THE REVIEW

EAST COULSDON RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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ECRA is Your Community Organisation run by Volunteers

EDITORIAL

by Pauline Payne

New Volunteers: There's a very positive message for ECRA members coming with this first Review of 2014. Our Winter Review included a leaflet appealing for new Road Stewards, Committee members and most importantly volunteers to take the Review forward in the coming years. We have been able to co-opt six new members to the committee, who will attend meetings until the AGM when they will be officially voted in – we hope they'll agree to stay on. Over the Christmas break, Committee Member, Neil Marshal set up an excellent ECRA Facebook page, see page 7 for more details. Facebook will make contact with ECRA more immediate and give residents an additional line of communication.

The Treasurer and I will be away in May visiting family and new granddaughter in Washington DC, so Alison Sleight and Eric Jenkinson, two of our new volunteers, have offered to finalize the production of the Summer edition of the Review and oversee its distribution. Alison is a young mum and Eric is recently retired and both have a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to contribute. Please give them all the support you can, either by sending in articles or volunteering to fill the last few Road Steward vacancies (see page 15).

Thank you to all who have come forward and to Neil for creating our new ECRA Facebook and for keeping it up to date. It is good news that we have so many residents willing to give time to help meet the challenges that lie ahead for Coulsdon and ECRA.

Local flooding: Our experience had been nothing like as bad as for the residents of the Somerset Levels or for towns and villages along the River Thames, for whom we all have a great deal of sympathy. However, both the Coulsdon and Caterham Bournes have overflowed and caused problems of their own. It seemed somewhat surreal to see sandbags, fire engines and fire crews outside the Purley Oaks Re-cycling Centre, as one passed by in mid February, dealing with the excesses of water from the Caterham Bourne thus relieving some of the flooding along the A22. The subway at Purley Cross has also been used as a 'container' for excess flood water. Closer to home, many of us who have lived in Coulsdon for four or more decades cannot recall ever seeing the Coulsdon Bourne so high, flowing so fast or hearing of it flooding into Reddown Road gardens. It may be some months before the water subsides and the A22 is open again for traffic. Thankfully the Council acted quickly, along with local emergency services, to help alleviate the situation.

Help Centre needs our support: The South East Cancer Help Centre is holding its annual ***Easter Fair*** on ***Saturday 5th April, 11am to 1pm***. There will be a cake stall, bric-a-brac, raffle, tombola, homemade crafts, refreshments and lots of other goodies. The Centre is situated at the back of the Tesco store in Purley, on the right hand side as you enter the site. Why not drop in, your support will be greatly appreciated.

Front cover: 'Bullfinch in Apple Tree' by artist Bill Titcombe: Seeing Bullfinches in the apple trees in our gardens heralds the spring – so here's one of them on the front page of our Review to remind us that spring is on its way. This is the fifth in our series of 'in a circle' front covers. Do you have a suitable subject for our summer edition?

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN AND AROUND COULSDON

by Charles King

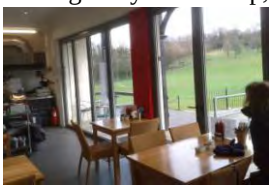
***Cane Hill and Lion Green planning applications*:** In December representatives from the four Coulsdon Residents' Associations and Coulsdon Businesses met with Cllr Mike Fisher leader of Croydon Council and GLA member Steve O'Connell to express our concerns over these applications. We reiterated that we wanted the Cane Hill development to have an exit directly onto the A23 Coulsdon Bypass to prevent Lion Green Road and Marlpit Lane roundabout becoming congested. We also strongly made the point that the proposed Lion Green Road supermarket needs more than 150 car parking spaces if it is to serve both the supermarket and the town centre. They agreed that the planning applications would be delayed until March 2014 while further considering these two issues.

Aldi Supermarket planning application went to the council on Thursday 6th February and was passed. Work is due to start in the spring and the store hopes to be open by Easter 2015.

