

Wonersh Parish Council

BLACKHEATH • SHAMLEY GREEN • WONERSH

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WONERSH PARISH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

Villages of Blackheath, Shamley Green and Wonersh

Record of the Annual Parish Assembly, held on Thursday 23rd April 2009 at 7.30pm at Wonersh Memorial Hall, Wonersh

Present at the meeting were Mr N Morris, Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr M Harding and Mrs A Powell Evans, Vice-Chairmen of the Parish Council, and Parish Councillors Mr R Bawden, Mr N Goodchild, Mrs L Healy, Mr A Shareef.

In attendance, County Councillor A Povey, Mr N Morrice, formerly of Transition Godalming, Mrs Frere, Chairman of Wonersh United Charities, Lyndon Capewell, Waverley Borough Council, Verity O'Connell, Waverley Borough Council, Clerk of the Council, Mrs J Cadman, Mr A Golden Surrey Advertiser, and 32 members of the electorate.

1. **Welcome** The Chairman welcomed all present and explained that this meeting is a legal requirement and is chaired by the Parish Council chairman, but is a meeting of the electorate rather than a Parish Council meeting and is the opportunity for residents to raise and discuss local matters.

The Chairman introduced the agenda and the speakers for the evening and drew the meeting's attention to the information stands at the back of the hall.

2. **Apologies** were received from Rev Sally Davies, Mrs Christine Howard, Graham and Lesley Hayward and PC Paul Soulsby.

3. **Chairman's Report**

The Chairman called the meeting's attention to printed copies of his report, which had been distributed at the start of the meeting. There were two main issues which he wished to highlight:

1. The really successful projects are those where the parish council can work with groups of residents, in particular where there was a village association or village society. These provide the framework which enables people to get engaged and take ownership of the project. It would be very valuable if Wonersh could get a village society off the ground.
2. *Common land*: The parish council spends a considerable amount of money on looking after common land: cutting the grass, putting up posts, dealing with trees and making good damage were just some examples. Residents who live adjacent to common land have a responsibility not to park or store materials on common land, and it is unlawful to do so. If a resident wished to store materials on the common land on a temporary basis they should contact the clerk, as it is possible to issue an temporary licence.

The Parish Council's issue for the coming year is communication with the electorate. Two newsletters had been issued recently and the Chairman recommended the Parish Council's web site to the meeting. The Parish Council also communicates through the local Press. The e-mail network between residents in Blackheath was of tremendous value, and the Chairman understood that one was currently being put in place in Shamley Green. The Parish Council would very much like to see this network developed across the parish and were still in the early stages of working out how to do this, but welcomed contact from anyone who would be interested in being involved. The Chairman wished to thank the Ward Borough Councillors for their advice and help over the past year, and County Councillor Andrew Povey for his continued interest in the parish and also for

his generous grants to the parish.

The Chairman also wished to thank our hard working local police officer, Paul Soulsby, his former PCSO Michael Barker and Michael's replacement, Simon Mitchell.

4. **Wonersh United Charities**

Pat Frere advised the meeting that the annual accounts were submitted for audit in June of last year and approved at the July meeting of the organisation. They had now, as required, been submitted to the Charities Commission.

The Wonersh United Charities is an old established charity, generating a modest income which is distributed by the Trustees to people in need in the parish. The Trustees are drawn from the community, although Blackheath is at present unrepresented.

As the name suggests, Wonersh United Charities is a group of charities, borne out of small legacies which provide small sums of money. Support also comes from the Henry Smith Charity. Ms Frere expressed her gratitude to Wonersh Parish Council and Shamley Green PCC for their support.

5. **Wonersh Village Stores Committee**

Sidney Worthington, who had stood in at the last moment as Mrs Howard, who was to have reported, was unwell, advised the meeting that, from the 6th April 2009, the Wonersh Village Stores Charity had taken over the management of the shop from the Village Stores Ltd.

There had been a problem with the roof of the shop but this has now been satisfactorily repaired. Both shops have long term tenants, as a result of which the repayment scheme is on track. The accounts were available for inspection, and Paul Enticknap would clarify any points.

Mr Worthington recorded thanks to Paul, who was now standing down from the committee, for all his hard work on behalf of the Village Stores Ltd.

6. **Transition Towns**

The Chairman introduced Nick Morrice, formerly of Transition Godalming. Nick had previously been a teacher, but was now semi-retired. He now works with U3A in Milford and Wonersh, teaching subjects as diverse as Ancient History, Singing for Fun and Latin. He is also an A level tutor in English.

Where we are now: Mr Morrice pointed out that we in the West live comfortable lives. In recent centuries our comfort had come from the slave trade, now it came from oil. We live in an oil dependent world and have got used to this level of dependency in a very short time. Mr Morrice read a list of household items that are made of oil.

1. *Peak Oil:* this is the point in time when the maximum rate of oil extraction is reached, after which production of oil enters terminal decline. The indication is that we have reached that point and now oil will decline year on year, and become more expensive. The first oil was discovered in Pennsylvania in 1859, at a well now called Drakes Well. World discovery of oil has been falling for 40 years, consumption exceeded discovery in 1981 and the gap is widening.
2. *Climate Change:* this is happening faster than most models predicted. The worst effects could still be avoided if people engage with the issues. Transition initiatives such as transition towns could help alleviate the worst effects of climate change.

