

Come and Celebrate!



On Saturday 11th
July @11.30

We're celebrating the
restoration of
Spitalford Bridge
and the new bus shelter



Join us on the bridge for
tea and homemade cake
as we cut the ribbon!

Hassocks Amenity Association



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*maintaining an attractive rural
environment in keeping with changing times*

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2015

July is going to be an eventful month. Over Friday and Saturday, 10th/11th, the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group will be holding two consultation evenings on possible sites for housing development. When finally approved, the Neighbourhood Plan will become the template into which all developments, whether they be 'bricks and mortar' or services such as transport, or environmental factors such as footpaths, will be required to fit for up to the next twenty five years. Its importance cannot be over-estimated.

Three days later, on Monday July 13th, we will be holding our AGM. We will be concentrating on an equally important aspect of Hassocks life in the coming years. How can the voluntary sector, which so often in the past has been the well spring of innovation in our village, survive and flourish in the future? We hope that the business part of our meeting will be brief, so that we can talk this through together. Who knows - we may find we are preparing a Community Plan for the future?

On Saturday July 11th at 11.30 am there will be a chance to celebrate. The restoration scheme for the Spitalford Bridge area, which provides space for a bus shelter, is now complete. The coldest, draughtiest corner of Hassocks has been transformed into a sun-trap! So far the verdict is: it's just the ticket! Two representatives from Friends and Neighbours will cut the ribbon and 'open' the bus shelter.

Gordon Marples will be in charge of the jollities and will unveil a memorial plaque. The bridge was built in 1817, 'by subscription'. The new plaque will proudly announce that it has been restored in 2015 by 'The people of Hassocks'. See you there!

www.hassocksamenity.org.uk

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‘The green heart of Hassocks’

One of the attractive features of the bridge restoration project and the design of the bus shelter is that it opens up the view of the Herring stream. This is one of the unsung treasures of Hassocks. It is fed by the Lag stream which is classified as the most unspoilt chalk stream in the South, if not the whole country. HAA have joined forces with HKD Transition to keep the stream flowing clear and, with the United Reformed Church, to maintain the vegetation on the banks in environmentally friendly manner. We are being advised by the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the Ouse and Adur River Authority. This will be an on-going project which we hope will transform this corner of the village

Our Green Group is providing more instant solutions to cheering up Hassocks. Two large planters now grace Keymer Parade, thanks to Simon Weller for relocating them and to Amanda Kenhard for the planting. The basket provided by Mansell McTaggart at the entrance of Grand Avenue has been planted up for them and looks really promising. At long last, now the weather has turned warmer the large raised bed is being planted up for summer flowering. Many of the plants have been grown on at home by Georgia Cheshire and her new helper Anthony Steele. She has also planted a dramatic arrangement in the container outside the sorting office and has just finished work on the horse trough at Stonepound. The group have also taken over responsibility for a large bed at the station, alongside the cycle hire building. Georgia and Anthony are putting in bedding plants for the summer, but in the autumn plan to replace them by shrubs. Altogether, weather permitting, the result should be a much more attractive village thanks to all her careful planning. We are not surprised to hear that she has just passed the RHS Practical in Horticulture. Hearty congratulations, Georgia!

By the time you read this, an increasing number of lamp posts will be garlanded with hanging baskets. This is a very welcome Parish Council initiative, and we were glad to help out when they encountered problems finding a supplier. We put them in touch with the Camilla Botnar Foundation. It is good to think that as we admire the hanging baskets and the Aldingbourne Trust’s floral displays at the station, that both are also providing valuable work experience for disadvantaged young people. Surely there is no better way of spending public money?

Group thinks not. We accept that short term pain is the price for long term gain as Network Rail continues its modernisation programme and there are only three lines available to access London Bridge. However, we have a suspicion that not all staff who devise the complex tabling are aware that Hassocks is a busy station, with a footfall steadily increasing and nearing the level of Burgess Hill. It is not a little country halt, somewhere in the sticks, near Brighton. At the April Stakeholders Meeting there was ‘an open and honest conversation’ with the specialists who are responsible both for contingency planning during disruption, and for improving customer information. The voice of Hassocks was clearly heard. Nevertheless, it is still important for individuals to write or email the train operating company with full details of journey times and how ‘skipping’ or late arrival has affected their day.

