

West Surrey Badger Group

NEWSLETTER No 65 APRIL 2013

www.wsbg.co.uk



Team Badger
needs your
help to
**STOP
THE
CULL**

Read inside

*Also in
this issue*

Our friend Jeff
News and reports
Future meetings



Member of the Mammal Society
and Surrey Wildlife Trust

Member of the Badger Trust

Registered Charity No 1100142
Patron David Shepherd OBE

Last October the pilot badger culls were postponed, one reason being that the number of badgers was higher than expected. Now DEFRA have reduced the number of badgers in each of the two areas after recalculating using some data they say was not available in October.

Badger Trust is working hard to see if there is any way to challenge this new calculation. They have always said it is very difficult to count badgers.

MEANWHILE, TEAM BADGER IS GOING FLAT OUT TO CONVINCING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PUBLIC'S OPPOSITION TO THE CULL.



Back in October last year, Brian May and his animal welfare organisation 'Save Me' launched an e-petition in protest against the forthcoming badger cull pilot trials. The splendid painting by our committee member and artist Pat Williams, in colour on the cover, was used on a billboard in West London to launch the petition.

The petition quickly reached 100,000, the number required to request a back-bench debate. The debate was a triumph with a

majority of 147 to 28. However, this was not binding and has been ignored by the coalition government.

The petition rose to around 150,000, but now as the threat comes closer we need to increase the number substantially to force the government to realise that public opinion is very much against them.

To read more about Save Me go to <http://www.save-me.org.uk>

Save Me is now part of Team Badger,

a coalition of a group of NGOs that oppose the badger cull on the grounds that it will not work and is against all the scientific evidence. Member organisations include RSPCA, IFAW, Animal Aid, Born Free, Badger Trust and many more. One aim of Team Badger is to offer the government an alternative to killing badgers – vaccination, but on a large scale, using the resources of all the participating organisations.

Now functioning as a coalition, under the title of Team Badger, supported by scientists, vets, environmentalists, MPs from all parties, and a growing number of enlightened farmers, Team Badger will be working hard in the coming months to make sure every man, woman and child in Britain knows the true awfulness of what

is about to happen – nothing less than the destruction of badger families which have been resident in this country for much longer than us Anglo Saxons, and gaining no discernible benefit for farmers.

There will be no way back once the shooters with their high-powered rifles begin their dirty work.

Since the new year, and especially since Paterson's speech to the NFU confirming that culling will take place this summer, the public are rallying again, and the petition is now heading towards the 200,000 mark.

But right now? It is unlikely that this government will voluntarily take its foot off the pedal in this matter. The only hope is if the British public clearly say, with one voice, "WE WILL NOT STAND FOR THIS".

It's not too late, so please sign the petition if you have not done so already, and encourage as many other people as you can to sign.

The site is <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/38257>

or there's a link button on the www.teambadger.org.uk website.

Warning to be vigilant, but not foolhardy

Badger baiters targeted a sett near Dorking early in March. Two men with a terrier were observed digging a sett, but ran off when challenged from a distance, fortunately without capturing a badger. They were also spotted by the farmer, and several police did a thorough search for them without success. We are currently helping police in their enquiries to determine whether this is part of a wider problem. I must thank the team of volunteers who have so far helped to check 19 of the nearest setts

(in atrocious weather). However, more sett checking is still required.

Please be vigilant and note anything suspicious when you are out walking near badger setts, but be aware that if you observe people digging near a sett, badger baiters are violent and might be carrying shotguns. Don't challenge them at close quarters but phone one of our committee members immediately and inform the police. Emergency numbers are always inside the back page of our newsletter.

Rodger Munt

OUR FRIEND JEFF CLARK

It is with great regret and sadness that I have to report the death of Jeff Clark, who passed away on February 18 after a short illness. Jeff was a founder member of the West Surrey Badger Group, a former chairman and a very active field officer.

Jeff was born on 6 April 1949 in Hammersmith to mum Maud and dad John, baby of the family to older brother, Alan and sister Terry. They were a close-knit family, with grandparents and a great-aunt living in same street.

In his early teens, Jeff became interested in rowing and belonged to Furnivall Rowing Club in Hammersmith, where



Jeff using his construction skills to build an artificial badger sett.

he formed longstanding friendships – a recurring theme throughout his life.

