



Bearsted & Thurnham Report

**September
2005**

The Newsletter of the Bearsted & Thurnham Amenity Society

Tenfold Increase in Society's Membership

The Society's membership has increased more than tenfold from 114 at the time of the Annual General Meeting in May to 1156 as we go to press.

Special thanks are due to the many volunteers who delivered thousands of membership appeal leaflets to every household in Bearsted and Thurnham, and to our newly established team of 36 Road Stewards who are doing splendid work delivering membership cards in every road in the two parishes, and in many cases recruiting even more new members at a cracking pace.

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Changes to the Society's Committee

Heather Langley and Jean Spendley informed the Committee on 30 August that with the membership drive successfully completed they wished to stand down as Chairman and Vice-Chairman/Secretary respectively. The Committee agreed that with immediate effect Brian Clifford should be appointed Chairman and David Cockerham Secretary and Vice-Chairman. The Committee recorded its gratitude to Heather and Jean for their many years of hard work in those roles, carrying the Society

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Message from the Society's New Chairman

We recognise that the exceptional response to the Society's membership drive reflects widespread concern about issues that affect, now or potentially in the future, the living environment of Bearsted and Thurnham.

Your response has been massive and is greatly appreciated. As Chairman I will do my best to see that, with your help, we are effective in pursuing, constructively and responsibly, the aims of the Society within our community. We have big challenges ahead.

Brian Clifford

Special General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that there will be a Special General Meeting of the Society at 7.30 p.m. on 11 November 2005 at Madginford Hall to seek the approval of members for certain amendments to the Society's Constitution. See details on page 5.

Membership Increase (Cont'd from page 1)

But most of all our thanks go to all the people of the two parishes for their magnificent response to our appeal. Thanks to them, the Society is now on a much firmer foundation, and we can start to plan with confidence for the future.

Our membership is not only much larger but much more evenly distributed throughout all parts of the two parishes, from Cold Blow Lane and Pilgrims Way in the north down to Merton Road and Lenside Drive in the south, and from Willington Street and Weaving Street in the west to Caring Lane and Crismill Lane in the east.

Road Steward Network			
The Society is greatly indebted to all its Road Stewards listed below, and to the many volunteers whose offers could not be accepted because they duplicated others. We are especially grateful to the Parish Councillors with long and distinguished records of public service for both Bearsted and Thurnham who have not only joined the Society but volunteered to cover large areas as Road Stewards.			
Charles Bedford	Tony Fisher	Heather Langley	Mike Smith
Darren Benson-Dare	Roy Floyd-Sands	Patricia Laws	Jean Spendley
Peter Bull	Pamela Gadd	Angela Legood	Joy Stevens
Joanna Burborough	Robert Gee	Geoffrey Licence	Christine Thomas
Roy Carey	Muriel Greenstead	Tom Morris	John Tween
Julie Chatburn	Rosemary Harlow	Joanna Mullner	Jane Veal
Wendy Chislett	Veronica Hill	Di Rudd	Patrick Walton
Peter Croughton	Peter Holman	Pat Sandford	David Ward
Mike Faulkner	Susannah Jack	Felicity Simpson	Nick Whitworth
More Volunteers Needed. Some Road Stewards are having to cover unreasonably large areas because we still lack volunteers in certain roads despite having many members there. To reduce the burden on them we are particularly keen to hear from volunteers in Merton Road, Spot Lane and its offshoots, Yeoman Lane and its offshoots, and Ware Street.			

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Committee Changes *(Cont'd from page 1)*

with very little help through long and difficult times to live to fight another day. Both will remain on the Committee, and Heather will continue for now in the role of Treasurer – one which has carried a particularly heavy burden during the membership drive.

Present Membership of the Committee	
<i>Brian Clifford</i>	<i>Chairman</i>
<i>Heather Langley</i>	<i>Treasurer</i>
<i>David Cockerham</i>	<i>Vice-Chairman & Secretary</i>
<i>Joan Brown</i>	
<i>Robert Gee</i>	<i>Footpath Group Liaison</i>
<i>Dr Felicity Simpson</i>	
<i>Jean Spendley</i>	

More Committee Members Urgently Needed

We urgently need more Committee members or helpers to develop and implement programmes for our greatly expanded membership. The Committee is particularly keen to co-opt members or helpers with experience, skills or even just strong interest in the fields of development and planning consent, editorial and publishing work, and event organisation. If you feel you have something to offer please contact the Chairman or Secretary (see back page for contact details).

