

News from North Downs

At the time of writing (late September), the North Downs Branch (based in mid-Kent, but which also reaches out to dwellers along the Surrey Hills) was busily planning its schedule for a new season.

With much fundraising undertaken during the summer months – not least for the Heart of Kent Hospice – the Committee's September gathering set out a programme, to include: celebrations for Agincourt day in October; a New Year's event at a local Nepalese restaurant; and – for 2020 – a dinner at The Spitfire, Kings Hill, West Malling (Kings Hill being the development which now occupies the old RAF airfield).

Individual members continue to contribute a great deal to their communities. Our President, Group Captain Patrick Tootal OBE, is – as ever – “flat out” with his work for RAF charities, especially the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, with its emphasis on education and outreach to our county's school pupils and students. Cllr. David Thornewell, the LibDem Chairman of East Malling Parish Council and one of our Borough Councillors, has been attending many meetings and public enquiries concerning the worrying over-development which threatens the rural and county identity of our district – especially a plan by Bellway Homes to build houses close to the historic setting of St. Mary's Abbey, West Malling. Likewise, over in Surrey, our Vice-President, Andy Smith, continues his work as CPRE County Director, to defend the Leatherhead and Guildford greenbelt. Given the level of public concern over countryside and conservation matters, The Royal Society of St. George could well gain more members by taking a more active role on this most worrying of topics.

Finally, Deputy Chairman, Wing Commander Mike Sutton, performs a very useful role, liaising with many local groups, spreading the word and ethos of our Society; and Mike informs us that more of his celebrated quiz and film nights are to be held in the winter months for branch members and friends – a great opportunity for people to meet informally.

Once again, we would like to pay tribute to our National Chairman, Joanna Cadman, and to Liz Lloyd at National HQ: a huge “thank you” for all your work and devotion. Our greetings, too, for all our friends and colleagues in branches across the country and worldwide.

Stuart Millson, Chairman