitute for nature, which left to its own devices will look after the natural world’s diversity, given the chance.

OAKEN LANE SPORTS FIELD PUT UP FOR SALE

Elmbridge Borough Council has decided to sell the playing field on Oaken Lane, formerly occupied by the Eagles Rugby Club. Elmbridge says its “ambition is to see Oaken Lane once again providing leisure and recreation use for our residents”. Claygate Parish Council agrees and strongly opposes housing use.

But when Claygate Councillors asked Elmbridge how, once the site was sold, it intended to ensure its continued leisure use and prevent it from being used for housing, no satisfactory answer was provided. Then, on October 2, agents’ particulars were circulated indicating that the site is “within an attractive Surrey residential catchment”, and emphasising the ease of access to London. In further correspondence, Elmbridge has disclosed a restrictive covenant dated 1931 requiring the purchaser “not to use the property for any purpose other than open space and recreation ground or common”. Which is fine, but only so long as Elmbridge or East Surrey, which will become the relevant authority, are prepared to enforce the covenant. Elmbridge adds that it “cannot prohibit future planning applications which are contrary to current policy”. This is far from reassuring.

ORGANISATIONS MOBILISE TO PROTEST AT LOSS OF COUNTRYSIDE

The government's changes to its planning framework have caused concern and vocal protests nationwide. No land in or near the Green Belt, especially within half a mile or so of a train station, is safe.

The newly invented "Grey Belt" category is so loosely defined it is being used by developers to justify building on good quality Green Belt. It means they can more easily build on the countryside, avoiding the complexities and costs of dealing with "brownfield" land – disused, derelict building sites, scrub land, or land previously built on.

National organisations representing both town and countryside have made representations to the Secretary of State responsible, now Angela Rayner, and have been mobilising support to help fight this wholesale attack on the Green Belt. The principal groups are:

Save Claygate Green Belt (See Pages 6-7) Claygate's own campaign group, has linked up with Claygate Parish Council and other local campaign groups fighting the same battle, to share intelligence and advice. Claygate has a wealth of talent and knowledge to draw upon to help defend its green spaces and countryside. In particular, very helpful discussions on tactics and objections have taken place with the Raleigh Drive group, where outline approval has been granted for up to 60 houses, and the Long Ditton campaign where 150 houses were initially refused permission; this is now subject to appeal.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England The largest group campaigning on countryside and wildlife issues, through its HQ and regional offices. It submitted strong objections to the National Planning Policy Framework proposals, motivating public responses, disputing the loose definition of "Grey Belt" and promoting "brownfield first".

Save Claygate Green Belt is now a member of CPRE and receives all its communications, relevant items of which will be published in Claygate. Visit **www.cpre.org.uk**

The London Green Belt Council This organisation brings together more than 100 bodies, including London boroughs and environmental groups, politicians and members of the public, who share a concern for protecting the Metropolitan Green Belt.

In conjunction with CPRE, it is compiling an inventory of pristine Green Belt, including active farms, on the periphery of London, that is at risk or has already been lost to development (**londongreenbeltcouncil.org.uk/green-belt-is-now-grey-belt-lgbc-cpre-report**). Information about Claygate's Green Belt at risk has been provided. Visit **londongreenbeltcouncil.org.uk**

The Community Planning Alliance (CPA) A not-for-profit, volunteer-run group that aims to provide planning intelligence and guidance to grass-roots communities. Since its foundation in 2021, more than 700 communities nationwide, including Claygate, have registered, all campaigning against inappropriate development in their areas. It organised and co-ordinated 180 local days of action this year. Another is planned for October 23 in central London.

It runs webinars on planning topics, such as "Demystifying Housing Targets", and has advice on how local groups can help their councils fight back against unreasonable housing targets. CPRE and CPA work closely together on joint campaigns and intelligence sharing. Visit **communityplanningalliance.org**



THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE COUNTRYSIDE:

Esher and Walton MP Monica Harding asked Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook (left): "What should I say to my constituents who are facing concrete everywhere?"

He replied: "The honourable member should say that they live near highly sustainable areas for development and we want to see more homes come forward in those areas."

The Ramblers Association and The Open Spaces Society These two are more narrowly focused but have similar objectives. The RA campaigns to keep the countryside open, especially important when development might seek to obstruct established public paths. Since 1865, the OSS has been fighting to protect and establish village greens, commons and public paths for everyone to enjoy, in a wider context than just the Green Belt. Some may be small pockets of green in urban areas, playing fields etc. The OSS was instrumental in getting One Tree Hill and Stokes Field in Long Ditton designated as village greens, and hence proof against development, two years ago. Save Claygate Green Belt is getting advice and assistance from both of these groups.

A parliamentary group of MPs – representing constituencies with significant "at risk" Green Belt – has come together to highlight the unacceptable consequences of the planning policy provisions. Monica Harding, Claygate's MP, has expressed her support for the village's fight to defend its Green Belt. She has spoken in parliament, and written to Matthew Pennycook, Housing Minister, opposing measures that could fall disproportionately on her constituency that includes seven railway stations close to Green Belt land, two of which affect Claygate.



A public village meeting to discuss the threats to the Green Belt filled Holy Trinity Church

GROUP DRAWS UP ITS BATTLE PLANS

Save Claygate Green Belt was founded to let Rose and her children inherit the village as we know it – separate from the London sprawl, connected to the countryside, with a distinct village community and unique character. Rose is 11. It won't be identical when she grows up – it will change and grow, too – but it must be recognisably similar, with its essential characteristics intact.

Save Claygate Green Belt was begun by ordinary Claygate residents who just happened to be around. It came together when developers' surveyors were spotted on the fields of Loseberry Farm. And it was a functioning organisation by the time The Crown Estate said it planned to build 500 houses on the farm. It then became aware that Loseberry was the tip of the iceberg – developers were crawling all over the Green Belt around Claygate.

The Save Claygate Green Belt committee has grown from six to 10; it has no chair – all are equal; and it has recruited a number of highly skilled volunteers.

A website and petition (now standing at 2,400 signatures) were launched in May and a communications effort sought to make Claygate aware of the threat over the spring and early summer, including a village meeting in July attended by 400 residents.

ROSE'S FEAR FOR THE FUTURE

Unprompted, Claygate resident Rose, aged 11, wrote about what the countryside means to her:

'Claygate is one of the only villages around the city of London where there are fields that go on for miles and miles, the air is clean, the wildlife lives harmoniously in OUR land, OUR forests, OUR trees, OUR wood, OUR earth. It may be gone before you know it. This won't happen immediately, but over years and years, what will this village we live in be? You like wildlife? Gone. You like delicious fruits and veggies? Gone. You like taking your dogs for a walk in the morning in the woods? Not any more. Gone. Realistically, some of us won't be around to see this change in Claygate, or anywhere actually, but just think about what your children may experience, or your grandchildren, or even your great grandchildren.'

A research team has been assembled to carry out the hard, detailed work necessary to fight planning applications, and professional experts have been engaged to provide support in developing key lines of attack.

A fundraising effort has been launched, targeted at gathering small, manageable donations from a large number of people – because although the team will handle much of the work itself, it will still need expert opinions and those cost money.

In addition to the application related to land north of Raleigh Drive, there is an outline application pending for up to 56 houses on fields west of Heathside. This is in Hinchley Wood, but is very much part of Claygate's Green Belt.

Developers are digesting the additional advantages given to them by the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, published in August, and it is feared that several have submitted "pre-applications" to the planning authority – so the phoney war may go hot at any time.

Claygate is surrounded by Green Belt and all of it is a potential target. Save Claygate Green Belt is using the pause to build its resources to resist an expected tsunami of applications in the autumn and into 2027.

EXPERTS AND SPECIALISTS ARE ASKED TO JOIN THE TEAM



Green Belt: a hugely successful post-war policy and the envy of the world

Save Claygate Green Belt is not interested in simply being a protest movement: it wants to win as well.

First and foremost, the attack Claygate faces will use planning channels, and the village has to organise to fight on planning grounds. For each threat, the Save Claygate Green Belt team identifies the main potential lines of attack and then assigns researchers to build a fact base and develop arguments.

But it also has to recognise that the attack on Claygate and other Surrey villages is political. It is driven by a political philosophy that emphasises centralised decision making, imposing sets of rules that are so detailed that little room is left for the judgment of local elected representatives.

It is also driven by a mindset that values cities and towns, preferably industrial ones. It pays lip service to the value of villages, but only in the sense that a village is a town that hasn't grown up yet.

Claygate therefore has to fight the attacks on the village on two fronts – planning and political. But Save Claygate Green Belt can't do this alone: it needs residents to give their support, their time and skills, to lobby, to write objections, and to help raise money.

The team wants to meet anyone with specific subject matter skills and in writing expert opinions. It seeks arboriculturists, or a climate adaptation specialist, and more. It has only a small budget for experts, so ideally seeks those prepared to work pro bono.



It also wants to meet communications specialists, those with experience of lobbying local government, those who have experience of networking across similar community organisations, and entertainers who can give their time for fundraising events, such as the Barn Dance to be held in the Village Hall on November 28. In a nutshell, it seeks all the skills and experience that will help it mobilise the collective will of a united village and project that to decision makers.

The organisation is only as good as the people who help it. So join the movement to defend the village.

Email Save Claygate Green Belt at info@saveclaygategreenbelt.com or message via WhatsApp **07427 876154** to help with any of the above.



VILLAGES NOT ALONE IN 'GREY' FIGHT

Building in nearby communities - especially around stations along the rail line to Guildford - will affect Claygate

Campaign group Save Surrey Countryside has been watching with great concern the attack on the county's Green Belt by speculative developers, since the National Planning Policy Framework came up with the concept of "Grey Belt".

This turned out not to mean disused fuel stations and car parks but, seemingly, nearly all Green Belt countryside. In August the Framework was updated again, inflicting further damage.



Map shows how much Green Belt around Guildford has been re-labelled 'grey'

Communities throughout Surrey are devastated at the impending loss of their countryside, its wildlife, and the character of their villages, to be replaced by unimaginable numbers of new-build houses in massive urban estates.

West Clandon, a historic village mentioned in the Domesday Book, surrounded by fields and National Trust estates, faces a development of 200 houses on Green Belt, while another developer has an option on a much bigger area of Green Belt alongside it.

Since Guildford's current Local Plan was adopted in 2019, 843 dwellings have been approved in the village of Send alone. In Effingham, 600 homes are proposed on Green Belt land. And a public inquiry into 200 homes proposed near the village of Normandy is currently working its way through the system. On Epsom Downs, a planning application has been made for 675 homes on the Green Belt at Downs Farm and planning refusal of another 110 homes at Langley Vale is subject to appeal.

Sally Blake, Coordinator of Save Surrey Countryside

COBHAM FACING 'UGLY' TIDAL WAVE OF APPLICATIONS

In recent months, Cobham has seen the good, the bad and the ugly.

The good: planning permission was refused for an electronic advertising board at the Esso filling station on Stoke Road. This garage is partly within the Tilt conservation area yet over the years planning approvals and appeal decisions have aided its incessant march toward urbanisation.

The bad: the approval of the solar farm around Slyfield Manor House – a Grade 1 listed building. The decision hinged on the government's green energy priority and "grey belt" policy. This development will damage agricultural land, footpaths and the Manor setting.

The ugly: the tidal wave of large-scale housing proposals on local Green Belt. The introduction of a "grey belt" planning category allows development on parts of the Green Belt deemed "poorly performing" – and if housing is needed locally, is sustainable and 50 per cent "affordable". But "poorly performing" is being downplayed, "sustainable" seems to include all sites, and "affordable homes" are mostly "shared ownership" that can cost more than buying outright.

The larger schemes around Cobham in the planning system now are: Chippings Farm (625 homes near the A307), The Paddocks (250 homes at Stoke D'Abernon), Clouds Hill (250 homes south of Oxshott), and Moore Place Golf Course (200 homes on the edge of Esher, awaiting a decision). A developer has also acquired rights to land at Cobham Services beside the M25 for a plan to build 1,200 homes, which together with a neighbouring development would be 1,500 homes. And just south along the A3 is Wisley New Town, with 2,500 homes under construction. This is in addition to the many other projects being considered nearby.

Together, they represent thousands of new residents, thousands more cars, and huge pressure on roads, schools, GP surgeries, utilities, and the natural environment. Elmbridge Borough Council is already struggling to process this volume of applications.

Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust has been supporting local groups throughout this process. What happens next will depend heavily on public engagement. By attending consultations, submitting comments, and insisting on proper infrastructure before permissions are granted, residents can still influence the future of Cobham.

Adrian Wise of the Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust



An artist's impression of how Hook Park's tower blocks might look

HOOK PARK WOULD SPREAD URBAN SPRAWL INTO SURREY

The proposed Hook Park development on Green Belt land off Clayton Road in Chessington would see the construction of 2,000 new homes in buildings of up to eight storeys. This would add around 2,400 additional vehicles per day to already heavily congested local roads and 6,800 new residents (up 36 per cent) to the population of Chessington, putting unmanageable pressure on over-stretched local infrastructure, such as hospitals, GPs, schools and community facilities.

The proposed development would also destroy scarce, valuable Green Belt land and the wildlife which depends on it. Chessington residents are strongly opposed to the proposed development as the magnitude, design and layout are completely out of character with the existing surrounding area and would increase the urban sprawl of Greater London into Surrey.

