



Leatherhead & District Local History Society

Newsletter

November 2016



Two views of Fetcham Park whose lost 60-acre gardens were featured at this year's Heritage Open Days. See Page 2.

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Front page: Some 700 visitors were welcomed at Fetcham Park House on 11 September as part of Heritage Open Days. An exhibition based on research by historian Vivien White showed the estate through three centuries since 1705, re-assessing the legacy of George London, believed to have designed ornate gardens there in 1711-12 that used water from the River Mole. London was renowned for parterres, waterworks and planted avenues inspired by the gardens of France. Although Fetcham Park was later developed along the more naturalistic style favoured by Capability Brown, much of London's work remained until the 20th century.



EDITORIAL

This month sees our special celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Society.

On Friday, 18 November we will welcome founder and first Treasurer, Stephen Fortescue and his wife, as guests of honour at our anniversary party in the Letherhead Institute. Members will be welcomed and short talks given on the early history of the Society by Frank Haslam, on publications and personalities by Peter Tarplee, and on our achievements and future plans by current President Alan Pooley. Stephen Fortescue will toast our 70 years of activity and contributions to the recording and preservation of Leatherhead district's fascinating history and heritage.

We have a brand new logo representing the Society and new arrangements for accessing the *Newsletter*, starting with this edition. This is part of an updated approach to publicity to renew public awareness both of our Society and the Museum. Each *Newsletter* will now be sent to all members at the start of the month, either in print or by email as you prefer, and will then be made available at the end of the month online. The Archive will also be opened up to all interested researchers in order to show members and the wider public alike as much as possible of the work carried out over the past seven decades. This will apply both to the *Newsletter* and the *Proceedings*.

This *Newsletter* also includes continuation of Edwina Vardey's own oral history interview and the first of those she carried out over more than 30 years, beginning with the remarkable Elsie Green. See Page 26.

With the *Proceedings* now restored, we are looking for ever more contributions to both publications in future. So do please feel free to contact either Bill Whitman, its Editor, or me with your ideas, research or just personal memories of life in Leatherhead, Ashted, Fetcham or Bookham.

TONY MATTHEWS

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

18 November: L&DLHS 70th birthday celebration

Wine and nibbles, followed by brief talks on the Society's own history, personalities and achievements. As a member, please feel free to bring a guest. Admission is free but donations welcome. Guest of Honour: Stephen Fortescue, Founder Member and Past President.

2 December: Frank Haslam will present another fund-raising Quiz Night/Supper. Ask friends who might form a team with you for an entertaining evening. You don't have to be a history buff. See the enclosed booking form.

20 January, 2017: Professor Patricia Hawsworth will speak on *How Science can Tell us about the Use of Land*.

17 February, 2017: Professor Richard Selley will speak on *The Birth, Life and Death of the River Mole*.

17 March, 2017: Annual General Meeting. Short talk by Nigel Bond on *My Work as Archaeology Secretary*

Details of activities will be posted on the Society's website and announced at meetings, all of which take place in the Abraham Dixon Hall of the Letherhead Institute (top end of the High Street), starting at 7.30 for 8pm. Visitors are always welcome.

THE DISTRICT'S OLDEST BUSINESS?

J Hutchinson of Church Street, Leatherhead, founded in 1830, claimed this title. Best known as a coal merchant, it was probably first a corn chandler, judging by the buildings next door. Now it is gone, which is the oldest retail business still thriving in our district?

Pearce's baker's shop in Bookham High Street was a bakery at least from 1900, according to Fortescue (*The Story of Two Villages: Great & Little Bookham* 1975, P22). The building dates from c1825 (Nairn and Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Surrey* 1962, P226).

However, the bakery business has changed hands over time so how about Casselden's shoe repair workshop (Neetandkwik) in Crabtree Lane, Great Bookham, since 1927? **DEREK RENN**

*Charity cyclists race past
Hampton Cottage on
31 July during the Prudential
London-Surrey Bike Ride.
Picture by Robin Christian.*



THE FUTURE OF HAMPTON COTTAGE by **JOHN ROWLEY, L&DLHS Chairman**

For quite a few months now, the external condition of Hampton Cottage has been the subject of much inconclusive debate. As often the way, it has become the subject of rumours as well as thoughts about developing the Society to attract wider participation.

The fact is there has been severe deterioration of the ancient timber frame in several places. However, the way the building was restored in the late 1970s gives us some confidence that the problem of the fabric is not desperately urgent, although some refurbishment of the visitor welcoming signage is also needed.

Some members suggest more covered space is required for our exhibits and other facilities. This would mean the loss of considerable external space currently well used especially by young visitors. Any expansion of the building would require planning permission and then full access for a contractor. It could not take place until the building's rear wall had been refurbished and access would still be restricted for disabled visitors.

Others say we should take advantage of the forthcoming development of Leatherhead town centre to find larger new accommodation which could be developed as a Society headquarters/Museum with full disability access. We would have more space for larger exhibits covering, for example, the area's manufacturing background. Our bookshop would be more obvious to passers-by and separate from the Museum area.

We could provide more office space and an IT area. With Surrey County Council cooperation, it might include a training area for use of

on-line research resources as well as records conversion, perhaps by interns. It would include our own lecture hall, conference room and members' library. For lectures we could take coffee in the Museum.

Other facilities might include just enough parking for two school mini-buses, allowing classes from more distant schools to visit the Museum. A substantial storage area on-site would assist the curating team and also allow us to bring our parish archives together.

We now have these facilities by renting accommodation but having everything in our own premises might improve our effectiveness and image. Many feel that Hampton Cottage is our best exhibit, its compactness is infectious and our stewards provide a warm welcome. No-one wants to lose these strengths and we need to build on them in moving forward. So what do we do?

Over to you, the members. Which direction would you prefer? Either way, we need hefty fund-raising. A more ambitious target might attract large donors but we need consensus first.

FRIENDS OF LEATHERHEAD MUSEUM

by GWEN HOAD

For those unable to attend the AGM, the Friends Committee now has the following members: Robin Christian, Lin Hampson, Gwen Hoad (Treasurer and Membership Secretary), Judy Wilson (Hon Secretary), Debby Humphreys, Diana Rogers, Alan Pooley (Ex Officio)

Since the AGM we have had a busy programme of events. The museum was open on 31 July for the Cycle Race. Robin Christian and his helpers were there all day and were pleased to welcome many visitors. They were also able to get a good view of the race if they did not blink! Robin had to travel up to Leatherhead the day before from where he lives, south of Horsham, in order to be in the Museum before the roads closed. He may even have slept there!

The now well established Craft Days were held on 5, 12 and 19 August. Numbers were down on last year but the day it rained was the best attended. Fortunately there were two gazebos to help keep everyone dry and there were plenty of things for the children to do.

Lorraine's exhibition in the front room upstairs celebrating the end of WW2 was a focal point. The room is furnished with items

from the period and if you have not seen it you should do so before the season ends. Two of Robin's team dressed as Hilda and Frank Hollis, Hampton Cottage's wartime residents, to welcome visitors.

The museum was open on both days of the Heritage weekend and the number of visitors justified it. The education team was on hand for visits from Fetcham Infants School and a group of Brownies. We now have an enthusiastic group of Friends, including some former teachers, who enjoy these visits even if it gets a bit hectic at times.

The Museum closes on 10 December for the winter and will reopen around Easter. The stewards' social will be held on Monday, 12 December at 7pm for 7.30. All stewards and those who contribute behind the scenes are invited as a thank you for their hard work.