Councillor Fred Winckless

The Society heard with great sadness of the passing of Councillor Fred Winckless in August. Councillor Winckless had joined the Society shortly before his death and written a letter expressing his support for it and offering to serve as a Road Steward. It is a mark of the man that he should have done this despite his many other heavy public commitments and his long and distinguished record of service to the community. He will be greatly missed

**Bearsted & Thurnham Amenity Society
Footpath Group Programme**

Date	Start Time and Place	Route
Saturday 15 October	2.00 pm at Bearsted Green (Pond)	The Green–Honeyhills Wood–Detling–North Downs Way–Thurnham Castle–Aldington–Return to Bearsted
Saturday 19 November	1.15 p.m. The Green	5–6 miles. Route to be confirmed (will be published on village notice boards at the end of September)
Boxing Day (Monday 26 December)	10.30 a.m. The Green	5–6 miles. Route to be confirmed (will be published on village notice boards at the end of September)

The aim of the Society's Footpath Group is to walk and so keep open all footpaths in the two parishes and, as a second aim, to do the same for all footpaths within a 3-mile radius of Bearsted Green. Walks are open to all ages. Adults should be members of the Society, and children should be accompanied by a responsible adult. Dogs are welcome but must be kept on a short lead at all times. The Walk Leaders do not accept any responsibility for accidents occurring to or caused by any person, dog or other animal on our walks. Walkers are urged to be vigilant when walking on roads, paths etc.

Walks of about 5 to 7 miles are held in the afternoon of the third Saturday in each month except December, when the walk is on Boxing Day morning. Shorter walks of about 2 to 3.5 miles are held on alternate Friday evenings from April to September. Details of these are displayed on the Parish notice boards. Walkers need to wear stout footwear, bring adequate wet weather clothing, be prepared to negotiate rough ground, and be able to climb over stiles and up steep slopes. For further details please contact Mike Perring on 739109.

Special General Meeting Planned to Amend Society Constitution

A Special General Meeting will be held on Friday 11 November at 7.30 pm at Madginford Hall to ask members to approve amendments to the Society's Constitution designed to streamline its operations. Some changes under consideration by the Committee are listed below. It is of course open to members to request that other items be added to the agenda by writing to the Secretary (see back page).

Some Amendments Under Consideration	Purpose
Change the name of the Society to "The Bearsted and Thurnham Society".	By dropping the word "Amenity", make the name less cumbersome and reflect the fact that the Society is concerned with all aspects of the living environment in the two parishes and not just with their amenities. No change in the Society's status as an amenity group or diminution in its objectives relating to amenities would be implied.
Increase the limit on membership of the Committee from 10 to 15.	Reflecting the additional workload of the Committee resulting from the increase in membership.
Remove the time limits on lengths of service by Committee members and Executive Officers	To ensure that willing members are able to continue in the absence of volunteers to replace them.
Provide that only one member of any sub-committee must be a member of the main Committee.	To allow more members to help the Society in its work without having to take on the commitments of Committee membership
Remove the requirement for two general meetings to be held annually in addition to the AGM.	Our greatly expanded membership makes these a major exercise. To conserve resources, we should hold them only when there is a pressing need. The right of members to request a Special General Meeting would remain intact.
Subscriptions paid by members joining between 1 January and 4 April shall be valid also for the following Society year.	To bring greater fairness to our fee structure, and to reduce the incentive to delay joining as the Society year progresses.
Remove the minimum age requirement of 18 for membership	Reflecting the fact that any desire by young people to be involved in the Society's work is entirely to be welcomed, and to regularise the fact that some households are believed to have included uner-18's in their membership applications.

Pub License Changes

Like millions of people all over the country, the Society was taken un-awares by a rash of applications by all our local public houses for variations to their licenses. By the time we enquired, the deadlines for objections to most of them had passed, but we did manage to enter objections to the applications of the Kentish Yeoman and the Black Horse, the former to remain open until 2.00 a.m. on all Fridays and Saturdays and many holidays and festival days with amplified music and dancing, and the latter to do so seven nights a week. The public notices displayed by some pubs gave no details whatsoever of the variations applied for. We have challenged this, asking to be advised whether it constitutes compliance with the requirement to give notice on the premises. The White Horse put in a *relatively* responsible application to remain open until 12.30 a.m. seven nights a week. We await the results of all this with some trepidation. Whatever the outcome, we shall monitor the consequences carefully and stand ready to campaign for the review of licenses of any pubs causing distress.

Mixed Results on Recent Planning Applications

While coping with the considerable administrative burden flowing from the Society's rapid expansion, Committee members have been doing their best to keep tabs on and, where appropriate, enter objections to a rapid succession of planning applications. The results of the latest batch to come to Maidstone Borough Council's Planning Committee were a mixed bag.

