# THE REIGATE SOCIETY

1977 - 1984

THE NEXT SEVEN YEARS

JOHN NAUEN

A continuation of the Short History by John Stammers
entitled: 25 YEARS OF ENDEAVOUR

1952 - 1977

Published by: THE REIGATE SOCIETY

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The continuation of John Stammers' History of the Reigate Society "25 years of Endeavour" is written with the following objectives in mind:

- to maintain a record of the highlights of the Society's activities whilst these remain reasonably fresh in mind and
- to record the efforts of the personalities who have contributed much to the Society's affairs without, it is hoped, belittling the solid effort behind the scenes (without which the Society would soon perish) of scores of enthusiasts who work on the Council of the Society and/or on the numerous specialist Committees.

For convenience and in general terms a format has been adopted which, it is hoped, marries in with the style used by the Author of the original History and in conjunction with which this addition should preferably be read.

However, for the convenience of those who do not have ready access to the original History, the following very brief precis may be useful.

- the Society was formed by Frank Potter and P E Budgen in February 1952 and the inauguration took the form of a Public Meeting held in Reigate Priory on 23 May 1952.
- the fight to retain Reigate Priory generally in the form we know it today was successful and the 'development' scheme to cover the land with houses and shops was abandoned, thanks to the individuals who subsequently formed the Society and their supporters.
- the Society concerned itself with numerous plans for land use, road schemes, lighting and advertising and was generally able to exert influence to the Towns' advantage (Reigate and Redhill).
- it has to be appreciated that not all the Society's proposals proved acceptable to the powers-that-be and a scheme for replanning in the centre of Reigate, for example, came, regrettably, in this category.
- it was in 1964 that the Society's collection of 35 mm colour sides was commenced.
- also in the 60's the Merstham Protection Society merged with the Reigate Society and alternative routes for the M23/M25 motorways were proposed and a case was presented to the Public Inquiry in February 1968.
- in the same period (1965) the Reigate and Redhill Common Land Preservation Committee was formed to work closely with the Society to oppose incursions into Common Land (particularly at Earlswood). The balance of the funds of this Committee was handed over to the Society in September 1984, amounting to £120.
- the long fight over the one-way traffic system in Reigate Town centre is recalled.
- trees, their preservation, replacement and addition, figured as prominently in earlier days as they do now.
- 1975 saw the inauguration of a Junior Section for our school children. It thrived for a time. Note that in 1984 plans have been laid to resuscitate this important educational activity.
- it was in 1975 that the first Town Trail was published. The present second edition was published in the Winter of 1981/82.

Some Exhibitions were staged. Amongst these were:

1959 Trees in Towns ("Trees of Reigate" was published in 1962)

1963 Look at Your Town

1969 Civic Trust Exhibition "Who Cares?"

1977 Silver Jubilee Exhibition

If these brief extracts intrigue the reader, then it is hoped that a copy of the History itself will be studied.

Clearly much was accomplished by the Society's actions and by publicity in those first important 25 years. Nevertheless in John Stammers' words:

"Over the years the Society has learned to be patient but persistent."1

or the tail-end of the poem by the late Margaret Sheppard-Fidler
"Preserve our heritage of grace
Today
Tomorrow it may be too late."<sup>2</sup>

#### AND so we turn to the next seven years -

In 1977 the Society adopted the logo used since then on its correspondence paper and in the Annual Reports which appear each Summer. It was designed by Arthur Hutchinson.

The period 1977 - 1980 with Arthur Hutchinson (I) supported by Arthur Crouch (II) - that is, the two Arthurs - was a time of stimulating activity as the Chairman made his envigorating presence felt not only in the Society but also in the local Press, in the Borough Council offices and elsewhere. Always passionate in his endeavours, Arthur I in his first year of office saw the presentation of the first Civic Award Certificates and no less than nine were handed over by Lord Reigate (who remains one of our members) at the Annual General Meeting on 22 June 1978. It is worth recalling that the origin of the Awards stemmed from a proposal by the late Mr Frank Potter that the Society establish an "Award for good development". In that year, 1977, the original Certificate was designed and executed by Mr Potter.