We are sorry to lose John Millard, a longstanding Museum volunteer, who organised the stewards' rota and often stood in himself when necessary. As usual we need more stewards and any new volunteers would be very welcome.

In the August Newsletter we showed a set of mystery tools from the Museum which featured in a quiz at Julia Lack's farewell meeting as chairman of the Friends. For those of you who could not identify them, here is what they were actually used for.



Cobbler George Barnsley's circular welt knife



A cobbler's finishing tool for soles



A cobbler's forepart iron



A washable medical glass pestle



A fire extinguishing grenade. But one other tool remains a mystery. Go to Page 40.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2016

Report by ROY MELLICK and LORRAINE SPINDLER

This year's Heritage Open Days from 8 to 11 September were successful throughout Mole Valley, with events organised over the weekend at the Leatherhead Museum and the Letherhead Institute as no exception.

The temporary exhibition at Hampton Cottage included a display about some local trees of historical significance and a Heritage Photo Booth. The display included the ancient Bookham Tree with a diary of events - both local and worldwide - that took place throughout its life. Also included was the Road Beautification Scheme that was applied to streets in the area during the 1930s.

Although the numbers were down on previous years, the weekend exhibition was well attended. Children especially enjoyed Robin's team dressing up as Frank and Hilda Hollis, the former residents of Hampton Cottage whose 'factional' life is presented in the room set out with artefacts typical of a 1940s working and living space. As well as our two new team members helping with administration on Mondays, we now have a school-leaver helping with the inventory/research of all items in the Hollis Room. As usual too, visitors were able to see the 17th century timber-framed cottage's permanent displays on local affairs and industries.

This year's Heritage Open Days theme throughout Mole Valley was *Lives and Landscapes*, and the Leatherhead Community Association hosted several events at the Letherhead Institute. Our Society was kindly allowed to display a brief summary of the 'lost' Saxon minster believed to exist around the site of Rowhurst and Teazle Wood in north Leatherhead. This was the subject of a talk earlier this year by our Archaeology Secretary, Nigel Bond. It was also an opportunity to sell some of the popular books we have published on Leatherhead and the surrounding district.

The annual Heritage Open Days began in 1994 as the country's contribution to the European Heritage Days, established three years earlier by the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The aim was to raise appreciation of Europe's rich and diverse cultural assets and their need for care and protection. The central principle



Left: Mole Valley's festival brochure featuring four days of 70 free events at towns and villages throughout the district.

Below left: Archaeology Secretary Nigel Bond explains our Society's display at the Letherhead Institute.

was as simple as it was compelling: to throw open the doors to historic monuments and buildings that were normally closed to the public, as well as those visited at other times.

Since 1994, Heritage Open Days have grown into this country's largest heritage festival. Across Mole Valley hundreds of residents and visitors were delighted to uncover hidden



history, explore fascinating exhibitions and open doors to intriguing buildings.

A number of attractions sold out, with visitors arriving in droves to view the architecture and interiors of Thorncroft Manor in Leatherhead and The Grange in Bookham. The new and exciting research into the origins of the gardens surrounding Fetcham Park House also attracted great interest. See Pages 1 and 2.

ARCHAEOLOGY NOTES

by NIGEL BOND

The Surrey Archaeological Society has run two excavations this summer, one in our area at Great Bookham, and the other at Cock's Farm, Abinger.

The Great Bookham excavation continued the search for further evidence of Bookham Courte, the medieval Chertsey Abbey's manor house or farm in the centre of the village behind the church, in Lyn Spencer's back garden. Lyn described earlier investigations in her talk to the Society in April.

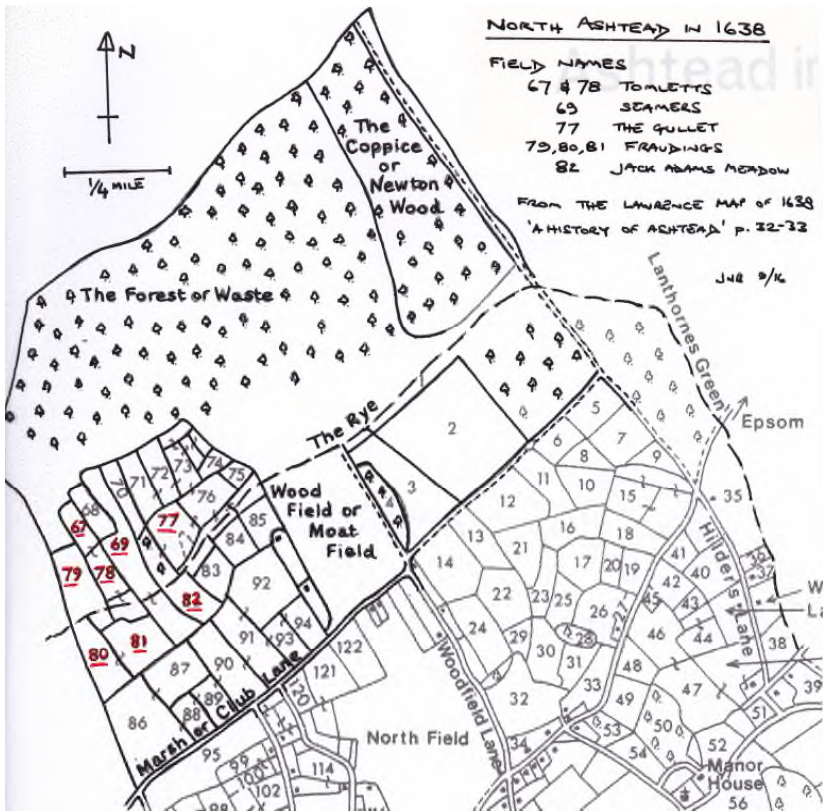
The three trenches were located to extend beyond a flint cobbled area found in previous years and to investigate suspected features found by 'geo-phys'. We found medieval and later pottery, exposed more of the cobbled area with an unexplained line of chalk blocks embedded in it, a mortar foundation which may have been the base on which long sill beams of a large barn type building may have sat, and evidence of demolition of a wall or building.

The Abinger excavation revealed evidence of Iron Age and Roman occupation and a Bronze Age cremation at the high point of the field where we were working.

The Society had a room in the Leatherhead Institute during the recent Heritage Weekend (see Page 8) with books for sale and a display describing Leatherhead's lost Saxon minster and its possible association with Rowhurst Forge (the Fire and Iron Gallery). Lucy Quinnell, the owner of Rowhurst, also had a display at her home discussing the history of the present building.

My archaeological activities in recent weeks included starting my training to carry out archaeological watching briefs under the guidance of Dorking archaeologist Frank Pemberton. These watching briefs monitor building works on sites that have the potential to encounter archaeologically significant material, but doing so without unnecessary impact on the builder's work.

My first project is monitoring work at an early 19th century cottage adjacent to an 18th century house in a part of Leatherhead that may have been occupied as far back as Saxon times. Thus far the few finds are either 20th century or Victorian.



Walkers in Ashted may have noticed the welcome reappearance of ancient field names on new oak gates on fields off Ashted Woods Road and on Ashted Rye Meadows Wetlands. The gates and name plates have been provided by the landowner, Mrs Daphne Burnett, with some of the field names taken from John Lawrence's 1638 map of Ashted (see above) from pages 32-33 of the Society's *A History of Ashted*. The names include those such as Fraudings, Fraudings Marsh, Tomlett's, Seamers, Jack Adams and Gullett.

One field is named Centenary Field in commemoration of those who fell in World War One. Mrs Burnett has also generously placed this and the other fields forming Ashted Rye Meadows Wetlands under the guardianship of Fields in Trust to ensure they remain an open space in perpetuity.

SEPTEMBER LECTURE: FARNHAM CASTLE

Report by **DEREK RENN**



To most people, Farnham is just another town to be by-passed on the way to the West Country. **DAVID GRAHAM**, former president of the Surrey Archaeological Society, showed us what they miss.

In the Middle Ages, Chertsey Abbey and the bishops of Winchester were the largest landholders in Surrey. From 805AD the bishops held 64,000 acres at Farnham, administered by three monks. It was very convenient, halfway between London and Winchester, a day's ride from each.

In 1927 it was transferred to the new diocese of Guildford but its bishop lived at Farnham until his new cathedral was finished in 1955. The old settlement was down by the bridge over the river but by the 13th century had moved up to a higher river terrace with a regular layout protected by ditches. The wide Castle Street, lined with Georgian houses still had a street market, although the Market House had gone.

Accounts of the bishopric from 1208 survive in the Hampshire County Record Office. A halfpenny (about 0.002p) was frequently paid for a small boy to climb down the well to recover the well-rope when it slipped off its wheel. In 1373 the bishop had two hunting parks here, one for red deer, the other for roe deer as the species do not get on together.

Our speaker explained the standard form of a Norman earthwork castle, to be found at Abinger or embroidered in the Bayeux Tapestry:

a big mound with a wooden tower on top, plus a bailey enclosure for every day purposes. At Farnham this had been transformed into stonework, with a unique feature: the stone tower had once been free-standing over an earlier ditch and well, and the mound had been heaped up around it in two stages.

The square tower was plastered within and without and had no windows or doors, although three ledges might be platforms or building stages. At the level of the top of the mound it widened into a plinth but there was no trace of any higher building, which might have been made of wood.

After the tower was found and emptied about 1960 it was covered with a concrete slab. David and his wife, Audrey, monitored the removal of this slab some years ago for English Heritage which has built a wooden well-house to protect the tower, with flights of wooden stairs going down into the cold darkness within.

A medieval chronicle said that bishop Henry de Blois of Winchester, a grandson of William the Conqueror, built six castles in 1138, including Farnham, but some of them were probably begun by earlier bishops. The claimed destruction of the castle in 1155 was equally uncertain. In 1215 it had surrendered quickly to a French army.

Mr Graham took us on a virtual tour of the buildings in the castle bailey. The much-altered great hall still contained one long timber post carved with Norman chevrons. He had excavated a saw-pit in the castle, which might have been that used to cut the timber used in the great hammer-beam roof of Westminster Hall. The kitchen contained an enormous Tudor fireplace.

There was a great gate tower of Flemish brick, built for bishop Wayneflete in 1472-5. The outer gate of the castle was now much lower than before and its drawbridge had gone. A long crack in the wall might have been caused by the spiked gunpowder petard used to blow in the doors during the Civil War when a Parliamentary army camped in the park.

Metal detecting had found various odds and ends including a cannonball and flattened musket balls. Isaac Walton's daughter had been christened in the new chapel, which had interesting graffiti in the stained glass.

After the Reformation, the six palaces of the bishops of Winchester

were reduced to three: Farnham, Southwark and Wolvesey in Winchester. The latter two are now in ruins. Up to the time of Queen Victoria, royalty often visited Farnham Castle.

In answer to questions, David said the well below the tower had not been cleared for safety reasons because it was unlined. Bricks were no longer made in the borough (Thomas the tiler had made 10,000 for the bishop in 1300).

He confirmed that Farnham Museum still had King Charles I's nightcap, given to the bishop on the monarch's way to trial and execution. Were Farnham in Hampshire, our speaker lamented, its council tax would be much lower!

On Friday, 21 October, Sally Todd would tell us about St John's School, Leatherhead, in World War One. We meet in the main hall of the Letherhead Institute at 7.30 for coffee/tea, the talk beginning at 8pm. Visitors are always most welcome.

BOOK REVIEW: *THE LOCKS OF NORBURY*

by BILL WHITMAN

Author: The Duchess of Sermoneta (Pub: John Murray 1940)

I borrowed this book from Leatherhead Library to check a couple of dates and read it from cover to cover with great enjoyment.

William Lock of Norbury, who built the great house in Norbury Park, 1774, was a good friend of Fanny d'Arblay [Burney], as was his wife Frederica [Freydy]. Fanny visited Norbury for long periods on many occasions. Her sister, Susan Phillips, lived in Mickleham and was also a frequent visitor. Nearby too is Juniper Hall where a group of French exiles were living from 1794 including Talleyrand, Madame de Stael and Brigadier d'Arblay, who met Fanny at Norbury.

The author of this book was a descendant of William Lock and had access to family letters and diaries which she drew together to record a history of the family from the time of William, born 1732, to the death of his great grand-daughter in 1893.

In the book we meet Nelson, Lady Hamilton and the dreadful court at Naples; Sir Thomas Lawrence who painted many of the Lock family; Garibaldi; George IV's maltreated Queen Caroline; and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, killed for the cause of Irish independence as well as many others.

WHEN SURREY ROADS WERE DUSTY

Provided by DOUG HOLLINGSWORTH



Above: A dusty Surrey road in the very early days of motor transport.

Westrumite was a road-dust preventing material composed primarily of petroleum and ammonia. It was developed around 1900 in response to the spread of motoring and the dust raised by cars using the roads.

Country Life magazine's section, *The Automobile World*, on 5 November 1904 contains a report on the experimental use of Westrumite on the Ripley Road near Cobham. The writer, who has watched the experiment on several occasions, says the results are of very great interest as 'it is impossible to count on more than three or four months respite from an annoyance [dust] which constitutes the greatest obstacle to the advance of automobilism.'

But he concludes that the results of using Westrumite on gravel roads are disappointing because of the cost of repeated applications



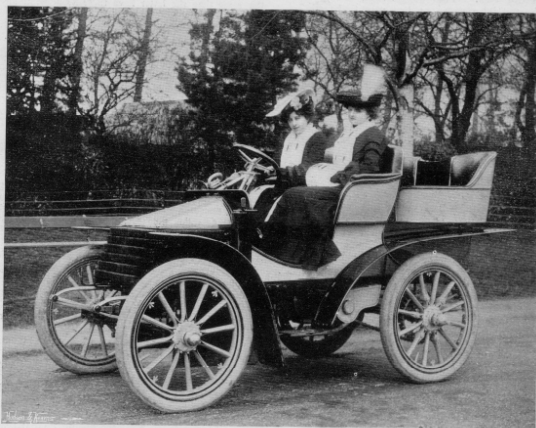
Above: Traffic in Cobham. Might Westrumite improve comfort?

during a dry summer. He says: 'Private owners who wish to lay the dust for a hundred yards or so opposite their houses may find it worthwhile to buy a few barrels of the compound and use it as necessity arises...but I am afraid that the local authorities in Surrey at any rate will never employ it on a large scale.' Under the existing conditions even the heaviest application would only be 'efficacious for a month at the most'.

