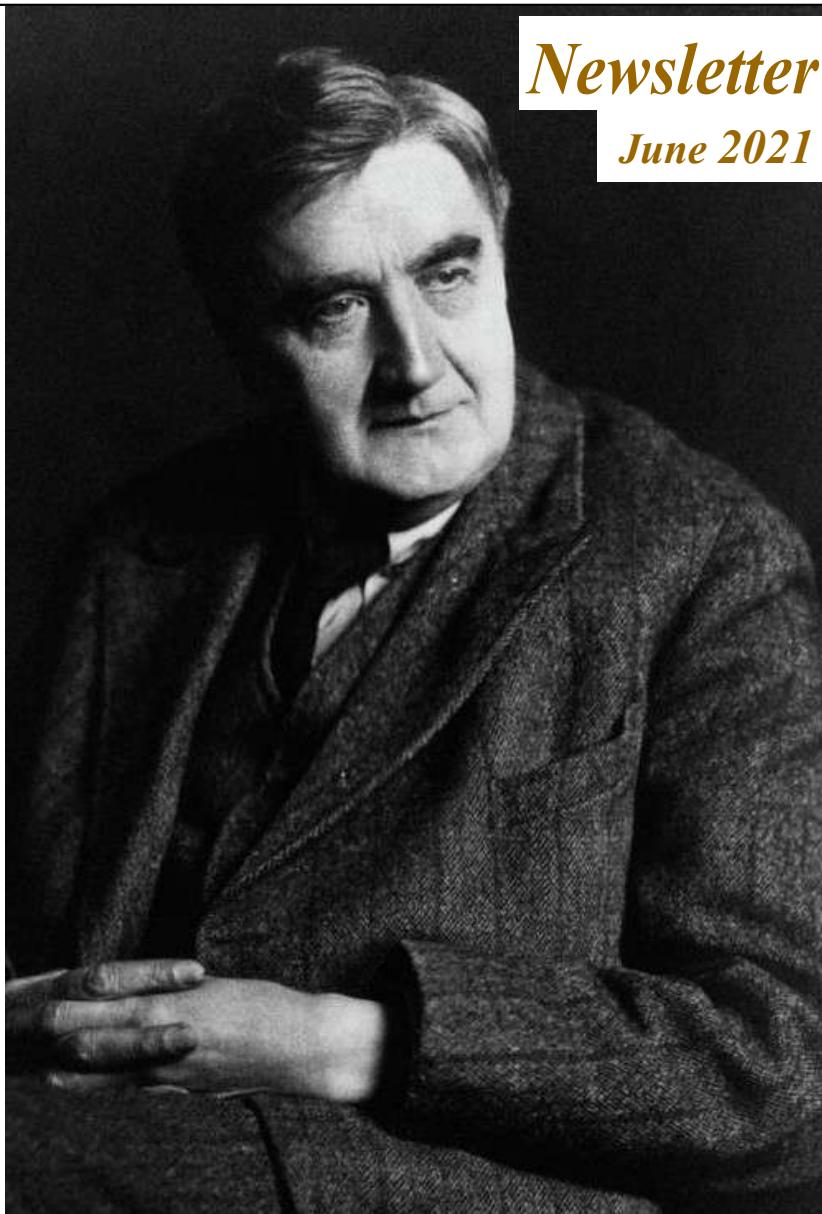




*Leatherhead & District Local History Society
covering Ashted, the Bookhams, Fetcham, Headley,
Mickleham and Leatherhead*

Newsletter

June 2021



INDEX TO ARTICLES

Title	Page
Editorial	3
Chairman's Report	4
Programme of Future Activities	5
News from the Museum	6
Lecture Report: The Locks of Norbury	7
Lecture Report: The Secret History of Kingston, Part 2	12
Lecture Report: A History of the Grange	14
Feature: The Hart-Dykes in Leatherhead	16
Book Review: Unravelling the Yarn	18
Feature: A Tale of Vaughan Williams	20
Feature: G Astridge & Sons of Ashted	25
Feature: Building Leatherhead Leisure Centre	30
Feature: Dowager Viscountess Dawnay	37
Officers of the Society	38
Quarry House	40
Dorking Concertgoers Advert	40

Cover: Composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), brought up at Leith Hill Place and later resident of Dorking for 20 years. See feature on Page 20 following an oral history interview in 2002.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS (1 Jan-31 Dec 2021)

Ordinary membership for this year is £10. Associate and Student memberships remain at £6. A renewal form is again provided with this *Newsletter* for the few who have yet to renew. It can also be downloaded from our website at www.leatherheadhistory.org (Go to *Society > Miscellany > Paperwork*). The fee for the Friends of the Museum remains £3 or £5 for a couple. If paying by cheque is a problem please contact me by email for our bank details so you can pay online via your bank or building society. A fully completed form is still required, by post or email. **FRANK HASLAM**



EDITORIAL

Welcome to this edition of the *Newsletter*, packed as usual with some great features and showing just how strongly the L&DLHS has weathered the pandemic storm and survives to face another day.