Jeff attended a building college and then started a career in building, moving between several different companies, working on various projects (including rebuilding the Grand Hotel in Brighton after the bombing). Again, Jeff forged many friendships with colleagues in the industry.

Jeff and Anne met in Edgware and lived in North Harrow before moving to Brookwood in Surrey in 1977. He loved his home in Brookwood where he had lived with Anne for 34 years, surrounded by wonderful friends and neighbours.

Jeff had a wide and varied interest in music and musical instruments, particularly guitars (which at the last count amounted to about 2 dozen in his collection!). He was even buying yet another one on ebay just after he'd come out of hospital recently. As well as guitars, he collected a huge array of musical instruments including mandolins, banjos, gongs, keyboards, drums and didgeridoos.

About five years ago, Jeff went to Japan to attend a beginner's course on Taiko drumming. He since acquired three drums of his own, and became involved with Taiko drumming group 'Tamachi', which he really enjoyed being a part of, and made some wonderful friends in the group. Last year Jeff played with them at the Wildlife Rocks day at Guildford Cathedral. He really enjoyed his Taiko drumming which was very compatible with his love of Japan.

He also enjoyed his wildlife holidays, including trips to California, Borneo, Alaska, and recently to Tasmania.

Jeff had a great compassion for all animals, and unselfishly dedicated his time towards



Liz Walters

One of Jeff's passions was Japanese Taiko drumming.

the protection of wildlife, particularly badgers. In this respect he was involved with many wildlife organisations, but predominantly the West Surrey Badger Group and Secret World Wildlife Rescue in Somerset, which was particularly close to his heart. He regularly helped out at their special weekend functions.

Using his building skills, Jeff constructed many artificial setts for orphan cubs, as you will see in the photograph. This is how some WSBG members will remember him. He also helped rescue injured badgers and anything else that was in trouble. He often manned our sales stall at our indoor meetings.

Jeff also worked with N.F.B.G. (now known as Badger Trust) where for a while he was a trustee and helped to write the badger cub rehabilitation protocol. He regularly attended the Badger Trust conference, where he was often seen in the bar with his guitar, and made many friends from groups throughout the country.

Jeff loved his wife and his wider family, and was a gentle, kind and caring man, always thinking of others before himself. He was always very generous, not just with donations of money, but most importantly with his time. He will be sadly missed by all his family, friends and acquaintances, and will be a great loss to this world, and of course to badgers.

Dave Williams

Pauline Kidner, of the wildlife rescue organisation Secret World, writes:

Jeff was always so supportive of Secret World and all that I have done over the years.

I sincerely hope that we shall be able to name something after him and it really has to be connected to badgers – Jeff always reckoned he had the matching colouring!

A dear friend lost but never forgotten.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Nick Nickells

Ironically, I closed my last April's report with the suggestion we should provide our garden 'visitors' with a bowl of water in view of the impending water shortage restrictions! How wrong can you be? I guess these last few weeks they would have appreciated dry bedding in a cosy shelter. Hopefully by the time this report goes to print, the proper Spring weather will be with us and we and our wildlife can all enjoy it.

With our financial year having finished on 31st March, we are now preparing for our Annual General Meeting on 21st May (details opposite). Once again in the last twelve months we have experienced our usual highs and lows, all overshadowed by the Government's determination to go ahead with the initial badger cull to kill 5,000 badgers in a 6-week period. Fortunately it was postponed until this coming June, so we have a period of time in which we must continue to pressurise the Government to listen to the majority of the general public who are against this course of action, (over 63% according to a BBC survey).

I trust you have all taken the opportunity to write or e-mail your local MPs.

Regrettably, our Group has been involved in a serious case of sett damage which occurred on Christmas Eve, when the Fire Brigade was called to rescue two dogs from a local badger sett. Following the licensed re-instatement of the sett, we will endeavour to ensure the emergency services are fully aware of their responsibilities on such occasions. A full report is on page 12.

Your committee has prepared a programme for our Group monthly meetings and the details are on the back of this newsletter. We look forward to seeing you. If anyone has contact with suitable speakers for future meetings please contact Dave Williams – he would welcome any suggestions.

Ending on a very sad note, we are all devastated to hear that Jeff Clark has died after a short illness. He was a founder member of our Group and a lover of all wildlife. We shall miss his ever-willing input, and his endless concern and friendship.

graspers and travel cages so necessary for badger rescues.

Can you help us in June?