In contrast, the experimental use of tarmac within Cobham village itself is said to have been far more successful. He writes: 'Only a short stretch of road was treated in the first instance, early in the spring of the present year but the results were so satisfactory that the experiment was extended....The method adopted was exceedingly simple. The surface of the road was carefully scraped and brushed ...and the tar from the local gasworks applied hot with ordinary tar brushes.....The effect has been truly astonishing. Whatever the weather the road is smooth and hard and there has been a complete absence of dust throughout the summer except for the small quantity blown by the wind from the footpaths....The cost is said to have worked out at about [a penny farthing] per square yard which is equivalent to £64 for treating a mile of road 21 ft wide.'

It was our part of Surrey's first experience of modern road building, albeit in a world of mainly horse-drawn traffic and unrecognisable monetary costs.

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Above, from The Automobile World, 5 November 1904. Motoring 112 years ago was rather different from today. No congestion, parking problems or driving licences in an era when speeding meant going faster than around 10mph.

A MATCH REPORT - 100 YEARS ON!

by GOFF POWELL

In the August *Newsletter*, I wrote about the two local battalions of the Royal Fusiliers Public Schools Regiment (UPS) who fought in World War One but also met each other one day on a football pitch at Epsom Recreation Ground.

During the 1960s and early 1970s I wrote match reports for two local football teams for the *Leatherhead Advertiser* and the *Leatherhead Reporter* newspapers, but nothing like the report that follows below. I wonder how the reporter would fare today if, say he had to report on the local derby between Manchester United and Manchester City – ‘Jolly nice goal Wayne!’ or ‘Well done Raheem, lovely ball skills!’

Just how many of these brave young men survived to tell the tale I do not know, for despite visiting the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website and because the report only gave surnames of the players, I had very little to go on. Here, then, is the original match report from *The Surrey Advertiser* on Saturday, 13 February 1915.

‘On Saturday, February 6th 1915, an exciting Association Football Match took place, it being the occasion of the Final for the Brigadier’s Challenge Cup between B Company, 20th Battalion (Leatherhead), and C Company, 21st Battalion (Ashtead),

‘The opening exchanges went in favour of the Ashtead contingent, Jenkins and Kerr especially distinguishing themselves by some fine runs on the left wing. From one of these, after about fifteen minutes’ play, Kerr opened the scoring with a good shot. B Company pressed after this, but found Ross very safe, he clearing his lines time after time again when matters looked rather dangerous.

‘Whitehead and Clegg combined well, and the former had nobody but Rolfe to beat, but his final shot from an acute angle went wide. A corner next fell to C Company and from the kick the custodian fisted out, and one of the backs kicked down the field again. Shorrocks made one or two beautiful runs after this, and Whitehead struck the post with a good shot.

‘From a throw-in Hallows pressed over to Whitehead, and he in



Above: Match between teams of the Royal Fusiliers Public Schools Regiment.

turn gave it to Clegg, who banged the ball into the net from about a dozen yards out. Shortly afterwards Shorrocks made off again, and passed to his partner, who centred well. Clegg fastened on the ball, and scored again, thus putting his company in front.

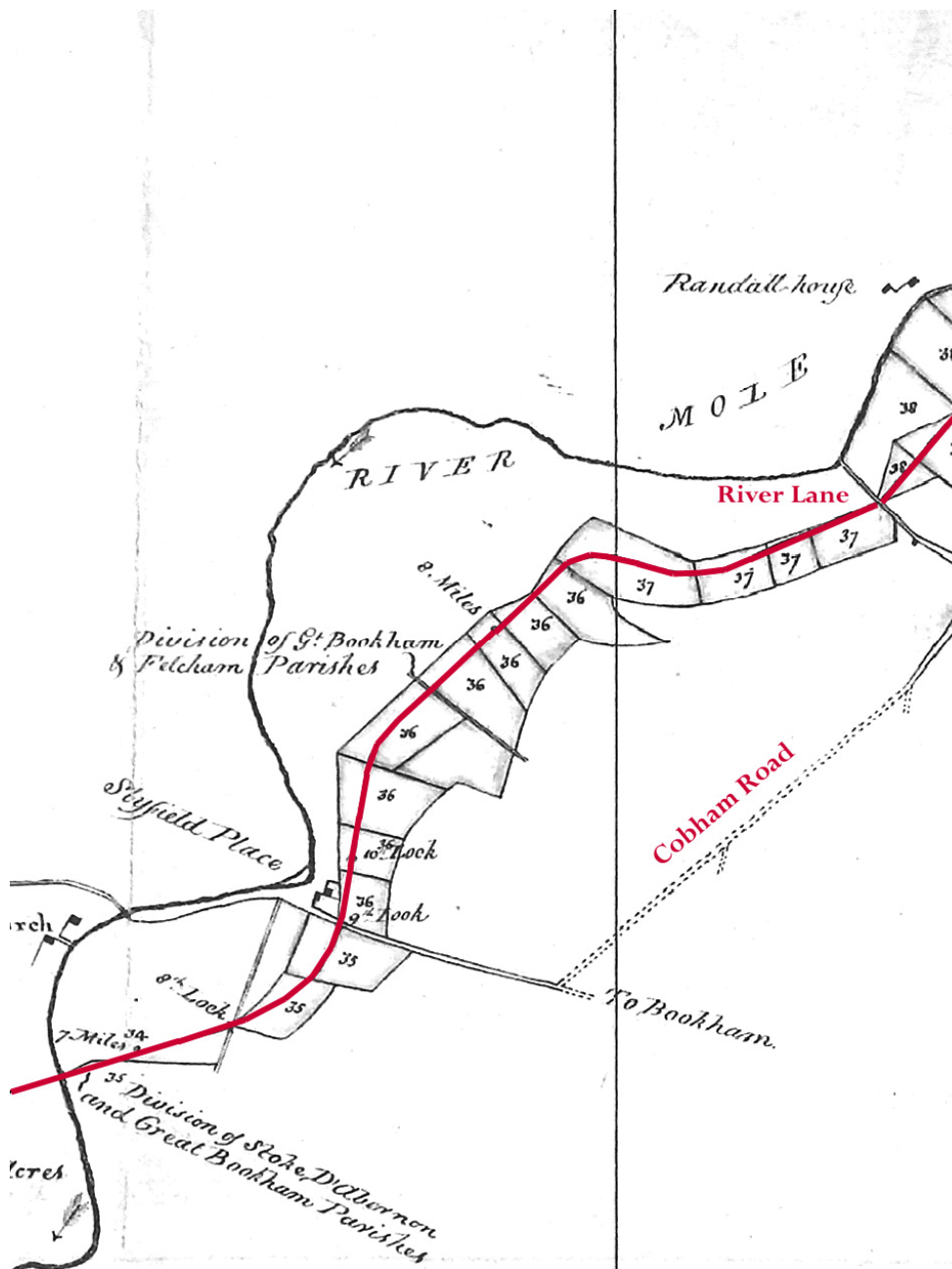
‘Ashtead tried hard to pierce their opponents’ defence, Jenkins working very hard to achieve this purpose; but Lang and Ross proved the stumbling block time after time, whilst, if they got past the backs, Saville showed himself to be very safe between the sticks. The half-time score was: B Company, 2 goals: C Company, 1 goal.