Other Town Centre projects*: *Kia is near completion of its car showroom on the bypass north of Pipers Road. ***Dobles Motor Cycles*:** the steelwork is now complete on their new workshop behind their Brighton Road showroom. ***The Oakwood Group*** residential flats on the former Pinewood site have now reached 6th floor level. ***Cycling Made Easy*** (020 8660 8823 **www.cyclingmadeeasy.co.uk**) is moving from Chipstead Valley Road to larger premises near the pet shop in the Brighton Road. Visions is now the ***Therapy and Life Centre*** (07904 386793 **www.therapyandlifecentre.co.uk**). ***Liberty Cars*** has changed its name to ***Coulsdon Cars*** (0208 660 6666 **www.coulsdoncars.com**). Two interesting new restaurants have opened: ***Mirch Masala*** (020 8763 8787 **mirchmasala-coulsdon.co.uk**), offering curry dishes at low prices, has taken over the closed Goz restaurant – *no alcohol served; you may bring your own – no corkage charge*. At the other end of town ***Steak Stone*** (020 8668 5555 **steakstonehouse.co.uk**) has opened: *"Our special stone is heated to over 300 degrees allowing you to cook your food exactly as you like"*. Pistols wine bar was sold just before Christmas and closed early January for complete refurbishment and will reopen as the ***Mango Bar*** (020 8617 3853)**.**

***Town Centre*:** After representation by ECRA, Croydon Council have replaced the broken paving stones outside Jane's building with smaller harder blocks which should not crack under the weight of delivery vehicles. We are still trying to get the many other loose paving stones and trip hazards repaired.

Around Coulsdon*: *Rickman Hill Recreation Ground*:** The pavilion has not been used for six years. A local resident has obtained the lease from Croydon Council and has plans to turn it into the ***Cedars Play Café, a café with children's indoor play facilities. A lot of work needs to be undertaken on the building – if you can help, contact 07949 412264 or **queries@cedarsplaycafe.co.uk**. In Marlpit Lane Memorial Park, the ***Poppy Café*** now has wifi (**www.poppycafe.co.uk**) and the ***Bowling Green*** should reopen in April (**www.marlpitlanebowlinggreen.co.uk**). ***Old Coulsdon Tudor Parade*: *Corals*** have planning permission to open a betting shop in the ex Oddbins unit.



THE COULSDON BOURNE FLOWS AGAIN

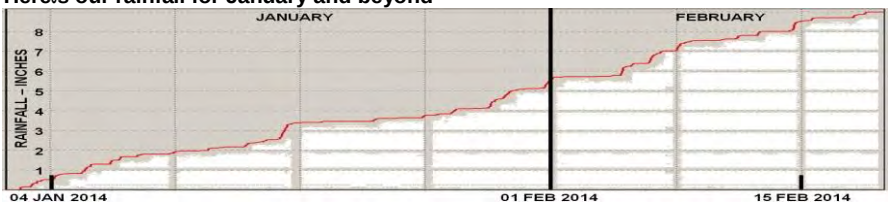
The Bourne February 2014 Coulsdon South Station

With last year being the wettest year on record in England and January 2014 the wettest January since the 18th century, the Bourne behind Coulsdon South station started to flow between the 23rd December and 26th December 2013. It then began again at a very fast rate on 30th January and flooding the spare ground and then overflowing into the neighbouring gardens in Reddown Road. This was reported to both Croydon Council and Network Rail and by the middle of the next week they had managed to clear the covered culvert and restore full flow. This is the fastest and highest volume of water seen in the Bourne in living memory.

The Bourne is an occasional stream that surfaces from chalk aquifers on the North Downs during or after rainy seasons. It has two arms the Caterham Bourne being the larger and stronger arm and the smaller Coulsdon arm. Most of the Bourne which flows under the centre of Coulsdon is underground, the culvert meets the Caterham Bourne underneath Purley Tesco and then continues in underground culverts until it reaches the River Wandle at its source by the Swan and Sugarloaf.

