

News from St Martha Parish Council

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Warm greetings from St Martha Parish Council to all Chilworth residents and very best wishes to everyone for 2023.

As we rounded off 2022, St Martha Parish Council was busy as usual considering a raft of items, most of which we are now carrying forward into this new year.

London Road Active Travel Scheme: some of you may be aware of very strong objections being raised about the proposed new travel scheme for London Road, Burpham in Guildford - including whether it is appropriate, the disruption it would cause and the lack of public consultation. The proposal is to instal one-way segregated cycle paths on both sides of London Road, upgrade the existing roundabouts to provide safer crossings for cyclists and pedestrians, install new crossing points, improve existing junctions and upgrade bus stops. It is part of the scheme to make Guildford a greener place to live by reducing carbon emissions.

As a result of the ground swell of objections, a Public Consultation Meeting was held on Thursday 5 January where residents turned out in large numbers to show their strength of feeling in opposition to the scheme. Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, apologised for the poor consultation and promised to engage with local resident groups about the scheme. It is clear, however, that residents do not want the scheme. Many reasons including reduction in road widths, floating bus stops, inability for vehicles to 'pullover' if an emergency vehicle try to pass. To keep abreast of developments, please consult the online newspaper Guildford Dragon, the Surrey Advertiser, and social media, such as Next-door St Martha. There is also a summary on our Parish Council website.

Inter-Parish Climate Change: every other month a growing number of Surrey Parish Councils are meeting either in person, or via Zoom, to consider items relating to Climate Change and other matters of interest to all parishes. Recently such items have included: sites for Electric Vehicle Chargers; airspace and flightpaths; 20mph speed limits; possible improvements to footpaths/crossings in Wonersh resulting from Section 106 money arising from the development of the old Seminary; tree, wildflower and bulb planting and Parish Tree Wardens. (Please see below for more about Tree Wardens.)

St Martha PC and Shalford Community Council are working together to ensure there is joined up thinking across the Village of Chilworth for all Climate Change related matters.

Parish Tree Warden: The Surrey Tree Warden Scheme gives people who feel that trees matter an opportunity to champion their local trees and woods – care for trees – carry out woodland management – survey trees and gather information about them. Ideally every Parish should have a Tree Warden. The Surrey Scheme will help you learn about being a Tree Warden and give you the tools that you need to be an effective Tree Warden. If you

are interested, please look at the Surrey Tree Wardens website for more information:

<https://www.surreytreewardens.org.uk/>

If you find you are still interested after reading more about it, please do get in touch with Patricia as it would be great to have a Warden for our beautiful area of the Surrey Hills:
allen.p@stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

‘Jessie’s Seat’ Memorial and History at Chilworth Station: we are hoping you will soon see a replica train headboard and poster cabinet with pictures and an explanatory account at Chilworth Station. This will refer to the history behind the topiary bird by the side the North Downs Line between Chilworth and Gomshall. You might have wondered about it when journeying along this line, though if you blink you could have missed it! It commemorates an accident to a goods train travelling from Redhill to Reading on 29 February 1892. A wagon coupling broke on top of Shere Heath bank and as a result 30 wagons were thrown down the embankment and 9 wagons and a second locomotive tender were derailed. Sadly, Guard Henry Wicks aged 52, and with 30 years railway service, was killed instantly at the site of the current ‘Jessie’s Seat’ topiary. Henry Wicks was taken to the Percy Arms Pub and the subsequent inquest into his death was held also at the Pub. The Topiary bush was planted by South Eastern Railway employees on the lineside between Gomshall and Chilworth in March 1892, in memory of Henry Wicks’ tragic untimely death.

Henry’s daughter-in-law, Jessie Wicks was especially upset by the loss of her beloved father-in-law, as they had always enjoyed an excellent relationship and thus since then the Memorial Topiary has been known as ‘Jessie’s Seat’. The Topiary is of Box (*Buxus balearica*), an incredibly hardy plant, able to withstand years of weather, railway weedkiller and train brake dust! It is shaped as a large seat for ‘*Guard Wicks’s spirit to sit upon for tranquil eternity*’ and on the back of the seat is a ‘*country pheasant*’. It is the ‘bird like part’ of the topiary that has been given the affectionate nickname by train drivers of, ‘the Chilworth Chicken’ or the, ‘Chilworth Pheasant’. Since 1991, and the privatisation of the railway, the memorial has been maintained by a team of volunteers from the local operations staff and with kind support from the railway network.

There was a special Commemorative Train Ride on 29 February 2020, exactly 128 years to the day after the crash, to remember this event and as the train stopped at the spot a posy of primroses was placed on the topiary ‘seat’ by one of the St Martha Parish Councillors. A number of Network Rail retirees were on board the train as well as Sir Peter (now Lord) Hendy, Chairman of NR.



The Chilworth Chicken/Chilworth Pheasant
(Photograph courtesy of Network Rail)

New Wooden Planter at the Station: one of the old wooden platform planters at Chilworth Station is being replaced. It has seen better days! We thank Alliance for Natural Health at Old Station House who supply the displays in the planters and looked after them for the benefit of all rail passengers and the enhancement of the station.

Chilworth War Memorial land: the Parish Council is overseeing the removal of a large Ash Tree that needs to come down, behind the War Memorial, due to Ash Dieback disease and the PC has also set in motion the replacement of some wooden fencing and posts at the site.

Permissive Right of Way: to safeguard it for the future, the Council is looking into having the Permissive Right of Way that runs along the bottom of the field below St Marth's Hill designated a Public Footpath. This is by kind permission of the owner of the field.

Policies and Terms of Reference: The Council is adopting new policies and updating existing Policies and Terms of Reference. Once approved, these will be put on the PC website.

Patricia Allen

STOP PRESS: the forthcoming **Annual Assembly of St Martha Parish** combined with the **Annual Gunpowder Mills Meeting** will be held on **Tuesday 21 March** at **Chilworth Village Hall starting at 7.30pm**. There will be Speakers, Refreshments and a chance to chat.

Please make a note of the date and come along to what should be an interesting Chilworth Village Event. Nearer the time, details will be on the Parish Council website, Instagram and Chilworth Notice Boards.

Forthcoming Parish Council Meetings all held in Chilworth Village Hall:

21 February 2023 at 7pm

21 March 2023 **The Annual Parish Assembly at 7.30pm**

18 April 2023 at 7pm

16 May 2023 **The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council 7pm**

Councillors:

Jean-Pierre Pugh (Chair) - pugh.jp@stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

Patricia Allen - allen.p@stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

John Peake - peake.j@stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

Clare Price (Vice Chair) - price.c@stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

Julia Tantram - tantram.j@stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

Parish Clerk: Anne Tait - clerk@stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk