

Mayoral Blog & Diary – A Celebration of Burgess Hill 2019

Click on the following link to view it on
Tumblr: <https://burgesshilltownmayor.tumblr.com/>.

36	29 Sep	Summerhaven Open Day 2pm
35	28 Sep	BH Bonfire Night
34	18 Sep	Talk to Southway children yr 3 at 13.15
33	17 Sep	Woodlands Meed Tour 9.50 for 10am
32	07 Sep	Model Railway Club at BHSB 2.30pm
31	06 Sep	Schmallenberg Visit
30	17 Aug	Little Miss Filbrits 2019
29	07 Aug	NCS Mural unveiling
28	03 Aug	U3A Cream Tea – BH Academy
27	01 Aug	Playday at Fairfield Rec
26	01 Aug	Vodafone Shop Relaunch
25	24 Jul	Sandpit Opening
24	23 Jul	Parkinsons Meal – BH Lions
23	18 Jul	Bioproductions, Victoria Rd
22	17 Jul	Friars Oak reopening
21	13 Jul	Duck Fair at World's End
20	09 Jul	BH Business Parks – Downlands School
19	08 Jul	BH Girls School Tea Party
18	08 Jul	Opening of St Peter & St James shop
17	06 Jul	Coro Nuovo
16	04 Jul	Tea at St Peter & St James

15	28 Jun	Forest View Care Home – Arts in Care
14	26 Jun	Photo at BH Town Hall
13	19 Jun	Interview with Jennifer Logan at BH Radio
12	14 Jun	Annie at BH Academy
11	11 Jun	Opening by Princess Anne of Magdalene Rise, Bolney
10	09 Jun	Kindertransport Memorial at Wyberlye House
09	09 Jun	BH Summer Fayre
08	06 Jun	Academy Mural
07	05 Jun	Teddy Bears’ Picnic
06	02 Jun	Voluntary Societies Exhibition (St John’s church)
05	28 May	Young Carers Fun Afternoon
04	24 May	Invite from Bernhard Halbe – Mayor of Schmallenburg
03	18 May	NRR Presentation to BH (1)
02	15 May	NRR at BHTC
01	14 May	Pop up Art –Sussex Oakleaf
00	13 May	Elected Mayor

MAYOR'S BLOG

30 17 Aug

Little Miss Filbrits 2019



FilBrit is an organisation located in Haywards Heath & Burgess Hill bringing together in Sussex the British and Filipinos communities. I met Danny Favor mayor of East Grinstead, proud to be the first Filipino UK town mayor. Following the Phillipine diaspora now 10% of the population work overseas to support their families at home. Many, like Danny himself, work within our National Health service.

The event was well organised by Thess Glover and her team. There were seven contestants whose ages ranged from 5 to 8.

They performed with an amazing self-assurance and were judged against six categories: Photogenic; Talent; Sports ability; Eco Green support; their evening gown; and the darling of the crowd. Maxine, the eventual winner, caught everyone's hearts when, as the tiniest of the candidates, she sang a full-throated song in the talent section. The hall was full of proud mums and dads, and the event was a great success.

29 07 Aug NCS Mural unveiling

NCS (the National Citizen Service) run a life-changing programme open to all teenagers aged 15-17 to discover who they are and what they can do. The BH 'wave' set out to raise money to support servicemen with Combat Stress and also to help the Chailey Heritage. As part of this Bradley Collett (in the photo) managed a project team project to produce a mural. They also have held a charity walk that raised over £1,000.



I met Bradley at the BH Theatre where he is a member. His team produced the mural which is now positioned in the Garden of Remembrance. They learned spray painting techniques in a remarkably fast time and produced a moving tribute to the Combat Stress organisation. The fundraising today has raised nearly another £200. Peter Butterworth from Combat Stress gave a speech saying how important the work was for the military and thanking the young people for choosing them as a charity to support. It was my pleasure to cut the ribbon to unveil their work which will have a long term home in the charity's centre in Leatherhead.

28 03 Aug U3A Cream Tea – BH Academy

The U3A staged a summer fair in BH's Academy to showpiece what the organisation does and how it provides a community where those who are into their third age can find interest and friendship. I was met by their chair, Chris Elkins who introduced me to their work on display: handicrafts, a book stall, local history, Sussex architecture, and outside vintage cars. Over an exceptionally tasty cream tea Michael Duck, the organiser, explained how they had tailored the activities to the requirements of the BH members. The Grumpy Old men meetings seemed

to be particularly popular! The organisation helps those getting on a bit to get out of their houses and socialise with like-minded friends. All were having a good time that afternoon.

27 01 Aug Playday at Fairfield Rec

It turned out to be perfect English summer weather for the Playday at the Fairfield Recreation Ground – some sun, some clouds, but no rain. Tom Foolery were putting on half hourly shows of magic and conjuring. The Sensory Arts Workshop had table-loads of children making imaginative models in chocolate-coloured clay. There were two men on stilts, a Council stand about recycling, miniature railway rides, bouncy castles, and music from South Downs Radio. Burgess Hill Youth, an offshoot from BH Lions Club were there along with the leader of the District Council. They were expecting around 300 children to attend. Congratulations to Sally Blackmore, the Better Young Lives coordinator at MSDC, who organised the event.

26 01 Aug Vodafone Shop Relaunch

This turned out to be a big family occasion! Simon Rahman who has recently taken over the franchise of the Vodafone shop, was joined by his parents, his wife and child, his two brothers, sister in law and three of their children. There was breakfast laid on for guests and staff, and he was also joined by colleagues from his previous job working for BT in Worthing. The refurbished shop now has a bright interior and carries the full range of Vodafone offerings. Simon is keen to get involved in community life in Burgess Hill and, of course, to grow his business. He is looking to move to new premises in the refurbished town shopping centre when it is completed. It remained to me to cut the red ribbon and to wish him all the best in his new venture.

25 24 Jul Sandpit Opening

How appropriate to open the quaintly named Urban Beach in the centre of Burgess Hill on one of the hottest days recorded! This is the third year that this massive sandpit has been set up by the Town Council during the school holidays, and it has proved very popular. Last year it was used by over 200 children each day. It brings families to a part of the town where football has been declining while the major town centre regeneration programme is put into effect, so as well as entertaining the children it brings support to our retailers and businesses. It also helps parents and child minders find something to amuse the children during the long holiday. It's free and its open every day 10am to 4pm until the 1st September.

24 23 Jul Parkinson's Meal – BH Lions

BH Lions had organised a meal to support the work of the Mid Sussex branch of Parkinson's UK, a charity that (to quote their website) supports those suffering from this disease by driving better care, treatments and quality of life. Because of their work, no one has to face Parkinson's alone. Sue Blunden the branch chair attended, along with 12 people who suffer from the disease – one of whom the vice chair, Martin King, made a good speech at the end of the meal. Tony Parris of the BH Lions Club was there with his family, and his daughter organised the raffle. I recounted how my old friend and roommate had suffered from

Parkinson's which brought to my attention the terrible effect it can have, both physical and mental. LJ's Café produced a splendid meal, and the event in the end raised over £300 for the charity.

23 18 Jul Bio-productions, Victoria Rd

I was invited to a breakfast meeting, arranged by Suisan Fleet of BH Business Parks Association, to be shown around one of BH's successful enterprises. Bio-productions make a range of industrial and home cleaning products that are green and earth friendly. They use enzymes to clear dirt and bacteria and to unblock drains. The company's founder witnessed a young child who had nearly died by swallowing a chemical cleaner and devoted his energies to developing products that are safe and non-corrosive.