One of your editor's Christmas presents was a weather station. It transmits automatically from the garden to a receiver and display in the house. It's a great new game to play each morning paging back over the last day. We changed the date from the American mmddyy to ddmmyy, plumped for temperature in Celsius and left the pressure in hectopascals once we'd decided what that meant. However, we set the rainfall to inches and the wind speed to miles per hour. Downloading to the computer enables us to view the Bradmore Way history of rainfall, temperature, wind and gust speeds, air pressure and humidity.

Hereôs our rainfall for January and beyond



FIND US ON FACEBOOK

by Neil Marshall

The ECRA Facebook page is now up and running. If you're on Facebook, please "like" the page so we can get some traffic to and from and start to make it a bit more useful and interesting. You'll see I've added some basic info, but feel free to add more. Anyone can view the page, you don't need to be signed up, but you will need to sign up if you want to add anything. **www.facebook.com/EastCoulsdonResidentsAssociation**

WWI MEMORIAL, COULSDON MEMORIAL GROUND

by Pauline Payne

The 4th August 2014 marks the centenary of the start of WWI and there will be national events to commemorate this up and down the country. Our local War Memorial was erected on land originally owned by Edmund Byron, as part of his Coulsdon Estate. The Memorial Ground site was purchased in 1920 from Edmund Byron by Coulsdon and Purley Urban District Council, partly paid for by public subscription. The Byron family were Coulsdon's squires and Thomas Byron, the first squire, bought the estate in 1782 for a mere £14,000. The family lived at Coulsdon Manor until 1922 when the estate was finally sold in accordance with the wishes set out in Edmund Byron's will. The Coulsdon Memorial Ground was opened in 1921, the memorial being inscribed: ***To the memory of the men of Coulsdon who fell in the Great War 1914-1919.*** A bronze plaque has since been added bearing the words ***and in the memory of those who fell in the World War 1939-1945***.

The Memorial is kept in good repair by members of the Coulsdon British Legion working with Croydon Council who have repaired the ceiling and regularly tend the greenery. Recent refurbishments to the Ground include up-dating the children's play ground, the addition of a children's 'assault' course and adults open air exercise equipment. In November the Grounds café was successfully reopened, now fittingly named ***The Poppy***.

If you would like more information on Coulsdon during WWI and the Byron family this can be found in The Bourne Society's series of ***Village Histories***, Edition ***No 5: Coulsdon*** which was edited by our local historian and ECRA resident, Ian Scales. If you have any stories on the Great War passed down to you by your forbears we will be pleased to publish them.

NEWS FROM FARTHING DOWNS

by Pauline Payne

Changes afoot: Before Christmas we heard that Bob Warnock, the Superintendent for the City Commons, based at Ashtead, will be on secondment to Hampstead Heath for fourteen months. Bob hopes to be able to keep in touch with Farthing Downs while he is away and we wish him every success in his new role. Meanwhile, we welcome Andy Barnard, Superintendent of Burnham Beeches, who will take on responsibility for the Coulsdon Commons, with Allan Cameron as Head Ranger. Neil Sibley, who has been a Ranger on Farthing Downs for some years now and the main contact for Friends of Farthing Downs and other volunteer groups, has been relocated to Ashtead. Our very best wishes go with him. Neil will continue to live locally and we will still see him around. There are other changes – to be revealed in April.

Storm Damage and Heavy Rain: A total of six trees had to be removed following

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the winter storms. The large conifer which fell across Ditches Lane was cleared by Rangers over Christmas and five other windblown trees have been cleared from New Hill during February. While we regret the loss of trees there are advantages to the natural environment. Rotting wood becomes a home to insects and fungi which in turn create a larder for birds and animals. The space left by a fallen trees is soon filled, as saplings and wild flowers begin to flourish in new meadows. The heavy rainfall has halted general work on the Downs at the moment as the ground is still too saturated.