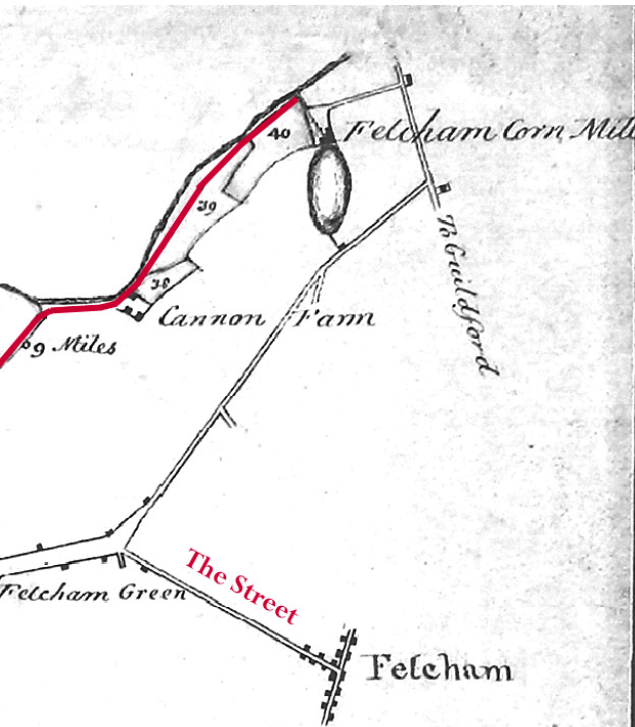
‘Soon after the re-start the B Company forwards swarmed round the Ashtead goal, and Shorrocks looked like getting through, but only a corner resulted. This was cleared; and amid great enthusiasm, Jenkins broke away on the left, and sent in a spanking shot, which Saville saved in a marvellous manner.

‘The game proceeded at a very fast pace, two corners falling to Ashtead in quick succession. Not to be denied, Leatherhead came away once more, and Hallows, obtaining the ball in a good position, gave the goalie no chance whatever with a quick shot.

‘Two goals behind, Ashtead roused themselves up, and for some time dominated the play. In less than a minute, a good combination with their forwards, Taylor reduced the lead with a splendid shot, and not long afterwards their persistence was again rewarded, Jenkins equalizing with a good shot, after a fine run.

Continued on Page 22





Walton to Fetcham Canal Proposal of 1794

Another local canal that never was

The August 2016 *Newsletter* referred to the Grand Imperial Ship Canal through Leatherhead which was proposed in 1825 but never built. It was intended to link the Thames to Portsmouth.

Earlier, in 1794, another proposed canal also failed to materialise, as JOHN MORRIS wrote in the February 2007 *Newsletter*.

That would have linked the Thames and Fetcham Mill with additional connections further south. The plan, shown left, is held at the Surrey History Centre, Woking, but was photographed by John in sections and is now within the Leatherhead Museum collection.

Continued from Page 19

‘From now until the finish the game was very exciting, both ends of the field being visited in turn. Shorrocks, Hughes, and Hallows repeatedly got away on the left, but either their final efforts were stopped by the Ashtead backs, Ross especially doing well, or they shot wide of the mark.

‘In the closing stages Jenkins went half-back for Ashtead, and this seemed to take all the sting out of their attack, as he was undoubtedly the best forward on the field. Leatherhead appreciated the change, and, despite Hughes’s knee giving way, they scored twice more, through Whitehead and Clegg, the latter putting in 3 goals.

‘B Company, - Goal, Pte. Saville; backs. Pts. Howard and Carver; halves, Ptes. Hughes, Lang, and Musgrove; forwards, Corpl. Shorrocks, Ptes. Hallows, Scholes, Clegg, and Sergt. Whitehead.

‘C Company, - Goal, Pte. Rolf; backs, Sergt. Jones and Pte. Ross; halves. Ptes. Kendrick, Mee, and Slade; forwards, Sergt. Horton. Sergt. Hales, Ptes. Taylor, Kerr, and Jenkins.

‘Referee; Mr. E. G. Gayford, secretary, Surrey County A.F.A.’



Left: Brigadier-General Gordon Gilmour, commanding officer of the Brigade, who had offered a challenge cup to be competed for by the various companies. He presented the cup to Leatherhead, who beat Ashtead 5:3, but said he had never seen a ‘more keenly fought, better contested, or better tempered game’. A large crowd witnessed the encounter, mostly in khaki uniforms.

POTTED HISTORIES: TYRELLS WOOD

For the past eight years GOFF POWELL has been compiling potted histories of places, people and other subjects in our district for the *Ashtead & Leatherhead Local Magazine* on behalf of the Society. Its distribution is limited but you can obtain a free copy at Sainsbury's information desk in Leatherhead or go to www.ashtead-leatherhead.com for recent back issues. Here is No.75 on the house Tyrells Wood, The Drive, Headley Road.



Tyrells Wood, shown above in 1909, once stood in 250 acres. The house was built around 1880 for Roger Cunliffe and designed to meet the needs of his growing family of four sons and two daughters. The estate included Highlands Farm, which he let out on short renewable leases. Cunliffe, who had banking interests, first came to the district in the 1860s and lived at Fetcham Lodge.

Tyrells Wood is a substantial red brick structure with massive chimney stacks above its gabled roofs. It was bought by the MP Henry Keswick in 1913 and sold in 1922 as a residence and sporting estate. Henry, son of Great Bookham's Lord of the Manor, William Keswick, followed his father as Member of Parliament for Epsom. On his death in 1928 he left an estate valued at £466,409 - worth an estimated £46 million at 2014 values.

In 1999 Tyrells Wood Golf Club celebrated its 75th anniversary at the site. According to the *Royal & Ancient's Golfers Handbook* for 1924, the first captain was Sir Rowland Blades, later Lord Ebbisham.

CHALK PITS AND THE A246 by ED TIMS



At the beginning of the 19th century, chalk pits were notable features alongside public roads. In the decades that followed their use was no longer required in agricultural practices or building and many have disappeared under landfill.

Often referred to as 'marl pits', they were an available source for marling fields where the soil was clay and difficult to work. The chalk was taken to the field and mixed with a quantity of the soil to form a spreadable marl which broke down the acidic nature of the soil. Often the result was a marl pit and they can still be seen as depressions in fields, sometimes supporting a group of trees.

This part of southern England has no natural stone for building. If chalk is mined to a considerable depth the chalk has a greater and stronger density. Bargate Stone, for example, was used in earlier days for foundations at the Abbots Hospital and the Royal Grammar School in Guildford. The source was Foxenden Quarry, now a car park off York Road in Guildford, where deep tunnels still exist.

Chalk layers yield hard silica flint which occur in almost all of the pits and was used extensively for building. The flint is knapped - broken to produce flat surfaces - and bonded with lime mortar which was easily compounded with quicklime, made by burning chalk in kilns.

Most of the former local chalk pits lie alongside the Guildford/Epsom road (A246) for ease of transportation. The largest is between West Clandon and Merrow where a previously derelict pit was re-opened during World War 2 and chalk taken for marling fields in Surrey areas to expand the cultivation of crops and supplement food supplies. The remaining scar is clearly identifiable.

A site at Shere Road, West Horsley, was a source for marling but also one with evidence of mesolithic man-made tools and arrow-heads from the flints.

Polepit at East Horsley was a small pit, probably a source of flint

for building by Lord Lovelace and perhaps for nearby kilns for lime burning. The nearby Chalk Lane had a deep pit, probably the source of building flints but also the site of a prehistoric flint mine which was extensively investigated by Commander K.R.U. Todd who found tunnels and a large number of primitive tools suggesting a trading site.

A pit once existed at Salmons Road, Effingham, but it is difficult to imagine its use beyond marling, perhaps for road maintenance on the switchback length of the A246.