Thanks to our online presence and cooperation with Dorking Local History Group, we have continued providing regular fascinating lectures. You can read the reports of several of these in this *Newsletter* while checking Page 5

to see some of what is still to come this summer. More reports will appear in September.

Two guest contributors, Ann Williams and Robert Swade, have written respectively on the historic Ashted firm, Astridge (Page 25), and the construction of Leatherhead's popular leisure centre (Page 30). Our Chairman and Ashted archivist has followed up an article in the March *Newsletter* with research on the Hart-Dyke silk worm story (Page 16), supported by Anne Fraser's book review. Our President and Fetcham archivist responded to an enquiry about one of the area's more remarkable houses (Page 40), and as well as his fine lecture on the Locks of Norbury, Bill Whitman has shed more light on a query made ten years ago (Page 37).

The cover story of this edition concerns one of Mole Valley's most famous past residents, the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, who was mentioned prominently in one of Edwina Vardey's classic oral history interviews nearly 20 years ago and about whom a revelation appears. You can read about that on Page 20.

We are hoping to see the Museum reopening this year following a lockdown in which essential work has continued thanks to the Friends and both Museum managers. Exhibitions are already planned there and if we can fill the various Society vacancies we have faced in recent times, we should be set for a well deserved recovery in future years.

TONY MATTHEWS



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

In terms of how the Society is operating and who does what, nothing has changed significantly since the last *Newsletter*. This is, of course, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and, in particular, being locked down once again.

As I write, a number of decisions need to be taken as conditions improve, about bringing in new volunteers and re-opening our Museum. Some of these decisions have a legal twist to them and it is my job to spot these and make sure the Trustees are properly involved.

On the other hand it is quite difficult to draft complete, well-constructed Executive Committee agendas when the decisions sought are more in line with pandemic restrictions than tradition. We will be contacting members shortly about our 2021 Annual General Meeting on the year 2020. This is a roundabout way of apologising for not yet providing decisions to you in this *Newsletter*.

We have a number of new volunteers who, I am sure, will be of great value to the Society over the coming years. However, it is much easier to identify someone for a role than to get them working effectively. The way to do it is to start small and with informal responsibility so that a volunteer can become comfortable in a task and fully understand what they are dealing with before signing on.

For example, I am still in the midst of the archiving task I started several years ago. This is in part because new material is discovered on an almost daily basis. You will see on Page 16 an article on one research project I have recently undertaken, as yet incomplete. This is a Leatherhead story with a mysterious and, as yet, unverified Ashted connection, that has morphed into a district-wide interest involving a past local government structure and a lingering social framework which is less prevalent today.

Between *Newsletters*, we will keep you informed of current planning and developments via our usual emails. Anyway, back to the future, I know we have all been very careful to stay Covid-free and should resign ourselves to continue to do so for little while yet. Stay safe!

JOHN ROWLEY

PROGRAMME OF FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Online talks from the Dorking Local History Group and L&DLHS are available via the [Surrey History MeetUp website](#). Register as soon as possible and take your seat early as they fill up very quickly. If you miss them, we may be able to email you a link to the recording which will be available for a short period.

Monday, 7 June, 7.15pm for 7.30pm

RICHARD III IN SURREY

Mike Page of Surrey History Centre on how the dramatic events of his reign 1483-85 affected Surrey, shedding light on reasons for his downfall.

Monday, 21 June, 7.15pm for 7.30pm

THE PAST ON GLASS

James Crouch talking about the more than 10,000 glass plate photo images in the collection of photographic artist David Knights-Whittome, who owned studios in Sutton and Epsom c1904-18 and held a Royal Warrant. The collection in Surrey Libraries offers a unique insight into the lives of thousands of local residents, schools, colleges and theatre groups, weddings and house parties, country houses and other institutions across the UK and Europe. It also includes many WW1 soldiers in uniform, a lost generation who either lived or were stationed locally before their postings. James will discuss digitising the collection and to trying to identify those shown. A registration link is to come in early June for this L&DLHS event.

Monday, 5 July, 7.15pm for 7.30pm

DEEPDENE HOUSE

Alexander Bagnell tells of the once grandest of all Dorking estates, owned by the Hope banking family. Demolished 1967.