We have accepted an invitation to have a stall at the Field Studies Centre, Juniper Hall near Dorking on the weekend of 8th and 9th June. The event is the Surrey Wildlife Festival described as a Family Day Out: "Get up close to your local wildlife at our Surrey Wildlife Festival. Join the fun with activities including meet the animals, face painting, games, food and drink and much much more". I will be seeking volunteers to help nearer the time but do please put the dates in your diaries and let me know if you can be there to help, or if not just come and say hello.

Bright outlook

Now this Treasurer has found the weather in the last couple of months too gloomy to mention and that goes for the forecasts for the economy too. Yet I feel very positive for the financial future of the West Surrey Badger Group. Membership and resulting subscriptions remain consistent and such a strong and important backbone for the charity, with such fantastic supporters and along with various fundraising activities being discussed for this year I am confident we will continue to stay bright in what are rather gloomy financial times.

Your support remains greatly appreciated and I thank you all for being there.

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the West Surrey Badger Group will take place on Tuesday 21st May 2013, at 7.30pm in Wanborough Hall

A G E N D A

- 1) Apologies for absence
- 2) Presentation and acceptance of 2012 AGM minutes
- 3) Chairman's report
- 4) Field Officer's report
- 5) Presentation of accounts and Treasurer's report
- 6) Appointment of Auditors
- 7) Notices of Motions
- 8) Election of Committee. Nigel Mee, Peter Eggleton and Pat Williams will be standing down as per the constitution. These and the other Committee members are willing to stand again. New Committee members are needed.
- 8) A.O.B.

Please note the earlier starting time as our short AGM will be followed by refreshments, quizzes, discussions, a raffle and reports on some of our recent activities.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Nigel Mee

Since my last report financial matters have been relatively quiet compared to the activities of our valiant field officers, as can be seen elsewhere in this newsletter. However, the financial life of the charity carries on as it always does, probably the main thing being the fast approach (at time of writing) of the end of another financial year on 31st March.

As usual in April and into May the figures for the year will be finalised, audited and reported to members at the AGM in late May. Early indications show a fairly quiet year financially. Whilst it's been a tough year

for raising income there has been nothing to affect the ongoing commitments of the Group, nor to stop us supporting important matters such as the Badger Trust's recent opposition of the government's delayed badger cull.

Better equipped

This year we have purchased several items of equipment, and new resources such as the hi-viz jackets particularly intended for road work. It has been good to know they are in use from a safety perspective. Out in the field also in use have been the additional recently purchased

Welcome to our new member

Catherine Walls

Garden repair work

It may be necessary for us to carry out work on a badger sett if problems start to occur. It is quite rare for us, but when it happens it is probably best if we do it rather than an outside consultant. Here is a recent case in point.

For a number of years one of our members, Sue, has been enjoying watching the badgers that live in a sett on the edge of her small garden. There has been a cost for the entertainment they provide – plants are occasionally dug up, items are taken away into the sett for bedding and significant amounts of sand are pushed out from below ground to the most inconvenient place above ground. Tunnels were now extending along the flowerbed and underneath the lawn and the soft sandy soil had made the whole area unstable. On two occasions the surface had given way, allowing Sue to fall into the tunnels. So, how could the West Surrey Badger Group help?

Well, we are not in the business of closing setts and kicking badgers out to seek alternative accommodation, so we invented a plan to keep the badgers from undermining the vulnerable part of the flowerbed and lawn. We proposed to repair the damaged part of the garden and shore up one of the tunnel entrances, at the same time ensuring the badgers could still gain access to the garden and through to the outside world for their foraging activities.



Peter Eggleton

Gates in position at the ends of the tunnels.

Natural England accepted our proposed repair scheme and issued a licence to carry out the work.

The first stage was to exclude the badgers from two tunnels which ran under the lawn, and for this we fitted badger gates manufactured and supplied by Ted, which were set to open outwards only. After three weeks we were certain no badgers were trapped below and could therefore dismantle the gates and fill in the tunnels.

There was no point in leaving it like that as the badgers would most probably dig back in, so chain link fencing was placed underground and over the surface above. Next it was

necessary to support the entrance to one of the other tunnels, simply done by fitting a small piece of 300 mm diameter plastic drainage pipe to the front. We finished off by dressing the area with some wooden battens and a layer of top soil.