New Hill Billies: The Hill Billie numbers have been growing recently and work days on the third Sunday of the month are well supported. More help is always welcome and if you would like to join the Hill Billies contact the City on **01372 279083.**

WATCH YOUR PASSWORD!

by Ian Payne

How many IDs (identities) and passwords do you have to access your various banking, utilities, social media etc. sites? Some people like to give themselves an alter ego as an ID, but many of us use our email or surname plus initials. The ID is usually not secret, so your security is dependent on a password. Most likely you have one password that you use for all your applications – it's easy to remember, and I bet you don't change it every month. If your password is stolen from one system, then it's available to the thief for all your others. Certainly, you shouldn't have your IDs and passwords written down in your wallet, so what can we do about it?

Having a large number of different passwords is difficult to manage, except perhaps your bank should be special. So the next best thing is to change your passwords frequently. Here's an idea for you to choose a password that's not easily guessed yet can be easily remembered despite being changed monthly. Choose a word, e.g. associated with a hobby or a pet's name – let's say sebastian. Now switch two of the letters, say nebastias and put '1' in front for January, '2' for February . . . '12' for December. So we have 1nebastias, 2nebastias, . . . , 12nebastias. In year two, move the digits up to get n1ebastias, n2ebastias, . . . , n12ebastias and so on to year ten to give nebastias1, nebastias2, . . . , nebastias12. So there you have it – 120 passwords over ten years and all easily remembered. I'm sure you can think of lots of variants on this idea that are even more secure.

And if you do want to have different IDs and passwords for your different applications, here's a suggestion for recording them. When you add your frequent websites to your 'favorites' (deliberately American spelling), try renaming them. Identify your favorite, 'right click' and choose 'Rename'. This is an opportunity to call your favorite whatever you wish and append your ID and password to the name. Of course, not the full ID and password, but short forms that are your cue to the actual values. Now when you pull down a favorite, you've got all the information you need. While you've got the 'right click' open, you can also click on 'Sort by name' – all your favorites are now in alphabetic order.

HEATLH REPORT

by Reg Baker, Coulsdon Forum, Health Correspondent

Refurbished Purley War Memorial Hospital – An Unforeseen Outcome

This long awaited and sorely needed Health Centre has been fully operational since the Autumn of 2013, with a formal opening on 7th November 2013, amidst high acclaim attributed to the extent of the high quality of cutting edge technology this Centre would provide to many patients in the south of the Borough. With improved access to a wide range of health services it would relieve the load on A&E Centres at main Borough hospitals, and other health facilities.

As part of the refurbishment project an Urgent Care Centre (UCC} has been provided within the hospital complex, to deal with a range of minor injuries and ailments that require attention but are not life threatening. *(If in doubt phone the NHS 111 service.)* In the final Business Plan produced for this project to meet planning and other consent approvals required, the estimated number of attendances to the UCC was predicted to be 12,000 p.a. or 33 on a daily basis. In the event, since opening, hospital records indicate a daily attendance, again on average, of just 20 each day or about two thirds of the anticipated value. The writer is not aware of any corresponding figures for out-patients or diagnostics.

A number of reasons have been floated for this reduction in anticipated visits to the UCC, ranging from early optimism to lack of publicity. In hindsight, considering the significance of this project to health facilities in the south of the Borough, a leaflet delivered to most households in this area would not have gone amiss. Even at this stage, the Trust could facilitate this as part of any remedial action. Also, the UCC has barely been fully operational for just six months, and some may consider corrective action at this stage to be premature. One other factor may be the current on-going campaign to divert minor ailments away from hospitals, especially A&E, towards self-care, pharmacies or GP surgeries as appropriate, where they may well be adequately attended to more quickly.

However, to meet this imbalance of resources against demand *(especially in the light of the parlous financial state of most NHS Trusts in England – no health agency should tolerate under-utilised resources),* the Trust is proposing a reduction (UCC only) in both the range of minor injuries to be treated *(e.g. cuts, minor burns, stings and so forth)* and of opening hours. These changes are planned to come into force next April, the UCC then to be open from 2pm to 10pm daily, 365 days a year *(previously 8am to 8pm 365days a year).* Potential visitors are advised to contact the UCC to establish the situation, before embarking upon a journey (020 8401 3238).

Again, the reduction in opening hours, to match the fall in demand, is about one third. Whether this is the best remedy to address the imbalance, may well become a matter for debate. However, it remains to be seen what the figures for attendance at the UCC will be in the future, and it is to be hoped that the Trust will keep this matter under constant review, and is prepared to draft in resources as required to adequately meet any increase in attendance coupled with provision of extended cover.

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HEALTH REPORT ***continued from page 10***

Health Related Meetings at Purley War Memorial Hospital (PWMH)

In response to a questionnaire (August 2013) requesting the views of Trust members regarding membership facilities, further thought has been given to the timing and location of health meetings. In particular, people told the Trust that they were more likely to attend meetings if they were held at both Croydon University Hospital (CUH) and PWMH. In addition, for some members, evening meetings were not favoured – especially during winter months.

To address this feedback, the Trust is proposing to vary the start times of events and meetings, running some during the day, and holding some at different locations around the Borough. To start the new regime the following two meetings have been announced:-

Tuesday 25th February at 2.30pm PWMH
Living up to our promises – How we are Improving Quality

Tuesday 25th March at 2.30pm PWMH
Healthy Living in Later Life

All residents in the Borough are eligible to attend. Please register your interest by phoning 020 8401 3209 or email **ft@croydonhealth.nhs.uk**

Purley War Memorial Hospital – Re-dedication of the War Memorial

The Trust marked Armistice Day (2013) with a re-dedication of the War Memorial at the newly refurbished hospital. The re-dedication ceremony was led by Head Chaplain Hilary Fife with Chairman Mike Bell, representatives from local faith groups, and hospital staff in attendance. The traditional two-minute silence was observed, the last post being played by a bugler from the Salvation Army.

Memorial Garden

The Memorial is located, so the writer has been informed, within the hospital garden in the form of a small plaque. This area has no direct access for members of the public, but visitors requiring access for viewing or remembrance purposes should seek assistance from hospital staff.

Memorial Plaque

ECRA REVIEW – VOLUNTEERS ALWAYS WELCOME

We had an impressive response to our appeal in the winter issue with several residents coming forward to fill vacancies. However, we are still short of a few Road Stewards to distribute The Review quarterly and to collect the annual subscription. If you would like to help out, please contact the Treasurer, Ian Payne on 01737 554449 or email iangpayne@btinternet.com

LOOKING BACK . . . . . .

by Pauline Payne

. . . to September 2007, we were blissfully unaware of the economic crash waiting to emerge the following September. We were concerned about the Town Centre which was earmarked for regeneration (completed in November 2011). In an article entitled 'The Future of Suburban Coulsdon' based on a GLA study ***Semi-Detached: Reconnecting London's Suburbs,*** we set out in 'The Review' how the Town Centre should be developed to bring increased footfall and boost the local economy. The study had concluded that the key to regeneration was 'getting people into town centres'.

We believed our Town Centre needed: a new supermarket – this gets a tick as a new Waitrose is proposed although not in our preferred location; more low cost housing on brown field sites – another tick as Hadleigh development in Reddown Road, Pinewoods and the mixed development proposed for Cane Hill provide for this; new employment opportunities and the development of Coulsdon North trading estate – three new car show rooms have been built on the Coulsdon North site, and a Waitrose distribution centre is proposed for the Ullswater Estate which alone will bring 400 new jobs to the area.