Monday, 16 August, 7.15pm for 7.30pm

SEARCHING FOR INSPECTOR WILLIAM DONALDSON (1807-55)

Henry Pelham, Inspector Donaldson's great great grandson, talks about the first serving policeman to be murdered on duty in Surrey.

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

Although maintenance has continued at the Museum, it has been closed to the public since 2019 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. However as this subsides we hope to re-open in July/August for a three-months trial period on Saturdays only. Numbers will be restricted, entry controlled and social distancing in place.

The new, cast aluminium blue plaque in memory of late L&DLHS Chairman and President Linda Heath, has been installed on the west wall of the Museum, overlooking the garden. We plan a formal unveiling, with the wellhead, in September.

The Friends continue to operate, steward and fund-raise for the Museum on behalf of the Society, although more volunteers are still needed and the Friends chairmanship remains vacant. Minor maintenance by the Monday group volunteers has continued both inside and out and some important specialist contract work has also been undertaken. The mid-bay partition on the first floor has been reduced to open up the roof zone to enhance the spatial impact. The electrical improvements have been completed and certified, and the storage heaters have been stripped down and repaired. Other minor repairs, include re-pointing of courtyard paving and a new door to the out-building. A specialist fire safety audit has also been done.

The Hollis Room, our WW2 showpiece for three years, is having an exciting makeover based on a 1960s teenager theme. Our exhibition this summer was to have featured paintings by the late John Ainley, a founder of the Leatherhead Art Club, but this has been deferred to 2022. Instead, the local Buildings of Interest in aqua-tint prints (watercolours) by John Hassell and son 1780-1850 will continue until the autumn, to be followed by a repeat of the very popular 2019 Heritage Weekend display of local historic maps.

We have tried to retain a lively display in the Museum's front bay window during the lockdowns. Each month a local history project has been mounted which seems to attract much interest from passers-by. Do keep looking. Indeed, if you have a family story, pictures, photos, information or mementos that might assist the Society, please do contact us.

PETER HUMPHREYS and DUNCAN MACFARLANE

LECTURE REPORT



THE LOCKS OF NORBURY

BILL WHITMAN told the story of Frederica Lock of Norbury, her family and friends, in the January Zoom lecture.

Norbury Park lies on the west bank of the River Mole, opposite Mickleham. Beyond the valley is steeply sloping, heavily wooded land, running up to and beyond the brow of the hill.

In 1770 there was a farm-house and the old priory on the river land while the hill behind was covered with yew, beech, some walnut and box. Britain was at war for most of the time, usually against the French. Wealth mattered. Land was being enclosed and gentlemen did not work. The eldest son inherited, the second joined the army, the third the church. Daughters could be married off if you could afford to provide a dowry.

William Lock (1732-1810) was illegitimate but inherited a considerable sum on his father's death. He then disappeared to the continent and returned with a good appreciation of the arts. Not subject to the then common vices of gambling and excessive drinking, he married Frederica Schaub (1750-1832) in 1767 in Marylebone. He was 35, she was 17 but they were always very fond of each other.

Frederica's father, Swiss-born Sir Luke Schaub, had rendered considerable service to the German-speaking King George I as a

translator and confidential agent in foreign negotiations. The Locks started building a house in Portman Square, London, and while it was in progress, went off to Italy for some years. By the time they returned to England in 1775 they had four children: William (1767-1847), Charles (1770-1804), George (1771-1864) and new baby Augusta. Two more were to follow.

Lock had bought the park at Norbury in 1774 and through his friend, the banker and future son-in-law, John Angerstein, built a house overlooking the River Mole and Box Hill. It was known for its drawing room with frescoes, unique in England. John Timbs wrote: *'Mr Lock's painted room soon became the subject of much conversation among lovers of the picturesque, and has long been a powerful object of attraction especially as it is the only successful attempt of the kind in this country.'*

In around 1780 Lock lost £20,000 from a failed loan and the family moved permanently to Norbury, selling their London home.

The Locks' sons were all educated at Cheam. William, the eldest was a precocious young man with a skill for sketching portraits which were highly commended by knowledgeable critics. However he lacked the talent to carry this through to capturing character in paint and after a tour of Italy he seems to have abandoned the effort.

Nevertheless he was later involved in a 'Committee of Taste' set up in 1805 to design a memorial to Lord Nelson in the Guildhall. It was he who urged that the design proposals all be referred to the Royal Academy or other artists best qualified to make judgements. In the end he was himself one of three judges trusted to make the final decision. He married a society beauty, Miss Elizabeth Jennings, and in time inherited the estate.

All but one of the Locks' other children had conventional lives. George went into the Church, the girls married well. However Charles the second son was different. Used to a standard of living he could not afford, he had little training or inclination to work, although he did spend a year or so in a counting house. He married Cecilia Ogilvie, daughter of the Duchess of Leinster. After the Duke, her first husband, died, the Duchess married her sons' tutor, and Cecilia was among their subsequent children.