Ian Davison, of the Residents Against Hook Park group

PAULA PREPARES FOR A 'RURAL ROAR'

Paula Moss (right), Vice Chair of Effingham Parish Council, has founded a national campaign called Rural Roar to fight against the Green Belt being turned grey.



She says applying the Government's new "grey belt" test to Guildford's Green Belt means 99.6 per cent of all sites around villages such as Cobham, Effingham and Bookham are labelled grey belt.

"A score of such proportions can hardly be judged fit for purpose. Around Effingham, all green fields – every single one of seven sites – have been designated as grey belt – including Effingham Common. While there are other protections in place for the common, its proximity to the station makes it and the land close to it especially susceptible to potential development.

"I've launched Ruralroar.org.uk as a rallying point for a campaign aiming to suspend application of the grey belt test on land around villages in the Green Belt until the test can be reformed. It is currently not fit for purpose.

"We need houses and we may even need some on Green Belt – but not like this, and not land that strongly serves the core purposes of the Green Belt.

"Ruralroar.org.uk is seeking reform to ensure that brownfield land is identified and released ahead of any Green Belt land that supports the purposes of the Green Belt ... Local Plans and Green Belt boundaries should be determined by locally elected councils – not dictated by the speculative demands of developers.

"I'll be calling for support for the campaign shortly, including a demand that Guildford Borough Council hands back Effingham Common to this parish. In the meantime, if you want to be armed with the facts, visit my website www.ruralroar.org.uk"

SURREY TO RULE ON HARE LANE SPEEDS

Gil Bray, who chairs the Environment, Highways and Transport Committee, reports on its work





The campaign by Hare Lane residents to reduce the speed limit on the stretch of road from The Swan pub to the railway bridge has prompted much consideration and debate by the Parish Council.

Its Transport and Parking Advisory Group produced a report which was discussed at Environment, Highways and Transport Committee meetings, with robust contributions from members of the public. The Committee decided that the full Parish Council should debate the report at its meeting of June 25.

The minutes of that meeting stated: "The final report recommends that traffic calming measures are required and recommends additional signage, pedestrian crossings and pavement improvements. It was proposed that the report should be sent to Surrey Highways setting out these recommendations and noting that the residents of Hare Lane feel strongly that 20mph should be the preferred solution. Surrey County Council Highways should investigate, and it is appreciated that they will apply their own criteria into the options."

THE BRASH PILE: The Committee decided in February that the pile of sticks, twigs and other cuttings beside the "verge" path on Hare Lane should be removed, following reports of a rat infestation. Since the removal of the pile, the Council has received only one letter noting a sighting of two rats, which represents a great improvement.

It's impossible to know precisely why this has happened, but the Committee understands that residents in The Firs had been leaving food out for birds and animals and reduced this dramatically when the rats became a problem. They now leave out far less food and this is thought to have played a part. To the extent that this is the case, the Committee thanks The Firs' manager and the residents for their response.

HARE LANE GREEN FOOTPATH: Work to improve the condition of the grass footpath across the Hare Lane Green, from The Swan pub to Littleworth Road, was completed a few months ago. The Committee has heard that residents in that part of the village appreciate the undoubted improvement.

HIGH KERB AT THE END OF THE PARADE: The Committee has maintained pressure on South Western Railway to reduce the height of the pavement in this area, mainly to improve safety for wheelchair users and those unsteady on their feet.

The Environment, Highways and Transport Committee understood the company had intended to carry out the work in the current financial year. However, in August, South Western Railway said the work is not now planned until the 2027-28 financial year and, even though it is in its work plan, there is no funding in place. This came as a surprise and disappointment.

The Committee robustly expressed its views to South Western Railway and is now working with Surrey County Councillor Andy Burton and Elmbridge Borough Council to see if it's possible for Elmbridge to contribute to the costs of the work.

NEW BENCH ON THE PARADE: A smart new wooden bench has been in place in The Parade for several weeks and has sparked a number of favourable emails. The bench has been dedicated to the memory of former Surrey County Councillor, Mark Sugden, who worked tirelessly for the village for many years as Chair of the Parish Council and in a number of other capacities.

ISSUES RAISED AT THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING IN MARCH: The Committee made a full list of issues brought up at the Annual Parish Meeting and has addressed each one that falls within its remit. Few required major efforts, but one notable issue concerns continuing work on road safety measures at the top end of Red Lane. Parish Council Chair John Burns is working with Surrey County Councillor Andy Burton on this and a potential source of funding is currently being pursued

THE VILLAGE GRIT BINS: The Parish Council maintains three grit bins in the village for use in winter: one under the railway bridge; one at the junction of Hare Lane and Dalmore Avenue; and one on the Foley Road/Coverts Road triangle. These have recently been refreshed ready to be used to clear icy pavements and roads.

Continued on Next Page



Abbey Road or Church Road? Claygate celebrates its new pedestrian crossing outside the Recreation Ground: left to right – Andy Burton, Surrey County Councillor; John Burns, who chairs Claygate Parish Council; Susanne Tunnicliff, Village Hall Trustee; and Ian Cunningham, Claygate Recreation Ground Trustee.

From Previous Page

CHURCH ROAD CROSSING: The work to create a zebra crossing in Church Road, near the main entrance to the Recreation Ground, was completed before The Flower Show, which was always the goal. The Committee hopes residents find it useful.

SPEEDWATCH: The Committee is grateful to Mark Tymieniecki and his colleagues who make up the Speedwatch team for their dedication in monitoring drivers' speeds in the village throughout the year. Mark has written about Speedwatch on Page 15, but the Committee can add here that his reports, almost month-in, month-out, show that the percentage of speeders in Claygate remains less than the national average, and that in the four sessions the team ran from mid-June to mid-August, only 20 speeders were recorded among the 3,099 vehicles that went past the volunteers.

THE "WINGHAM WALK": Before Donna Holt, the previous Parish Council Chair, stepped down from the Council, she accompanied a number of people on a walk from the Wingham Court Care Home in Oaken Lane to The Parade in order to assess the obstacles along that route for Wingham residents. A number of potential improvements were identified, mainly locations where kerbs might helpfully be dropped, and pavements widened, but these were not taken further due to a lack of finance. However, a potential source of funding is now being pursued, so it is possible that progress might be made on some of those issues in the future.

The Committee works closely with Surrey County Councillor Andy Burton and is grateful for his continued attention to the affairs of the community. Residents can find details of all other issues addressed by the Environment, Highways and Transport Committee in recent months on the Parish Council website **www.claygateparishcouncil.gov.uk/**

REMINDER: The Committee reminds residents of the need to cut back hedges and shrubs where they are causing obstruction or hindrance. Affected villagers can seek remedial action by reporting such matters to Surrey County Council via the FixMyStreet app, using this link: **https://tellus.surreycc.gov.uk/.** The FixMyStreet app can also be used to report a wide range of issues to Surrey. The Parish Council commends it to residents.



PLANS MADE AS SURREY PREPARES TO GO IT ALONE



Parish Councillor Michael Collon reports on the latest changes to how Surrey is run

In less than six months, the functions of Surrey County Council are to be merged with those of five district councils, including Elmbridge, to form East Surrey Council, one of two new unitary authorities. From April 1 2027 – vesting day – the councils of Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, Reigate and Banstead, Mole Valley and Tandridge will disappear, as will the County Council. Claygate will become a small part of East Surrey – the eastern half of the county, as two layers of local government are removed and replaced by one.

At least the situation in Surrey is relatively clear: in the rest of the country, local government reorganisation is in chaos. Government ministers had accepted the proposal of Surrey County Council to divide the county into two unitary authorities, but the four counties which were intended to follow a year later are in turmoil.

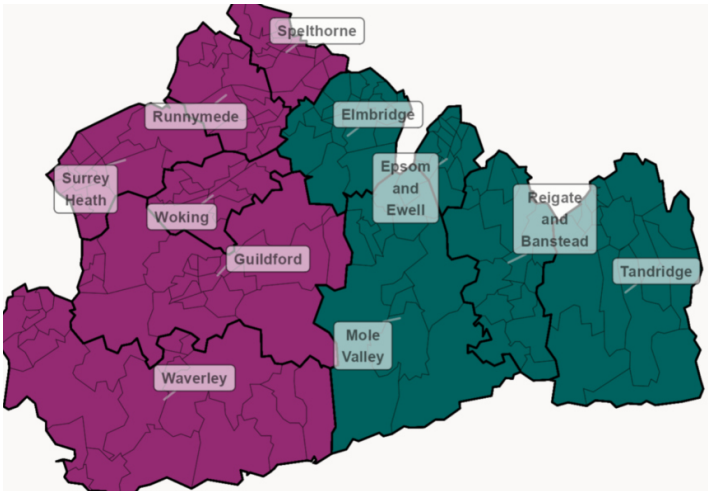
In the case of Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk and Hampshire the Secretary of State, then Steve Reed, went against the advice of his civil servants on the division of the counties. All four began judicial reviews of his decision. Before anything could come to court the Government backed down, withdrawing the decisions for those four counties, and "reviewing and pausing" plans for a further 14.

So Surrey is on its own. The Government confirmed that because the Surrey legislation is already in force and preliminary elections have been held, East and West Surrey "are on track to go live in April 2027".

The two East Surrey councillors elected in May for the new ward of Esher, Claygate and Oxshott North are Andy Burton and Alex Coomes. Both have council experience: Andy succeeded Mark Sugden as Claygate's Surrey County Councillor and continues as such until April 1 2027. Alex continues for now as an Elmbridge Borough Councillor for Claygate ward, a post he has held for many years.

Both are simultaneously acting as councillors on the shadow unitary authority until April 1, when their Surrey and Elmbridge posts are scrapped and East Surrey takes over. Both are Liberal Democrats, so they are two of the 40 Lib Dem councillors who form a majority of the 72 councillors on the shadow unitary authority, taking control when it goes live.

Parish councillors have been having regular meetings with Andy and Alex, and there has been plenty to discuss. There is a lot of information the Parish needs and it is unclear whether it can, as now, obtain it from Elmbridge Borough Council or whether it needs to rely on East Surrey. And there is nothing to say East Surrey will not want to change how it liaises with the 24 parish councils in its area when it takes over.



One thing parish councillors have been discussing with Andy and Alex is whether assets in Claygate currently owned and run by Elmbridge – such as allotments and car parks – will continue to be run by East Surrey.

The Parish Council also needs confirmation of the likely cost of elections in May. As only parish councils have elections in 2027, they must pay the whole cost, which Elmbridge estimates at £23,000 for Claygate. But by May, East Surrey will have taken over running the elections and calculating costs. It leaves the Parish Council not knowing whether it can budget according to Elmbridge's estimate, or whether East Surrey might charge a different figure.

Planning is also under discussion. At present, Elmbridge is the planning authority and the Civic Centre is a mile away in Esher, so councillors know Claygate; the village has three ward councillors who can speak from knowledge. Alex Coomes is chair of the East Area Planning Sub-Committee, and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee.

From April 1, the local planning authority will be East Surrey, probably based in Reigate. Its Committee will have no more than 13 members – Claygate will be lucky if it includes one of its two councillors. The Committee will, in any case, be much less effective; as explained on Page 3, new Government rules will severely restrict the classes of application that planning committees can consider.

The Parish Council will become Claygate's closest local link to East Surrey. Many areas in Surrey have no parish council and are realising that having one might be useful. This year, three areas of Mole Valley concluded formalities for the creation of parish councils. And recommendations for three more were approved by East Surrey on September 14. This means there will be elections for 24 parish councils in East Surrey next May; in Elmbridge, Claygate remains the only parish council.

These new parish councils, along with three in West Surrey, mean the proportion of the population represented at this level across Surrey rises from 33 to near 50 per cent of the county's 975,000-strong electorate, a significant shift and a useful bi-product of the reorganisation. Claygate waits to see if Surrey can show the rest of England how reorganisation can simultaneously improve services and save money.

CONTINUING THE FIGHT AGAINST LITTER

Claygate Parish Council runs two litter-picking sessions a year, which involves a small army of volunteers scouring the village and afterwards enjoying refreshments, the most recent in October. There will be another in the spring.

But Claygate is lucky to have other informal groups that keep an eye out for litter. This bunch of community minded residents (right) call themselves the Early Morning Walkers and they recently undertook a litter pick along their route through the woods and around the outskirts of the village. Among the debris, they were surprised to collect 11 filled dog poo bags and more than 20 discarded cigarette ends.



COULD YOU BRING FRESH IDEAS?

All 10 seats on Claygate Parish Council will be up for election in May 2027. Could you be one of the new councillors?

Parish councillors help shape the community in which we live: they discuss local issues, have a voice in local matters, and help make decisions about council services, facilities and projects. You don't need to be an expert in local government to become a parish councillor. Relevant training is provided, and councillors have the opportunity to gain an insight into the many different aspects of local government and administration, including finance, highways, the environment and planning.

THE TIME COMMITMENT

Being a councillor is a commitment, but it can usually be fitted around work, family and other responsibilities.

Councillors attend regular meetings of the council and its committees and spend time reading papers and preparing for meetings. You might also get involved in working groups, projects, or community activities. The time involved varies depending on the responsibilities you take on.

FIND OUT MORE

You don't need to decide now. But do come along to a Parish Council meeting, speak to one of the current councillors or contact the Parish Clerk to find out what the role is really like.

