

# West Surrey Badger Group

NEWSLETTER No 64 JANUARY 2013

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*"All I want is a quiet life"*

## *In this issue*

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Member of the Mammal Society  
and Surrey Wildlife Trust

Member of the Badger Trust

Registered Charity No 1100142  
Patron David Shepherd OBE

# BADGER CULL POSTPONED – BUT WE FIGHT ON

*Dave Williams, Chairman, Badger Trust*

IN OCTOBER we were all anticipating the badger cull to be under way shortly. Then to our delight on Tuesday 22nd the Environment Secretary, Owen Paterson, told the House of Commons that the two pilot culls in parts of Gloucestershire and Somerset had been postponed until next year. Reasons given included: the Olympics, policing, bad weather, and legal challenges – a reference, of course, to our own Judicial Review and the subsequent appeal.

I can confirm that also on that day we were poised to issue a challenge to Natural England on aspects of the licensing arrangements. We believe news of that action was a factor in the National Farmers' Union decision to notify the Secretary of State that they would be unable to complete the cull this year.

Brian May had posted an e-petition on the government site on 7th September, and within a matter of weeks the number of signatures had reached over 100,000. This enabled the coalition of organisations formed by him, under the name Team Badger, to persuade a group of backbench MPs to request a debate in Parliament. The request was granted, and we are indebted to Brian for the action he has taken and the surge of media interest it has generated.

On the day before the debate many members of Team Badger attended the Commons to lobby MPs. Several hundred badger supporters were there, including me. My MP was sympathetic, but being Conservative was hesitant about voting against her own government.

The debate took place on 25th October and the motion against the cull was tabled by Caroline Lucas, ably supported by Mary Creagh and others. The result was that 147 cross-party MPs voted against the proposed cull, with only 28 in favour. However, this is not binding on

the government, and both the NFU and the Secretary of State say they remain determined to kill badgers next year and to roll the cull out in further areas from 2014 onwards. The Hansard report is at

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/chan56.pdf>

The debate included a great deal of discussion about vaccination of both badgers and cattle. Effective vaccines are critical to the future of farming, so we hope the government will objectively review all aspects of its bovine TB strategy and develop a control policy which abandons culling. Its current proposals are bad for the farming industry, bad for cattle and bad for badgers. The proposed cull will not solve bovine TB, and Badger Trust would be willing to take part in detailed and substantive discussions with the farming industry to try to reach agreement on the way forward.

The introduction on 1st January 2013 of long overdue new cattle controls will help, but ultimately, of course, cattle vaccination offers the best long-term solution. Defra ignores the fact that there has been a reduction in bTB since 2008 and it continues to cherry-pick pieces of the science that fit its case. Somehow its attitude has to change.

Together with our conservation partners in Team Badger, and working closely with eminent scientists, we will continue our campaign to save badgers. In doing so we believe we will also be helping farmers, who for years have been misled by the farming unions about the true causes of bTB. We will press the government to discuss urgently with the EU how the vaccination of cattle in the UK can become a reality. Contrary to what the pro-cull factions claim, we are informed that the cattle vaccine and the DIVA test could both be available in a very short time.

Until then, you can be assured that

Badger Trust will also continue to explore the possibility of further legal challenges against the unwarranted, unscientific and counter-productive slaughter of badgers.

Very many thanks to all of who have helped to get us to this stage. The message is: we fight on until there is a change in government policy.



## Team Badger

Team Badger, the anti-badger cull protest campaign formed with the backing of Brian May, goes from strength to strength, securing the support of more than a dozen organisations.

On 19th September, the massive billboard shown above was launched beside a busy West London commuter route. The badger painting was executed by our very own Pat Williams and we're so proud of her. She has also designed adaptations of the Badger Trust logo to be used if or when the killings begin.

Brian May said he became involved with the issue "even before this government was in office, because it was apparent to many of us what was going to happen if David Cameron was given



**Brian May, musician, astrophysicist and badger champion, with artist and badger champion Pat Williams**

power – that animals, wild animals, were going to become completely unimportant, unrepresented."

*Welcome to our new members*

David and Vanessa  
Boulwood  
Christine Clark

Sue Darling  
Frances Jones  
Carole Westwood

Inevitably, one of the paramount memories of 2012 will be the extremely wet weather we have experienced recently. Most of us will probably recall it for months to come. Ironically, last spring we were being threatened with a hosepipe ban and water shortages until Christmas! Many areas have fared far worse than we have in West Surrey and coping with the trauma of the flooding disasters must be heartbreaking.