Eastwick Road in Great Bookham was probably a private chalk pit site on the Eastwick estate. However, no evidence exists of its size or purpose as it was filled in the 1950s and buried beneath housing.

Hale Chalk Pit lay near the top of what is now Downs Way on the south side of the A246 on the edge of Norbury Park. (See Page 9, *Newsletter* February 2016). No sign remains today apart from the name Halepit Road opposite. Further along at Rectory Lane, Little Bookham, is another venue, now filled, which was probably a marling site for the lower areas of land near the River Mole.

A deep pit with precipitous sides at Kennel Lane, Fetcham, was a source of chalk for marling and possibly flint. Nearby, The Dell on the Badingham estate was also deep and I believe was the source of flint for the structure of St Mary's Church. Also in Fetcham, Hawks Hill was a large excavation with probable multi-use, including a source of flint for mesolithic man to fashion tools and arrowheads (See *Proceedings* Vol 1 No 6).

The proximity of the Harroway offered a trading route for our early ancestors and flint and flint tools may have figured in goods traded along the route. The extensive use of flint for building is illustrated in the large number of houses and cottages built on the Lovelace estate in East Horsley and the parish churches of East and West Horsley, Fetcham and Leatherhead.

There have been suggestions that some chalk was moved out of the district but logistics cast doubt on this. Marling loads were measured in horse-drawn cartloads, each approximately 35 cubic feet and applied to the land at a rate of 30 to 40 loads per acre. (Source: *Nathaniel Kent Agricultural Survey of Norfolk, 1796*) (Photo: Surrey Wildlife Trust)



*Elsie Green (1904-1997) working at the Polesden Lacey Open Air Theatre.
(Picture from The Actors are Come Hither, 1998, Philip Walton Partners)*

ORAL HISTORY

ELSIE GREEN—THE INSPIRATION

This month marks 19 years since the death of the remarkable Elsie Green, MBE. Director of the Polesden Lacey Open Air Theatre for 36 years, she was also drama therapist at Horton Hospital, Epsom, and an inspiration to many budding performers, some of whom went on to successful careers on stage and screen. Four years before her death she was interviewed by EDWINA VARDEY at her Epsom home. Here are some extracts.

I was born in a pub off Lisson Grove, Marylebone, London in 1904. Only beer was sold, the customers being mainly draymen who delivered goods arriving at Marylebone Station. I can remember the lovely large shire horses driving through the streets.

My father was the youngest son of a farmer's large family and at an early age was put into service, eventually becoming valet to Lord Caernarvon. My mother was French and a trained dressmaker. She became lady's maid to Lady Caernarvon. My mother and father met while travelling on the Riviera with Lord and Lady Caernarvon. They undertook the management of their first pub in Soho which provided them both with a home and a job.

When it was time for me to go to school my mother insisted that my father bought a small house in Hampstead so that I could go to school there and have daily healthy walks on Hampstead Heath. The pub exhibited play bills for the Coliseum and the Met in the Edgware Road, a variety playhouse where my father used to take me to see brilliant performers like Marie Lloyd, George Robey and Nellie Wallace, Dan Leno and many others.

How proud I was to be taken by my father to this red-carpeted, golden-tiered palace full of unhealthy tobacco smoke and see such engaging talent. I felt that here was real communication between audience and performers. In fact we were all one happy family.

The other great perk from displaying play bills was constant visits to the Coliseum. Half of the evening was devoted to variety turns and the second half was given over to Diaghilev's Russian ballet. This opened up another world to me. I saw Nijinsky do his famous

leap out of the window, *Le Spectre de la Rose* and many other great dances.

I attended ballet school for many years but alas I did not progress very well. The reason was varicose veins. Giving up ballet was a heart-breaking experience but happily was soon replaced by a passion for the theatre. Gerald Du Maurier in *Dear Brutus* was the first play I saw apart from the annual pantomime and *Peter Pan*. From then on a school-friend and I used to sit in the front row at the gallery of the Old Vic every Saturday where we saw actors like Ernest Milton, Harcourt Williams, the young John Gielgud and Michael Redgrave play opposite Edith Evans and others. How different Shakespeare acted at the Vic compared with the one read at school. The magic of the verse interpreted by such incomparable actors was intoxicating.

So from then on I became obsessed with the desire to become an actress. I studied at the Guildhall but failed in the final diploma examination. I was in despair when quite by chance I dropped into a speech training class run by the late Clifford Turner in the City Literary Institute in London. After three weeks of sheer bliss studying under him I passed my final exam with distinction.

Then of course I wanted to learn how to direct a play. So I asked Mr Walmingshaw, principal of the Mary Ward Settlement in Russell Square, whether if a group of experienced actors could be assembled he would agree to Mr Clifford Turner of the Central School of Speech Training being appointed as producer for plays in the repertory of the Tavistock Little Theatre. This was agreed and I became Clifford's assistant. All too soon, however, Clifford was sent all over the country on an adjudication tour and I was offered the job of director of plays in his stead. That is how it all began.

The Tavistock Little Theatre was an amateur theatre with an enormous membership of experienced actors working under several professional directors, producing a different play each week for its loyal audience at very low prices. Every aspect of drama was presented from Greek plays to bedroom farces. I had the good fortune to work on *The Ascent of F6* by Auden and Isherwood with incidental music played by Donald Swann and John Amis, and also *Murder in the Cathedral* by T S Eliot and many of George Bernard Shaw's plays. I was in the process of directing Rex Warner's translation of

The Trojan Women when the bombing in London became very serious which, though giving the play particular poignancy, necessitated the closure of the theatre.

I was evacuated with my young son to Epsom, Surrey, where I formed the Epsom Drama Group composed mostly of young men and women from the Land Army. At this time it was forbidden to use halls for public performances so we performed *Everyman* and *Murder in the Cathedral* in churches throughout Surrey. We toured many other plays in Surrey and in North Wales, Criccieth, Porthmadog, Pengelly, Caernarvonshire. I actually played Shaw's *Candida* myself on one occasion. I was a lecturer at Bangor University.

After the war at Polesden Lacey a performance of *Merry England* was given as part of the Festival of Britain. The director then left the district and the Bookham Community Association were looking for another director. The chairman of the association, the late Mrs Harrison who had seen my work at Tavistock Little Theatre, finally tracked me down at Epsom and asked me whether I would direct *As You Like It* at the Polesden Lacey Open Air Theatre the following summer. I was terrified, never having worked in the open air before, but flattered and intrigued enough to agree. The following day in a mild snow storm I staggered to Polesden Lacey in search of the theatre. It was a plateau covered in snow and surrounded by magnificent trees. A wonderful sight and an irresistible challenge.

The following spring an audition date was fixed and I was lucky enough to find Ron Kirkwood and others who spoke Shakespeare's verse as though it was their natural language. Rehearsals proceeded happily with no set, only hessian wings. As the theatre seats 2000, splendid amplification was installed but no lighting. By the end of the play it was dusk with a touch of magic, the surrounding meadow being lit by masses of glow-worms. They have never appeared since. I suppose they must have been trodden to death by the home-going audiences. But this was the beginning for me of 37 years of summer Shakespeare.

In 1964, 1965 and 1967 we were invited to give two performances of our Polesden productions at Chichester Festival Theatre in aid of their development fund. For Saturday rehearsals we were housed in a disused pub with mattresses and blankets provided by

the WVS. We worked with minimum scenery.