With all 10 seats up for election, this is a great opportunity for new people and fresh ideas to ensure that Claygate remains a great place to live, work and visit. Ten seats. One community. Your chance to make a difference.

WHO HAS MADE AN OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION?

It's time to start thinking of candidates for next year's Brian Rhodes Community Cup, which is awarded annually to an individual adjudged to have made an outstanding contribution to the Claygate community in the previous 12 months.

Parish Councillors vote – by secret ballot – on the nominations and the winner will be announced at the 2027 Annual Parish Meeting in The Village Hall. So this is an early call for the people of Claygate to nominate their candidates for this award.

To nominate someone, you must live or work in Claygate – and you can nominate more than one person. The nominee must also live or work in Claygate and must have given permission for their name to be put forward and publicised.

Nominations, which must include an explanation, in no more than 50 words, of why, and how, the nominee has made an outstanding contribution to the community in Claygate in the past 12 months, should be sent in an email to the Parish Clerk, at clerk@claygateparishcouncil.gov.uk

Thanking you in advance for your nominations. Please note: sitting councillors at Parish, Borough and Surrey levels are not eligible for nomination.

● This year's Community Cup was awarded posthumously to Mark Sugden, who represented Claygate on Surrey County Council and was a constant champion of Claygate and its community.



Despite his valiant and prolonged battle with illness, Mark, who died last year, remained deeply committed to his electorate.

In its tribute, the Surrey County Council said: "Whether attending meetings in person or online when his health made physical presence impossible, his dedication never wavered. Mark's tireless work on behalf of his constituents, even in the face of significant personal challenges, set a standard for us all. His passion for representing his community was evident in everything he did, and he was held in the highest regard by residents, fellow councillors and officers alike."

LOCAL TAX'S BENEFITS ARE VERY VISIBLE

Many of the things paid for or supported by Claygate Parish Council, using local taxpayers' money, can be seen around the village – hanging baskets and troughs that brighten up the streets, the maintenance of six garden sites, including the Village Green and The Firs verge, and the contributions made to the Christmas lights and other community events organised by the Claygate Village Association.



This local tax is the Parish Council precept and is currently set at £16.65 per household per year (for a Band D property) – a small part of the overall Council Tax bill collected by Elmbridge Borough Council. The precept element is handed over to the Parish Council to enable it to look after local priorities, support community projects and work on behalf of Claygate residents.

It pays for grit bins and noticeboards, one of the village bus shelters and the footbridge on the Old Claygate Lane footpath, as well as street furniture, including the bench on The Parade recently installed in memory of Mark Sugden, who was a parish councillor for many years as well as a Surrey county councillor.

Keeping residents informed and understanding the needs of our local community are also important parts of the Council's work. This includes producing and distributing two editions of The Courier each year, developing a new website, and paying for the Claygate Shops and Businesses Survey.

HOW DOES CLAYGATE COMPARE?

Claygate's precept is relatively low, compared with many other town and parish councils. However, direct comparisons need to be treated with care. Many councils with higher precepts are responsible for providing and paying for a much wider range of local services than Claygate Parish Council currently does. As local government is reorganised (see feature, Page 12), Claygate might find itself taking on more responsibilities, too.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Parish Council wants to give residents plenty of notice that it is likely to need to increase the precept for 2027-28. One reason is the Parish Council elections in May 2027, when there are no County Council or other elections – so the Parish will have to bear the full cost.

There are other changes on the horizon, too. With local government reorganisation and the creation of the new East Surrey Council on April 1 next year, it is not yet known which local services it will continue to provide. If some services are reduced, the Parish Council might need to consider providing them locally, particularly where residents tell us those services are important to Claygate. This could mean the Parish Council taking on more responsibility for services within the village, and it would need the resources to do that properly.

The Parish Council knows no one welcomes an increase in their Council Tax, and it will continue to be careful with residents' money. At the same time, it wants to ensure that Claygate remains an attractive, well cared for and vibrant place to live, and that the local services and activities the community values can continue to be supported.

KEEPING CLAYGATE CONNECTED WITH ONE-STOP WEBSITE

A new website has been launched by Claygate Parish Council, providing residents with an easier way to find Council news and information, learn about its work and keep up to date with what is happening locally.

But the new website is only one part of a much wider plan to improve the way the Council communicates with residents and provides information about local events and services. One of the next steps is to introduce a regular email bulletin for subscribers to the Parish Council website.

This will be in addition to the six-monthly paper editions of The Courier which will continue to be delivered to every Claygate household. The bulletin will provide a convenient round-up of Parish Council news, forthcoming meetings, local projects, consultations and other useful information. Scan the QR code to sign up: Or visit: forms.cloud.microsoft/e/16CWR1M3bN

LOOKING FURTHER AHEAD

The Parish Council also wants to share news from across the whole village, covering all the things Claygate has to offer. Plans include the development of a village-wide website, bringing together information from shops and businesses, community organisations and local services under one umbrella site. It will enable anyone wanting to find a local event, discover a community group, catch up on village news, access useful local information or report a problem to find easily all the information they need in one place.

To help take these ideas forward, the Parish Council has established a Communications Working Group and would love to hear from Claygate residents who might be willing to contribute their experience, ideas or practical skills, particularly those with expertise in:

- **Branding and design**
- **Social media**
- **Marketing and communications**
- **Digital services and websites.**

It need not be a major commitment. Just contact the Parish Council Clerk at clerk@claygateparishcouncil.gov.uk.

SPEED CHECKS DON'T PLEASE EVERY DRIVER

Speedwatch sessions involve volunteers at the side of the road checking drivers' speeds through Claygate – and it doesn't please everyone. A few drivers ask why the volunteers are not doing something more useful – often before speeding away. And it is a fair question: what does Claygate Speedwatch do and why does it matter?

Well, Speedwatch does matter: the speed limit throughout Claygate village is 30mph, and it exists to protect everyone who uses its roads and pavements. The risk rises sharply with vehicle speed: higher speeds reduce a driver's time to react and increase the severity of any collision, particularly for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

Keeping speeds down therefore protects residents, pedestrians and pets. It also reduces vehicle noise and lowers the risk to people using narrow pavements, such as those on Hare Lane, where large goods vehicles with protruding wing mirrors can pass uncomfortably close.

Claygate Speedwatch therefore exists to remind drivers of the limit, encourage safer behaviour and help reduce the risk of collisions.

THE RED LANE INCIDENT

A serious incident took place on Red Lane this year. The driver escaped with minimal injury, but it was a sobering reminder of how quickly a loss of control can put others at risk. The car struck two trees as it entered Claygate; on another day, pedestrians might have been nearby.

In response, the Speedwatch team worked with Surrey Police to introduce several practical improvements:

- Shifting the monitoring focus from Oaken Lane towards Red Lane;
- Adding two new monitoring locations following discussions with Surrey Police and a site survey;
- Identifying the need for additional volunteers;
- Increasing the number of monitoring days from three to four each month.

Together, these changes have given the team a range of approved monitoring sites on the main routes into and out of Claygate: on Hare Lane, near the BT exchange; Oaken Lane; three locations on Red Lane; and three locations on Stevens Lane.

SPEEDWATCH SESSIONS
(For 12 months to August 18)
Number of sessions – 33
Sessions with no speeding vehicles – 3
Total number of vehicles passing – 16,065
Total Speeders – 118
Average vehicles passing per session – 486
Total session time at roadside – 33 hours
Average offenders per hour – 3.6



Red Lane incident: a sobering reminder

Impact Speed Km/h	Chance of survival Percentage	Serious Injury Percentage risk	Slight Injury Percentage risk
30	90%	15%	75%
40	68%	26%	42%
50	20%	3%	17%
60	5%	3%	2%

Figure 1

Speedwatch sessions are scheduled to take place where and when previous checks have indicated the greatest need, but they have to be within the permitted morning and evening operating times set by Surrey Police. This means, for instance, that volunteers cannot always respond to reports of antisocial driving later in the evening. The group appreciates residents sharing their concerns and continues to work within the times approved by Surrey Police.

And the team has a friendly request: please treat Speedwatch volunteers with the same courtesy they extend to everyone they meet. They give their time to help keep Claygate's roads safer for the whole community. Abusive behaviour will be reported, regardless of a vehicle's speed, and more serious incidents – assessed on a scale from one to five – can lead to the driver being invited to discuss the matter in person with Surrey's casualty prevention officer.

Surrey Police takes the welfare of its volunteers seriously. Thankfully, in recent years, it has rarely needed to report a driver for abusive behaviour, and it is grateful for the support shown by the majority of road users.

WHY NOT VOLUNTEER? Speedwatch needs more volunteers to share the workload. The commitment involves completing an online training course and then giving one or two hours each month, at a time that suits you. Volunteers always work in pairs to support accuracy and safety.

Mark Tymieniecki

NEW COMMUNITY CENTRE BURSTS INTO LIFE - AND IS BUILDING A GYM

It is now non-stop action at the Claygate Community Centre on Elm Road as its new management has introduced a raft of changes that offer a range of new facilities and services to the village.

Now run by the Claygate Community Alliance, it has already begun work on a new fitness studio, introduced many social events, classes and entertainments and is making the spacious, flexible and comfortable Centre available for hire for events.

The revitalised Centre officially opened its doors on September 1, with the management team proudly declaring it is run by the community, for the community and invites everyone in the village to drop in – perhaps to catch up with old friends, learn a new skill, or simply enjoy a change of scenery. And it got off to a cracking start, securing more than 200 members in its first three weeks.

Its offering includes:

● **WEEKDAY WELCOMES:** The Centre is open every weekday from 9.30am to 4pm – including Wednesdays – as well as Saturday mornings. A group meets for coffee and a chat between 10.30 and 11.30am every Saturday. All lunches are cooked freshly on-site by the excellent catering staff. Meals can be booked in advance; anyone deciding at the last-minute to enjoy lunch on the day would need to get their order in by 11am. The kitchen cooks to order to avoid wasting food.

● **ACTIVITIES AND CLASSES:** A seated exercise class is in full swing and a new Zumba Gold class is off to a flying start. If anyone wants to improve their flexibility, give them a try.

● **UPGRADED WI-FI:** The Wi-Fi at the Centre has been significantly improved to offer a fast and reliable connection for work or browsing.

● **EVENTS AND ENTERTAINMENT:** The Centre is already buzzing with life, recently hosting a wine tasting evening and a successful curry night. And it has some brilliant events coming up, such as its monthly film night. This is open to all and will cover a huge range of styles and genres. Each evening will include a brief presentation on the history of the film, and a chance to chat about it as a group afterwards.

It's going to be a relaxed way to revisit classic movies, enjoy some drinks and snacks, and meet new people. The first film evening was scheduled for Thursday October 15, featuring Alfred Hitchcock's brilliant 1943 thriller, "Shadow of a Doubt". The line-up for future months will be announced soon, with something special planned for December to celebrate the festive season. Tickets can be booked on the Centre website: claygatecentre.org



BECOME A MEMBER

The Centre thrives on the support of Claygate residents and a great way to help is to become a member. Annual membership is just £24 a year – which can quickly be recouped through member discounts on meals and drinks. Signing up is easy – residents can register online at claygatecentre.org, or by visiting the Centre in person to speak with one of the friendly volunteers at the welcome desk.

SUPPORTERS AND VOLUNTEERS

A venture of this scale will always be looking for more volunteers to help keep it running smoothly. The Centre has a group of wonderful volunteers but always needs more. Anyone who would like to be involved can visit the website or just call into the Centre for a chat.

A VENUE FOR YOUR NEXT EVENT

Anyone looking for a venue for their event – family celebrations, parties, concerts, classes, club meetings, or community events – can hire the Centre and its kitchen. It can cater for meetings large and small; its dining facilities can accommodate up to 60 people; and its large main hall is a flexible and welcoming events space.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

The community management team is also busy extending the facilities: it has been granted planning permission for a new fitness studio alongside the main building – and construction work has already begun. All villagers are welcome to go along and see for themselves.

GROUP GETS TO WORK WITH CHRISTMAS SHOPPING EVENING

A Claygate Christmas Shopping evening is planned for Wednesday December 2 with shops staying open until 8pm and free car parking in Torrington Lodge and Hare Lane car parks. This initiative is just one of the actions being taken following the creation of the Claygate Business Group.

The Group was the result of work conducted over the past three years by the Shops and Businesses Advisory Group, led by Leonora Tye. The Group conducted the Claygate Business Survey, funded by the Parish Council, and recommendations from the Survey Report were acted upon and turned into initiatives, including village maps, more free parking and the creation of the Claygate Business Group.

The Business Group's first action has been a social media campaign on Instagram to promote all Claygate has to offer under the banner "This Is Claygate", followed by the Christmas Shopping event.

With local businesses now taking these ideas forward, the Advisory Group has successfully completed its original brief, and it extends a big thank you to all the volunteers who have given their time, ideas and enthusiasm to helping Claygate's centre thrive.

WASTE SHOP MEANS LESS BINNED FOOD

Victoria Zadeh, director of Waste to Plate Ltd, explains how her business operates



Volunteers Jas, left, and Maria, right, with regular customer Joyce Milne, centre. Joyce says: 'I like cooking and I don't like waste.'