With water tables at such high levels, inevitably the effect on wildlife is just as dramatic, especially for creatures that live underground. There is little we can do to alleviate this problem, but fortunately our Group has received no reports of badgers or their setts having been affected. However we must remain vigilant as, in the next few weeks, badger cubs will start being born.

We now have two new (and younger) field officers supplementing our team, which will stand us in good stead to maintain our 24/7 coverage of our area. We have also upgraded our kit to include hi-vis jackets etc., and recently held a comprehensive training session to ensure that the team will be able to cope with most of the call-outs

we receive. Ironically, two of our recent committee meetings have been interrupted and members have had to leave to deal with such emergencies. As always, we would be pleased to hear from any member who wishes to become involved in this practical side of our activities – just contact any committee member for further information.

As Dave Williams has reported in previous newsletters, the events surrounding the badger cull dominated much of his time last year as Chairman of the Badger Trust. Whilst the government has decided to postpone the start of the cull until next June, we will continue to make every effort for the plans to be cancelled altogether. There is still much to be done to find alternative methods of reducing bovine TB and we and other Badger Groups will go on supporting everyone involved in fighting against the cull, be it by financial donations, attending rallies, writing to Members of Parliament, etc.

Finally, I trust you all had a very happy Christmas and wish everyone a successful New Year, whatever challenges lie ahead for all of us.



### **Our collaboration with the League Against Cruel Sports**

The League Against Cruel Sports is an animal welfare charity which helps prevent cruelty to animals associated with sport and wildlife crime. Its headquarters is in Godalming, and the West Surrey Badger Group has recently teamed up with them to monitor setts that are at high risk of badger persecution.

The LACS relies on the public to be its

eyes and ears in reporting possible wildlife crime in the countryside. If you believe you may have important information, call their Wildlife Crimewatch Line on 01483 361108, or complete the online form, found on their website: [www.league.org.uk](http://www.league.org.uk). Alternatively, for local badger incidents, don't forget our own Badger Line: 01483 811989.

This is a time of the year when people often reflect on the 12 months that have just passed and think of another new year ahead. However, financial years are not always calendar years and this is the case for the West Surrey Badger Group, where the financial year end is actually 31st March and of course we can reflect on the charity's financial year at the AGM next springtime.

### **Progress so far**

So how is the year going anyway? It's likely that income will be down a little on the previous couple of years. Why? The rainy weather in 2012 conspired to wash out three of our four planned sales stalls, which meant sales and donations on the cancelled days were lost. Also, where we had been fortunate in 2011 to have been included in three Waitrose Community Matters charity donation months, sadly we've been unable to be included since. It would appear that the supermarket chain has changed its policy for nominating charities, and whereas we used to apply to an individual store we now have to apply to a national address. We shall keep trying. In addition there was no annual sponsored walk in 2012.

Supporters' membership fees and donations remain of paramount importance, and I am pleased to report that membership numbers remain similar to previous years.

### **Generating income**

We are always exploring other means of raising income. One new area has been the production and fitting of badger gates (see page 7). I should have more news on how this is going next time.

If anyone has ideas for future fundraising then do please get in touch with me or any of the committee members.

Our contact details are at the end of this newsletter. New ideas are always welcome.

### **Our gifts**

Fortunately we continue to spend within our means. The committee endeavours to minimise costs wherever possible to maximise use of available funds. So even though financial times are austere we were delighted to be able to donate £2,500 recently to the Badger Trust toward what has turned out to be its successful campaign in having the coalition government's planned badger cull in Gloucestershire and west Somerset suspended for a year. We also donated £1,000 to the Wildlife Hospital in Leatherhead, such an important institution for wildlife and much used by this charity's field officers.

I hope all our supporters have a great new year and I wish you every happiness and good health. With my never-ending gratitude for your financial support and assistance – I thank you!

### **RUXLEY UPDATE**

We have now had a new wire fence and a secure gate installed round the main area of badger activity. In the new year we shall be clearing the undergrowth again, putting in a path and erecting a hide.

In view of the large number of tall trees on the land, mostly protected by preservation orders, we have commissioned a tree survey to determine if any dangerous trees or branches need any remedial work.

*John Whitaker*

## Remembering Clem



IT IS WITH great sadness that we report the death of Edwin Clements, known to us as Clem. Aged 89, he passed away in October after a short illness.