Transition Town Initiative

This is an approach to community level sustainability, dealing with the future of Peak Oil and climate change, and at the same time creating a community that people would like to be a part of. The initiative is based on 4 facts:

1. Less energy is inevitable, so it is better to plan for it rather than by taken by surprise.
2. Create a resilience to better cope with less energy availability.
3. We have to do it ourselves and we have to do it now.
4. By unleashing the creative genius of the community we can design ways of living that are more enriching, satisfying and connected than our present ways.

Totnes in Devon has put together a pilot group to raise awareness in the town. They recognised the need to involve everyone, and engaged with local businesses. This led to a “Great Unleashing” in September 2006. This was preceded by 10 months of talks and film screenings, and discussions with businesses which led the pilot group to believe that there was sufficient enthusiasm in the town to make this successful.

The first step was to devise an energy descent plan, to create a society less dependent on energy derived from oil and to work out how to get to where we will be in 2030.

Within weeks of the “unleashing” other places were getting in touch to find out what was going on. This model has been taken up by communities all over the UK and, increasingly, the world. 150 initiatives had been set up, a lot more were at the planning stage.

Transition Town Totnes had now set up an organisation called Transition Communities in Work, to provide more efficient support. Each community has contributed valuable research into what works and what does not. Projects include: locally grown food, community gardens and allotments, organic farming and gardening, food markets, car sharing, cycling, traffic calming, litter free routes, biofuels, recycling schemes, repairing and ‘free-cycle’.

The Transition Movement is a social response to the twin challenges of peak oil and climate change. It does not seek to provide all the answers, but is one solution, a community based solution.

Mr Morrice had been in touch with Transition Haslemere. It was formed in October, and now had a small group of about 10 people. It had recently held its first open meeting, which about 50 people attended, and some very good ideas had been formulated. Mr Morrice pointed out that a transition community did not have to be a town, it could be a village, or even a hamlet, and be just as successful. He noted that the Guildford Environmental Forum appeared to be talking about the same projects as the Transition Towns.

Mr Morrice finished by quoting from *The Transition Handbook* by Rob Hopkins, the founder of the Transition Movement “in this process of Transition will be discovered that a potential for an immense social and cultural renaissance, the like of which we have never seen”.

The Chairman thanked Mr Morrice for his talk and referred to the Parish Council’s carbon neutral project, which was in its early stages at present. Richard Bawden had prepared some more detailed information on the project, and had recently carried out a survey on the Parish Council’s own carbon footprint. Volunteers were needed, and anyone interested in being involved should speak to Mr Bawden.

7. Parish Matters

1. *Transition Communities:* A resident proposed that the films referred to during the talk should be shown in this hall, and it was established that it was possible that funding might be obtained for this project. Mr Morrice advised, in response to a question, that at present no specific measurements had been done in Totnes to establish the difference in energy consumption. At present resources were focussed on an energy descent plan, trying to work out how to get from here to where we need to be in 2030. It was established that, at the moment, each household used the equivalent of 30 barrels of oil per year, and needed to reduce that to 10. The energy descent plan would need to be quite specific on how to do that.
2. *Support of local businesses:* Peter Betlam observed that there had been a recent planning application in Bramley to turn an empty shop into a post office, baker and deli. He believed that this would receive full support, and was concerned for the potential loss of business for the post office and shop in Wonersh. He urged everyone to use and support their local shop, a much needed facility that would be greatly missed if it closed.
3. *Extension of the pavement at The Hollow:* Brian Herbert asked for an update on this proposed extension. The Chairman advised that the Parish Council had put forward a detailed proposal for this, which had gone forward to committee. He understood that it was a scheme that might possibly obtain funding from the accident working group, subject to funding from SCC’s general highways budget. This was something that the Parish Council had pressed to go forward, and they would ensure that the parish were advised as soon a

further information was received.

4. *Barnett Hill*: Mrs Herbert had been interested in the proposal that the conference centre should become a 52 bedroomed hotel, and asked if the Parish Council had views on this. The Chairman advised that this was not a conversion to a hotel, the application was for an extension of the present use as a training and conference centre to include hotel work. The Parish Council had looked carefully at this application and had come to a considered conclusion that it would not object, but that a range of conditions needed to be put on any permission, to include those on the present permissions.

The Chairman drew the meeting's attention to the opportunities for community involvement, and asked those present to sign up to the projects as follows:

Richard Bawden:	Carbon footprint
Anne Powell-Evans:	Community Speed Watch
Louise Healy:	Twinning arrangement
Athar Shareef:	Becoming a parish councillor

The Chairman reminded the meeting that Parish Council elections would take place in 2011, and there would be vacancies, as some people would retire. This was an opportunity for new faces on the parish council.

Cllr Povey ended the meeting by saying how much he enjoyed being in any one of the three villages that make up Wonersh Parish Council. This area represented much of what was good about Surrey, and the sense of community was very strong. Surrey's strengths are its environment, education system, a very safe community and the economy. He believed that Surrey tended to be amongst the last places in the country to go into recession and amongst the first to come out, and there was much to look forward to.