Every week, perfectly good food across the UK is at risk of going to waste. At the same time, household budgets remain under pressure and communities are looking for practical, sustainable ways to make a difference.

This is where Waste to Plate comes in. Its mission is simple: to stop good food from going to waste and make it available to the community, including via its new shop in Claygate.

The Waste to Plate shop at Claygate Community Centre is open to everyone: it is not a charity or a food bank – there is no means testing and nobody has to demonstrate need. Shoppers visit it because they want to reduce food waste, stretch their household budget, make a more sustainable choice or see what has arrived that day.

While being a limited company, it is not a traditional shop and does not seek to compete with Claygate's established shops and businesses. It does not order stock according to what might sell, and there is no guarantee that an item available one day will be there the next. One day there might be an abundance of bread and vegetables; another it could be fruit, chilled products, store-cupboard ingredients or something completely unexpected. Stock is determined entirely by surplus and availability, not a conventional retail buying plan.

At the heart of the model is the "free standard quota", giving people an opportunity to access food without charge. Alongside this, there is a paid element for those who want to take additional items or access more of what is available.

Waste to Plate pays for about 85 per cent of the produce it distributes, alongside food that is rescued and collected. There are also the costs of transporting, storing and refrigerating food, running premises, maintaining equipment, insurance, food safety and other everyday costs involved in operating responsibly.

Waste to Plate could not operate as it does without its volunteers. They help collect, sort, organise and distribute food, serve customers and keep everything moving behind the scenes. They also create a welcoming, community atmosphere and get to know regular visitors.

Food waste remains an enormous environmental and social challenge: perfectly edible food can become surplus for countless reasons – too much has been produced, packaging has changed, demand has been low, products are approaching their end dates or supply simply exceeds what can be sold through conventional channels. Once that food exists, the worst outcome is for it to become waste.

The Claygate Community Shop, at the Community Centre in Elm Road, is open from 10am-4pm on weekdays and 10am-1pm on Saturdays. wastetoplate.co.uk/community-hubs



Clear skies: Crowds flocked to the Rec for the Flower Show on a baking hot day in July



Navy, aged eight, and her pet Finn, three, adopted Western style outfits for the delayed dog show

VILLAGE SPIRIT SHINES AT THE SHOW

Thousands of visitors revelled in the scorching summer afternoon heat of Saturday July 11 to enjoy the 123rd Claygate Flower and Village Show.

The Recreation Ground was transformed into a vibrant, sun-drenched hub of community spirit for the village's biggest event of the year that brings together generations of neighbours, families, independent traders, and visiting friends.

The iconic grand exhibition marquee stood proud, overlooking the field and packed with more than 200 classes of extraordinary exhibits. Visitors marvelled at outstanding floral displays, perfectly uniform runner beans, fragrant home-made bakes, impressive local photography and creative children's crafts.

Outside on the field, families enjoyed the Classic Car Show, thrilling children's track races, tug-of-war, lively brass tunes from the Cobham Band, a stirring opening by the 1st Claygate Scout Band, sheer skill and discipline demonstrated by the Barker Martial Arts students and a captivating performance by the Thames Valley Morris – proudly continuing a treasured tradition begun in 1952 (see feature, Page 37).

Wisely, the Dog Show was postponed because of the heat and the need to safeguard animal welfare but it successfully took place on Saturday September 19 on the Rec. The weather stayed dry and cool as dozens of joyful canine contenders and proud owners turned out to compete across fun categories, bringing delight to all spectators and completing this year's festivities in wonderful style.

BEST DRESSED WINDOW 2026

The magic of the Flower Show extended beyond the boundaries of the Claygate Recreation Ground this year as local traders participated in the inaugural Best Dressed Window competition. Shopfronts along The Parade and surrounding streets were transformed into imaginative floral marvels, bursting with creative artistry, bunting, and village pride.

These spectacular displays highlighted just how vital the independent local businesses are to the beating heart of Claygate. The Flower Show organisers send a heartfelt thank you to all businesses who put so much effort into participating, and congratulates this year's thoroughly deserving joint winners – The Little Haberdashery (featured on Page 21) and Claygate Flower House.

REMEMBERING BRYAN CHAPPLE

Bryan Chapple sadly passed away this summer. He was a huge part of the Flower Show team for many years, taking on a variety of roles including Ground Steward, Chairman and joint Founder of the Claygate Country 5 Run in the early 1980s.

FEEDBACK WANTED

This grand event simply could not happen without a dedicated volunteer committee, helpers, and an enthusiastic community. To help make next year's gathering even better, please take a few moments to complete a Flower Show Survey: a link and QR code (left) are both also available via the show website or Instagram page (@claygateflowershow). All constructive thoughts and creative ideas directly help shape future plans. And the show will be back on July 10 2027.

HARD WORK AND CONTRIBUTIONS KEEP REC IN SHAPE

Claygate Recreation Ground is much more than a green space: it sits at the heart of village life – a place for sport, exercise, play, dog walks, events large and small, meeting friends, and enjoying the outdoors.

The Rec is managed by Claygate Recreation Ground Trust, a local, volunteer-led charity responsible for maintaining the grounds, woodland, pavilion and facilities.

From football and cricket to the multi-use games area, outdoor gym, children's playground, cafe, dog walks and community events, tens of thousands of visits are made to the Rec every year. The annual Gig on the Rec alone brought about 800 people together this summer to enjoy the music of Billy Joel Tribute UK.

But keeping this much-loved community asset in good condition and open 365 days a year comes at a cost. To meet its responsibilities and ensure the ground remains safe, attractive and available for everyone, the Trust relies on the support of local people to keep it thriving.

INVESTING IN THE REC

The multi-use games area is a great example of the work the Trust does. After more than 20 years of daily use, its surface had taken a battering from sport, weather and the clay soil. This year, the Trust has invested in a new surface and freshly painted courts. But there is always more to do, and villagers' support can make a real difference.

The new Claygate Rec Lottery is an easy way to make that difference while having the chance to win a weekly £25,000 jackpot. Tickets cost just £1 a week, and 50 per cent of every ticket sold goes directly to the Trust to help maintain and improve the Recreation Ground, pavilion and woodland.



The Trust's work includes maintenance of the trees

Every resident can also become a Friend, making a £10 monthly donation and in return enjoying discounts at the cafe, the Treetops pavilion, and Gig on the Rec. Most importantly, regular support helps protect the Rec for everyone.

So help keep the Rec at the heart of Claygate. Find out more and sign up at claygaterecreationgroundtrust.org.uk/support or scan the QR code (left).









CREATIVE POST BOX TOPPERS BRIGHTEN THE PARADE

The creative team behind the post box toppers that brighten The Parade has been busy, crocheting a range of scenes for passers-by to admire. Themes have included the Winter Olympics, the Chelsea Flower Show, Claygate Flower Show, local garden birds, summer holidays, and back to school.

HALL LOOKS AT WAYS OF KEEPING COOL

The summer has been a busy time for Tony Woolhead, manager of Claygate Village Hall: he has been masterminding annual maintenance work, including painting and repairs, to ensure it is looking fresh and clean for the autumn.

He has also been overseeing the replacement of two of the hall's three heater units, following the earlier replacement of the third unit. This large expenditure was part funded by the Parish Council. The hall also received funding via Claygate's Surrey County Councillor, Andy Burton, and the Your Fund Surrey Small Community Projects scheme for other projects in the hall, including thermal reflecting film on the windows of the small hall, additional tables and a watering system for the garden at the back. The hall is now turning its attention towards projects linked to managing temperature and ventilation after the hot summer just experienced.

The programme of improvements over the past couple of years, including floors, curtains and furniture, make the hall ideal for functions of many kinds. Anyone thinking of booking an event can go the hall's website, check its calendar and find booking instructions: **www.claygatevillagehall.co.uk**. Katie Ernest, hall lettings manager, organises the diary extremely efficiently and can often suggest alternatives for hirers if there is nothing that fits in the diary. Other regular activities can be found on the hall's website under "What's On".

The hall regularly hosts shows of all kinds, too, and those coming up include a Halloween concert by Tenuto Opera (October 25); Claygate Dramatic Society's pantomime, "Trouble in Pantoland" (November 19-21); a Save Claygate Green Belt fundraiser barn dance (November 28) and an Ember Big Band Christmas Concert (December 12).

HELP NEEDED

As always, more help would be appreciated in running the village hall especially as the current generation of trustees and officers will at some point wish to step down. Sally Williams, Chair of the Village Hall Association, says the hall has been very fortunate this year to recruit a new treasurer and there has been some interest in becoming a community trustee.

A community trustee is simply someone who is a member of the local community and has an interest in keeping the village hall running smoothly. But more than that, they can look forward to future projects to improve the facilities. Spaces have also been found for representative trustees – people whose organisations use the village hall on a regular basis.

Anyone interested should get in touch; they will be contacted by someone from the hall to discuss what is involved and to meet up.

A personal explanation of the responsibilities and time commitment required of a trustee of a small charity will show what an interesting and often exciting opportunity it can be and how it helps everyone in Claygate to enjoy a very well used village hall. Email **enquiries@claygatevillagehall.co.uk**

LIGHTS, CAMERA AND ACTION IN THE PARADE



Claygate was once again in the limelight in September when a film crew descended on the Parade to make an advertisement. Lights, cameras, sound artists and actors buzzed around outside the beautifully dressed shop window of Williams and Bunkell, the fishmonger.

The advert was for a UK savings and investment app and has already been spotted – one eagle-eyed resident posted it on the Claygate and Esher Community Page on Facebook. Recording was also taking place in Albany Crescent at around the same time.

The village is clearly attractive to makers of adverts and dramas. Filming took place for another advert at the junction of Foley Road and Claremont Road a few years ago, and homes in Claygate, along with sports facilities and fields in Thames Ditton, were used in the filming of "Code of a Killer" in 2015, a drama-documentary on the first use of DNA in a murder investigation. The real-life events took place in Leicestershire.

And also this summer, an advert for a major retailer was filmed in Brendon Drive, on the Claygate-Esher border. The presence of a film crew and all its equipment is always disruptive – so let us hope the results make Claygate look spectacular!



Vanessa Frances: 'I love mending clothes – giving a new lease of life to a favourite garment'

'MAGICAL LITTLE GROTTO' SCOOPS BOROUGH PRIZE

One of the newest shops in The Parade has scooped up Elmbridge Borough Council's Best Claygate Independent Retailer 2026 prize in its Love Elmbridge awards, which called it a "magical little grotto full of hidden trinkets and treasures for all your sewing needs".

But there is much more to The Little Haberdashery than sewing. Founder Vanessa Frances explains: "What has been so humbling is be to right inside people's lives. Who'd have thought that a Little Haberdashery would be used for major life events including births, deaths and marriages.

"To win this award means so much to me. Starting a business is a nerve-wracking endeavour but it was a dream to have my own shop. The Claygate community and beyond have been remarkable – so welcoming and supportive. I have loved every minute and love coming to work every day."

Vanessa opened the shop early this year and has already built up a reputation for repairs and alterations: "I love mending clothes – giving a new lease of life to a favourite garment and keeping it in use for longer." She said she had also seen generations connecting, with grandparents and grandchildren crafting together, with all ages wanting to learn to crochet: the shop hosts parents and their children learning a new skill together.

The Love Elmbridge Awards winners are chosen by borough residents, thousands of whom cast their votes. The Little Haberdashery also shared the Flower Show's inaugural Best Dressed Window prize with Claygate Flower House (see Flower Show, Page 18.)



- A Claygate Christmas Shopping evening is planned for Wednesday December 2 (see Page 17)
- The successful run of street markets (pictured left) in Claygate Parade continues on December 13, from 11am to 3pm. The Christmas market will feature stalls selling high quality food products, distinctive gifts, and more – locally produced and often hand made.

DIGITAL ASSISTANT TO HELP PATIENTS

GP practices are facing increasing demand and reception teams face a rising number of calls, appointment requests, prescription queries, test result inquiries, and administrative requests. The challenge is particularly noticeable during busy periods, such as early morning.

At Capelfield Surgery, the reception team works incredibly hard to support patients and ensure urgent needs are prioritised appropriately. However, like many practices, it is continually looking for ways to improve access, reduce waiting times and retain its skilled reception team.

To help with this, it has recently introduced a "digital reception assistant". The system answers calls immediately, helping patients with routine requests. Patients can still request to speak to a team member, and every request continues to be reviewed by practice staff. By handling routine inquiries, the digital reception assistant allows staff to spend more time helping patients who need additional support or have more complex needs.

To get the most out of the digital assistant: let it finish speaking before you reply; say "can you repeat that" or "can I speak to a human receptionist" at any time; ask to speak in a different language if needed. Any change takes time to get used to, and the surgery welcomes feedback from patients as it continues to improve the service.

To find out more, just go along to the Friends of Capelfield Patient Participation Group Open Forum on Thursday November 19 at 6.30pm at Capelfield Surgery.

HOSPICE SUPPORTS PEOPLE EVERY DAY



Prominent among Claygate's Parade of retailers is the Princess Alice Hospice shop, with its smartly arranged front window and inviting selection of recycled items. Far less visible is the organisation's extensive in-patient unit at its beautiful Hospice in Esher, tucked away behind the trees on Lammas Lane, that provides specialist care for people with complex medical and care needs.