We believed and still believe that leisure facilities and an improved public library are needed to serve Coulsdon's growing community. Here things begin to look hazy. It's not clear if the Cane Hill development will include leisure facilities and one of our local libraries was only spared closure by 'the skin of its teeth' during a round of Council spending cuts three years ago. We did manage to get a local pub, which Coulsdon lost when the Red Lion closed, but public art in the town centre, reflecting Coulsdon's history and rare wildlife is still a long way off.

TOWN CENTRE AND HOME SECURITY

***Town Centre Security*:** Following pressure from Coulsdon West Resident's Association and ECRA Secretary, Maureen Levy a meeting was arranged with Councillors, Council Officers and the Police to discuss how Town Centre security could be improved. All agreed that a third northern camera is needed and that funds for this could come from a 106 agreement reached with Town Centre developers. We can report that both existing Town Centre security cameras are working again.

***Home Security*:** Operation Bumblebee is targeting burglars in London, here are the Met Police's top ten security tips:

Close and lock all your doors and windows, even if you are only going out for a few minutes. ***Keep*** your valuables out of sight. ***Fit*** a mortice lock to your front door and other external doors. ***Consider installing a burglar alarm***. ***Leave*** some lights on if it will be dark before you get home. ***Do not*** leave your car keys or ID documents near a door, letterbox or window. ***Always check*** who's at the door and don't open it if you feel anxious. ***Always keep*** shed and outbuildings locked. ***Mark or etch*** your property with your postcode, house or flat number or the first three letters of your house name. ***Register items*** with a serial number at **www.immobilise.com**. ***Cancel*** milk or other deliveries if you will be away for days or weeks at a time. If you are unlucky enough to be burgled call ***101*** or ***in an emergency call 999***. For more help and advice visit: **www.metbumblebee.org**

FROM COULSDON TO KIGOMA

by David Ackland, ECRA Resident

David helping with the pump

"Not THE David Ackland?" I am sitting in Tabora, in central Tanzania, once a point of convergence for trade routes in East Africa, with tens of thousands of porters passing through on foot, en route back to the coast and Zanzibar, or on the way to trade in what are now Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Congo and Zambia. It was largely an Arab town, which welcomed 'explorers' such as Livingstone, Burton and Stanley.

But I am sitting around a table, with five Tanzanians, discussing a project which the Tanzania League for the Blind has proposed to the Tanzania Development Trust (TDT) for support. Forty years ago I left University and went to Tanzania with Voluntary Service Overseas, and taught there for 10 years. Amazingly – and unexpectedly – two of the five Tanzanians turn out to be students from one of the schools at which I taught.

Tanzania has moved on. Very few telephones when I was there, as putting the infrastructure in place was prohibitively expensive, but now Tanzania has skipped the landline era: mobile phones are ubiquitous and act as agents for development. Across East Africa, people away working in the cities can transmit money using their phones back to their relatives in the countryside, enabling them to improve their lives. (Barclays are marketing 'Pingit' in the UK as a new idea, but m-Pesa is already part of everyday life for Tanzanians.) And now there are many more tarmac roads. When I lived in Tanzania for the first time, there was primary education for all – but a shortage of classrooms, books, desks and teachers. Now, there is the same problem, but for secondary schools. Secondary education is not available for all, but now, at least, there is a secondary school in every area.

But I am looking with the eyes of someone who was in Tanzania long ago. Those with me see abject poverty. I see improvement, and that gives me hope for the future even though there is much more to do. And that's where TDT comes in – it tries to support small projects which would be too small for a multinational charity. Examples include training young people to sew, so they can earn a living making clothes; enabling a small charity to buy cows and chickens to earn an income to support orphans and indigent old people (and to help feed them); buying books and desks for secondary schools; solar power for dispensaries so that medical aid can be given at night.