Cecilia's half brother was Major Edward Fitzgerald who became



Above left: William Lock (1732-1810). Above right: Frederica (1750-1832) with two of her children.

heavily involved with the United Irishmen, a revolutionary group founded by Wolf Tone, to fight for Irish independence. He was shot while being arrested and with his wound untended, died in prison. His reputation tainted the rest of the family including Cecilia, who bore Charles two daughters.

Charles obtained a post as consul to the Kingdom of Naples while Nelson was recuperating there after the Battle of the Nile in 1798. He enjoyed the hospitality of the Ambassador, Lord Hamilton and his wife Emma, Nelson's mistress. Despite this, Charles wrote of Lady Hamilton: *'...that superficial, grasping vulgar minded woman..... the power she possesses over him and Lord Nelson. The extravagant love has made him the laughing stock of the whole fleet.'*

The Queen of Naples happened to be a great friend of Emma's and both women entertained a dislike of Charles Lock who had limited resources and was suspected of republican sympathies. Cecilia was also pretty and the two were jealous of her. Charles wrote further: *'We have in Lady Hamilton the bitterest enemy you can imagine.'*

Unsurprisingly, he and Nelson fell out over another matter and Charles had to ask for a transfer. He wrote finally of Emma: *'That infamous woman is at the bottom of all the mischief which has rendered my stay so uncomfortable for the last six months.'* He was being reassigned to Egypt when he caught a fever and died in Malta. What he would have thought of his brother's later role in the memorial to Lord Nelson we can only speculate.

Reverting to Norbury, back in 1784 Frederica Lock first met the novelist Fanny Burney (1752-1840) in London. Fanny Burney, third daughter of Dr Charles Burney, a musician and author, had considerable success with two novels. The first, *Evelina*, published anonymously in 1778, became the talk of the town. Everyone, even the King, tried to work out who the unknown author could be. She met Mrs Thrale of Streatham whose husband was owner of the Anchor Brewery in Southwark, and through her, Samuel Johnson, Joshua Reynolds, Richard Sheridan and many other intellectuals. *Cecilia*, her second novel, published in 1782, was also well received. Samuel Johnson said: *'Sitting with Miss Burney makes me very proud today.'*

After meeting Frederica Lock, Fanny wrote: *'The sweet and most bewitching Mrs Lock called upon me in the evening with her son George. She does truly interest both head and heart...she was so kind, so caressing, so soft; pressed me so much to fix a time for going to Norbury. What a charm London has lost for me by her departure, sweet creature that she is, born and bred to dispense pleasure and delight to all who know her.'*

When later staying at Norbury she wrote: *'Our mornings if fine are to ourselves as Mr Lock rides out. We have two books in public reading: Mme De Sevigny's letters and Cook's last voyage. Mrs Lock reads the French, myself the English. Our conversations too, are such as I could almost wish to last forever.'*

In 1786 Fanny became assistant Wardrobe Mistress to Queen Charlotte, a job she disliked, in part because she never knew when she would be needed to attend the Queen. Frederica Lock used to write daily to Fanny while she was at Windsor but Fanny could not invite the Locks to visit her without the Wardrobe Mistress's permission.

Susan Burney/Phillips, Fanny's sister, lived in Mickleham and was

also a friend of the Locks. On one occasion she and the Locks read a poem by an extraordinary young man from Ayrshire - Robert Burns - as well as Fanny's second novel.

In 1792 a colony of French aristocratic exiles came to Juniper Hall and the Locks welcomed them all to Norbury. General Alexandre D'Arblay joined them later. He had been commander of the guard when King Louis XVI escaped from the Louvre.

He and Fanny wrote to each other to practise their respective languages. In February 1793, Fanny wrote: *'Monsieur D'Arblay is one of the most delightful characters I ever met, for openness, probity, intellectual knowledge and un-hackneyed manners.'*

He had little money but Frederica told Fanny: *'Mr Lock is of the opinion that £100/year might do as it does for many a curate.'*

Fanny married Alexandre D'Arblay in Mickleham in 1793 with the Locks and Susan present. The newly weds first lived in Bookham and built a house in Westhumble funded by Fanny's third novel, *Camilla*, on land given to them by Mr Lock. Fanny's baby was christened Alexandre at St Nicolas Church, Great Bookham, by Rev Samuel Cooke, godfather to another novelist, Jane Austen.