The company has been remarkably successful, exporting their products throughout the world, both under their own labels and through recognised brands. Angela Gill, their Managing Director, showed us around her factory that opens up like the Tardis from a modest frontage in Victoria Rd. Nearly 40 people work there and the atmosphere is very friendly as well as hard working. A little known fact is that they are the world's largest manufacturer of under-rim toilet cleaners – a star among BH's business community.

22 17 Jul Friars Oak reopening

The Friars Oak has had a major refurbishment, rearranging the seating, opening an extension into the garden, introducing a new food range which now includes three separate menus for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and extending the drinks available from the bar to offer a number of imaginative cocktails.

Rachel Clews, the new licensee, hosted the opening event providing drinks and canapés for an invited number of guests. The place was full on a sunny evening. It was an excellent start and let us hope the business prospers.

21 13 Jul Duck Fair at World's End

The poster offered a dog show, children's fancy dress, live music, arena demonstrations, classic cars, a mini funfair, side stalls, plant sales, toys, the Mid Sussex Brass Band, a beer tent, food stalls ranging from Burgers to the Middle East and Thailand, a bake-off competition, vintage bikes, a dress up your scooter competition for children, and Burgess Hill Radio.

This was organised by Karen Williams from Munchies café and, boy, did she deliver. Some 5,000 people apparently came to the event on a beautiful English summers day – not too much sunshine, but not too much rain – all in aid of St Peter & St James hospice. A great achievement!

20 09 Jul BH Business Parks – Downlands School

Thirty or so business people came to the Downlands school in Hassocks who hosted an impressive working breakfast. The main purpose of the event is to provide networking for the

BH business community – there was an impressive array of bacon butties and croissants to go with the coffee. Mark Wignall, the school Head who was helping serve the coffee, said that they had an excellent kitchen staff who can provide a good lunch for only £1-80 per pupil. The school is sited just next to the rolling South Downs and educates pupils from a wide catchment area, including Burgess Hill. Some of the town leading lights were there – it is surprising in how many things these very busy and socially-minded people are involved. We had a presentation about the free support to local businesses provided by Mid Sussex District Council. The Mrs Colvert explained her role in co-ordinating STEM (school jargon for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) and asking for business support in providing students with work experience and later in their career with apprenticeships. The highlight, however, was two star pupils who described their work in gaining prizes for their engineering inventions. Congratulations to Peter Liddell for co-ordinating these Business Parks meetings.

19 08 Jul BH Girls School Tea Party

By the time I arrived tables in the school hall were full of OAPs who had started arriving half an hour in advance. At my table all the guests had no contact with the school, but each year they got their tickets from the Help-point early since they are in high demand. We had a ploughman's lunch with the tea served by very attendant girls in school uniform. Almost immediately the musicians started to play in the background – girls of all ages, all well practiced with great poise and self-confidence. The young cellists seemed smaller than their instruments. The young flautist played a medley of wartime songs, and the audience joined in with 'we'll meet again', 'pack up your troubles' and the like. I met David Black the Director of Music who has huge enthusiasm for developing the girls' musical talents. The next big stage production will be Chicago – ambition there knows few bounds.

18 08 Jul At the Opening of St Peter & St James shop

"It is an honour to be invited as Mayor to open your new shop in Burgess Hill. I have a close personal connection with St Peter and St James Hospice in that my wife, Lesley, died there just over three years ago. She was looked after with loving care and for that I am eternally grateful. Now that I am Mayor, I have selected St Peter and St James Hospice as one of my two charities.

I have learned some interesting facts about the hospice recently about which some of you may not be aware. When the hospice was founded it was funded by James Dinnage, the owner of Dinnages garage in memory of his son Peter who died when young. Incidentally, James Dinnage was involved among many other things in the area including the founding of a donkey sanctuary – there are indeed two donkeys currently at the grounds of the hospice. So you see in addition to the two saints in the Bible, we also have two of our own in Burgess Hill.

It gives me great pleasure to cut this ribbon and to declare this beautiful shop formally opened."