For the first 21 years at Polesden no play was repeated. At the beginning the audience numbered 1500 but by the time I retired they were 20,000. For the last few years Polesden has become a festival including, in addition to Shakespeare, Gilbert & Sullivan operetta, ballet, old time music hall and top concerts. A magnificent feat of organisation on the part of the local committee. Facilities for the theatre have been developed, elaborate sets designed, and a high degree of efficiency has been achieved.

At the same time as working at Polesden Lacey for the National Trust I also worked through drama with mentally disturbed patients at various mental hospitals. It was for this work, and my work with the National Trust, that I was awarded the MBE in December 1977.

From my long association with mental patients a few events stand out in my mind with special vividness. The most spectacular was when we decided to give a rehearsed reading of the play *Everyman*, in necessity minimal costume, before an audience comprised of other patients, doctors and staff. I was brought in to do this because one of the enthusiastic members of the Fabian group was a highly intelligent ex-member of the RAF and an extrovert psychopath to boot. With no job at all he learned the leading role which he played superbly.

The part of Good Deeds was played by a beautiful young girl yet sadly violent and schizophrenic with a penchant for breaking windows. To the strains of a Bach fugue I had the actors walk slowly through the audience and then up on to the stage with Good Deeds lying on a rostrum, placed draped in a simple hospital sheet, her golden hair cascading over the rostrum. There she lay, still and relaxed until it was time for her to read. It seemed to me a miracle.

When the play was over, our ex-airman, *Everyman*, presented all the members of the cast and myself with a carnation. As he never had any money, I suspect, true to his psychopathic and moral standards of ethics, he had been to the market that morning and nicked them.

For about two years I worked with a group of psychopaths who had been condemned for certain crimes and were 'doing time' at hospital. I was warned that they might be tough so it was with some trepidation that I entered the room for the first time. They had been

told that someone was coming to read and talk about plays with them and they were, I am sure, expecting a lovely young actress to turn up because on my entry the ringleader said: 'Gee, who's this old bag they've sent up?' Whereupon I replied: 'You **** off or shut up', to which he said: 'Coo, boys, she's one of us.' After that I had no trouble at all.

I expressly took roles along which I thought might arouse their social consciences, Galsworthy's *Silver Box*, *One Door for the Rich*, *Another for the Poor*, *Strike*, *The Stubbornness of the Capitalist Boss and the Union Leader*, *Leading to Tragedy for Both Parties*, advocating the need for discussion and compromise. Ernst Toller's *Masses* and Mann's *The Right to Strike*. They were enthusiastic and read with gusto. We all became very friendly. But I'm afraid my pathetic attempt at spiritual enlightenment was not very successful. When some of them were about to be discharged I enquired what they were going to do on release. 'Well, go back to crime of course. Who wants a nine to five job?' Who indeed?

I've often been touched by the instinctive sympathy which patients have for each other, accepting each other's idiosyncracies and abnormalities quite naturally. The so-called 'sane' have much to learn from the so-called 'mad'.

I remember in particular one neurotic patient amongst the group, suffering mostly from chronic depression. He told me that he wanted to write film scripts. Could I help him get an introduction? I said no but advised him to try to get work in a film studio, scrubbing the floor, tea-boy - anything - and then to keep his eyes and ears open. He was horrified and said: 'What about my right to happiness?' I replied: 'What makes you think you have a right to happiness? You must work your passage.'

Incidentally he is now quite a successful playwright. Many years later he met a friend of mine who wrote to me quoting what he had said about me. 'She was like a beacon in the very dark days of my life. I shall always be thankful. I mean that from the bottom of my heart because in those days there was no-one. They were the darkest days of my life. She was wonderful. She pointed the way and God knows there was little light in those days.' I hope not to be thought immodest, quoting this but you see it is the only accolade I

have ever had.

On retiring from Polesden I founded Evergreen Productions and presented *Murder in the Cathedral*, *St Joan* and *Othello* at various venues in Surrey and at the Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Bankside, Southwark, London, in aid of Shakespeare's Globe building fund. I hope to be directing *King Lear* there next spring. One of the most gratifying things about my work with Shakespeare is thatfor some of my actors it has been a springboard for a career in the professional theatre.

Edwina Vardey: When you produced *Henry V* you said it was difficult to get money for scenery so you had two banners.

Two huge banners, one red and one blue, representing the camps on each side of the stage. We had two tents [representing] the army of France and the English. I had great difficulty in persuading the Committee to let me buy this extremely wide material as it was quite expensive. They said: 'Could you cut it in half?' but then it would look like two silly little strips. So I said: 'Look, I will pay for it myself. I must have it.' At last they agreed. But the loveliest thing about that production was that I recruited boys for the army from Epsom College, Glyn Grammar School and St John's School in Leatherhead. They were recruited for the army.

I said to the tent people: 'How long does it take to get a tent up?' They said: 'Oh, about ten minutes.' I said: 'Well I want it done in ten seconds.' They said: 'Right, get the boys in the bushes with the tents all ready', the pegs already having been set in the ground with the boys - in order to rush on - knowing exactly which pegs to go to and it was up. It worked but what I hadn't bargained for was the hushed whispers of the boys saying: 'Gosh, you ass, you clod, you' All this was going on and it was so lovely I didn't mind.

Edwina Vardey: Do you enjoy putting something on in the open or has it got huge drawbacks?

Oh yes, I enjoy it enormously but my goodness the price you have to pay but then you have to suffer for everything you enjoy, don't

you? The discomfort of rain, midges and all that but you take all that in your stride. But the main difference for the actors is size if you like. Your gestures must be larger, simpler, your voice must be projected more and even though the application is splendid you need to do everything, relish everything, give yourself time. You are handling something magical. Not to have a special voice or a special approach but to have a special love, if you like. It's got to be done with understanding - love, enjoyment relish.

There's one little [Polesden Lacey anecdote] which I treasure. It was when I did *The Midsummer Night's Dream*. It was before the days when we boasted of portaloos. We merely had Sani-Cans for the actors and the audience. There was a diminutive fairy, a dear little girl, who sitting on the Sani-Can nearly fell right down into it. She came up with her little skirt stained and we had to cut it short and she went on with a skirt of about half an inch but so pretty was her little bum that nobody minded at all.

Edwina Vardey: Are you pleased with the way Polesden Lacey has become an institution?

I think that's delightful. We used to call it the poor man's Glyndebourne - and not so poor with the champagne corks popping! But no, I find that absolutely charming. To come to Polesden and see the people already sitting in the grounds. It seems part of the English scene. Even if it's not a very fine day they do it. So endearing, you feel they have come to share that which you yourself loved.

Edwina Vardey: Are any plays unsuitable for Polesden?

No, not Shakespeare because he wrote for the open air anyway. He didn't want changes of scene because the audience was standing around. When it was raining, God knows how. When you think that little boys played Cleopatra, it takes your breath away. I've cut to make it acceptable because knowing an audience can't take more than about two and three quarter hours but they must have played for three and half or four hours. How could they do it?

Extra background from the book *The Actors are Come Hither - A Tribute to Elsie Green*, by Philip Walton and Ronald Sly. Published 1998 by Edward Thompson at Philip Walton Partners, Coggers, Leatherhead Road, Oxshott, Surrey KT22 0ET. Copyright: Philip Walton. Edward Thomson (1917-2001) was a friend of Elsie from 1943 when he was in one of her productions, *The Ascent of F6*.