Clem was an honorary life member of West Surrey Badger Group, having been a founder when it emerged from the West Surrey Natural History Society. His outstanding achievement of recording 24,000 badger setts around the country is nationally recognised, and here in Surrey his meticulous records provided the foundation for our current badger sett database. He completed the maps in Ernest Neal's book *The Badger*, and for many years was the national sett recorder for the Mammal Society.

Strangely, he never went badger watching, being content with finding and recording the setts, a feat all the more admirable because he didn't drive and his mode of transport was a bicycle. (We wonder if he ever achieved his ambition of riding a distance equivalent to cycling to the moon!)

Clem once described how he started recording setts:

*"Well, my late wife started it all around 1970, when she found a sett on her sister's farm in Sussex. Later she heard about the Mammal Society's national*

*badger survey and wrote for details. I found just one that first day, but I suppose it gave me more thrill than the thousands of*

*others I've found since. I was completely hooked, and much spare time has been devoted to this activity, including most holidays. Far better than lying on a beach in the sun.*

*As for Surrey, I started recording in 1971, and continued with renewed vigour after retiring here in 1982."*

Clem was a geologist, and worked at the Royal Greenwich Observatory for many years. He loved generating maps, not just of badger setts but also routes for off-road cycling throughout Europe, and he published tables of the heights of Scottish mountains over 3,000 feet, known as Monros, and the routes to ascend them. He was only the second person to climb all English and Welsh hills over 2,000 feet. No modern equipment here – he was once given a GPS, but said he preferred his own method of using his biro pen tip to measure 100 metres on the map.

A celebration of Clem's life was held in Guildford on 6th December, with friends and colleagues representing all his various interests, just reminding us what a remarkable man he was.

## Badger gates boost WSBG funds

OUR NEW BADGER GATES are proving very popular. Sales have significantly boosted our funds, whilst at the same time providing badgers with important access to their habitats, which might otherwise be closed off by garden fences. The gates allow badgers to pass through fences to forage in residential gardens while still blocking the passage of rabbits and other unwanted wildlife.

Our latest customer is Waverley Borough Council, which bought its first gates for a WSBG member, Sue, who lives in Shamley Green. Sue has a sett just under her lawn, and regularly feeds her badgers. Waverley's next installation will be in Farnham. It's great to know that the local council appreciates the importance of allowing badgers to roam freely.

The man responsible for the manufacture of our gates is another member, Ted, who lives in Godalming. He kindly took on the project, following

the completion of a hedgehog 'village' for the Hogs Lodge Hedgehog Sanctuary. Ted is a retired master craftsman, and makes the gates in his well-equipped workshop. They are beautifully constructed from treated pine, jointed and screwed. The gate itself swings freely on coach screws and the frame has pointed supporting posts for easy positioning in the ground.

These high quality gates are surely the best in the country and will last for many years. The WSBG selling price is a competitive £40 (free to the low-waged and retired). This compares very favourably with the lowest retail price elsewhere of around £65. What's more, we will install our gates at no extra charge when requested!

We are very fortunate indeed to have the benefit of Ted's services, which he gives free of charge.

For details of how to obtain a badger gate for your garden, ring Jacqui on 01252-702140.



**Ted in his workshop**

# CONSULTANTS AND SURVEYING FOR PLANNING AUTHORITIES

by Rodger Munt

WE HAVE FOR SOME TIME expressed concern over the survey reports submitted to local planning authorities and to Natural England by some ecology consultants. Our concerns relate to **inaccurate representations** of badger activity around a development site which are biased, by ignoring important details, to favour the developer. It is a sign of the times that many authorities do not have the resources to challenge the information supplied. They assume the consultant is applying accurate information to high professional standards. Unfortunately, a deception is not recognised unless a Badger Group is requested to check the information by undertaking a thorough survey to the standards required.

In recognition of the problem, the British Standards Institution is in the process of producing a new standard "**BS42020 Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development**". Some of the topics the standard addresses are:

- professional ethics, conduct and competence
- undertaking adequate ecological surveys
- indentifying limitations
- providing clear documentation and summaries that can be understood by authorities

This should apply to both registered consultants as well as volunteer ecology specialists such as Badger Groups. My main

concern is that there is no provision on how the ecologists are to be monitored to ensure they are adhering to the standard, nor what the consequences will be if they are not.