Hassocks Community Cycle Hire

It was a lovely sunny April day, and a goodly crowd assembled to watch Paul Best, of Southern Rail, formally cut the ribbon and open the new purpose built premises of Hassocks Community Cycle Hire. Built on platform two of the railway station (the Brighton side), access is from Station Approach East. Mountain bikes for adults and children can be hired for the half day or full day. Prices start at £10, with reduced rates for under 16’s and students. A full day for a family (two adults and two children) costs a very reasonable £55.

It is such an original community scheme that *So Sussex* has included it in a study that it is carrying out for the South Downs National Park to see if it is possible to establish a co-operative venture to enable bikes hired at one point to be left at another. This is a very big challenge – but it has huge potential.

The centre is open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10 am to 5 p.m. and on demand. The manager, Paola, a cycling enthusiast, will be delighted to welcome you and can also deal with repairs.

To hire a bike email: visithassocksbikes@gmail.com or phone 07521 961909

The railway scene

HAA members who are on email will have been receiving regular updates regarding the problems being faced by rail travellers. We described the action we had taken in our Spring newsletter, and the undertakings that we had received that passengers would soon be seeing an improvement. So far, we have received no evidence of this from HAA rail users. *'It's so awful. Just completely taking over our lives, so you just feel like collapsing in floods of tears'* is a more typical response. Our hopes rose when Southern introduced a new time table on 17th May, designed to reduce congestion and reduce the risk of small delays having a knock-on effect. They were soon dashed. The 7th and 14th May were particularly dreadful days, whilst on the 20th a broken rail at Haywards Heath meant that there were no trains at all that morning between Haywards Heath and Brighton. Hassocks youngsters taking A level exams at Brighton and Haywards Heath had to find alternative transport at very short notice. An exam nightmare became a reality.

The new timetable is also giving early morning London Bridge service users a particularly hard time, and one which is almost guaranteed to make tempers reach boiling point. The 7.46 a.m. arrives at Hassocks full (it replaces the 7.42 which used to arrive with plenty of room), and at Haywards Heath links up with an eight car Littlehampton train with plenty of spare seats. So what is the problem? Surely Hassocks passengers could just walk along the carriages and find a seat? But they have all been promptly grabbed by Haywards Heath commuters – it is a very popular train. And, as one disgruntled Hassocks passenger pointed out, *'And our season ticket is even dearer than theirs'*! The early birds from Hassocks who travel an hour earlier suffer in the same way. We raised this with Southern who responded: *'We realise that seats are important for the longer commute so we are monitoring loadings very carefully'*. They will contact us again in July. In the meantime, Hassocks commuters continue to *'stand and wait'*.

We also continue to be plagued with *'station skipping'*: trains which are scheduled to stop at Hassocks run straight through so that they can arrive at their final destination within the period of grace which allows the service to be deemed *'on time'* and fines avoided. Is it really necessary to so often choose Hassocks for these time-saving alterations? The Rail

Working together

We are delighted that Georgia Cheshire has been co-opted to the Parish Council's Environment committee. Already the result of this close co-operation is being seen around the village, not least in their funding of some of the Green Group's planting. In addition, the bus shelter at Spitalford was funded by the Parish and County Councils, involving much anxious measuring by three agencies! Soon work will begin on upgrading an important footpath by the Parish Council.

In 2013, following concern expressed by Roy Ticehurst and other members, we began to investigate the possibility of repairing the footpath that runs east from the Parklands Copse and joins the field path leading to the community field. In many sections it is dangerous as the path has collapsed near the stream, whilst overhanging branches and fallen trees block the route. In April last year we formally requested the Parish Council to upgrade *'this popular but unsafe path'*. After some understandable initial hesitation, the response was positive. Approximately £12K has been allocated for tree clearance and the construction of an all-weather path. The Monday Group will be asked to construct bridges and a board walk. Work is expected to start soon, with completion, weather permitting, before the winter sets in.