The badgers still had about four entrances to their sett, could still come through into Sue's garden, and with one of Ted's gates paid for and fitted by the Council, could still go off foraging

Did it work? So far so good, the badgers are still there.



Peter Eggleton

The garden repaired.

Wisley Airfield

A few years ago planning consent was given for a development on the disused airfield at Wisley. Since that time the developers have been working their way through a number of pre-start conditions.

We received a call from a local person who was concerned that there was a badger sett in the development area. I made a visit and identified a well-used 4-hole sett in a bank at the edge of the proposed development area. We would expect a large development proposal to be accompanied by a full ecological survey and impact statement, and indeed it

was. That report did not identify the sett, but then it was completed in 2007 and this sett may have arrived since. I immediately notified Surrey County Council to ensure the sett was taken into account by the developers.

Consultant ecologists were sent to the site by the developers and issued their report in very quick time, agreeing with the sett identification and advising on exclusion zones for working without a Natural England licence. They advised that a licence would be needed if they worked within the zones. We do not of course expect a licence to be issued at this time of the year due to the



Peter Eggleton

One of the sett entrances at Wisley Airfield.

possibility of dependent cubs and, with bedding visible on the spoil heaps of this sett, cubs are most likely.

The developers needed to do something on site to show that work had commenced before the planning

consent expired, which they did a few days later. Would you believe that they started their work within the zone nominated as needing to be covered by a licence! I have made a complaint to the police on grounds of disturbance.

P LANNING REPORT

Dave Williams

West Byfleet

I have never had more emails or phone calls from people concerned about a badger sett and a planning application than I received concerning a recent case in West Byfleet. There is a field separated from a badger sett only by a 10 metre wide lane. An application had been made for change of use of the field from agricultural to a site for an extended Romany gypsy family.

The council received over 500 letters of objection. There was a demonstration outside the site by several hundred protestors, and a meeting in the village hall, which was so full that they had to have a second meeting. It was estimated that nearly 1,000 local people had attended.

However, just as I'm writing this, I've

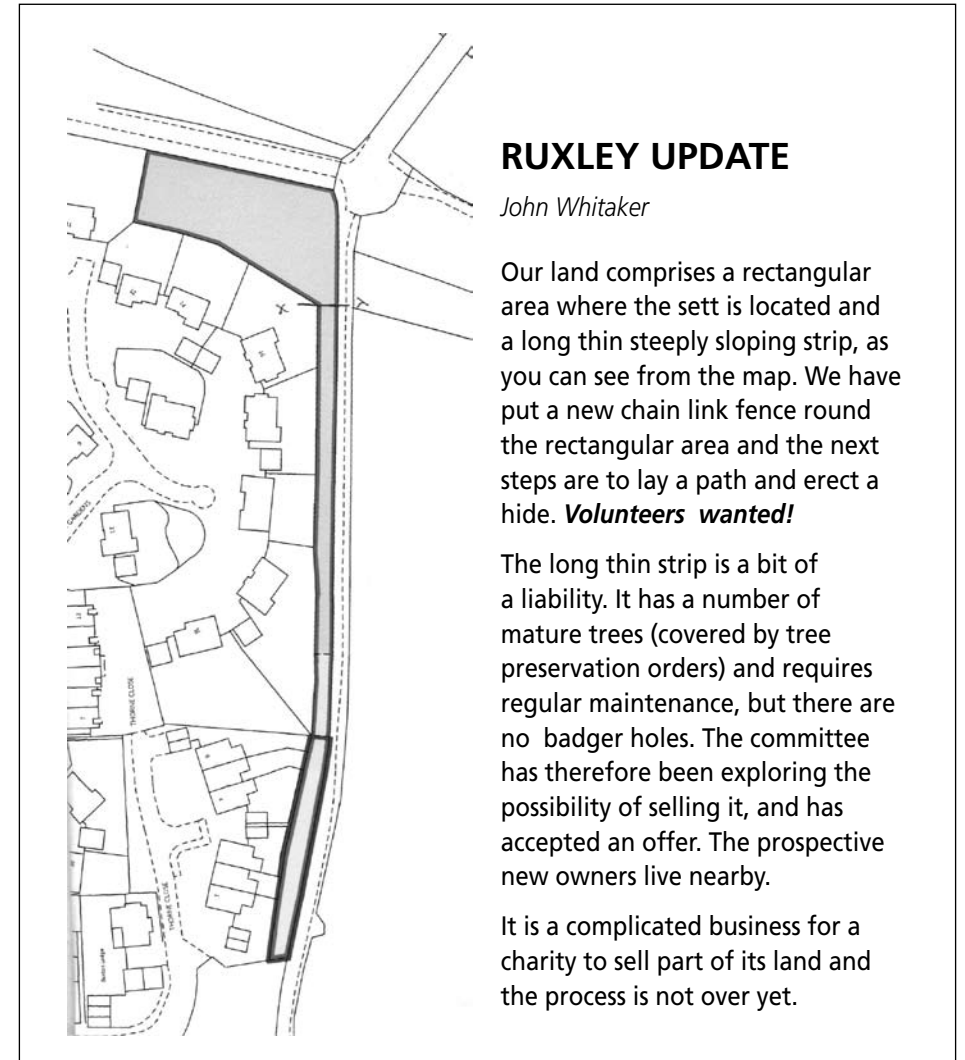
heard that the application has been withdrawn, but I don't know the reason.