I talked with Barbara Williams, the Chief Executive of the Hospice. Only some 12% of their £4.4m income comes from the National Health Service contribution – the rest they have to raise through donations. Running their now eight shops is an essential part of this fundraising. The new shop in BH is perfectly located in Church Road very near to the entrance to the Martlets. It is light and airy and is unusual in that the charity branding can be seen inside the shop – just to remind you of the good purpose to which your money is going.

17 06 Jul Coro Nuovo

Both Cllr. Anne Eves, our deputy mayor, and I attended this magnificent concert by the Coro Nuovo choir in St Andrews church which with its high roof and lack of pillars provides the excellent acoustics of a concert hall. The choir's leader Andrew Rees – a Welsh tenor famous in his own right – started the concert with a powerful solo from Haydn's 'The Creation'. The choir sang an interesting selection of music featuring many female composers on the theme of Earth's Beauty. They certainly added to that beauty that evening!

If that was not enough, four young musicians – Maria Luc (piano), Leo Popplewell (cello), Andrew Martin (flute), and George Robinson (classical guitar) – competed for the Sussex Young Musician of the Year Award 2019. Wow, what players! Conductor and musician Toby Purser, one of the judges, told the contestants that they had brought something truly mesmerising to their performances. The award went to Leo who gave us a robust piece of Beethoven on his cello, but frankly any one of them could have been the winner.

Highlights of the concerts can be seen on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/84hrHTGMB7Y>

16 04 Jul Tea at St Peter & St James

Having selected St Peter & St James Hospice as one of my two mayoral charities I was invited by Wendy Agate, their community fundraising manager, to join her and other members of the fundraising team for afternoon tea. The hospice is a place of beautiful calm and quiet in the heart of Sussex countryside with views of the South Downs. I was told that James Dinnage, the founder of the hospice as well as the Dinnages garage, had also opened a sanctuary for donkeys and that there were to this day two in a nearby field in consequence.

15 28 Jun Forest View Care Home – Arts in Care

The Forest View Care Home is located in beautiful, quiet grounds at the end of Southway by the rugby pitch. It is run by Shaw Healthcare; 50 of its 60 beds are taken by the County Council for the care of local patients suffering from dementia. When I visited it was an open day for family members and the general public – on display were detailed works of art by the patients produced during therapy sessions.

I was shown around by Jane Harris. The inside of the Home is freshly decorated in bright colours. Upstairs are the people who are room-bound. Downstairs the residents have use of a common room and other facilities, as well as a beautiful garden that is maintained by family members. The residents are well looked after by a dedicated team. Most people were sitting outside listening to songs performed by a husband and wife team. It was a beautiful sunny day and the residents were clearly getting much pleasure from listening to the music being performed.

14 26 Jun Photo at BH Town Hall

I had my photo taken by the Middy outside the Town Hall to go with Jennifer Logan's interview. I had some badly bruised ribs from the weekend and hoped that the pain did not show!

13 19 Jun Interview with Jennifer Logan at BH Radio

I had a meeting with Jennifer Logan at Burgess Hill's own radio station in Church Road. Jennifer is senior reporter at the Mid Sussex Times. It was a background piece about the new mayor, and I was very happy with her article when it was published. I met there also Tony Parris who is not only a leading light in BH District Lions Club, but is also helps run BH Radio – one of the many people in this generous town who give their time to supporting good causes.

12 14 Jun Annie at BH Academy

My partner and I were invited to attend a performance of Annie at the BH Academy. It was an ambitious production which was a total success. The children performed with great confidence and gusto. We has a feisty Annie, and a wonderfully slatternly Miss Hannigan. Hannah Freat, their new head of music had put in many hours getting the high quality of performance and she was supported by Mike Wood, her predecessor, who had finished a career at the school since 1975 and had returned for the last time to help deliver this success.



