

Farnham by Monica Jones

Farnham is my home town, so I'm bound to be somewhat biased. But it's not just nostalgic memories of the smell of hops in September, the open air swimming pool (why didn't we notice the cold?) and the Saturday night "hops" in the Memorial Hall, with the girls lined up on one side of the room and the boys on the other.

And then there are those hop kilns; if people dare look up from the pavement, they will notice them in Farnham's characterful little yards and alleys, and now it's possible to wander through and look at the shops that have been opened there

I was born on a hop farm just outside the town, but for the past 37 years I have lived in the centre, cheek by jowl with Farnham Park whose changelessness is one of its chief glories. I love the (still) country feel of Farnham, with Coxbridge farm on its doorstep and incomparable countryside within ten minutes' drive of the town centre. The buildings are still glorious and I get a thrill every time I walk across the bottom of Castle Street just before Christmas and see the floodlit Castle afloat at the top, with the floodlit church tower an equally miraculous surprise.

I am thankful that in Farnham we have had generations of Farnham People who have fought to keep the town as it is. It is said that 99 out of every 100 of the town's citizens are self-styled road engineers - but I owe a huge debt of gratitude to all those who have formed themselves into pressure groups and amenity and residents' associations to look after my interests - and to give their time to form as many caring groups to look after the townspeople as well as its places. Farnham people are, thank goodness, a lively, argumentative and caring lot.

There are things, of course, that I'd like to change. There's a lot of traffic - but I can remember when there was an unmoving queue of cars right through the town before the one-way system. There's not much night life (though there's an outlet for almost every other interest in Farnham) and perhaps we should gear ourselves more to the interests of the young. But we didn't have the super Museum of Farnham when I was young, nor Farnham in Bloom nor other things in which the town has recently excelled. And I can still walk into town and meet half a dozen friends to stop and chat with.