There is no doubt about the popularity of both William and Frederica Lock. A neighbour, Mrs Delaney, said: *'Mr Lock is esteemed one of the most perfect characters living; his lady's outward form and amiable disposition are truly angelic.'* The French exile Madame de Stael wrote: *'Sweet image of Norbury, return to remind me that a pure happiness can exist on earth. I thank them for having loved me.'*

Later, Charles's widow, Cecilia, wrote to her daughters: *'I know how happy dearest Grandmama would make you. I always thought her the most delightful as well as one of the most perfect human beings. Thank her for her goodness in having you at that most delightful Norbury.'*

However tragedy came in 1806 when a carriage overturned at the turning from Leatherhead to Norbury Park on the way to visit Frederica. Caroline, Princess of Wales, was inside and survived but a companion, Miss Harriet Cholmondeley, was killed. The story is recalled on a memorial plaque at Leatherhead parish church.

Frederica left Norbury after William her husband died in 1810. William Lock the younger sold the estate after buying back the home the d'Arblays had built, for less than the building cost.

LECTURE REPORT

A STORY FROM THE SECRET HISTORY OF KINGSTON, PART 2

In February, tour guide and author JULIAN McCARTHY presented the second part of his *Secret History of Kingston upon Thames* in the Zoom lecture series. The first part was given last October and reported in the December 2020 *Newsletter*. This time he added lots more material. Among this was the following story.



*Above: Lady Anne Saville
(1864-1927)*

Princess Anne of Lowenstein-Wertheim-Freudenberg, also known as Lady Anne Saville, lived in Thames Ditton and was a great niece of Alexander Raphael who built St Raphael's Catholic Church in Kingston in 1846-48.

She didn't like crossing water and invented an automatically balancing bed which she claimed prevented sea sickness. Her passion was flying and having befriended a World War 1 ace, Captain Leslie Hamilton, later flew with him in air race competitions.

She heard that her friend and a Colonel Frederick Minchin planned to repeat John Alcock and Arthur Brown's first air crossing of the Atlantic in 1919 but travelling from east to west, which had not yet been successfully achieved. By financing the venture, she convinced them to let her become the first woman to cross the Atlantic or 'fly the sea', as she said. She was 63 and the destination was Ottawa, setting off from Upavon, Wiltshire. The plane was the *Saint Raphael*.

She arrived for the takeoff at 7.30am in September 1927, dressed in purple leather knee-breeches with matching jacket, a black crush black silk stockings and high-heeled fur-lined boots. 'I am proud to be the first woman to attempt the crossing,' she told reporters.



*Above: Lady Anne astride
her wicker chair
at the rear of
the cockpit.*

*Right: Plaque at
St Raphael's Church
commemorating her
tragic journey.*



She strapped herself into a wicker chair placed at the back of the cockpit and placed her only luggage, two hat boxes, underneath.

At 9.44pm an American tanker sighted the aircraft about 800 miles west of Galway. At around 6am the next morning a Dutch steamer reported seeing a white light travelling eastward in the sky about 420 miles east-south-east of New York. If it was the *St Raphael* it was too far south of its intended route and was flying out into the Atlantic, suggesting that they were hopelessly lost. The aircraft was never seen again.

LECTURE REPORT

A HISTORY OF THE GRANGE

The Grange Centre in Bookham today provides homes, skills and care for some 130 adults with learning disabilities. The site in Rectory Lane pre-dates 1600 and was the subject of a fascinating Zoom lecture by VIVIEN WHITE in March.

She showed how the original building was a yeoman's house, was then used as cottages for farm labourers, was transformed into a gentleman's residence in the 19th century, and was sold to the School of Stitchery of Lace, forerunner of the present charity, in the 20th. The 500 years of its history are filled with human interest stories and Vivien hopes to complete a book on The Grange later this year, if archives open to allow her to complete the research.

In the meantime, Eloise Appleby, today's chief executive officer of The Grange, is currently training hard for a sponsored 95-mile walk in Scotland in late June to raise funds for the charity. It was hit hard by the Covid-19 restrictions and she will be walking the West Highland Way.

Vivien's 45-minute talk explained why The Grange has always technically been in Great Bookham although situated right on the boundary with the neighbouring parish of Little Bookham. She used historical maps to show that while jutting into Little Bookham, it was probably built on that spot to be close to the strips of land in common fields overlooked by and belonging to the original owner.

One early owner was Henry Collins, a rector of Little Bookham church half a mile away. He was the son of a mercer from Kingston-upon-Thames and probably the first rector of the church with a university degree. He bought the property with a legacy from his father but died in an epidemic leaving a wife and young family. After the children grew up, the property was sold to a local yeoman.