Milford

An application to build houses on the site surrounding Milford Hospital has been received by Waverley Borough Council. We shall be studying the application and the badger survey to see if we need to lodge an objection. We are hoping that the buildings will be far enough away from any setts so as not to cause any problem.

Dunsfold

On behalf of the Wildlife Trust I surveyed a site in Dunsfold where a house building application shows houses almost on top of a badger sett. We will be recommending a badger protection zone, and a corridor to adjacent foraging areas.



RUXLEY UPDATE

John Whitaker

Our land comprises a rectangular area where the sett is located and a long thin steeply sloping strip, as you can see from the map. We have put a new chain link fence round the rectangular area and the next steps are to lay a path and erect a hide. **Volunteers wanted!**

The long thin strip is a bit of a liability. It has a number of mature trees (covered by tree preservation orders) and requires regular maintenance, but there are no badger holes. The committee has therefore been exploring the possibility of selling it, and has accepted an offer. The prospective new owners live nearby.

It is a complicated business for a charity to sell part of its land and the process is not over yet.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER 2013/14

Thank you all for your support over the last year, your subscriptions and donations. This is to remind WSBG members, who don't pay by standing order, that their subscriptions are now due for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. Enclosed with this newsletter you should find a subscription payment form. I would be grateful if you could complete this and return it as soon as possible.

Rodger Munt, Membership Secretary

Misguided firemen destroy much of badger sett in the Chantries

Alan Johnson

On Christmas Eve a family were walking their three terriers in Chantry Wood. Two of the dogs then disappeared down an entrance of one of the many badger setts in the wood – this one being immediately next to a path on a steep hillside. After they failed to reappear, it seems the family found a spade from somewhere, and started to try to dig the dogs out. After some time, they then called the Fire Brigade.

Now one would have assumed that the Fire Brigade would have thought things through. They might, perhaps, have realised that dogs, if left alone,

will come out of a sett of their own accord within a few hours. If not, they might have thought that seeking some advice would have been a good idea and contacted the Badger Trust, or the West Surrey Badger Group (WSBG) who are available 24/7 for this purpose. And, most importantly, one would surely have thought that interfering with a badger sett is a criminal offence. Sadly for the badgers living in this sett, whatever procedures were followed or not followed, the end result was that the Fire Brigade simply dug, and dug and dug. For something like

Here I am in the crater where the sett entrances used to be.



Jacqui Christmas

six hours a group of firemen excavated the sett until they accomplished their task, and released the dogs. Perhaps even more extraordinarily, they then simply left the scene of devastation and went back to base.

The Surrey Advertiser reported this as a heart-warming Christmas story of two dogs rescued. A WSBG member, Belinda, read the story and took a different view, writing to the *Surrey Advertiser*:

Dear Sir/Madam,

While I am delighted the Adams family got their dogs back safe and sound, I was horrified to read the details of your article dated 4 January 2013.

The family were probably oblivious to the fact that they may have just broken the law and if it is found that they have dug up an active badger sett they may be liable to prosecution under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. There is no mention in your article whether anyone sought advice before digging up the "animal's burrow" but by the description it sounds very much like it was a badger sett.

The Fire Brigade should have been aware of the proper protocol here, and in the past they have contacted us before going ahead with such a rescue as they are aware that you require a licence to touch a badger sett. However, in this case none of our members were called and the first we heard about this incident was through your article.