Yet even this is just a small part of the work of the Princess Alice Hospice, Claygate's local hospice that's been standing alongside and supporting families in the village for more than 40 years – because more than 90 per cent of its free care takes place in the community.

Most of its work is carried out in people's homes or care settings: the organisation's teams of nurses, doctors, therapists, counsellors and support staff help people to live as well as possible, making precious memories with loved ones in the time they have.

Behind every person the Princess Alice Hospice cares for is a network of friends and loved ones who are also receiving guidance, practical help and emotional support. Community bereavement support includes cafe visits, walks and talks, and matching isolated community members with a compassionate neighbour, for valuable friendship and connection. The work is supported by more than 1,500 dedicated volunteers in more than 80 different roles.

This free, compassionate care is for everybody, but the organisation says it can currently reach only one in three people in need. Its free care costs more £13m a year and just 25 per cent of its income comes from NHS grants, which means it needs to raise £29,000 every single day. But demand is rising – and costs are rising too, and so it needs to raise more money to plug that gap.

As a charity, it relies heavily on the incredible generosity of the local community. And there are many ways people in Claygate can – and do – help continue the vital work:

- Volunteering – a wonderful way to make friends and give back to the community;
- Fundraising – from holding coffee mornings, cake sales and quiz nights to sponsored walks, garden parties and community events, every pound raised is important;
- Donating – whether by setting up a regular donation or making a one-off gift;
- Gifts in wills – these form a vital part of income;
- Playing the Princess Alice Hospice Lottery – sign up to be in with a chance to win;
- Visiting the Claygate shop – whether donating items, picking up a bargain or volunteering precious time, every purchase and donation helps fund care for local families.



The organisation is supporting people in Claygate every day – people like Shane, who so kindly shared his moving story about his Dad last year: his, and many other inspirational accounts can be read on the Princess Alice Hospice website at www.pah.org.uk/our-care/care-stories

The organisation would love everyone in Claygate to visit its Hospice cafe, visit its website or get in touch to find out more about its work: www.pah.org.uk/how-you-can-help

CAR SERVICE MAKES 650 APPOINTMENT TRIPS IN A YEAR

The Esher and Claygate Car Service has been offering people transport to medical appointments for many years and is always on the look out for new volunteer drivers and for clients who want to use the service.

Over the past year it has undertaken more than 650 drives, and currently has 56 drivers on its books. The drivers take residents of Esher and Claygate, who have no access to transport, to all types of medical appointments. There is no charge for the service but a small donation from the client to help keep the service running is suggested. Through the contributions received and the generosity of drivers in not claiming mileage allowances, the service has been able to donate to three local charities in the past year: the Claygate Youth Hub, East Elmbridge Food Bank, and CHEER, which supports older people in Elmbridge.

Anyone with a few spare hours a month can volunteer to be a driver. Just visit the service website for details. And anyone without access to transport and needing help getting to their appointment is welcome to call 07501 029237, or email eccsdriverequests@gmail.com, or visit: www.esher-and-claygate-car-service.com

VOLUNTEERS DETERMINED TO KEEP CLAYGATE IN FLOWER



Claygate Village Association enjoyed a busy spring and summer thanks to many volunteers and wonderful community support. Tidying up the Torrington Lodge border (pictured right) was tackled with determination and what a transformation was achieved.

A fabulously well supported plant sale (pictured below), both in terms of donations and sales, raised welcome funds for Claygate in Bloom.

And the new planting on The Green, funded by a grant from the Parish Council, was a joy to behold. The summer heat meant much hard work for the Association and Claygate in Bloom volunteers to ensure the plants not only survived but thrived (pictured below, right). The organisations valued the appreciation expressed by the community for their efforts and the trustees were particularly pleased to enable a Duke of Edinburgh volunteer to complete their volunteering hours by helping out.

Trustees thoroughly enjoyed chatting to so many people at the Village Association and Claygate Blue Heart Wildflower stand at the annual Flower Show. And the Association awarded its Best Front Garden 2026 prize to 11 Derwent Close: a neat vegetable garden on the lawn, designed by Marie-Jose. The winner of this competition is awarded a cup to keep for a year; all nominated gardens must be in Claygate and visible from the road or pavement.

COMING UP

All residents are warmly invited to attend the Association's annual general meeting on Wednesday November 18 at 7.30pm in Holy Trinity Church Hall – more details will be published on the Association website, Facebook and Instagram.

And the Association's year concludes with the ever-popular Claygate Christmas lights switch-on – don't miss this fantastic community event in The Parade on Saturday November 28, from 4pm.







STREET TREES HELP LOWER THE HEAT

The importance of the incredible trees lining Claygate's streets came to the fore this summer as they played a vital part in staving off the worst effects of the soaring temperatures. They can absorb carbon dioxide, breathe out oxygen, and absorb harmful pollution – and without them the village would feel empty and dull.

Claygate tree wardens Vanessa Relleen and Bill Raspin are enormously grateful to the villagers who took the time to water the street trees outside their homes. Claygate has an amazing variety of trees, from mighty London planes, limes and horse chestnuts to flowering cherry, rowan and acer, and without this care some would surely have perished in the summer heat.

This summer's heatwaves raised awareness of a phenomenon called the "heat island effect", which sees hard surfaces in urban areas, such as buildings, Tarmac and concrete paving, absorb heat from the sun during the day and store it overnight. This can lead to an unbearable build-up in temperatures across urban areas.

Trees can counter this in two ways. First, by simply providing shade to reduce the temperature of the hard surfaces. Second, by a process called evapotranspiration, which means they take in moisture from the ground and release it though their leaves – providing an air conditioning effect. For example, a mature London plane tree can reduce the surrounding temperature by between two and eight degrees centigrade.

Quite apart from their cooling effect, urban trees create important wildlife corridors, habitats and food sources for birds and insects up and down streets and every spring the wonderful variety of blossoms provides a great food source for bees and other insects.

Although planting street trees won't solve the global climate crisis, they will certainly improve the local environment and increase the sense of calm, beauty, and well-being in the village.

● Claygate's tree wardens are working with Surrey County Council to maintain and see more trees planted in the village. Anyone with an empty tree pit on their street that they would like to see planted – and, importantly, that they are prepared to water – can contact bill.raspin03@gmail.com.

WATER FLOWS THROUGH STREETS AS DROUGHT BRINGS BAN

Water, water everywhere was the mantra in Claygate during this dry and hottest of summers. Thames Water imposed a hosepipe ban as water levels fell – but it struggled to keep pace with fixing the many leaks from failing pipes.

Water poured from the ground and formed large puddles at two points in St Leonards Road; repeatedly near the new zebra crossing in Church Road; at the junction of Hare Lane and Arbrook Lane; and on Oaken Lane at the end of The Avenue. Other leaks were reported, too. Repairs required roads to be closed and the K3 bus had to be diverted for long spells – but some of those repairs proved to be temporary, as water soon burst out again.

Thames Water explains: "We are sorry to our customers who have experienced outages over the summer due to burst pipes. When the ground becomes very dry it can shrink, crack and move, placing additional stress on buried water mains and increasing the likelihood of leaks and bursts. Over the summer we have been fixing more than 1,000 leaks a week.

"Thames Water understands it can be frustrating to see visible leaks while customers are being asked to save water. We spend more than 50,000 hours every month locating and repairing leaks."

HOSEPIPE BAN

Thames Water added: "Recent rain has been welcome but has had only a limited impact. Although we want to lift the hosepipe ban as soon as we can, we need sustained, significant rainfall over months to help rivers recover and groundwater levels recharge before reservoir levels can fully recover.



Closed: St Leonards Road suffered two major leaks

"We continue to monitor conditions and are grateful to customers for continuing to use water wisely. Their support remains essential as we manage resources."

A DECADE OF DOG - AND OWNER - TRAINING

Dog trainer Ali Cottrell is celebrating 10 years of working with local pets and their owners on Claygate Recreation Ground. Ali has lived in Claygate for more than 20 years and set up Ali Cottrell Canines a decade ago. It has since grown into a locally based successful dog training, behaviourist, and dog care business.

Visitors to the Rec will be familiar with her leading sessions, which are all about owners and their dogs having fun while developing excellent communication and bonding skills.

The basis of Ali's training is positive reinforcement and building trust and confidence through learning new skills in dog management and handling. The classes are suitable for all age groups from puppies to adult dogs. Ali also offers individual behavioural one-to-one sessions. For details, visit www.alicottrellcanines.com



Ali with some of her students at West End, Esher

GARDENS DRY UP BUT SOCIETY BLOOMS

All gardens were affected by the long hot summer but Claygate Gardening Society continues to thrive with its programme of talks, garden visits, events and significant discounts at local garden centres and other suppliers.

Its own depot on Vale Road allotments, run by an enthusiastic team during the growing season, supplies a wide range of gardening materials at very competitive prices.

The Society's year started with a talk on The National Garden Scheme ("The Yellow Book"), the origins of which can be traced back to titled ladies who opened their gardens to raise funds for nursing schools set up by Florence Nightingale on her return from The Crimea, the first of which opened in 1860. A proportion of income raised still goes to supporting nursing charities.



Subsequent talks featured "Growing Vegetables" and "The Joys and Challenges of Modern Gardening" and the Society's last talk for this year will be held on Thursday October 22 on "The History of the Allotment Movement".

In June, its annual visits to significant gardens saw Society members at Town Place and Clinton Lodge, near Haywards Heath, East Sussex. Town Place, created from three acres of virgin farmland over 40 years by its present owners, now has an international reputation for its stunning borders, rose gardens, herbs, and topiary – one of the best gardens the Society has ever visited.

The six-acre garden at Clinton Lodge, more formal and romantic, surrounds the 17th century house. The overhung walks and alleys and formal beds are very atmospheric, the whole having a slightly "faded grandeur" air about it.

July's visit was totally different, featuring the Royal Horticultural Society's Hyde Hall, Chelmsford. Smaller, and very different from RHS Wisley, Hyde Hall is set on a hilltop with panoramic views and open skies. Famed for dealing with challenging dry conditions it is full of colour and texture. The only hitch was the five-hour traffic jam getting home.

All garden shows were affected by the summer heat and lack of rain. But exhibitors still found plenty to show at the Claygate Flower and Village Show, attended by the Society, which now awards the RHS Banksian medal at its own flower show in September to the exhibitor with the most points. This year it was won by Ann Whittaker (pictured receiving the award). Ann, who has served for five years as a super-efficient Secretary is standing down from the committee at this year's annual general meeting in November. She will be greatly missed. At present, the post of Secretary is unfilled for 2027.

And after six years of organising the always entertaining talks, Julia Forrest will hand the role of Talks Secretary to Linda Wells, who has already lined up some interesting speakers for next year. Melanie Bennett has also joined the committee and will be helping with website and technology matters.

Membership of the Society is buoyant and new members are always welcome. No significant gardening experience is necessary, just enthusiasm. Membership at £7 is money well spent, recovered in discounts on purchases from local garden centres. For further information, and to sign up online, visit www.claygate-gardening.org

CHURCH PREPARES FOR NEXT PHASE

Holy Trinity Church is delighted that so many people are using the new gate and pathway linking the Recreation Ground with the churchyard and Church Road.

The pathway, peaceful seating areas, wildflower meadow and wildlife haven are all part of its Way Maker project, creating a welcoming place of peace, well-being and biodiversity for everyone to enjoy.

And there is more to come: Way Maker is not yet complete. The church is now hoping to develop a "welcome garden" outside the church foyer, with seating and raised flower beds, and is exploring the possibility of a new glass entrance door from the pathway into the church. Together these would create an accessible and attractive welcome to the churchyard and church, and further open up this space to the wider community.

The church thanks everyone who has supported the Way Maker project and helped the pathway vision become a reality. In May, a Service of Thanksgiving was held to celebrate the opening and blessing of the new gate and pathway, with the Rt Rev Paul Davies, Bishop of Dorking, and the Rev Patrick Bateman, Claygate vicar, leading the service. People from across the Claygate community attended, including local MP Monica Harding and the choir from Claygate Primary School.

Alongside Way Maker, the church is also continuing to develop Holy Trinity as a place where people of all ages can find community, explore faith and discover more about God. It is delighted to welcome Jay Blake as its new Rising Generations Pastor, helping the church to develop its work with children, young people and families. Jay previously trained at Holy Trinity Claygate before serving for seven years at St John's, Hampton Wick.

Holy Trinity recently marked Education Sunday, celebrating and praying for local schools, teachers, pupils and families, with Dan Cadman, the new head teacher at Claygate Primary School, attending. This autumn, the church will be hosting a training day, with the Prayer Spaces in Schools organisation that helps churches, schools and community workers to create inclusive spaces where children and young people can reflect, pray and explore faith.

Everyone is welcome to go along to the busy church, to get involved, and find out more or simply spend time in the church and churchyard.

POPPY APPEAL HOPING TO MATCH LAST YEAR'S TALLY

This year's Poppy Appeal week runs from Monday November 2, but poppies will be available in advance from several outlets in and around Claygate, including the churches, public houses, retail outlets and schools. Remembrance Day itself falls on Sunday November 8.

And organisers are hoping to match – or beat – the impressive £7,494 in donations collected last year – the largest total the current Poppy Appeal Organisers can remember. To do that, they need volunteers, without whom the Royal British Legion, that runs the appeal, could not function as it does.