11 11 Jun Opening by Princess Anne of Magdalene Rise, Bolney

A collection of dignitaries were invited by Bolney parish council to attend the opening of affordable homes at Magdalene Rise. The development had been funded by English Rural Development whose chair welcomed HRH when she arrived. The houses had been designed and built to a high standard on land provided by a local farmer. The property will provide accommodation for residents of Bolney as a priority. They will have no rights to buy so that this facility will remain for ever available to the village.

We had a buffet lunch in the remarkable Rawson Hall which puts many of the community facilities in the towns of Mid Sussex to shame. Princess Anne made a point of speaking to everyone who attended the event. It was a most welcome attendance from such a hard working member of the Royal Family.

10 09 Jun Kindertransport Memorial at Wyberlye House

I was invited to unveil a memorial plaque to the 50 Jewish girls who came to BH in 1938 escaping from the horrors of Nazi Europe under the Kindertransport scheme. They were made very welcome by BH and lived for several years in Wyberlye House near to Marle Place.

I met Lesley Urbach who had raised the money for this as a child of one of those rescued. Seven others came to the event, four from the USA and one from Australia.

We remembered the past and gave thanks that Europe has now had over 70 years of peace since those dreadful times. The party were entertained to afternoon tea in the Town Hall followed by a presentation compiled by Lesley about 50 girls and Wyberlye House, which sadly has now been demolished.

09 09 Jun BH Summer Fayre

It was an honour to open Burgess Hill's Summer Fayre. The whole of St John's park was covered with an amazing number of activities. Burgess Hill Radio provided the sound systems to support music displays and entertainment, outstanding displays by local children's dance and drama groups. There was a focus on providing fun for our children, though the adults also joined in – a climbing wall, human table football, a rodeo bull, miniature train rides, a bouncy castle, pony carriage rides and more. And of course there was a good supply of food and drinks in support.

I went round and talked to people operating an impressive range of community stalls: prominent local charities (Mid Sx Voluntary Action; Sasbah for Spina Bifida support; National Service Citizen ; Forest View nursing home; the Monday Group; Age UK; To The Beat dance camps; Chestnuts hospice; Air Ambulance); local interest groups (Rotary; BH Artists; BH Rugby Club; Ariel Drama; Walkhouse Dance; BH in Bloom; Bee Keepers; Fairtrade; BH Heritage & History; BH U3A); the military (RAF Air Cadets); churches (Gateway Baptists; Salvation Army); local businesses (Baan Thai; Places Leisure; Dental trauma; Beauty Bank; Ocado; Raven Homes).

The day provided a great showcase for a caring town and the many activities that people support and the large band of volunteers who enrich the life of our community.

08 06 Jun Academy Mural – official opening

Burgess Hill Academy accepted a commission from the Town Council to paint a mural within the town hall celebrating Burgess Hill. Five girls rose to the challenge - Emma, Nelly, Amy, Lucy, and Lily-mae – and they produced a very colourful picture of features of the town all emanating from a young woman's head.

The Council invited the artists together with the art teachers and the head, Jon Francies, to an opening ceremony followed by tea and cakes in the Council Chamber. The mural stays as a testament to the artistic talent of young people in this creative town.



07 05 Jun Teddy Bears' Picnic

It was not a hot day, but at least it did not rain. There was a large turnout of parents and minders with their young children – it looked like over two hundred – who set up for a picnic in the space between the St John's park cricket pavilion and the pitch itself. They were surrounded by many outdoor activities for the young and tents giving details of the child

support serviced available in the town, including the Mid Sussex District Council Hub who provide a whole programme of services for families, children and young people (www.westsussex.gov.uk/family and on facebook <http://www.facebook.com/MidSussexCFC>)

The event was a great success and clearly appreciated by the young people there.

06 02 Jun Voluntary Societies Exhibition (St John's church)

As part of the BH Festival there was an exhibition of voluntary societies in St John's church. There were some familiar faces there representing a range of local charities supporting so many people who need help for: brain injury (Headway); learning disabilities (Signposts; Kangaroos); terminal illness (St Peter & St James hospice); young people's activities (BH Youth; Budding Foundation); the elderly (Contact the Elderly); stroke sufferers (Stroke assocn.); spina bifida sufferers (Sasbah); and supporting all charities in Mid Sussex (MSVA).