The so-called "North East Quadrant" scheme for the centre of Redhill, which eventually came to be named the Warwick Quadrant, was beginning in 1977 to take up Society members' time and a lot more was to be spent by Harry Ingram, Arthur Hutchinson, Mary Goss and many others before actual site work was to begin in 1983. Part of the Society's constructive assistance was devoted to pressing for a substantial new Civic Hall, a view which in 1977 was beginning to gain ground not only with the public but with Councillors. This was to replace the Market Hall which, whilst a Redhill landmark and incorporating a substantial theatre, was becoming obsolete and in great need of refurbishment. Because of the need to give the selected Contractor a clear site, the Market Hall was demolished a little earlier than later proved to have been necessary in view of subsequent delays in commencing the new civil engineering work.

A fresh social event took place in June 1978. This took the form of a Barbecue in the delightful garden of the Hutchinson's home off Chart Lane which proved a social and financial success. However, it was not repeated.

<sup>1.</sup> Short History by John Stammers p.14 (John Stammers)

<sup>2.</sup> Short History by John Stammers p.15 (the late Margaret Sheppard-Fidler)

<sup>3.</sup> The Reigate Society Civic Awards 1977 - 1983. Pamphlet of March 1984

At this time the Society's publicity about itself was largely confined to "Who Cares" (a leaflet similar to the present (1984) version) as well as the Annual Reports.

1978 was a year when the planning of Gatwick Airport's second Terminal was being contemplated simultaneously with detailed consideration of the plans for Redhill Town centre. Indeed the draft plans of the latter scheme were unveiled at a Meeting on the 5 September 1978 when it was ascertained that "the overall shape of the development was reasonably satisfactory". <sup>4</sup> The Society presented a list of suggestions in December that year and many of these views were reflected in the revised plans. As is known the plans still include a Civic Hall and Library, even if the shops in Warwick Quadrant may include fewer prestigious names.

For the record and after considerable changes to the scheme, site work commenced on the 17 October 1983. Cllr. John Lyndon Morgan, Mayor of Reigate, and John Whitfield, Chairman of the Surrey County Council, dug the first hole.

The year 1978 proved disappointing to the Organiser of the Junior Section whose demise seemed inevitable without much more help from Society members: it was not to be.

On the positive side in "a year (1979) of pressures unprecedented in our existence," 5 the Society presented important views to four Inquiries:

- the North East Quadrant at Redhill, referred to earlier
- the M25
- the Second Terminal at Gatwick
- the future of the damaged Grotto in Cherchefelle, Reigate

The Society at this time was also involved in a formal Presentation at the Examination in Public of the draft Surrey Structure Plan.

For some time the Society had been discussing the formation of a Heritage Centre, a place where all "can enjoy and enhance our heritage so much more if we have information and knowledge to appreciate it more deeply." Arthur Hutchinson and others felt strongly that a fresh organisation was needed with premises such that maps, photographs, guide books, leaflets on walks and other information could be displayed and where residents and visitors would be able to learn something of the history and beauty of our towns in the Surrey Hills. Thus it was that on the 1 May 1982 the first Heritage Centre in Surrey was born at the Old Town Hall, Reigate, in the presence of the Mayor, many ex-Mayors, the Town Clerk and representation of several local organisations, as well as some members of the public.

The Society itself now plays no direct part in the organisation of the Centre but has always given its support to the organisation originally created under its auspices and, of course, some of its members play an active role.

It was in a period of high inflation that it became necessary for the Treasurer to consider in some detail the future financing of the Society. He proposed a new scale of subscriptions to a Special Meeting of the Society held in February 1980 which remain in force to the present time.