Anyone able to assist with the Poppy Appeal in Claygate should contact either Hugh Stephenson, the organiser for Claygate Parish, on 01372 464217 or 07950 029130, Hughstephenson7@outlook.com or Peter Wakeham, Poppy Appeal Manager for East Surrey, on 01273 411058 or 07826 908603, Pwakeham@britishlegion.org.uk.

The Royal British Legion's purpose is to improve the lives of everyone in the armed forces community and make sure their voice is heard in both wartime and peacetime and anywhere in between. For its 2026 Poppy Appeal and Remembrance services it aims to highlight the contribution and sacrifice made by armed forces families. The impact on family life is the top reason that makes serving personnel consider leaving their job.

When someone serves in the armed forces, their family serves too, facing unique challenges and



sacrifices alongside their loved ones – and the Legion is there offering support from day one of service and throughout their lives.

By wearing a poppy, people show their support and thanks to the armed forces community, past and present: it means a lot to those who serve and their families. From risking their lives in war zones, providing support during emergencies and humanitarian disasters, and spending time away from their families, those who serve in the forces deserve the public's gratitude.

At any given moment, the Legion is helping nearly 8,000 members of the armed forces community by providing expert advice and practical support. Every donation helps to support those who serve and their families, whatever the need, whenever it's needed.

POOL UNVEILS LANE LINES AND EXPANDS ACTIVITY PROGRAMME

A fresh new look with refreshed facilities and an expanded programme of activities is being enjoyed by swimmers at the Claygate Community Pool. The brief annual summer closure allowed the pool to be emptied and lane lines painted on the pool floor, enhancing both training sessions and recreational swimming.

The pool's activity schedule has also grown significantly through partnerships with local well-being organisations. Sound Bath Sessions, delivered by Vicky from Viva Aquatica, have proved so popular that additional dates have been added for November 3 and December 1.

Alongside established classes with Viva Aquatica and Gina King, a new Sensory, Stay and Play session was introduced during the summer term and will continue on Tuesdays during term time.

And Claygate Community Pool remains home to Kingston Royals Swimming Club, which offers competitive training and swimming lessons for all ages. For more information and details, visit: **www.kingstonroyals.co.uk**.



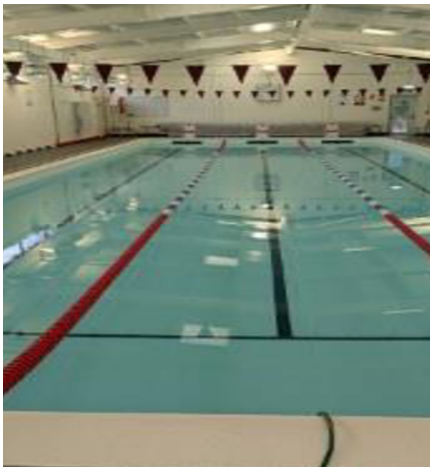
Dry summer: Jono Eskin paints lane lines in the empty pool

Pool parties continue to be a popular choice for birthdays, end-of-term celebrations and community gatherings, and pool hire is available to both members and non-members. For further details please contact: **claygatepoolmembership@gmail.com**

Claygate Community Pool, in the grounds of Claygate Primary School, is also put to excellent community use as it continues to champion accessible well-being activities and community engagement, offering an inclusive space for residents of all ages.

Claygate residents are all invited to visit the pool to see for themselves what a valuable asset it is. They can explore the facilities and meet the volunteer team at the pool's next open day on Saturday November 21, from 1pm to 3pm.

Pool membership is available throughout the year for individuals and families. Individual membership is £25 and family membership is £60 (this includes all children under 18 living in the same household). Application forms can be found on the pool's website, **claygatecommunitypool.co.uk/**



Full again: with lines painted

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to help with morning weekday supervision of 45-minute sessions between 6.45 and 9am.

MEMBER OF STAFF NEEDED

The pool can also be a place to work: the team needs an additional member of staff. The school has a paid vacancy to support weekend opening and closing duties, as well as pool maintenance/management for a four-week period from mid-January to mid-February 2027. Training will be provided. For further information, please contact **claygatepoolmembership@gmail.com**

NEW HEAD STRIVES FOR EXCELLENCE, KINDNESS AND FUN



All change: Dan Cadman with popular retiring head Sandra Cunningham

In September, Claygate Primary School welcomed Dan Cadman, its new head teacher, who takes over from the highly popular Sandra Cunningham following her retirement after eight years at the helm.

The Primary School is a much-loved and well sought after school in the community. At a time when many primary schools are facing falling pupil numbers, Claygate continues to be oversubscribed, reflecting the strength of its reputation and the high aspirations of its families, staff and children.

Dan will become a familiar face to village parents and so the Courier asked him about his journey into education and what attracted him to Claygate: “I have worked in education for almost 25 years, but my journey into primary education began in a small rural village in southern Japan, where I was teaching English.

“It was there that I fell in love with working with primary-aged children. Their enthusiasm, curiosity and passion for learning was – and still is – infectious. Just as importantly, I experienced the wonderful sense of belonging that comes from being part of a thriving community.

“Fast forward 20 years, and after working as an assistant head teacher in Walton-on-Thames and then as a deputy head teacher in Twickenham, I felt ready for the challenge of headship. When I first toured Claygate Primary, I knew almost immediately that this was the school for me. I saw happy children, dedicated staff and beautiful grounds. It felt like a very special place.

“Just a few weeks into the role, I have already been overwhelmed by the support, encouragement and kindness of the school community. I believe strongly in the importance of community and in developing young people who look beyond themselves – children who want to make a positive difference to their local community and to the wider world.

“At the school, there are three things that are particularly important to us. First, we strive for excellence every day. We have exceptional staff with high aspirations for every child, and we want our children to leave us with strong academic foundations, excellent communication skills and the confidence and ambition to become the very best version of themselves.

“Second, we are a school filled with love. Above all, we want our children to be kind – kind to themselves, kind to others and kind to our planet. Our wonderful grounds, including food-growing beds, a nature area and pond, as well as our guinea pigs and chickens, give children the opportunity to develop a genuine love and respect for nature.

“And finally, school should be fun. We want children to leave with a life-long love of learning. Our teachers work hard to create a curriculum that excites, engages and has real meaning for the children.

“I feel incredibly fortunate to have joined such a wonderful school and community. We are determined to keep growing and thriving, and I am excited about what the future holds for Claygate Primary School.”





Scouts enjoying an adventurous expedition - and (below) the excellent band opens the Flower Show

AN ACTION-PACKED SWISS ADVENTURE

In August, the 1st Claygate Scout Troop joined the Surrey Scouts' expedition to Kandersteg International Camp Site in Switzerland, travelling by overnight coach to the beautiful site in the Bernese Overland. The 30 Scouts and six leaders from Claygate set up camp alongside other Surrey troops as well as Scouts from all over the world.



The Scouts had a full programme of activities which included hiking in the surrounding mountains and valleys, rafting on the fast-flowing Aare river, high ropes, swimming, and visits to Bern and Interlaken. The amazing leadership team from Surrey Scouts, all volunteers in scouting, booked all the activities and provided food for nearly 700 young people and leaders.

Another expedition is planned for 2029. In the meantime, the Scout troop is planning camps in the UK, including a greenfield summer camp in the Yorkshire Dales next year.

BEAVERS AND CUBS - A CELEBRATION

Along with Beavers and Cubs across the UK, the troop is celebrating 40 years of Beavers and 110 years of Cubs. In 1st Claygate that amounts to more than 250 young people and volunteers all celebrating, making it one of the biggest birthdays ever.



These badges celebrate the dates when the Beavers and Cubs sections were commenced across the UK as part of the Scout family. Beaver Scouts became official UK-wide sections in 1986 after a trial period in areas across the country. Cub Scouts began as Wolf Cubs in 1916, after a successful pilot programme, and officially became Cub Scouts in 1966.

In the coming months the young people will be undertaking the following:

- 1st Claygate Scout and Guide Band will be performing at Disneyland Paris
- Attending the village Remembrance service on Sunday November 8
- Being part of the Claygate Christmas Lights event on Saturday November 28

For details, visit: www.claygatescouts.org/

JO JINGLES BRINGS JOY OF MUSIC TO LITTLE ONES

Jo Jingles, the UK's long-established music and movement programme for babies and young children, is starting new classes of music, movement, instruments and developmental play in Claygate on Friday November 13 at The Claygate Youth and Community Hub on Elm Road.



Sam Helen, who will be running the Claygate programme, says it has been developed over more than three decades and is aligned with the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Sam is holding free demonstration sessions ahead of the new term. The Claygate classes begin on November 13, with Baby Jingles at 10.30am, and Jingle Toddlers at 11.30am at The Hub in Elm Road. To book online: booking.jojingles.com/discover/territory/leatherhead/ or call Sam on 07355 167188.



GIRLS GET BUZZY SO THAT BEES CAN FEEL AT HOME

The hot, hot summer didn't stop Claygate Girlguiding – here are some of the things they got up to.

4th Claygate Brownies were busy – or "buzzy" – with a term filled with bee-themed activities (pictured above) for their Animal Helper badge. They welcomed Tom from the British Bee Charity to a meeting, planted up flower tubs with pollinators, made bee hotels, and designed gardens. They also built a model of a "Pollinators' Paradise", which was entered in the Claygate Flower Show (right), winning the girls the Richard Maxwell group-work cup for their efforts.



The girls also joined the Elmbridge Countryside team for some invasive weed removal. Himalayan Balsam is a problem in Arbrook Common, where it prevents native plants from growing. The girls successfully removed hundreds of the pesky weeds during their visit.

Older girls in 1st Claygate and 3rd Claygate Guides (aged 10-14) joined forces for a residential outing at Paxmead Riverside Base in Shepperton. As well as preparing and cooking all their meals on open fires, the girls worked on their Camp skills builder, and hiked along the Thames while finding clues to complete a quiz. There was also plenty of singing and sketch performances at the campfire.

1st Claygate Guides were busy with "whisper sabotage" (exploring cybersecurity). Some guides took part in a litter pick in Claygate, while others did their own litter pick when visiting other areas. They made fire posters to reinforce safety rules, and practised knots – which they used to put up a flagpole for a camp, as well as putting up a tent, lighting fires and doing backwoods cooking. They also found time to work on other badges, including Artist, Personal Best (hockey), Photography, Mixology, Overnight, and Artist, resulting in Bronze and Silver awards, and a Gold award.

Meanwhile at 3rd Claygate Guides, the girls worked on their Explore skills builder, having a go at map reading and planning trips using public transport maps and timetables, then discussing what to do when things don't go according to plan. They experimented with different flapjack recipes, and backwoods cooking. They achieved their Pioneering badge, making lolly stick rafts as floating tealight holders, and catapults.

The girls collected nature items in the woods which they pressed into clay formed into leaf-like discs. When dry, these were decorated and attached loosely to twigs and branches, so they moved gently in the breeze, imitating their natural counterparts. This was entered in the Claygate Flower Show, where the girls were again successful, winning the John Cole group-work cup.

During the summer holidays, Esher District held its Annual Day Camp for Rainbows (aged four to seven) and Brownies (aged seven to 10). This ran for a week in August at the Foxwarren guide hut, and girls from four different units attended over the week. This year the theme was Space, and the girls took part in activities, crafts and cooking around this theme, as well as finding out facts about the solar system, spacecraft, and astronauts. This enabled them to earn two special badges by completing challenges.

The autumn term has brought the excitement of Girlguiding's new uniform, which launched in July. The redesign was undertaken with input from almost 55,000 members. The new uniform is available in the Girlguiding shop already, but there is no rush to change – the current uniforms can still be worn until they are outgrown or wear out.

New girls are always welcome to join Claygate Girlguiding. Anyone with a daughter interested in joining a group can register on the Girlguiding website www.girlguiding.org.uk by clicking on the "Register a Child" button. One of the Claygate leaders will get in touch, and families will be invited to meet the leaders and other girls. New adult volunteers are also welcome – please email esherdc@gmail.com to get involved.

For news, visit Instagram www.instagram.com/girlguidingesherandclaygate/

HUB YOUNGSTERS TEE UP FOR GOLF

It was a busy summer for The Hub, with a range of activities bringing young people together, and it is now welcoming young people back through its doors for a new term of friendship, activities and support.



The enthusiasm, teamwork and commitment of the young members of the Claygate Youth and Community Hub ensured its annual Summer Fair proved another great success, both in nurturing the organisational skills of the youngsters and in raising valuable funds for future activities.

Another summer highlight was a visit to Thames Ditton and Esher Golf Club, where 21 young people enjoyed coaching from golf professionals, a putting competition and the opportunity to experience the course. The club has also chosen The Hub as its charity of the year, a gesture that is greatly appreciated by everyone involved.

During the school holidays, funding from the national Holiday Activities and Food Programme also enabled The Hub to provide a series of special activity days. The youngsters took part in a Summer Olympics event, pottery painting workshops and even set up their own Japanese restaurant, including learning how to make sushi. In total, 64 local young people participated across the programme.

For more than 10 years, Hub manager Katie Holmes and her team of staff and volunteers, led by Andy Clifton, have been helping local young people develop confidence, resilience and a sense of community. One of the greatest rewards, says Katie, is seeing children grow into capable and caring adults: “Over the years we’ve watched young people navigate the challenges of growing up and emerge as wonderful young adults. It’s a privilege to be part of that journey.”

