

# A strong sense of betrayal

## How the borough council gave away our 'town jewels'

WHEN the late Bill Ewbank Smith wrote *Farnham in War and Peace*, in 1983, he could never have imagined just how relevant his text would be to Farnham residents 23 years later under the heading: "Given to the public in 1920s... Given away to developers in 2004."

Mr. Ewbank Smith's Brightwell's, please meticulous recording contact us on 01252 of items from the 716252 or 01252 Farnham Urban

District Council's archives and minute books, coupled with local newspaper delving, have now been recorded in connection with the Brightwell's saga, which is part of the Regeneration of East Street scheme, and a display which has been on view at Farnham Library.

This is a separate exhibition to that which is currently on view in the Locality Office, in South Street, which is from the Crest Nicholson-Sainsbury partnership.

On the poster Celia and Richard Sanders and the destruction of this part of Farnham



**Bill Ewbank Smith in action at his typewriter in 1983.**

courts and the more recent Redgrave Theatre.

"These facilities are in danger of being removed. We appeal to Waverley Borough Council to ensure that redevelopment plans for the Brightwell's area will preserve this part of Farnham's heritage and that these leisure and cultural amenities will be safeguarded for future generations."

Max Lyons, who later became the Farnham Society's new president,

Two pages farther on in the book, in 1920, the author writes: "Loan sanction was duly received for the purchase of Brightwells, and possession was fixed for June 24th. Mrs. Jupp, the tenant, was given notice to quit and councillors began making plans for the conversion of the house and grounds to public use."

On page 43, referring to 1921, we learn that: "The bowling green and tennis courts scheduled for Brightwells at an estimated £400 met with opposition, for the cost had risen in the meantime to £1,050."

"This was disappointing, for the councillors had been looking forward to a grand opening in the spring.

"Not to be outdone, they borrowed the money from Law

### GIVEN

## TO THE PUBLIC in 1920s

by FARNHAM URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

..... for our leisure and recreation .....



**The exhibition at Farnham Library 4th now extended until November 4th**

Club & Courts The Redgrave Theatre Bowling Club & Green

### BRIGHTWELL HOUSE and GARDENS

## GIVEN AWAY

## TO DEVELOPERS in 2004!

by WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**for SAINSBURY & CREST NICHOLSON'S huge blocks of**

# 3 ACRE UNDERGROUND CAR PARK

## SAVE OUR HERITAGE!

per cent, repayable partly in 20 years, the rest in 60 years." Slight tension seems to have arisen by 1921 because on page 49 readers can see: "Suggestions were invited from tennis players as to the feasibility of forming a Brighton tennis club with exclusive use of the courts, say, on three days a week... There was feeling over this undemocratic use of the courts, but the bid of £20 was accepted by eight votes to seven."

and Waverley Borough Council was duly advised of this. Several other bodies also wrote to WBC in Resolution with the In *Farnham in War and Peace* (which itself might never have been published without the public paying its publisher, Phillimore Press, for copies in advance to ensure it would reach the bookshops), Mr. Ewbank Smith makes the following observations. On page 34, referring to 1919, the author notes Brighton's, off East Street, was "Offered to the council for £4,000. The council digested this most attractive offer. The house might prove a solution to their accommodation problem (the recently-built council offices were already too small for its needs); the grounds would provide space for tennis courts, an additional bowling green, perhaps enable an extension to the swimming bath.

The Friends of Brighton House and Gardens were given to the public by Farnham Urban District Council 'for our leisure and recreation, tennis courts, bowling club and green and later, the Redgrave Theatre.' They continue the heritage of Brighton House and its remaining estate, and urge that the leisure amenities it offers be retained for cultural and recreational use.

"This once-attractive part of our town was bought by Farnham Urban District Council in the 1920s for the benefit of the community. "The estate still contains the original pleasure gardens, bowling green, tennis

sanctioned (page 51), a performance of *Midsummer Night's Dream* by the Frensham Players (page 70) and in 1924, on page 84, he states: "Brightwell's... had been earmarked as a quiet place of public walks, pleasure gardens and discreet games areas for enjoyment of more sober age groups."

In 1925 (page 94) the reader learns of a request by Hale's, in The Borough, who wanted permission to stage a wireless demonstration in Castle Street, by the Marconiphone Company.

This was eventually held in Brighton's Gardens, where reception was said to be 'loud and clear.'

By 1927 the area was also being used for brass band concerts on a large scale - eight military bands having been booked for the season, and in 1928 the author writes, on page 123: "...Brightwell's. This delightful public garden was now in full blossom... A full programme of military band concerts had been arranged for the summer weeks.

"An average of 1,200 people attended each of the eight band concerts." The quotes concerning Brighton's continue and during the Second World War the summer of 1941 (page 223) was described as being a swinging time, with open-air dances, military band concerts, recitals on Councillor Chuter's electric organ and aquatic sports which induced 1,000 spectators to pack into the viewing area of the swimming baths on July 16th.

George Sturt was heard to exclaim in 1925: "The town's... alive, alive!" It really was.

Now the search is on for further documentary evidence which shows that the money paid for Brighton's, in 1919, was so low that it was below market price and thus was intended for public use or that a covenant was made which gave details of any restrictions placed upon the use of the land.

Anyone who can help in any way is asked to email cooperstudio@mac.com or ring 01252 716394, as a matter of urgency.

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# Brightwell Pleasure Gardens

# BANDS

# CONCERTS

EMBANKMENT, EAST STREET AND SOUTH STREET.

1934  
WEDNESDAY, 27th JUNE:  
5th Inniskilling Dragoon Guards.  
WEDNESDAY, 25th JULY:  
2nd Batt. The Queen's Royal Regt.  
WEDNESDAY, 8th AUGUST:  
1st Batt. The Duke of Wellington's Regt.  
WEST RIDING.  
WEDNESDAY, 5th SEPTEMBER:  
1st Batt. Suffolk Regt.

THE CONCERTS WILL COMMENCE AT 6.30 p.m.  
AND WILL BE FOLLOWED BY  
A Programme of DANCE MUSIC from 9 to 10 p.m.

Charges: Admission to Grounds, 3d.; Chairs, 3d.; Dancing Enclosure, 6d.  
REFRESHMENTS  
ILLUMINATED GARDENS.  
**BOWLS TENNIS SWIMMING BATHS**

AN advertisement for band concerts in Brighton Pleasure Gardens, the green at the front of Brighton's House, in 1934.

## Blockbusters

whom had, unfortunately, died before being able to see the path open again), and said he also appreciated the persistence of David Williams in steering the claim through the legal process.

As a final gesture Mike Andrew said: "I would like to dedicate the path to my maternal ancestors, the Gardiner family, who have lived in this area and used these local paths, for more than five centuries."

From page 1  
edition of 1871 and it was marked as FP (footpath) on the 1976 drawings for the Farnham bypass improvements.

The committee agreed that the route should be open to the public and this should be possible by the middle of December, following some minor safety works. Mr. Andrew acknowledged the support of John Plympton of the Ramblers' Association, the witnesses (two of