I visited a bee-keeping project in the countryside outside Tabora set up by a group of village women. Already, they have 90 hives in trees in the bush, and should now be producing their first honey for sale. And a well at Matongo means that villagers no longer have to clamber down a river bank for water, but have a safe, clean supply – even though many will still have to walk many miles each day to the well. And, as you can see, it still has to be pumped up!

Kigoma was where Stanley found Livingstone, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika – and where Kibirizi Tailoring is training impoverished young women to become seamstresses. It may be raining in Coulsdon, but we have a lot to be thankful for.

Donations to TDT (**www.tanzdevtrust.org**) can be made at **www.justgiving.com/tdt**

YOUR LOCAL SIXTH FORM COLLEGE: GOOD NEWS FOR COULSDON!

by Brett Freeman, Principal, Coulsdon Sixth Form College

I want all local residents to be proud to associate themselves with their local college; having joined as Principal in January I know that there are lots of reasons for pride right now and that there will be even more reasons to celebrate our successes in the future.

I believe passionately that the job of an educational institution is to create life-choices for its students. Lots of high grade examination passes are the best way to create those choices; accordingly our drive here will be to ensure the highest quality of learning in all classes. But education is more than just training to pass examinations. At Coulsdon Sixth Form College we will continue to offer a full range of sporting and cultural activities and endeavour to engender in our students a sense of academic, ethical and social leadership, giving them a set of skills and values that will make them outstanding young people committed to their own success and of those around them.

Having worked in both schools and colleges I see that what sets sixth form colleges apart is the clear focus on 16-19 education. Everything we do is designed for our post-school students – the lessons, the sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities, the teacher training, the ICT software, the study facilities and the ethos of teamwork and respect one would expect in an institution working with young adults. As well as that, a college like ours is small enough to offer classes of between 10 and 18 students so there is lots of 1-1 support – both in and outside of the classroom and a real sense of community engendered by the fact we are all engaged in a very similar mission: student success.

The vast majority of our students are studying advanced level subjects and many of them go on to university having had excellent advice and support from full time careers staff here at the College. We are aware however that an increasing number of our students may be looking at higher level apprenticeships, so a big drive is **to work with the local and wider community** to gain appropriate work experience, and to arrange talks and visits to build their CVs in order to gain the best possible jobs along with the best training courses.

In order to be successful we have to work in partnerships: teachers with students, the College with families and with our partner college Reigate and with the local community. Partnerships involve not only students with their teachers but also with personal tutors and mentors outside of class. Parents are kept closely informed through attendance and progress monitoring; the staff work within an association of Surrey 6th Form Colleges to ensure best practice is shared. The local community already use many of our sporting and other facilitates in the evenings and during my time here I hope to build many on-going contacts to fix the place of the College firmly in the minds of the surrounding community as being their College too.

I hope that many of you will want to play a part in making the College something you are proud to be associated with and I look forward to hearing from you so we can work on that together.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT REPORT

by Charles King

***Trains*:** No changes in local train service until May 2014 when the first of the rebuilt London Bridge platforms come back into use. The service has been badly disrupted over the last couple of months of bad weather. In particular the railway between Coulsdon and Earlswood which is in deep cuttings has suffered flooding and earth slips. The first photo shows the track just south of Redhill at the time the embankment collapsed and the second, the mud and water on the tracks near Hooley. We would like to offer our thanks to the staff of Network Rail who have had to work in appalling conditions to maintain a service for us.

***Poor Performance*:** Despite the weather, we have been concerned over the poor performance since November. East Surrey Transport Committee have expressed their concerns to Southern and Network Rail. New signage and digital displays have been installed at various locations including Coulsdon South. East Surrey Transport Committee met with Southern and have manged to pursuade Southern to intoduce cheaper Saturday car park charge at Coulsdon South. From mid January the charges are £6.00 Monday to Friday; £3.00 after 4.00pm; £2.00 Saturday, £1.00 Sunday.