Communications with the Society's membership and with the public has inevitably been a major responsibility and the circulation of reports part of its function. It was decided to create a Newsletter to be issued periodically each year and issue No. 1 was distributed

<sup>4.</sup> Redhill sub-committee report in Society's Annual Report of 1978/79 p7(Harry Ingram)

<sup>5.</sup> Annual Report of 1979 - 1980 p.5 (Arthur Hutchinson)

<sup>6.</sup> Annual Report of 1979 - 1980 p.6 (Audrey Ward)

in January 1979. By the close of 1984, nineteen issues have been published. The cost of these is much reduced because of their distribution by volunteers who cover the whole of our area and postage is restricted to those members who no longer live within reach. The editorship of this valuable link between the Society and its members has, from the outset, been in the capable hands of Mary Goss.

Year 1981 saw the restoration of the Grotto in Cherchefelle, Reigate, and the rebuilding of the lovely wall along the Priory grounds in Bell Street. That year the Society made a contribution to the Mayor's Appeal for the restoration of the Old (Reigate) Town Hall.

Whilst the presentation of Civic Awards lapsed in 1982 for lack of entries considered of sufficient merit, it should not be forgotten that the previous year saw the completion of the restoration inside and out of the Barons in Church Street, Reigate, owned by the Redland Group and to whom one of the 1983 Civic Awards was made. A detailed examination of the features of this building reveals that old craft skills still exist and it is worth remembering that some of the artisans engaged on the task were young men executing the trades of their forefathers for the first time.

At this time decisions needed to be taken about the use of the Frank Potter Memorial Fund which had been opened following our Founder's death in March 1979. Both the Society and the Reigate Society of Artists had appealed for funds but no final conclusion had been reached on how best to spend the money as a fitting memorial. The matter was satisfactorily resolved in 1983 by the adoption of a proposal by the Society to invest the funds to provide income from which to finance an occasional Memorial Lecture. The first of these took place on the 11 July 1984 when Sir Hugh Casson, President of the Royal Academy, gave a stimulating talk in the Hall of Reigate Priory before a large and attentive audience on "the Future of the Past" - an appropriate theme to commemorate Frank Potter who was so concerned with saving the best of our rich environment.

These lectures, to be held every year or so, are the responsibility of the Memorial Committee - the names of whom are listed in this document.

Towards the end of 1982, the Society became involved in the complicated affairs surrounding the damage to the Wray Common Windmill. The sails had been damaged in an autumn gale of some severity and the Owner decided to remove the parts left undamaged and was unable to replace them. This came to an Inquiry at which the Society was represented. Unfortunately, costs of repairs are so high that nothing to date has been done to reinstate this local landmark to its original appearance. Since there is no question of bringing it back to working order, it seems likely that nothing further will be done about the sails.

Early 1983 saw the start of the new Recreation Centre at Donyngs Place which is roughly on the boundary between Redhill and Reigate. Here at last was a determined effort by the Borough Council - albeit in a time of financial stringency - to provide a much-needed modern local amenity. The move towards speedy implementation of the plan was warmly supported by the Society.

The Council's method of inviting the public to hear of the alternative proposals almost as soon as they had been received by the Council by means of short 'presentations' by each of the Contractors who had responded to the official Enquiry document proved, at least for the Society, an admirable method of conducting the opening phase of such a scheme. In a remarkably short time Conder Southern had been selected and a Letter of Intent issued to enable extensive foundation work to proceed that Summer in fair weather.

The Recreation Centre at Donyngs Place was opened to the public in December 1984.

It is worth recalling that the Society was pleased to welcome the Contractor's team to a Meeting held on 30 June 1983 when a full exposition of the scheme was made by team leaders. It is to be hoped that this Centre, the new Redhill Shopping Centre, the modernised Redhill Railway Station (now planned) and other developments, will do much to restore pride in the Redhill area after a long period of deterioration.