Parklands Copse footpath repair was certainly a project far beyond HAA. But sometimes being bureaucracy free, small in size, yet rich in expertise has advantages. When Andy Petch, our County Councillor, heard that flood relief money was available through Operation Watershed, but that applications needed to be lodged before the end of the financial year, which was only weeks away, he decided to ask our help. After much hectic and time-consuming work by Fred Maillardet, our applications were successful: grants for the investigation of the cause of flooding in Parklands Road, including possible solutions to the problems experienced by riparian holders, and flooding and drainage issues in Lodge Lane and Dale Avenue. Your chairman is eagerly anticipating the day when cheques for over £11K will drop through her letterbox. It is interesting to note that one reason for our success appears to be the fact that we are a volunteer organisation and we ourselves had identified the problems. And we are very fortunate that Fred Maillardet leapt to the challenge.

‘To make an end is to make a beginning’

Annual General Meetings – the very words make most hearts sink. It is almost impossible to think of them as birthday celebrations. Our meeting on Monday July 13th in the United Reformed Church hall takes us to within three years of our half century. Looking back, there is a lot to celebrate, so from 7 to 7.30 we will be showing a rolling display of pictures of some of the things we have achieved in the past. You may even spot a younger version of yourself! In our audience we hope to have at least two of our original members: Patrick and Jean Cutler, whilst Tommy Gee, our first Hon. Sec. continues to monitor our activities from his home in Norfolk.

The first Newsletter in March 1969 described a very different area to the place we know. The Parish of Hassocks did not exist - it was known as Clayton and Keymer Parish and consisted of 1,439 homes. Today it is rising towards 4,000. The demography is changing. Hassocks community is getting younger. The Infants School has a yearly intake of 90 children and now is over-subscribed and some children may well have to travel to Ditchling or Bolney. People are working long hours, often commuting, and their families have first claim on any precious spare time. Grandparents, so often the back bone of all voluntary work, are now either called upon to help with childminding or are themselves looking after their elderly frail parents. HAA, like other community groups in the area, is finding it very difficult to recruit active volunteers and cannot see how it can sustain its present level of activity.

Based on the views expressed at our meeting in January last year, and subsequently at a meeting with the major community groups, here are some of the issues we feel we should now seriously consider at the AGM. If we cannot continue as in the past, what is the way forward? Residents still feel passionately about their village and its environment. Are there ways of channelling that enthusiasm which do not involve sitting on committees late into the evening after a long working day? One interesting suggestion is the creation of a register of people who are prepared to offer their skills, practical, professional or secretarial, for short-term projects and match them with the needs of all voluntary groups in the village. A sort of Hassocks dating agency, but kept in touch by regular emails! Other possibilities include working in partnership

with other groups in Hassocks or, more radically, would it be possible for our many community groups to pool their resources, work under one umbrella organisation yet retain their identity?

Thinking and talking about ‘making an end’ can be as difficult and as threatening as ‘making a beginning’. They are not easy topics. Nevertheless, we are confident that our members will rise to the challenge. Come and bring your friends! Inclusivity is the word!

Practical as ever, we will be offering you a glass of something delicious before you go home as a reward for your time and effort and - we hope - your offers of help and support at this time of transition.

Committee Vacancies

Every year we elect three members to serve for three years on our executive committee. Standing down this year are Peter Gibbons, Frances Guadencio, Amanda de Clemente, and Jonathan Soper who was elected last year to fill a one year vacancy. Peter and Jonathan are, we are glad to say, willing to stand for re-election. Amanda has resigned due to family commitments and Frances has moved on to be a leading member in the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and is now a Parish Councillor. We congratulate her and are delighted that she has joined Peter, so that we now have two such able HAA members on the Council.

There are therefore two vacancies – one three year term in place of Frances, and a two year one in place of Amanda. Nominations are welcome. We also have a vacancy for a secretary. Could you help us out at this time of transition? Computer literacy and minute taking skills are needed, but enthusiasm and commitment to Hassocks are even more essential. Please contact the chairman.

‘Absolutely fantastic service offered. Went out of their way on multiple occasions to help us. Cycles were great’.
Comment on Hassocks Community Cycle Hire. Trip Advisor.
April 2015.