To apply for a licence to interfere with a badger sett, Natural England (NE) requires the applicant to provide an accurate diagram of the badger activity on a site and to survey the surrounding area to establish the importance to the badger social group of any sett on the site. A survey can be time-consuming and some consultants only perform a desk assessment based on a national database of setts. However, the database will not be up to date – some setts may be abandoned and new ones formed. When we are involved, WSBG always performs a thorough survey of the area to determine current badger activity. A survey may be difficult if the development site is within a housing estate in a suburban/urban environment where there is no previous knowledge of any badger activity.

In order to establish the importance of each sett and its entrances the survey requires the classification of each sett entrance as either *well used*, *part-used* or *disused*, and the classification of each sett as either *main*, *subsidiary*, *annex* or *outlier*. While this requires some subjective assessment, particularly for sett type, some consultants provide a misleading interpretation well outside expected subjective variability.

(continued opposite)

## PLANNING SUBMISSION EXAMPLES

Below are recent problem cases where I have been involved with planning authorities. Other WSBG Field Officers have had similar experiences when asked to assess planning applications.

### 1. Kingsley Avenue, Camberley

These plans involved two new houses in the rear gardens of existing houses. An ecologist had reported **no evidence of badger activity** in or around the planned site. However, residents of neighbouring properties had reported seeing badgers regularly, but this evidence had been rejected as a fabrication by the planning agent. To resolve the issue we surveyed the neighbouring properties, the surrounding area (of approximately 1sq km) and eventually with permission the site. We found very strong evidence of badger activity (e.g. dung pits, guard hairs, foraging snuffle holes, runs, footprints and claw marks) in every garden, including the site, and two setts within 2 metres of the site boundary. A trail camera was also set up at one entrance which confirmed badgers in residence.

Although the developer agreed to move the houses further away from these setts.

and to leave a badger protection zone, at the last planning meeting the planning application was rejected.

### 2. Clewborough House Development, Frimley

This was a case where the manager of the consultancy manipulated the survey undertaken by the ecologist by **ignoring badger activity and inventing entrances to a sett** in order support the closure of others. As reported in our newsletter no. 55, a badger sett was damaged as a consequence. We reported the breach in the code of practice and the manager was disciplined.

During the appeals procedure we were able to provide evidence of the badger activity and to get wildlife corridors included in the plans. We have subsequently had a very good working relationship with the ecologist who did the original survey.

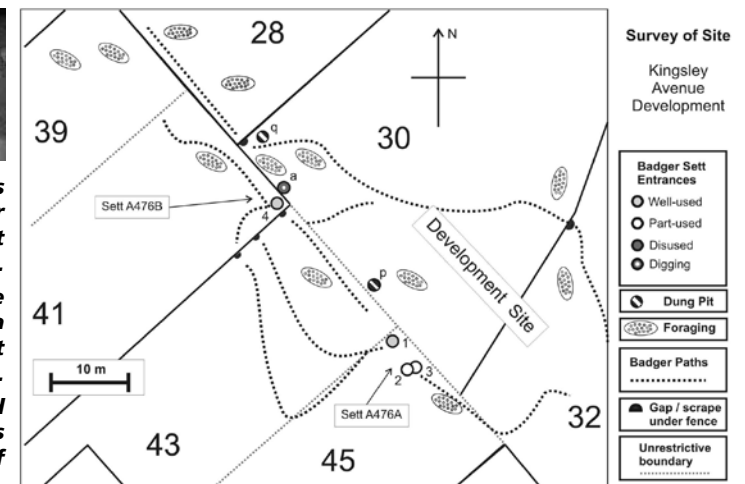
The developer also argued that he could



**Right: Rodger's survey of badger activity at Kingsley Avenue.**

**Above: one of the photos taken at a sett entrance next to the site.**

**The ecologist had said there was no evidence of badgers here.**



provide paths in the woods as part of a Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space to offset the impact of the development on the Special Protection Areas (primarily for ground-nesting birds). Unfortunately our advice that a new path in the woods, at 30 metres from a sett, would not adhere to the 100 metre separation recommended by the Forestry Commission, was *ignored*. As a consequence the sett was damaged by youths producing a BMX circuit, as reported in newsletters 60 and 61. (Further to this, and on a lighthearted note, see page 14.)

### 3. Lime Lodge, Englefield Green

There is a sett on the development site that the ecologist had argued *was disused*. However, our records showed that the sett was active before the ecologist's survey and we monitored significant activity at the sett during the winter months, after his survey, which suggested it was likely to have the important role of a breeding sett. We met with the developer on site and were able to demonstrate that the sett was active and persuaded him to re-route a boundary fence to avoid the sett.