The good news is that the Oak on the Green's latest attempt to get permission to build a block of flats in The Green's conservation area was again rejected, quite emphatically, by the Planning Committee. It remains to be seen whether that is the last we will hear of it.

We also had a partial success in Winifred Road, where an application which we and all the residents of the road except the applicant feared would do irreparable damage to this delightful close of 1930's period bungalows, and expose Bearsted and Thurnham's many other bungalow neighbourhoods to insensitive over-development, was deferred for negotiation with the applicant for improvements to the design to reduce the impact on neighbours. We will keep this under close scrutiny.

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Bearsted Woodlands Trust

The Bearsted Woodlands Trust held an opening ceremony on 27 September for the new pathway through the site – a splendid achievement and greatly improved amenity. We congratulate and thank the Trust.

White Horse Wood Project

All residents are encouraged to visit KCC's impressive White Horse Wood project on the Thurnham side of Detling Hill, which was officially opened on 8 September, to view what has been achieved to date.

We gather also that the application to erect a mobile telephone mast at the junction of Ashford Road and Rosemary Road has been rejected on the grounds that it would lead to an undue clutter of street furniture and might damage the roots of a tree threatening its long-term health. This will be a great relief to many anxious residents in the area, and those who fought it so effectively are to be congratulated.

The bad news however is that the Planning Committee approved applications for new housing which will encroach further into the Snowfields conservation area both from the Moncrif Close end, (six new houses, three detached and three terraced) and the lower end of the site, where the existing stable will be pulled down and a new house built on its footprint; the existing coach house restored; two completely new houses built alongside the coach house where none now exist, the access lane widened and the old ivy covered stone wall fronting on to Bearsted Green pulled down and re-built several metres back to provide improved visibility for vehicles.

Despite strong objections by our Parish Council and all three Borough Councillors, by this Society and by the Campaign to Protect Rural England, these applications were approved. Development Control officials submitted that if the applications were rejected, the decisions would in all probability be reversed on appeal as they had the Borough Conservation Officer's approval.

One thing from which we can take some comfort is that a careful study of the Development Control case officer's notes revealed the following passage on the Snowfield sites which has been very carefully noted:

"Concern has been expressed that the scheme [Moncrif Close] could not be considered in isolation with other proposals for the Snowfield Site. Each application must be considered on its merits, nevertheless, two sites have come forward for development at the same time and therefore are being considered together. It is considered that the current extent of the upper and lower sites that are proposed for development do represent the only developable areas within the site that would not result in unacceptable adverse effect on the character of the Conservation area or the setting of the Listed Buildings within and adjacent to the site."

We shall hold them to that.

The Society has submitted comments also on applications for re-development of the sites of 2 and 9 The Landway, calling for them to be scaled down, and strongly objected to the proposed development on Bell Lane, calling for it to be rejected as far too large, potentially dangerous to the children who use Bell Lane to walk to and from school, and encroaching too much on one of Bearsted's remaining green space footpaths.

New Planning Applications

These are the other planning applications recently registered with Maidstone Borough Council. If you have particular concerns about any of them, please let us know.

Reference	Location	Description
MA/05/1174	Roundwell	Erection of extension to provide rooms for 25 additional residents of Barty House Nursing Home
MA/05/1548	11E Yeoman Lane	Application for certificate of lawfulness for a proposed development
MA/05/0404 /C02	Land adjacent to 32 Tower Lane	Erection of one detached dwelling and replacement garage
MA/05/1596	11 The Landway	Two storey side extension, single storey bay window and installation of weatherboarding to first floor
MA/05/1599	Cara Cottage, The Green	Application for listed building consent for reinstatement of rear boundary fence
MA/04/1608 /01	St Faiths Lane	Detailed design and landscaping application following earlier outline approval for erection of 22 housing units on the old nursing home site
MA/05/1641	37 Yeoman Way	Extensions and alterations to both ground floor and roof including loft
MA/05/1665	99 The Landway	Single storey front extension, conversion of garage to habitable rooms, and new pitched roof to garage
MA/05/1685	The Old Byre, Chapel Lane	Application for listed building consent for conversion of store and garage to habitable rooms, plus enlargement of barn door to be used as a garage
MA/05/1688	66 Roseacre Lane	Loft conversion with side dormer
MA/05/1709	12, Ragstone Road	Outline application for the erection of one detached dwelling.

Published by the Bearsted and Thurnham Society

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