It is wonderful to see how Burgess Hill is so full of people with kind hearts who give their time to support people less fortunate than themselves.

05 28 May Young Carers Fun Afternoon

The event was held in the Fairfield Community Centre, organised by the Mid Sussex Young Carers Partnership. About 20 children came, and there was much to do including ping pong, cake and key ring making. For lunch we walked over to the Mustard Seed Café in the church of St Edward the Confessor. There was more food than we were able to eat, including some tasty sandwiches and cakes. Afterwards I joined in one activity learning to light outside fires using only flint and metal and some tinder. Good fun – maybe they should be invited to light the BH bonfire!

04 24 May Invite from Bernhard Halbe – Mayor of Schmalleburg

I was pleased to receive a letter of congratulations on becoming mayor from my opposite number in Schmalleburg, inviting me to attend with a delegation from Burgess Hill a celebration of the 775th anniversary of the founding of Schmalleburg's Historic Market on 7th & 8th September. I said I would, and we now have to organise this.

03 18 May NRR Presentation to BH (1)

The presentation of the revised plan for the Martlets by New River REIT was made on large boards within a small unit in the centre which is no longer a shop. I attended as Mayor and met Justin Thomas, their Residential Director. I thanked him for giving people the opportunity of contributing their comments on the plan and trusted that they would act on the salient points being made.

I received many comments myself as people came out of the presentation. In fact over 1,000 attended during the course of the day and the space was too small to allow everyone room to completely digest what was being proposed. I hear many comments about the lack of parking spaces, the deterrent cost of parking, potential road congestion, the decline of the family

shops and the market, the design, the lack of public toilets and in particular the lack of public changing space for the disabled, the loss of the Martlets Hall, and much more. Justin Thomas undertook to send the Town Council a digest of the comments the comments were collecting in their feedback boxes.

It is clear that the townspeople have very distinct views on the town centre's future, and we must become much more involved in these huge programmes that are changing the town's destiny and future character.

02 15 May New River REIT at BHTC

New River REIT who have leased the Martlets shopping centre from the District Council made a presentation to BHTC about their revised plans for the Martlets 'regeneration'. We were all pleased at the openness and honesty of their approach and thanked them also for putting a presentation for the BH residents in three days time explaining their proposed change of plan. This has been done because of the downward turn in the retail and entertainment markets, keystones in the original plan to bring about a recovery of commerce in the town centre. The plans will be submitted for formal approval by MSDC later in the year. Their original plan for completion this year has now slipped by another two years.

01 14 May Pop up Art –Sussex Oakleaf

My very first assignment as mayor was to go to the Pop up Art exhibition in the Martlets organised by Sussex Oakleaf. This is an organisation that has its central office in Delmon House, Burgess Hill, which provides support services to people with mental health needs, and also to individuals at risk of homelessness. The art on display was by people who had been helped Sussex Oakleaf – the works on display, mainly some excellent paintings and photographs, clearly expressed the inner feelings of the artists.

I spoke with Philippa Thompson, their Chief Executive who explained how art was one important way of helping people to understand and recover from their condition. Several of the artists were present, justifiably proud of what they had achieved.

01 13 May On Being Elected Mayor

It is an honour to have been elected Mayor, and a privilege. The role is not about the person who holds it, nor is it about politics. As Mayor you represent the town and its Council, and you have the power to give publicity to the many good works that people carry out in the community – some paid, many as volunteers – and to help them obtain public support and much needed resources.

My role so far has been full of activity: a fun afternoon for young carers; an open day with the town centre developers; attending the Burgess Hill Summer Fayre; the unveiling of a memorial to the fifty kindertransport children, who in 1938 were welcomed by Burgess Hill. It promises to be a busy year ahead and I look forward to the challenge.