### 4. Groveside, Great Bookham

This is another development, currently under construction, involving two houses in the rear garden of an existing property. A sett entrance on the boundary, and behind a tennis court on site, was discovered just before development was to start. A number of badger scrapes under the boundary fence suggested badger activity in adjacent properties and I advised the ecologist of the need to survey the adjacent properties and further afield, as required by NE, before determining a badger mitigation strategy.

Unfortunately the ecologist chose to apply for a NE licence to close the sett *without* undertaking the surveys that I

had recommended, and supported his application solely on deductions from the national badger sett database. He stated that the sett was a single hole outlier. My subsequent survey of the adjacent properties revealed that this single hole was part of an active badger sett, of 9 entrances within 2 metres of the boundary, that could be assumed to be connected by tunnels passing under the tennis court that was to be removed. Thus closing the sett entrance on site would serve no purpose and would not prevent a badger being trapped underground during removal of the tennis court.

Furthermore, although I surveyed an area of about 2 sq km around the site, only the 4 closest known setts could be found. These other setts were all around 1km away from the one on site and therefore were too far from it to be part of the same clan territory (for this part of England). Thus the sett on site could not be regarded as an outlier.

Regrettably, by the time I had completed the surveys NE had issued a licence to close the sett. I subsequently raised the issues with NE but they were unable to reverse the decision to award the licence. Nevertheless NE instructed the consultant to adjust a badger gate that had been installed incorrectly.

### 5. Crabtree Recreation Ground, Football Complex, Camberley

Camberley Town Football Club planned to extend its facilities to the recreation ground by introducing new training pitches, new stands and parking areas. The sloping sides of the park contain several badger setts and the ecologist argued that, as according to him there was *only a subsidiary sett and outliers*, these could be closed without

consequence to the badger social group. We pointed out that the largest sett on site had more entrances than quoted and could

not be classified as a subsidiary sett unless the main sett could be identified. The plans were rejected by the council.



## WSBG members join Somerset cull protest

*Jacqui Christmas*

Over 100 protesters, including two WSBG members, joined the badger night walkers in Dunster, West Somerset on the evening of 16th October. The peaceful protest, against the proposed cull of badgers in West Somerset where 4,000 badgers could be killed, was organised by the Somerset Badger Group and Secret World Wildlife Rescue. It was the first of a series of night walks that are planned to continue in the summer of 2013 when the government resumes its proposed cull.

The purpose of the night time walks is for opponents of the cull to be out in the fields rescuing wounded

badgers and to demonstrate the strong feelings people have against the shooting of badgers.

It's a long journey to make from Surrey, but our help to rescue badgers could be needed next year. For despite the parliamentary debate on the proposed badger cull resulting in an overwhelming 147 votes to 28 in favour of a motion calling on the government to abandon the culling of badgers entirely, plans to cull badgers in the initial two pilot areas are to go ahead:

You can help too:  
go to [www.teambadger.org](http://www.teambadger.org) and sign the e-petition to stop the cull.

## Tell us your badger tales

Send us your stories about the badgers you watch, with a picture if possible, for us to print in the next newsletter.  
Just contact Clare Windsor (details on page 15).



## Police voice fears about free-for-all

PC Jez Walmsley, wildlife crime officer for North Yorkshire Police, speaking after a court case where a farmer was convicted of filling a badger sett with slurry, said:

"During the last few years we have had a growing number of reports of cruelty that have involved people deliberately interfering with badgers' setts by filling them or ploughing them out. **We are worried that people think there is a free-for-all on badgers at the moment.**"

The case mentioned above concerned Malcolm Foster of Grange Farm, Bulmer, near Malton, who was found guilty of pumping 5,000 gallons of slurry into a sett. Mr Foster had claimed that he wanted to kill rabbits and rats. He was fined £500 and ordered to pay £700 costs.

## Menace on the doorstep?

Who was he, the young stranger knocking on doors in Crowdecote, asking residents about badgers? Mid Derbyshire Badger Group chair Irene Brierton says he wanted to know about sett locations, land ownership and whether residents would turn a blind eye to badger hunting. Three weeks later a young man called to ask about

Jean Thorpe, chair of the Ryedale Badger Group, was the expert witness in the case. She said: "It was horrifying. The colony of badgers would have drowned in slurry as the pressure needed to fill this sett with 5,000 gallons of liquid cattle manure would have been considerable. The tractor tyre marks showed deliberate intent to target the active badger sett. I have not been allowed back to visit the sett, but I understand from local villagers that it is now, sadly, completely inactive."

