

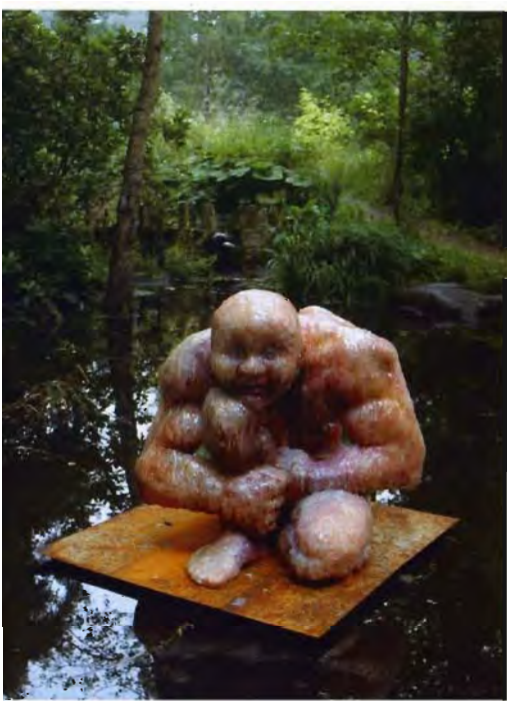
# PRIDE OF THE VALLEY SCULPTURE PARK



**W**alking around The Pride of the Valley Sculpture Park it is hard to believe that only a few years ago the area was overgrown and barely penetrable. This piece of land opposite The Pride of the Valley hotel in Churt is now a thriving park full of breathtaking sculpture set amidst superb landscaped woodland with incredible views over the surrounding countryside and Frensham Country Park.

The idea for the park belongs to its

curator, Eddie Powell, himself a sculptor and photographer, and the owner of the hotel opposite. Eddie bought the land about three years ago when it was entirely overgrown with the dream of turning it into a living gallery and indulge his passion for sculpture. The land was cleared and a mile and a half of footpath, trees and shrubs were planted. The park is now much more like a formal garden, but the wildness and natural beauty has been retained and provides a superb setting for



## ART

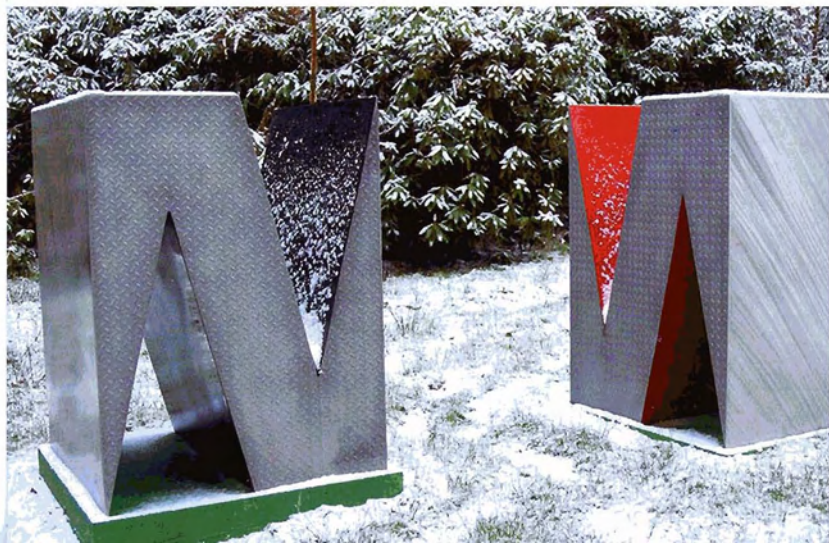
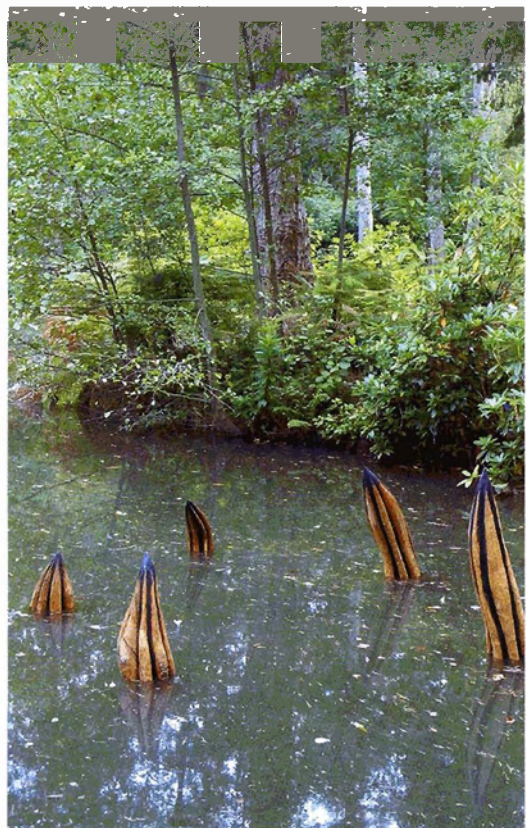
the unusual sculptures on display.

