

News from St Martha Parish Council

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West Lodge is the small, detached building next to the large green gates in Blacksmith Lane at the entrance to the Chilworth Gunpowder Estate. This site, of 26 acres, is Scheduled, at the same level as Stonehenge and is of National historical importance. It is owned by Guildford Borough Council.

West Lodge was the entry point for the gunpowder workers, up to 300 in the early nineteen hundreds. They were each issued with a numbered docket to carry on site and handed in on leaving. Hence, in the events of accidents, and there were some during the 300 years of operation, it would be clear who was missing or killed. Thus, West Lodge is a significant Historical Asset.

When the site was Scheduled in 1985, the Lodge was being lived in and, as a dwelling, it could not be included in the Scheduled site. If it had been included, it would have been safe from change in perpetuity. It was then Grade II Listed to reflect its historically important link with the Scheduled Site and to give it some level of protection from alteration.

The Borough commissioned a Management Plan for this site in 2009, funded by a £30,000 grant from Natural England and the Plan was adopted by the Borough in 2012. The Plan states: "West Lodge will be converted into a community facility, possible use by the Parish Council and a small education centre for school parties and occasional displays or exhibitions. The only building inside the Guildford Borough Council owned site with any potential for converting to a visitor facility would be West Lodge. "

Both St. Martha and Shalford Parish Councils, Chilworth2gether, the Chilworth Gunpowder Mills Group and many residents of Chilworth and the surrounding villages fully supported these aims.

Guildford Borough Council have recently decided not to comply with their Plan but to dispose of West Lodge on the open market as a normal commercial asset.

Your Parish Council has fought hard over many years to avoid this outcome and much regret the decision to dispose of this historic building.

Chilworth War Memorial Site

Your Parish Council owns this site and continues to maintain it to a high standard. This year the memorial service will be held there, as usual, on Sunday 12th November at 3.00pm.

New QR codes in the Gunpowder Estate

Thanks to the efforts of local resident Debbie Toynbee and her son Liam, in conjunction with Guildford Borough Council, there are now QR codes fixed to the wooden posts at each point of interest. They give a lot more information than is on the Borough's Heritage Trail leaflet.

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