A further Redhill amenity is the creation of a much-needed **Town Park** on the site of the old Football Ground. The Society made a substantial donation towards the cost of the trees which were planted in November 1984.

It is opportune at this point to comment on the programme of talks organised year by year by the various Chairmen of Committees on subjects usually broadly linked to their Committees' speciality. These meetings have given ordinary members an opportunity to gather in the Winter months to hear qualified Speakers and, not infrequently, to see colour slides screened by the Society's own modern high-quality projector. The Society also holds an interesting collection of 35 mm slides which are available for talks and, of course, as a historical record.

In 1982 the Society adopted a proposal to reinforce the concepts indicated in its "Who Cares?" leaflet by a further single-page pamphlet entitled "What it does". This lists in abbreviated form the numerous actions taken by the Society. Later, in 1984, the Society produced its first "book-marks" advertising itself in a form of publicity readily acceptable to local Librarians and to certain shops for distribution to their book-reading public.

On the subject of publicity and the constant need to keep up membership numbers, attempts were made in the Summers of 1983 and 1984 to man a stall (at various Fairs, Fetes and other venues) to stimulate public interest in the Society. So far the best formula to achieve this aim has yet to be found.

No brief history of this period would be complete without mention of the **Outings** which over many years the Society has organised. With the vast expansion in car ownership and with considerable competition from other organisations, it seems to have become more difficult to attract Society members in sufficiently large numbers to make the organisation of the events really worthwhile. Probably the peak was reached in 1977 when Frank Whittall arranged four coach-loads of members and their friends to Leeds Castle. However, enjoyable trips have since been made to Singleton, Greenwich, Fishbourne and Chichester, Polesden Lacey evening picnics and open-air theatre shows, Broadlands, Bodiam and Burwash, Ardingly Reservoir and, in 1984, a Field Excursion to Crawley.

Gatwick Airport continues through the years to engage attention and one of the Society's Committees, under the vigilant eye of Margaret Woodward, uses its best endeavours to steer a course between recognition of the undoubted advantages of the Airfield to the whole district and the worst disadvantages of noise pollution: in her words "a love - hate relationship". At this time it seems that the noisy helicopter shuttle (Gatwick/Heathrow) will cease in time, a move over which the Society used its influence.

The Society has continued to give support to a number of Organisations whose aims complement its own. Amongst these are the London Green Belt Council, the Surrey Voluntary Service Trust, the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC), the Surrey Amenity Council and the Open Spaces Society. Representatives of the Society attend meetings of these bodies where it is appropriate so to do.

## OFFICERS of THE REIGATE SOCIETY 1977 - 1984

PRESIDENT	J R Stammers	1972 - 1980
	A G Sheppard-Fidler CBE	1980 -
CHAIRMAN	A G Sheppard-Fidler CBE	1973 - 1977
	W A Hutchinson	1977 - 1980
	D J Turner	1980 - 1983
	E K Bourne	1983 -
HON SECRETARY	E G Hieatt	1964 - 1977
	A W Crouch	1977 - 1982
	A E W Rumsey	1982
	B C Bell	1982 - 1983
	F Jones	1984 -
HON TREASURER	W Toomey	1966 - 1979
	J A Nauen	1979 -
REGISTRAR	Mrs E M Forbes	1971 - 1979
	Mrs J N Angel	1979 -

### TRUSTEES of THE REIGATE SOCIETY

To enable the Society to hold assets, it was decided in 1983 to form a Trust. The Trustees appointed are:-

J N Angel E K Bourne J A Nauen Mrs M Woodward

## FRANK POTTER MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN	Frank Potter (Son)	
HON SECRETARY	Margaret Mellior-Smith	Reigate Society of Artists (F
HON TREASURER	Frank Whittall	Reigate Society (RS)
MEMBERS	Arthur Hutchinson	RSA
	Dennis Turner (to 1983)	RS
	Eardley Bourne	RS