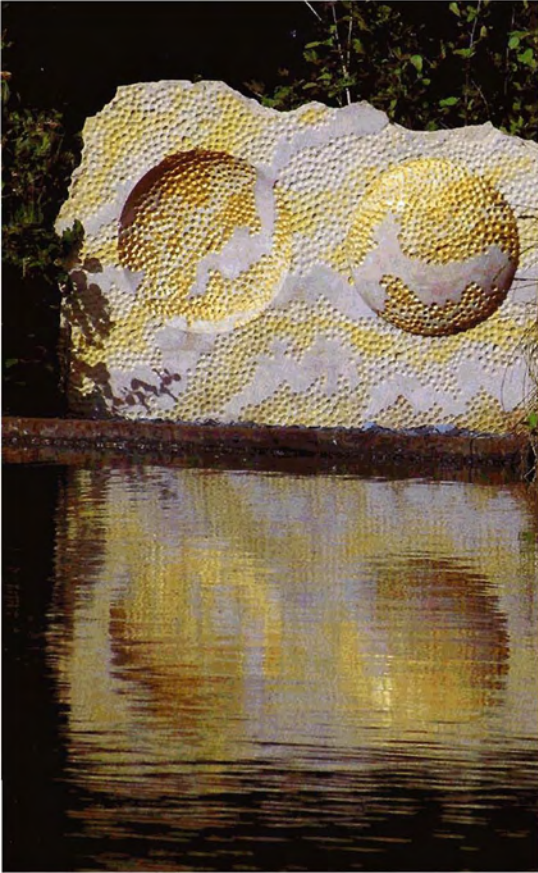
Over five-thousand visitors have passed through its gloriously decorated gates since they opened in April 2003. All exhibits are for sale and are listed on a guide of the park which takes the visitor on a tour passed all the exhibits, allowing for plenty of stops to sit and admire the wonderful views. It took eighteen months for Eddie to complete the park, which is still evolving, and the scale of this mammoth task is evident, not only in relation to the landscaping of the park but also the citing of the sculptures many of which are enormous.

The woodland provides an evocative backdrop, and movement in the water and trees breathes life into the static sculptures. Walking around a corner or up some steps, an exhibit is seen from all angles and takes on many different shapes than one viewed simply at ground level. The anticipation of seeing a piece in full is heightened by first seeing the top of it poking through the trees. Whilst others hang from the trees themselves, many are also functional in the shape of bridges and seating.

Over two-hundred and fifty sculptures are on display and range from the classical to the conceptual from over eighty different sculptors. Salvador Dali, Dallas Collins, Max Ernst and Jacob Epstein have all displayed here. The works include many conventional pieces such as figures or animals, others are more demanding, made up of abstract shapes and sharp angles. A lake forms the centre-piece of the park and elsewhere waterfalls, streams, lawns, low-lying bogs, woodland, hillsides and valleys wind their way around the static sculptures, accompanied by a wonderful smell of pine needles.

Sculptures of the human form come in all shapes and sizes. Giles Penny's *Man With Leg in Air* greets visitors at the entrance of the park - a lifesize in bronze of a large round man taking a carefree step to who knows where. Carol Peace's two bronze resin figures *Reach* and *Stretch* lie on the ground, one reaching thin arms to the sky and the other out towards the path. Lorcadia Ndandarika's *Headache* in springstone is a large African head with a hole through the cranium. Rounding the corner Andy Langley's larger than life *Perseus* in mild





Jim Unsworth's *A Surprise for Fabricius Luscinus* and *Another Surprise for Fabricius Luscinus* both in welded steel, in separate parts of the park, depict a huge elephant's head on top of a box or peeping through its doors as if part of a circus show. Anthony Haywood's *Four Horses of the Apocalypse* comprise four life sized horses made entirely from plastic children's toys, TVs, mannequins, typewriters, shoes, telephones and kitchen equipment. Robert Bradford's *Cork Eagle* is just that - an enormous bird made from steel and cork, funded by the RSPB to encourage wine-growers to stop using cork.



Other more unusual sculptures include Brian McGann's *Perfume* in painted plaster which consists of twenty-seven identical pink noses sitting side by side along a wooden block. The largest piece in the park is Paul Cox's *Ahoy* in painted welded steel, a giant red, blue and yellow tug boat balanced on top of an oversized green table next to a green chair - round, fat pieces that resemble toys in a children's playroom, weighing a huge eight and a half tonnes. Douglas Burton's *Wishful Thinking* in steel resembles the curved top of a tower or pavilion, laying on its side so that only half of it is exposed and remaining unattached to any grounded object.



steel stands ready for action with sword and shield in hand towering above the onlooker, his strength screaming through his face and muscled torso. Closer to the ground Robert Bradford's *Splat* in treated oak is a giant splayed figure, face down in the grass with long tresses of hair made from oak twigs. Giles Penny's *Two Men on a Bench* cast in bronze shows two oversized bald men sitting next to each other on opposite sides of a bench, identical but looking in different directions, ageless and forever watching the changing scenery around them. Walking over a steel bridge above a stream takes in John Fellows' *Billy* in plaster and glass wax, a crouching Buddha-like figure, with a baby-faced grin belying a powerful wrestler's body that appears to be melting.

There are many, many more fascinating sculptures than it is possible to do justice to here, all of which are originally displayed in a delightful setting, some obviously in view and others partially hidden. The sculptures share the park with a wide variety of wildlife making this a natural outing to fill all senses and interests.

The *Pride of the Valley Sculpture Park* is open from Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 5pm (closed Monday but not bank holidays) and can be found opposite the *Pride of the Valley* hotel on Jumps Road in Churt. Admission is £4.50 for adults and £2.00 for children and senior citizens.

Sculptures of animals are also plentiful.