It was occupied by farm labourers until around 1850. In 1795 a rich London gentleman, Thomas Seawell, who was already renting a house nearby, bought it together with the land to use as a farm but did not live there. His great-grandson developed the building into a substantial residence and named it The Grange. This he sold to a wealthy London solicitor, Arthur Bird, at the end of the 19th century



Left: The Grange as it appeared in 1910 when Arthur Bird lived there. It later became the School of Stitchery and Lace.

Below: Arthur Bird and his family. He was a major local property owner and competed with the temperance campaigner, Mary Chrystie.



and Bird then extended the house. He also bought other property in Bookham and even had the route of Rectory Lane moved in order to give The Grange a lawn in front of it and a grand entrance.

The School of Stitchery of Lace, established to give employment to nurses injured in the First World War, moved there in 1938. The name changed in the 1970s and it became a registered care home in the 1980s, encouraging disabled adults to live more independent and fulfilling lives. Please support Eloise's sponsored walk via <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com>.

FEATURE

THE HART-DYKES IN LEATHERHEAD

By JOHN ROWLEY

The March 2021 *Newsletter* included a report of Edwina Vardey's 1981 oral history interview with the Granger sisters who remembered the future producer of silk for the Royal Family, Lady Zoë Hart-Dyke (1896-1975), starting up in silkworm processing at Tyrrells Wood, Leatherhead.

In her 1988 book *Leatherhead - A History*, Edwina adds that more space was eventually needed and a small out-factory was opened near The Warren, Epsom Road, Ashted. However the processing of silk worms led to a foul smell intolerable to the neighbours and the factory had to close after one of them, Lady Duckham, took out a High Court injunction. Lady Hart-Dyke then moved production to the Goblin site but her husband, Sir Oliver Hart-Dyke, had earlier inherited Lullingstone Castle in Kent and they later moved both home and silkworm production there after many years in Leatherhead district.

Research in the British Newspaper Archive has revealed much about the Hart-Dykes' contribution to Leatherhead society during their years here. Zoë Millicent Bond first married Oliver Hart-Dyke on 29 July 1921 in a secretive register office wedding. His elder brother was to have inherited the baronetcy and Lullingstone but died on 27 June 1922. A month later on 29 July Zoë and Oliver had a second wedding in church despite being in mourning.

They appear to have lived at The Wilderness, Tyrrells Wood, from 1922-1939. Their first son Derek was born 4 December 1924. Oliver inherited Lullingstone Castle on the death of his father, Sir William Hart-Dyke, on 3 July 1931. It was actually a mansion rather than a castle, although boasting a castellate gatehouse. They may have used it immediately for some aspect of the silk manufacturing business while still living in Leatherhead.

The *Surrey Advertiser* reported on 6 February 1932 that a car belonging to Sir Oliver Hart-Dyke had been in collision with a post office van at the junction of Church Road and Church Street. The van was driven by Albert George Holder of Stoke Road, Fetcham, while the driver of the private car was Frederick Ernest Baker,

presumably the Hart-Dykes' chauffeur. Both escaped unhurt, but the vehicles were extensively damaged.

Another *Surrey Advertiser* report on 9 April 1932 covered fund-raising for the Leatherhead Cottage Hospital from a dance at the Stanley Hall, Royal School for the Blind, organised by Mrs Granger (mother of the 1981 interviewees) and Lady Hart-Dyke. Nearly 200 people had attended and Hal Stewart's Number 1 band played.

The same edition of the newspaper reported Sir Oliver Hart-Dyke among committee members re-elected at the annual meeting of the Leatherhead and Fetcham Conservative Association (men's branch) at the Constitutional Club, Leatherhead. The main decision at the meeting had been to make a big effort to increase the membership which totalled no more than 60 at the time. This was disappointing in view of the overwhelming majority enjoyed by Commander Southby at the last general election.

On 11 June 1932, Lady Hart-Dyke, honorary secretary of the Leatherhead branch of the Women's Constitutional Association, was among those attending a garden party at the Manor Farm, Little Bookham, run by the Bookham branch. The hosts were Mr and Mrs H. C. Willock-Pollen. Games were played, and tea and ices were served at the Tithe Barn, after which prizes given by Mrs Willock-Pollen to winning competitors.

Only seven days later Lady Hart-Dyke was reported opening Fetcham Fete in the grounds of Elmer, Hawks Hill, by permission of the East Surrey Water Company. Nearly £200 was raised in aid of the Fetcham Village Hall re-construction fund.

Mr Lloyd Jacob, chairman of the executive committee, said development of the district threatened its 'village spirit' with becoming urbanised unless a common meeting place was provided. A site had been purchased and they had also secured an old barn which would form the nucleus of the new hall. The National Council for Social Service had promised a grant of about £700 on condition that Fetcham raised a like amount.