Buses*:** Despite many groups and people objecting, the ***Mayor has decided that London Buses will go cashless from mid 2014. There are no changes to bus routes in our area. East Surrey Transport Committee, however, has been very concerned about the poor performance of ***route 463*** over the last few months and complained to both Epsom Buses and TfL.

***Freedom Pass Validation*:** With over a million Freedom Pass holders in London it is important that 'London Councils' (representing the London Boroughs) keep a track of them. A lot of people move out of London and do not return them, also when people die relatives do not return the pass. This is why 'London Councils' write to pass holders asking them to update their details. If you receive one of these letters and do not reply, your pass will be withdrawn. It will then show up as invalid when you try to use it and you will have to pay the fare. For more information **www.freedompass.org**

Mobility Scooters and Electric Wheelchairs*:** London Buses now allow smaller mobility scooters and electric wheelchairs on the buses as well as trams. However, before you can use the bus you need to contact TfL who will be able to assess if your wheelchair or scooter is suitable and they will issue you a ***Mobility Aid Recognition Card for you to show the driver. They can also offer you other advice on using public transport in London (**www.tfl.gov.uk/mentoring** 0203 3054 4361).

Steam Trains*: *Orient Express (Loco Clan Line Merchant Navy Class) Victoria to Guildford return to Victoria via Redhill; Saturday 8th February, Saturday 1st & Saturday 22nd March, Friday 4th & Friday 18th April, Saturday 3rd May, Friday 6th & Saturday 28th June 2014; Coulsdon South approximately 15.15 pm.
Note: *Train times/routes can be altered/cancelled at short notice even on the day and may run up to 15 mins early/late. Check these and other steam trains at* **www.uksteam.info/tours/trs14.htm**

What's on ?

Friends of Farthing Downs: Wednesday, 26th March – Illustrated Talk: What's happening to our Birds: The Retirement Centre, Old Coulsdon, 7.30 for 7.45 p.m.: Talk by John Birkett of Croydon RSPB: Following several bad winters, how is our bird population coping – you may be surprised by what John has to report. Contact 01737 554449 or email **fofd2@btinternet.com** for more information and to book.

ECRA & Friends of Farthing Downs: Saturday, 12th April – Joint Quiz Night: Cameron Hall, Congregational Church, Cannons Hill: 7.00 for 7.30 p.m. Social and fundraising evening. Quiz Master Malcolm Newman: Tickets: £9.50 each for teams of up to 8 includes, fish, chicken or vegetarian supper, soft drinks, tea and coffee. Contact: 01737 554449 or email: **ecra2@btinternet.com** to book.

The Bluegrass Plus Club: Easter Blue Grass Day: Saturday 19th April, 12 noon – 11.00 p.m. Concert begins 8.00 p.m. Resident Band 'Alive & Picking' with guest band 'Grass Snacks'. Final Coulsdon event at The Mount, Coulsdon; Bus 463; Tickets £15 for the day: contact Shelia on 07956 266534 or visit **www.bluegrass-plusclub.co.uk**

Chipstead Youth Theatre: 'The Amazing Maurice & his Educated Rodents' Wednesday, 9th – Sunday 13th April: Comedy by Terry Pratchett. A band of roving rats are the heroes under the streetwise command of Maurice the talking cat as they pull their Pied Piper scam for one last time. It's a rat-eat-rat world. Contact: Box Office on 01737 555680 or go to **boxoffice@chipsteadplayers.org**

City of London: Farthing Downs Health Walks: Silver Route – Friday, 28th March, 10.00 a.m. Meet at Farthing Downs car park to join this fortnightly friendly walking group for a 1–1½ hour walk, with gradual incline and decline, across the downs. Take in local wildlife while enjoying the views. Contact Maria Traynor on 01372 279083 or email: **maria.traynor@cityoflondon.gov.uk**

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Sunday 6 April 2014, 7.00 pm, The Anvil, Basingstoke
Booking: **www.anvilarts.org.uk/whats-on**

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