The Hub’s work depends on grants, donations, hall hire income and community fundraising. An important part of that work was arranged for early October, when villagers could show their support at the annual HubFest fundraiser, helping to ensure that this important local resource can continue to provide opportunities for young people to connect, learn new skills and enjoy a safe and welcoming environment.

The event was planned to be bigger than ever with a larger marquee, leaving more space for sitting, chatting and dancing. The excellent Camellia and the Wallflowers were booked to provide live music and fabulous prizes were donated for the raffle and silent auction.

As the new term rolls on, The Hub remains at the heart of the community, helping local young people to grow, thrive and look confidently towards the future.

SINGING SCHOOL IN GREAT VOICE AFTER 25 YEARS

In its 25 years, Surrey Singing School has produced West End stars and music industry success stories and currently has children attending who are already theatre and film industry professionals – yet still find time to come to classes for development, training and qualifications.



The school, based in Claygate and Shepperton, is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year and brings an individual approach to pop and musical theatre studies. Cinnamon Fuller, founder, owner and one of the teaching team, says singing can benefit every child and welcomes all abilities. She combines quality vocal tuition with fun and the excitement of performing, enabling pupils to grow in confidence while developing musical skills: “We want every child to feel they have a place on our stage and discover what they're capable of.”

Cinnamon has long-standing ties with Claygate: her grandparents lived in the village and helped raise money to fund the purchase of the land to build Claygate Village Hall. Her mother Pamela took over Chadsworth, the local stage school, and grew it to more than 600 pupils. Pamela now helps the Surrey Singing School team every Friday and says “it feels like coming home”. Cinnamon, pictured left with Lily Hanna and Leon Saunders, two of her professional pupils in the West End's “Matilda” musical, says one key feature of the school is its high teacher-pupil ratio, which allows pupils to receive individual attention while still enjoying the energy and friendships within the school.

Classes are offered for ages from six to 18 years on Fridays and Saturdays in Claygate and Shepperton. In addition to the Performance and Technique show classes there are opportunities to study extra classes in LAMDA and London College of Music examinations.

Free trial sessions are available, giving children the chance to meet Cinnamon and her team and experience a class to see whether the school is right for them. For further information visit www.surreysingingschool and book a free trial. Or contact Cinnamon on 07830 450466.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CLAYGATE?

A village resident prepared this quiz for members of a Claygate organisation - and the questions fell into the hands of the Courier. Some are tough. No prizes – just fun and satisfaction. Answers on Page 38.

1. "Together We Grow" is the motto of which Claygate organisation?



2. What was the name of Claygate's railway station when it opened in 1885?

3. In the same year (1885), which Claygate sports club was formed?

4. Who was the first winner of the Brian Rhodes Community Cup, awarded by Claygate Parish Council, in 2004?

5. Why is Beaconsfield Road in Claygate so named?

6. What was the original name of The Parade in Claygate?

7. Which Claygate organisation is marking its centenary this year?

8. There is a "blue plaque" on a wall in The Parade. Whose name is on it?

9. Ruxley Towers was the headquarters of which organisation in the Second World War?

10. Some of these questions have been drawn from "The Claygate Book". Who wrote it?

11. Another Claygate author wrote a history of the Guildford via Cobham railway line. What was his name?

12. Apart from the bricks themselves, what products from the brickfields of Claygate became famous for their quality and design from the 1920s?

13. What is the colour of the scarf worn by members of the Claygate Scouting group? Is it blue with a yellow strip; khaki; or grey with purple stripes?

14. The K3 bus is a familiar sight - and a service to the residents of Claygate. But the route of this bus, linking Esher and Kingston, had two earlier numbers. Name them.

15. A new greengrocer, the Fruit Machine, opened on the Parade in March. What was the name of the previous shop on this site?

CRICKETERS LOOK BACK ON UP-AND-DOWN SEASON



The 2026 season will be remembered as an up-and-down year for Claygate Cricket Club, with plenty of highlights to celebrate alongside some challenges that will help shape the future of the club.

The stand-out success of the summer was undoubtedly its Women's Softball team (pictured right), crowned league champions after an outstanding campaign. Winning nine of their 10 league matches, they produced fantastic performances throughout the season, including impressive victories over strong sides such as Esher and Sunbury. Congratulations to all the players and coaches involved in a memorable achievement.



The club's junior section also continued to thrive, with another hugely successful All Stars and Dynamos programme. More than 100 children attended weekly coaching sessions throughout the summer, developing their skills while enjoying the game in a fun and welcoming environment. The enthusiasm shown by players, parents and volunteers was fantastic to see.

The Sunday XI also enjoyed a strong season, playing competitive and entertaining cricket with several close matches and some brilliant individual and team performances.

Off the field, the club was delighted to secure a new multi-year sponsorship agreement with OMNI Property Solutions. Its support will play an important role in helping the club continue to develop both on and off the field.

Unfortunately, it was a difficult season for the 1st XI, who were relegated to Division 8. However, with a winter ahead to regroup, reset and strengthen, the focus is already on bouncing back in 2027. Winter training will begin soon, and any local players interested in joining the club are encouraged to visit its website or follow its social media channels for more information. www.claygatecricket.co.uk



The centenary cake with social committee members Sophie Craig, Sarah Burden and Nicky Ammon



Club Chair, Keith Tilson, and retiring Club Secretary Vanessa Relleen

TENNIS CENTENARY PARTY IS A SMASH





It has been a centenary year of celebration for Claygate Lawn Tennis Club. Marking its 100th birthday, the club held a gala party on its lawns in May, with more than 160 members and friends attending. Organised by the social committee, it featured live music, presentations, a gourmet hog roast and centenary cake. Club Chair Keith Tilson said: "All had a great time, albeit the party overran a little. We extend our apologies to our neighbours – it will not happen again for a while!"

A second highlight was enjoyed by 16 lucky members (pictured below left) who spent a day at Wimbledon in August playing tennis on the grass practice courts, and were taken on a guided tour, given an absorbing lesson in how to grow perfect grass and mark perfect white lines, followed by a champagne and canapés reception in the Centre Court hospitality area. The All England Lawn Tennis Club invites 16 representatives from each club celebrating its centenary to spend a day at Wimbledon.

The Claygate club was founded in 1926 with a single court behind 113 Hare Lane. It moved to its current site behind Torrington Close and Hare Lane in 1936 and now has five courts and approximately 500 members. For information: clubspark.lta.org.uk/ClaygateLawnTennisClub

CLAYGATE COUNTRY 5 RACE

Almost 400 runners took part in this year's Claygate Country 5 road race, which is a post-lockdown record, and the run took place in good weather, thankfully avoiding the scorching heat of most of the summer.

The run is strongly supported by local running clubs with some of them competing to enter the most runners. While the winner, pictured right crossing the line, completed the five-mile course around Claygate and into the surrounding countryside in less than 29 minutes, many runners enjoyed being out on the course for an hour or more. Runners of all abilities are absolutely welcome to enjoy the Claygate Country 5.



BOWLERS MISS OUT AS HEATWAVE CANCELS MATCHES

The soaring temperatures took much of the heat out of Claygate Bowls Club's summer season, with several of its friendly matches against nearby clubs having to be postponed or cancelled. But the club, based at Wingham Court on Oaken Lane, did manage to pick up a clutch of new members thanks to its open days and welcoming spirit.

Although the weather-affected competitive season was threadbare, the end-of-summer club tournaments produced some exciting matches, with Peter Whitehead winning the President's Day trophy, as well as the men's knockout tournament, and with Grania Langdon-Down winning the women's competition.



President's Day finalists: Jay, Peter and Grania

Another highlight of the summer was a minibus trip several members made to Southampton Old Bowling Green – said to be the oldest surviving bowling green in the world, dating back to at least 1299.

It was a fascinating day, with teams playing on the hallowed turf and the Claygate contingent



Claygate club members visited the world's oldest green

learning about the Southampton club's extraordinary history. One of its traditions involves a "knighthood" tournament that lasts several days, with the winner being a club "knight" and referred to as "sir". The winner also receives a silver medal, with mention of a contemporary notable event engraved on the back: with the competition having been founded in the late 1700s, the medal collection is a fascinating and priceless slice of history.

The friendly Claygate Bowls Club welcomes new members who would like to try their hand at this absorbing and intriguing sport. As well as competitions, members enjoy social bowling sessions throughout the spring and summer. The green sits in a beautiful setting and the club can provide equipment: all prospective new members need to do is wear shoes with the flattest, smoothest soles they have. For information, visit: claygatebowls.bowlsclub.net/

MATCH FEES RISE BUT BRIDGE CLUB 'STILL GREAT VALUE'

For the first time in several years, Claygate Bridge Club has increased its "table money", or match fee, to £4 per player each Monday evening. This is due in part to the need to build a reserve fund eventually to replace its ailing card-dealing machine, and in part to increased hiring costs for the Claygate Centre.

But this is still a highly competitive price compared to other attractions in the area. And the club has huge confidence in the new management team at the Centre, the Claygate Community Alliance.

It is now nearly 10 years since the club committee took the big decision to invest in the BridgePal scoring system. At the time it was the only club in the county to buy this technology, rather than the standard Bridgemate system, which meant a leap of faith for the committee, most of whom had not seen it working. Apart from its low cost and industry-standard components – Windows and Android – BridgePal's principal advantage is that, immediately after each hand is complete, it displays how, ideally, it should have been played. Far from being a source of embarrassment, this gives bridge players something to discuss in the short interval before the next round.

Duplicate club bridge is, like most competitive games, not a social activity when you're actually playing. It is very much a partnership game, and players really want to convey as much information as they can to their partner, but it all has to be done legally – without talking or giving signals.

During play, players are restricted to a few stock phrases such as "Having none" to confirm they cannot follow the suit that was led. This contrast with bridge at home can come as a surprise to first-timers in a club, particularly if the atmosphere reminds them of a school examination room. But it is also challenging and exciting.

The club has a thriving membership but its current difficulty is recruitment to the committee. Most Claygate members also belong to other local clubs, but the club hopes some will step forward and do their bit in Claygate. Anyone who can help, or who would like to join, should visit www.bridgewebs.com/claygate/

CHORAL SOCIETY'S FESTIVE PROGRAMME SETS THE MOOD



Slide into the mood for the festive season with the uplifting sounds of Handel's Messiah Part 1 and Vivaldi's Magnificat performed by Claygate Choral Society and Orchestra on Saturday November 28 at 7pm.

Its evening of Advent choral music will be conducted by David Terry, with Gareth Giles as accompanist, and takes place in Holy Trinity Church, Claygate. Tickets are £20 and can be bought via the Society website or on the door (card charges might apply) www.claygatechoralsociety.co.uk

Anyone with a love of choral music and who enjoys singing is invited to join the Society. There is no audition, and an ability to read music is helpful but not essential. Rehearsals are held on Friday evenings at Holy Trinity Church from 7.45pm.

The Society also runs a social calendar of events, ranging from quiz evenings to summer jazz. Potential choir members are invited to send an email to chair@claygatechoralsociety.co.uk.

FIVE CHOIRS, 180 SINGERS, ONE VOICE



The positive benefits of singing together are now generally accepted and the number of local choirs is testament to how much people enjoy singing together. One well established ensemble is Claygate's Vocality Choir, the first in a family of five Vocality choirs thriving today in Surrey and south-west London.

Vocality Claygate was founded in 2008 and has about 50 members who meet at Holy Trinity Church Hall on Tuesday evenings to sing, learn and socialise. Choir founder Catherine Dyson chooses a diverse selection of a cappella arrangements from different genres and styles of music each term, and all the songs are taught by ear, so there is no need to be able to read music.

The Claygate choir is directed by professional tenor Tom Chapman. Tom leads several choirs, but says: "Vocality Claygate is one of the friendliest and most dedicated groups I've ever worked with and it's so much fun to be a part of. The singers just love being there and bring such a sense of fun to the rehearsal, and this makes my job a total joy."

The choir generally works towards a small local performance for family and friends at the end of each term. Recently, however, all five Vocality choirs, including Claygate, came together for two joint concerts at the Hammond Theatre in Hampton. The Vocality choir leaders collaborated to ensure that each individual choir learned the repertoire in the same way, before coming together as one large choir on the day. About 180 members took part, singing a typically eclectic variety of songs, from "Africa" by Toto and "We Are the Champions" to "Little Blue". It was a wonderful occasion, with full houses for both the matinee and evening performances. As one Claygate singer commented: "What a lovely day. Singing with all the choirs together sounded – and felt – amazing."

Vocality Claygate will be giving a short, informal performance of the songs they've been learning this term at All Saints Church, Weston Green, at 8.30pm on Tuesday December 1. This beautiful little church has great acoustics, it's free to attend, and everyone is welcome.

And for anyone who would like to join Vocality Claygate, its next term begins on Tuesday January 12, and new members are always very welcome. Free taster sessions are offered during the first two weeks of every term, so that newcomers can start learning the songs alongside everyone else, rather than joining half-way through and feeling they have too much catching up to do.

For further information, and to book a taster, visit: **www.vocalitysinging.co.uk**

DAZZLING YOUNG MUSICIANS ON STAGE IN CLAYGATE

The world class series of concerts that takes place in Claygate continues on Saturday November 14 when Shlomi Shahaf on violin and Phoebe Papandrea on piano will play pieces by Bach, Debussy, Franck, Brahms and Wieniawski in Holy Trinity Church.