Wishing the fete success, Lady Hart-Dyke emphasised Fetcham's lack of a centre for social events, the reading room being quite inadequate. Since November, £425 had been raised by various events, and it was hoped the fete would raise the £275 still needed.

There were stalls and side shows and ‘Little Miss Sylvia Franklin’ presented a bouquet to Lady Hart-Dyke. Music was provided by the band of the 20th London Regiment (Queen's Own), and in the evening by the Leatherhead Town Silver Band.

On 9 July Lady Hart-Dyke was reported among those present during a visit to the Royal School for the Blind by the famous American deaf-blind authoress Helen Keller (1880-1968).

Sir Oliver Hart-Dyke assumed the chairmanship of Leatherhead Urban District Council in February 1939 following the death of the incumbent but decided not to stand for the forthcoming local election the following May, presumably because that was about the time they left permanently for Lullingstone where the Hart-Dykes would live during World War 2.

BOOK REVIEW

UNRAVELLING THE YARN

Zoë Hart Dyke, née Bond, and the Leyton Silk Road

by Claire Weiss

Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society

ANNE FRASER reviews this book, published in 2018, about the life of Lady Hart-Dyke, based on her 1949 autobiography.

It isn't uncommon, of course, to turn one's hobby into a profession. What is slightly surprising, perhaps, is that Zoë Hart-Dyke's life-time passion was for sericulture: the rearing of silkworms in order to produce silk. It also seems that it was quite acceptable for a middle-class daughter of the Edwardian era to spend her free time feeding mulberry leaves to these little creatures!

Zoë Hart-Dyke was born in 1896 in Leyton, Essex, to Dr Barnabas Mayston Bond and his wife, Eliza Bond. She went from modest beginnings to become the wife of a baronet, Oliver Hart-Dyke, and resident of Lullingstone Castle in Kent.

It was here that she established the silkworm farm that she had begun in Leatherhead, and where she was able to form royal connections. In 1949 she published her autobiography, *So Spins the Silkworm* (Rockliff).

This book by Claire Weiss complements Zoë's tales by filling in some of the gaps, particularly concerning her earlier life. Claire also hopes to increase an appreciation of her achievements in a male-dominated society.

Claire's interest in Zoë was piqued by having resided as a child at the same Leyton address in Manor Road, and in remembering the mulberry tree that graced its back garden. Her fascination with the life and work of Zoë led to years of research and the publication of this account. It is part local history, along with dollops of family history, biography, information on silkworms, and social history, all compiled into an informative if slightly mixed up whole.

Zoë was certainly quite a character. She was not especially academic, but benefitted from the first-class education encouraged by a forward looking father. Her stay at a French boarding school in her teens shaped her attitudes to life and business. My impression was of rather a whirlwind, energetic, go-getting and determined woman. Her skills and knowledge of silk farming were well respected and she knew how to win friends and influence people. Sadly, her business sense was not so keen.

I loved the detail of her life and how her passion later pushed her to develop her business. The description of the techniques she used is also fascinating. We even have 'smelly-vision', as many visitors to the castle would take advantage of the gasmasks made available because of the awful smell from the silkworms.

It seems that the intrepid spirit continues with her grandson Tom, who created the World Garden there. Unfortunately for Leatherhead and district local history buffs, there is little about the time in Tyrrells Wood. I do hope Zoë might have visited the mulberry tree at Parsons Mead School to take home a few tasty leaves.

The appendices are very detailed, and also worth a read. There is a beautiful illustration of a silk scarf inside the book jacket. I would encourage you to visit the Lullingstone Castle website and watch the video clip of the silkworms before you read.

This is a slim book which manages to pack in quite a variety of information. I hope it will help to raise the profile of this remarkable woman.

FEATURE

A TALE OF VAUGHAN WILLIAMS



The composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) is unquestionably one of the most famous of all Mole Valley's former residents.

His concert works such as *The Lark Ascending* and *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* rate among the most popular of all British musical compositions while his oeuvre over 60 years included nine symphonies, hymns, folk-song arrangements, large-scale choral pieces, operas, ballets and chamber music.

Brought up at Leith Hill Place and later a Dorking resident, his statue stands outside Dorking Halls, a giant figure perpetually conducting a notional orchestra. Yet in the early 1930s, when he was already a national icon, he took lessons from a young local musician who discovered he was 'hopeless' at playing at least one sort of instrument.

He was over 60 at the time. His teacher was 18-year-old Elizabeth Darbyshire, a talented soprano and clarinettist living at Rose Hill, Dorking. Nearly 70 years later she would tell her tale to Edwina Vardey during an oral history interview for the L&DLHS.