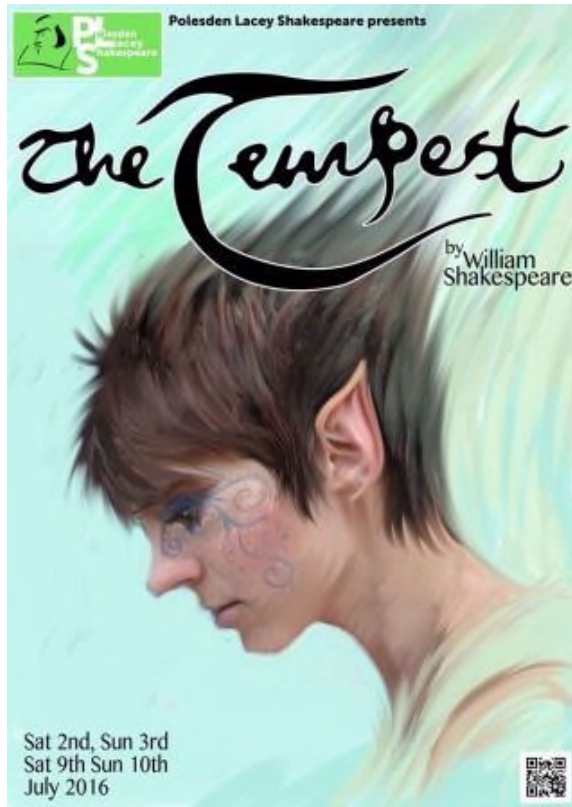
Elsie met Edward George Barnett (Jay) at a dance at the City Literary Institute where they had both been attending a course on the History of British drama given by Elsie Fogerty, founder of the Central School of Speech and Drama. She was Laurence Olivier's 'most admired' teacher. Jay and Elsie were married in 1935 and the musician Mantovani was their best man. He was a friend and neighbour in Bloomsbury. The Barnetts moved into an attic flat in Parliament Hill Fields, Hampstead. Jay was a clerk with a big cable firm and Elsie a secretary and translator. To supplement their wages they carried out surveys for Mass Observation, one of the earliest firms analysing public opinion.

Their son Michael Andre Barnett was born 18 November 1938. He attended Sherwood School, Epsom, a progressive school with two of [Labour leader] George Lansbury's grandchildren among the pupils. It was run by Chris and Peggy Barclay, she was a sister of Kingsley Martin, Editor of *The New Statesman and Nation*. 23 St Martin's Avenue, Epsom - many years later the base of Evergreen Productions - was a dormitory belonging to the school. The Barnetts lived there during the war. Jay died age 62 on Christmas Day 1968 at a hospital in Banstead. He had suffered from angina.

There are two plaques at Polesden Lacey beside the original small stage of the Open Air Theatre. One commemorates the Bookham Community Association's presentation of the stage to the National Trust in association with the Festival of Britain on 30 June 1951. The other plaque celebrates Elsie Green as director of the Open Air Theatre from 1953 to 1988.

Elsie worked with Polesden Lacey Open Air Theatre for 36 years, her last production there was *Othello* in 1988. The same play was also her last production at The Globe Museum Theatre in 1992.

Elsie's legacy lives on, with Shakespeare's The Tempest performed at this year's Polesden Lacey Open Air Theatre.



She had a stroke in 1996 and was taken to Epsom General Hospital on 13 November, afterwards moving to Epsom Beaumont Nursing Care Centre. From there she was accompanied one evening to the Southwark Playhouse to see a performance of Brecht's *In the Jungle of the Cities*.

On 9 February 1997 she was taken to Epsom Playhouse for a party in her honour with music, anecdotes, and cabaret turns. Thanking everyone she said: 'Polesden has been the really meaningful thing in my life. In my turn, in my fashion, I have loved you all.'

She died on 6 November 1997. Her name is engraved in stone in the foyer of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. She had been an excited guest at its opening ceremony after donating generously to the Globe Appeal.



ORAL HISTORY: Edwina Vardey
Author: *The History of Leatherhead*

Interview: 2.25 pm, Thursday, 9 June 2016.
Venue: Monkswell, The Priory, Leatherhead
Continued from the August Newsletter

After school I attended Kingston Arts School and did a graphic arts course. But with the death of my father at the early age of 49 I had to leave and took a place in Odhams Press as a layout artist in their magazines studio in Bow Street, London. Then with the war I was called up, which we all were at that age. I joined the Navy as a VAD Red Cross nurse. After only 50 hours of training I was sent to Plymouth Hospital and then to Inverary, Scotland, and finally to Scapa Flow.

Returning to Odhams Press I was asked if I wanted to go back to the studio but I realised I was a failed artist and I asked to go into their book department where I worked as an editor until my marriage. I left and teamed up with my husband, an artist, as designer and I was editor.

How did you get involved with the L&DLHS and your book?

I didn't set out to be involved but I was invited to 'run my eye' over the work they had done in preparation for a history of Leatherhead. Because I was an editor I began to edit it and in the end I took it apart and they allowed me to begin all over again. My husband designed the book so there we were, involved.

Did it take a very long time?

It took actually nine years but I had a team in the end. I asked people to take on certain parts of Leatherhead and research them and then write it up. I would then co-opt it into the book but I gave them all credit.

Did you use any of the oral history interviews that you were conducting at that time? These were carried out from 1979-2002.

Oh yes. Having got them it was easy because you could always refer to them in the researches.

Can you remember how you decided who to interview?

I do. One told me of another. So you would have somebody talking about Ashtead and then I would say, did they meet up with people from Leatherhead? They gave me the name of somebody else and all these old people were handed on, one from another.

Including the famous people?

No, not necessarily. I rang them up. Some were very pleased, occasionally worried but I reassured them and I also promised to show them what I had written, which I did.

Please tell me about the interview with Elsie Green.

The most important thing was to get her to talk and she was quite old. She went swimming in her garden every day of the year, winter and summer. I was fascinated by that but she didn't want to talk about it. She had founded the Open Air Theatre at Polesden Lacey and quite a few famous actors began their careers there. She supported them quite a lot.

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Archival Material

The Society's archival material including documents, illustrations
and maps, may be accessed through the following members:

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Historical Enquiry Service

This tries to answer questions about the histories of Leatherhead,
Ashtead, Bookham and Fetcham submitted via the Museum.



READERS' QUERIES



In the August *Newsletter* we asked if anyone could explain the photo shown left. In fact it was taken by Ginny Leary in Ashted at 7.22pm on 8 September 2015.

The camera view is roughly from north to south with a sunset breaching through a thick stand of beech trees to the west. The location is an oak tree a few hundred yards up the bridleway extending Crampshaw Lane towards Headley Court.



The tool above from the Museum is not a honey drizzler as has been suggested but we are still unsure what it really is. Any ideas?

DORKING CONCERTGOERS AT THE DORKING HALLS

Philharmonia Orchestra

Saturday 21 January 2017

Dorking Halls 7.30pm

Beethoven Leonore Overture No.3

Mendelssohn Concerto for Violin & Piano

in D minor

Dvorák Symphony No.8 in G major

Clemens Schuldt Conductor

Zsolt-Tihamér Visontay Violin

Min-Jung Kym Piano



Photo: Benjamin Estovega

Piatti String Quartet Series

Sunday 12 February 2017

Dorking Halls 3.00pm

Haydn, Mozart & Brahms with **Anna Hashimoto** Clarinet

Also **Sunday 5 March & Saturday 22 April 2017**



Photo: Benjamin Estovega

Tickets from Dorking Concertgoers' Box Office 01306 740619 or Dorking Halls 01306 881717

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