I would like to make your readers aware that you CANNOT go around the countryside digging up "animal burrows". We are privileged to have the most beautiful countryside to enjoy in Surrey but we must all be

mindful of the laws of the land. We must respect it and protect it.

"Take only photographs, leave only footprints."

Yours,

Member of the West Surrey Badger Group

Belinda reported the matter to the WSBG committee, and it was taken up by my partner, Jacqui Christmas, a WSBG field officer. To her horror, she found that the firemen had excavated an area about 5 metres in circumference and up to 2 metres deep into the hillside. The photo opposite taken by Jacqui shows me standing in one part of the crater.

Speaking as a lawyer, I believe that if this had been done by someone intending harm to the badgers – say a farmer, a developer, or badger baiters – a prison sentence would have been inevitable. But clearly there was no intent to harm the badgers. This was a case of crass stupidity and ignorance by a public authority who should have known better. It is desperately disappointing that the Fire Brigade had no procedures in place to prevent this wanton destruction.

The only saving grace in this case is that the sett was very large indeed, and obviously very old, with three storeys of tunnels. It appears to be even larger than the area dug out by the Fire Brigade. Hopefully all the badgers have simply decamped into the remains of the sett. We cannot know if there were newborn cubs who might have been too tiny to be moved safely – they could have been buried alive – but hopefully they were taken by their parents to the other part of the sett.

[Continued overleaf]



As the snow melts, the full damage is revealed.

What next then? The Police have been pretty good, if a little slow due to pressure of work. They have spoken to the Fire Brigade, who now have procedures in place which should hopefully prevent a repetition of the incident, and have secured their agreement to provide the manpower to undertake restorative work, as to which more in a moment. Also, we understand that the dog owners concerned have been given “words of advice”.

Guildford Borough Council (GBC), however, has been very disappointing in its handling of this. “Apathy” is the kindest description of its attitude, apparently not even being concerned by the presence of a crater on a path in a public park which it owns. In as far as it has expressed any view, it appears simply to want to have the hole filled in – but by someone else

– whereas what Peter Eggleton, WSBG committee member and field officer with more than 20 years experience of repairing setts, believes is required is to stabilise the sett, unblock a blocked entrance, protect exposed tunnels with plastic piping and undertake a degree of back-filling. Jacqui has accordingly made an application for a licence (for which it took GBC five weeks to give its consent as landowner).

Happily, Natural England, who issues the licences, has been very cooperative in this process, and a site meeting has been scheduled for 21st March, which Jacqui and Peter will attend for WSBG. In the next newsletter Jacqui will update readers on progress.

PC Ryan Stephens, the WCO involved in the incident, is hoping that the *Surrey Advertiser* will print a follow-up story.

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)
 RSPCA 0300 1234 999
 Member of WSBG Committee

NEIGHBOURING BADGER GROUPS

East Surrey 0208 660 9827
 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

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WEST SURREY BADGER GROUP

EVENING MEETINGS

Tuesday April 23 Mark Worsfold

Mark is a very active conservationist who recently completed a sponsored climb of Mount Kilimanjaro. His chosen charity was Save the Rhino, a species in grave danger.

It's a fascinating tale.

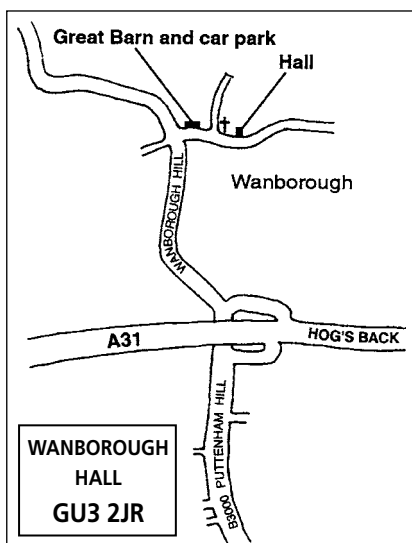
**Tuesday May 21 Annual General Meeting
starting at 7.30pm**

Our short AGM will be followed by refreshments, quizzes, discussions, a raffle and reports on some of our recent activities.

EVENT

Saturday/Sunday June 8/9 Surrey Wildlife Festival

WSBG has a stall at these two wildlife-centred Family Days. The venue is the Field Studies Centre at Juniper Hall, near Dorking. Please help if you can. (More details on page 7.)



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.



The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of West Surrey Badger Group.

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