

# The Friends of the Forster Country

# Newsletter

Issue No 42. April 2016

## Stevenage Borough Council housing plans

Since the December 2015 edition of our Newsletter there has been much activity by our Committee and by many Friends of the Forster Country members.

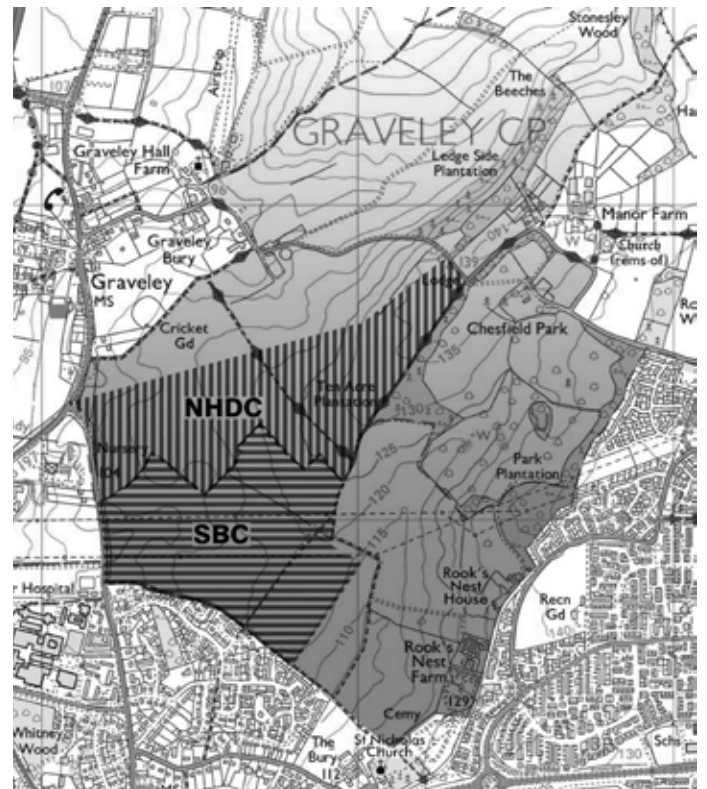
A small group of us met with Cllr John Gardner, Deputy Council Leader and Leader for Housing, Zayd Al-Jawad, Head of Planning and Engineering, Richard Javes, Planning and Transport Policy Manager and Deborah Horner, Senior Planning Policy Officer, all of Stevenage Borough Council.

We have also held meetings with our MP Stephen McPartland and with North Hertfordshire County Council. A meeting with Peter Lilley, MP for Hitchin and Harpenden, is to take place on 18th March.

As you will all know, the two councils in question are planning to build 1,800 dwellings on Forster Country and the purpose of these meetings was to increase our understanding of these plans and to improve our approach to responses to them.

The FoFC Committee drew up and sent in 38 individual representation forms each covering a different aspect of the Plan. In particular the attack on our Green Belt was criticised and the basis of the overall housing numbers was challenged. Our understanding is that all of these representations will be available in the public domain via the SBC website in due course.

We would like to thank all those, whether FoFC members or not, who put in objections to the Plan. We intend to consult further with local residents and to prepare additional documents with a view to presenting these to the Government Inspector later in the year.



For those who have not yet seen it, this is the sketch map showing the housing proposals.

*John Spiers*

## AGM

By kind permission of Anne Newman, the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Forster Country will take place in the grounds of Rooks Nest House on Saturday, June 25th, starting at 2.30 pm. Tea and cake will be served after the business is concluded.

We do hope to see many of you there. Some seating will be available but do bring your own if you prefer. Parking is available nearby in Weston Road Cemetery, SG1 3RP.

## Membership renewal

Annual subscriptions to the Friends of the Forster Country are now due. We enclose a form for your completion.

If we are to achieve our aim -

**To preserve for all time the open green space in the north of Stevenage known as the Forster Country**

- we need you all to continue supporting us and trying to recruit new members to our cause.

Subscriptions for 2016-2017 remain at £7 per individual and £10 per family.

# Elizabeth Poston's music archive

The original drafts and recordings of Elizabeth's music, once performed or published, found their way into her attic at Rooks Nest House, together with programmes, newspaper cuttings, correspondence and photos. This was because they were finished and also she was wary of dealing with publishers, having had occasion in the past to fight them hard in order to receive fair play.

Towards the end of her life she met Malcolm Williamson and his partner & publisher, Simon Campion, and decided that he should be her literary executor and copyright holder, expressing in her will the hope that he would give all manuscripts of her musical and literary works to a suitable trust for safe-keeping.

In 2013, some 100 box files of written material, mainly correspondence, were duly catalogued and deposited at The Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) at County Hall, Hertford and now, all the available music (nearly 300 items) has been checked and recently deposited at the Music Department of the British Library. So Elizabeth's dying wish for

the safe-keeping of her archive has been largely fulfilled.

After her death, the huge task of sorting out the music had been undertaken by Simon and one of Elizabeth's close friends, Suzanne Rose. Together, they listed, detailed and categorised all items of music, placing each in a numbered envelope. The majority of items are extant, despite Simon's disruptive moves to storage at Standon and then Royston.

In checking the material before dispatch, several new items have been discovered – correspondence, music and photographs, especially about her early years. One, a letter in neat copperplate by Elizabeth to her mother from her birthplace, Highfield, when she was just 7½ years old tells "Mummie" about the Easter eggs and other sweets that she



Elizabeth Poston as a young woman

and her baby brother consumed.

Another item was a composition for voice and piano *Shall I wasting in Despair*, written when she was only 13; in it she used the first and last verses of a poem by George Wither but with slight changes of her own – something she was to do later in some of her translations of Italian songs. Other new finds were books of

dance tunes and nursery rhymes bought when she was just 16 or 17 and, another, the earliest letter written to Elizabeth by the Canadian composer, Jean Couthard soon after their meeting in Canada in 1954 which marked the beginning of a lifelong friendship.

Pending full cataloguing, the British Library deposit number of this material and accompanying recordings of her work is 2015/51.

John Alabaster

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## Birthday Walk

Photo Margaet Ashby



We were delighted to see many 'new' faces on the annual New Year's Day Walk celebrating E M Forster's birthday. Indeed, a goodly crowd of nearly fifty persons, young and old, gathered at the lych-gate, though not so many completed the walk which was predictably muddy - even treacherous - in parts after so much rain had fallen in December. However, luckily no rain fell during the walk, the air was mild and people were glad to mingle in the Parish Room after their exertions.

We should give a special mention to Richard Parkinson and friend who now make the walk an annual pilgrimage from London.

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### Patrons of the Friends of the Forster Country

Margaret Ashby. Nicola Beauman. Barbara Follett. Sir Andrew Motion. John Pilgrim. Richard Whitmore

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