PC Walmsley also had a message for farmers: "As well as facing up to six months' imprisonment or a heavy fine and costs, farmers who deliberately damage badger setts risk losing the Single Farm Payment from Defra. The grant is dependent on farmers not being prosecuted for wildlife offences."

Group membership and whether that would entitle him to details of setts in the Ashbourne area. Information about him was later passed to the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

Was there any connection with rumours that farmers around Ashbourne had been holding "secret" meetings on preparations for a future badger cull?



**Member Moira Spain inspires us with these two images of 'pairs' of animals. In the top photo, the badger's companion isn't too hard to spot, but what about the small creature in the photo below?**

*Hint: – Just to right of centre at the bottom.*





## Were you watching TV on 7th December?

The 'missing words' round in the BBC programme *Have I Got News For You* that evening featured *Badger News* as its guest publication.

One of the questions to the teams concerned a headline that read "... .. say

sorry to Dr Roger Munt". No-one got the answer, of course, which was "BMX lads" (remember the incident of sett damage at Clewborough House that Rodger reported in our newsletters? It was subsequently published in *Badger News*).

## Celebrity Christmas charity record

The eco-clothing company Rapanui, based in Sandown on the Isle of Wight, has released a charity record in aid of the Badger Trust's campaign against the cull. Called 'The Present of Life', the record has had backing from Sir David Attenborough and Chris Packham.

Responding to angry criticism from

the IoW branch of the National Farmers Union, Chris Packham, who appears in the video for the song, said, "We should be working together based on the science towards the best solution for farmers and the badger population.

Go to the following link:  
[www.rapanuiclothing.com/badgersong](http://www.rapanuiclothing.com/badgersong)

## FOR EMERGENCIES CALL:

Your local Police Station / 999

Surrey Police Wildlife Crime Officer 0845 125 2222

Wildlife Aid, Leatherhead 0906 1800132

(website [www.wildlifeaid.org.uk](http://www.wildlifeaid.org.uk))

RSPCA 0300 1234 999

Member of WSBG Committee

## NEIGHBOURING BADGER GROUPS

East Surrey 01883 625585

East Hants 01420 87366

West Sussex 01243 825804

Mid Sussex 01342 870320

Binfield, Berks 0709 2234377

Herts & Middx 01992 589152

## BADGER TRUST

0845 828 7878

Website [www.badgertrust.org.uk](http://www.badgertrust.org.uk)

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# WEST SURREY BADGER GROUP EVENING MEETINGS

**Tuesday March 26      Joe Duckworth**

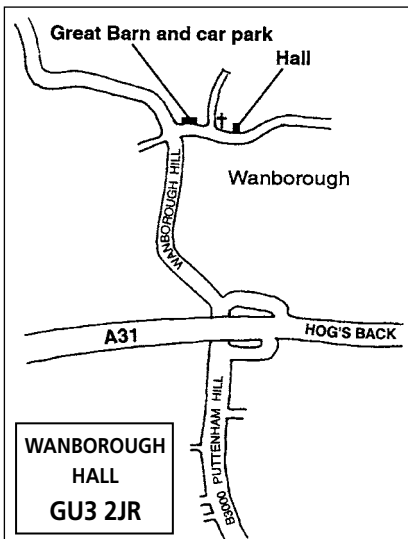
Joe is Chief Executive of the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS), based in Godalming. His talk is entitled  
**Cruelty in the Countryside.**

LACS has been very active in surveillance techniques to catch the perpetrators of animal persecution, including those who target badgers. Joe will explain all about his organisation, and its latest investigations and campaigns to obtain intelligence about the criminals.

LACS is also trying to stop the badger cull  
(read on page 4 how we are working with them).

*NB The presentation will not include any video nasties.*

Details of further talks will appear in our April newsletter

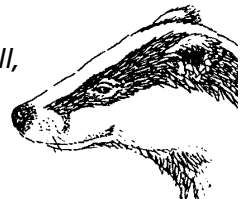


*All evening meetings start at 8pm and are held in Wanborough Hall unless otherwise stated.*

*This is just off the A31 Hogs Back.*

*Take the B3000 exit (from Guildford it's the first exit) and follow signs to Wanborough. At the bottom of the hill turn right (signposted Great Barn and Church). The car park is on the left next to the Barn.*

*Walk up to the hall, just beyond the church.*



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