The Oxshott and Cobham Music Society, which organises the season of concerts, is renowned for its dazzling selection of musicians from around the world. Young violinist Shlomi Shahaf (pictured right) began studying both the violin and piano at the age of four and he has played with leading symphony orchestras in Ukraine, as well as BBC National Orchestra of Wales and London Symphony Orchestra, among others.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Shlomi relocated to London, where he currently studies at the Purcell School. British-Italian pianist Phoebe Papandrea was born in London in 2007 and began studying piano at the age of three. She appeared at London's Royal Festival Hall at the age of four, marking the beginning of a performing career that has taken her to major venues worldwide. Their concert will be preceded by a free talk at 6.30pm.

On Saturday January 16, pianist Bridget Yee (pictured below) will play Stravinsky, Scriabin, Franck/Bauer, Chopin, Rameau, and Liszt in a concert beginning at the earlier time of 5.30pm. The young Malaysian pianist is recognised for performances of imagination, intensity and emotional depth.

She has appeared across Europe and internationally, with highlights including her solo debuts at the Lucerne Festival and the Royal Mile International Piano Series in Edinburgh. She was a BBC Young Musician Keyboard Finalist.

On Saturday February 13, three exceptional musicians – Philippe Graffin, Raphael Wallfisch and Simon Callaghan – bring their Beethoven tour, marking the death of the composer in 1827, to Claygate. This will be their only concert in Surrey.





Graduating from the Paris Conservatoire at 16, Philippe Graffin furthered his studies in the US and Netherlands. Upon hearing him play, Yehudi Menuhin invited Graffin to make his debut recording under his baton with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He has an extensive discography. Raphael Wallfisch is one of the most recorded classical artists in the world and Simon Callaghan performs internationally as a soloist and chamber musician, in parallel with a highly successful career as a recording artist.

And the Bute Wind Quintet conclude the 2026-27 season on Saturday March 13. They have had a busy two years of performing and completed a two-year Artists' Residency at the Norwegian Church Arts Centre, as well as recording “The Night Before Christmas” by Oliver Tarney for Convivium Records in 2024. Individually, they have all freelanced with professional orchestras, such as the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Welsh National Opera and various other UK orchestras.

Tickets are £22 for the concerts in November, January and March and £25 in February. All concerts are at Holy Trinity Church, Claygate and begin at 7.30pm, with doors open at 7pm – except Bridget Yee in January, which starts at 5.30pm. Tickets can be bought on the door, by calling the box office on 07766 884991, or online (with a fee) at **wegottickets.com**. The concerts are free for members, children, students under 26 (with ID), and accompanying carers. There are concessions for families with children, NHS staff and recipients of universal credit.

For full details of its programme of concerts, visit the OCMS website at **www.ocms-music.org.uk/**

CLAYGATE TEA DANCES: 'A SHORTCUT TO HAPPINESS'

The Austrian writer Vicki Baum is often quoted for saying "There are shortcuts to happiness, and dancing is one of them" – and who could argue with that, having seen the smiling faces on the dance floor in Claygate Village Hall enjoying an afternoon tea dance.

Claygate Tea Dance is run by Marilyn Stark, who is full of enthusiasm: "Don't stay at home when you can meet new people, have tea, fresh coffee and really good cake. We have a mixture of couples and single people, and they are all very friendly. All levels of dancers are welcome, even beginners. If you don't dance at all, you can come and just have tea and a chat. You never know, it might be the start of a new hobby."

She says that the fun of dancing has been shown to improve mental well-being and general fitness and that age is no barrier: the group has dancers up to the age of 90.

It meets at Claygate Village Hall from 1.30pm-3.30, every second and fourth Wednesday of the month – and occasionally manages to fit in an extra session. Marilyn suggests contacting her to confirm precise dates, as they can change to fit around other hall users and at school holiday times.

Marilyn adds: "We usually have a Christmas Tea Dance with mince pies, and sometimes one on New Year's Eve. So, come and give us a try. Contact me by phone or email or just turn up, no need to book, it's pay on the door." Phone: 07852 109288; email: afternooncakes@gmail.com

DANCING IN THE STREET KEEPS COLOURFUL TRADITION ALIVE



Before the Claygate Flower Show in 1952, a group of volunteers got together to practise Morris dancing to perform at the show. And that was the start of a tradition of appearing at the Flower Show that continues, along with its Boxing Day tour of Claygate's pubs that has become a heart-warming annual community event.

Over the years, there have been changes: none of the original dancers are still around, although some of the current group have been dancing for 40 years. But the biggest change has been moving from a men-only to a mixed side to welcome women dancers.

Thames Valley Morris performs a style of English folk dance that originated in the Cotswolds and its repertoire of about 40 dances includes both traditional 19th century dances as well as more recent inventions in the same style. Most of these dances involve six or eight dancers and, of course, a musician or three. In the summer, the side dances in public every Tuesday evening and at a few weekends, too.

Dancing is an enjoyable way of keeping fit both physically and mentally. And in dancing the Morris, participants are continuing a centuries-old tradition. There is friendship, great music, pubs to discover, and a warm reception from audiences.

The Morris meets every Tuesday evening in the autumn and winter to practise and to train apprentices. It's a welcoming supportive evening, followed by a debrief in the pub. To try it out, as a dancer or musician, contact Ian Campbell, on bagman@tvmm.org.uk or just turn up on a Tuesday at the Hub in Elm Road between 8 and 10pm. Start soon – and be part of the glorious annual Boxing Day tour of the village. More information: www.tvmm.org.uk

CHOIR'S PROGRAMME WILL BE UPLIFTING - DESPITE ITS THEME

Music for funerals can be depressing or, like the music the Ripieno Choir is singing at its next concert, it can be comforting and uplifting.

The concert starts with the greatest of JS Bach's six motets for unaccompanied choir, "Jesu meine Freude", a setting of Lutheran chorales interspersed with extracts from Paul's joyous Epistle to the Romans. Next comes music from another Bach, Johann Christoph. For the second half we go to the greatest of Bach's predecessors, Heinrich Schütz, and to perhaps his greatest work, the burial mass entitled Musikalische Exequien.

Schütz sets passages from the Bible to his music, some also set by other composers, including Handel in Messiah (wait for Ripieno Choir's 80th anniversary concert next April!) and Brahms in his Requiem. Schütz's setting is equally moving and inspiring.

Everyone can judge for themselves at All Saints, Weston Green on Saturday October 31 at 3pm — note the starting time. For more information and tickets, visit ripienochoir.org.uk

OPERA SINGERS INVITE THE BRAVE TO ENJOY THE DARK SIDE OF MUSIC

A ghoulish evening of treachery, murder and witchcraft is promised by Tenuto Opera on Sunday October 25 at its Halloween Opera night.

Tenuto Opera, a Claygate singing ensemble of classically trained musicians performing opera and classical musicals, has curated a selection of arias, ensembles and spooky musical theatre songs celebrating the darker side of opera and song. So be brave and enjoy an exciting concert by this accomplished group of singers.

It takes place in Claygate Village Hall on October 25 at 7.30pm. The seating will be arranged in cabaret style and there will be a donation bar. For tickets, visit www.ticketsource.com/kttenuto



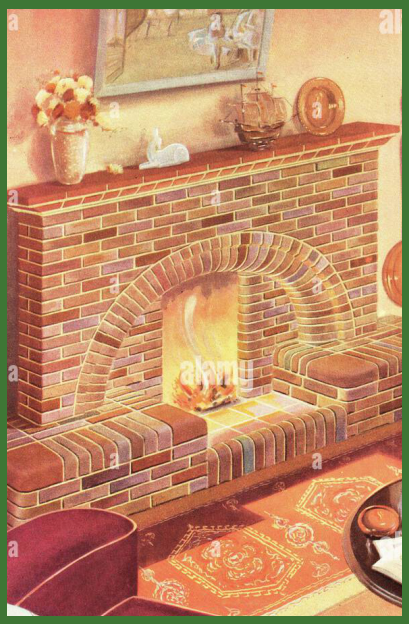
SO HOW DID YOU DO IN THE CLAYGATE QUIZ?

Here are the answers to the questions on Page 32

1. Claygate Primary School
2. Claygate and Claremont
3. The Claygate Cricket Club
4. Jean Griffiths
5. In honour of Benjamin Disraeli, twice Prime Minister in the 1800s, who was the first Earl of Beaconsfield
6. Station Road
7. Claygate Tennis Club
8. Hannah Young, of Ceramica



9. The NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes)
10. Malcolm Peebles
11. Howard Mallinson. The book's title is simply "Guildford via Cobham"
12. Fireplaces. Claygate fireplaces, historically produced by Claygate Brickfields Ltd,were renowned for their distinctive, thin briquette style
13. Khaki. The first group in Claygate was registered in 1909, not long after the birth of the scouting movement
14. 206 and then 215
15. Fruit World





BITTER-SWEET PLAY SPARKS REACTION

Claygate Dramatic Society's spring production of "We Shall Not Be Moved" was a storming success, winning praise and audience comments such as "brilliant", "thought provoking" and "so clever"; and while not a full-on comedy, there was plenty of laughter generated by its subtle humour – and several tears at the heartbreaking ending.



The play itself involved an original, brand new, bitter-sweet story that raises many issues of burning importance to Claygate. As one member of the audience said: "There were people who found themselves questioning their long-held views."

Written and directed by Peter Whitehead, "We Shall Not Be Moved" could not have been more topical, as it dealt with the damage to communities caused by unrestrained developers – in this case a treasured community asset threatened with being turned into a block of flats.

It twisted and turned, and was full of ambiguities, becoming a study in hypocrisy, as principles clashed with the practicalities of the real word.

To watch a recording of the play – and several other past productions – visit claygatedramaticsociety.com

PANTO PROVIDES PERFECT LIFT-OFF TO FESTIVE SEASON

The countdown is on to Claygate's most glittering event of the year – this year's pantomime in Claygate Village Hall.

Audience-goers have hailed the recent run of autumn pantomimes from Claygate Dramatic Society, with their powerful characters, warmth, life and hilarity, as the perfect lift-off towards Christmas.

"Trouble in Pantoland" will be no exception. Directed again by Dawn Lacey, it involves a large cast, along with chorus, dancers, fairies and guards. The plot revolves around Baron Hardup, once the nicest man in Pantoland, becoming the meanest, imposing taxes on everyone. But all is not what it seems!



Performances take place in the Village Hall from Thursday November 19 to Saturday November 21. Tickets are now on sale: email belitacharrington@hotmail.co.uk, or call her on 020 8398 8660. They can also be bought by post via the Society's website – claygatedramaticsociety.com.

CLAYGATE PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIRS 2026

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Council Chair and ex officio member of all committees

ANTHONY SHEPPARD
Council Vice Chair; Chair of Planning Committee; Member of Finance and General Purposes Committee; and Staffing Committee

GIL BRAY
Chair of Environment, Highways and Transport Committee; Member of Finance and General Purposes Committee; and Staffing Committee

JENNY FRENCH
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Vice Chair of Planning Committee

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Vice Chair of Environment, Highways and Transport Committee

MICHAEL COLLON
Member of Planning Committee

GEOFF HERBERT
Member of Planning Committee; Environment, Highways and Transport Committee; Finance and General Purposes Committee

IAN CUNNINGHAM
Member of Environment, Highways and Transport Committee

JOANNE PAYTEN
Member of Planning Committee; Finance and General Purposes Committee

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ENVIRONMENT, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE: **MARK TYMIENIECKI, SIMON HOPE, VANESSA RELLEEN**

TREE WARDENS: **VANESSA RELLEEN, JOHN OVENDEN, BILL RASPIN**

ADVISORY COMMITTEES CHAIRED BY:

COMMUNICATIONS: **JENNY FRENCH**

TRANSPORT & PARKING: **SIMON HOPE**

PARISH CLERK
DAWN LACEY

Email: clerk@claygateparishcouncil.gov.uk
or call **07741 848719**. *This is a part-time role and messages will be answered as quickly as possible*

Please check the Parish Council's website and the community notice boards outside the Village Hall and next to Torrington Close for agendas and confirmation of meeting dates, times and venues, which can be subject to change. This information is available, at the latest, three working days prior to each meeting. Anyone wishing to speak at a meeting should let the Parish Clerk know in advance. Please also see our Facebook page.

CLAYGATE COURIER EDITOR: **PETER WHITEHEAD**

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Thursday October 29, 7.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

STAFFING COMMITTEE
Thursday October 29, 9pm
Village Hall - small hall

PLANNING COMMITTEE
Thursday November 12, 7.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday November 12, 8.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

PLANNING COMMITTEE
Thursday December 10, 7.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

ENVIRONMENT, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
Thursday December 10, 8.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

PLANNING COMMITTEE
Thursday January 14, 7.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

ENVIRONMENT, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
Thursday January 14, 8.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday January 28, 7.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

PLANNING COMMITTEE
Thursday February 18, 7.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Thursday February 25, 7.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

STAFFING COMMITTEE
Thursday February 25, 8.45pm
Village Hall - small hall

PLANNING COMMITTEE
Thursday March 11, 7.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

ENVIRONMENT, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
Thursday March 11, 8.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday March 25, 7.30pm
Village Hall - small hall

A full list of future meetings is available on the Parish Council's website