Above: This was Vaughan-Williams' home, The White Gates, Nutcombe Lane, just off the Westcott Road, Dorking.

Elizabeth's parents were both professional cellists who had studied in Germany under a famous teacher. Her father taught the cello in Sussex where Elizabeth was born in 1915 and by the time the family moved to Dorking, she had spent years at school in Switzerland before attending the Royal College of Music in London to be trained as an opera singer. She also took to playing the clarinet, an unusual instrument for a girl at the time.

The family moved to Rose Hill around 1933. The house next door, Claremont (now converted to flats), was occupied by David Moule Evans (1905-1988), a composer and friend of famous musical figures including Malcolm Sargent and Michael Tippett as well as Vaughan Williams. One day he called in and asked Elizabeth if she would consider taking on a pupil keen to learn the clarinet.

She replied: 'No, I'm not qualified to teach anybody. Who is it?' He said: 'I am not at liberty to tell you yet but if you would be interested it would be a great help.' Elizabeth assumed he was referring to a small boy. Moule Evans said the prospective pupil had broken his leg and wanted to know more about the instrument so she relented. The next day she got a letter from Vaughan Williams.

Interviewed by Edwina in 2002, she said: ‘My parents were in hysterics and thought it was terribly funny. At the age of 18 you take everything in your stride. I had no idea what he looked like or anything. To me he wasn’t a famous man at all.’

She went to Vaughan Williams’ house. ‘There was this enormous looking man sprawled all over a rather small sofa with a grey shawl draped all over him. We said hello and talked for a minute or two and he seemed very nice. I can’t think why I said it but he took it the right way. I said: “I thought you were a little man with a beard.” Instantly he said: “Ah yes my dear. I thought you were a middle aged lady with a moustache.”

‘We went off into fits of laughter and I was his abject slave after that. We were bosom friends after that. But he was hopeless. He had false teeth for one thing, not much good, and he had no idea. He had these very long slender fingers. To be any kind of clarinet player - or any wind instrument - you’ve got to have good fat pads to fill it in.

‘He gave it up eventually but it was only while his leg was healing. I remember he was a very amusing person. I said I can’t come next week and he said why? It was during the holidays and I said I’ve got to go up to Yorkshire. He said why on earth are you going to Yorkshire? I said well, I’ve got some cousins up there and I’m staying a week. There’s going to be a dance. He said you can’t go to Yorkshire to a dance, I’ve never heard anything like it. He made an awful fuss. He liked all young people. People loved to make a fuss about it. It never occurred to me. I had plenty of boyfriends of my own.’

After Vaughan Williams’ leg recovered she would go to his home to play tennis with him. ‘He was a very good tennis player in the garden. They had quite a big garden.’

Vaughan Williams’ wife Adeline (1870-1951), a cousin of novelist Virginia Woolf, was an invalid and their household was run by a relative who was also a friend of Elizabeth’s elder sister, Molly. The relative was introduced to a friend of the girls, a trumpeter called Bernard Brown. The couple were married and went to live in Chelsea but were later tragically killed by an early wartime bombing.

The years passed and Elizabeth’s musical career as a soprano took off. In 1936 she met her future husband, Patrick Watson, in Cambridge while performing in opera. Patrick was an engineer with



Above: Vaughan Williams with his second wife, Ursula. Finally married in 1953, they had lived in a ménage à trois along with his first wife Adeline for 13 years until her death in 1951.

Rolls-Royce. She knew the economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) whose famous wife Lydia Lipokova (1892-1981) was a choreographer. She performed in the very early days of BBC television before the war, recording the first ever *Children's Hour*. She moved from Dorking to Liphook on the day war broke out in 1939 and married Patrick in 1941. They lived in Nantwich, Cheshire; returned to Surrey to live in Cobham and then moved to France for six years before returning to live in Effingham in the 1960s. Their two sons were also very musical.

Vaughan Williams meanwhile was living in a Dorking bungalow with both Adeline and his mistress, the poet Ursula Wood (1911-2007), whom he met in 1938 and who later became his second wife after Adeline's death. Ursula's own first husband had been killed in action in the war. The extraordinary ménage à trois continued for no less than 13 years.

Vaughan Williams' earlier friendship with Elizabeth was one of many with young female singers. He was called 'Uncle Ralph' by

those who gave him admiring kisses after choral concerts that he conducted. A pianist, Harriet Cohen, asked him to write a piano concerto for her and he agreed ‘ in return for 10,000 kisses’.

After the war Elizabeth performed many times on BBC radio. Following one recital she received a letter from Vaughan Williams the next day saying: ‘Very much enjoyed the first half of your recital. Just the right tempo as usual and so on and then - hell and damnation - our battery ran down!’

In 2002, now living in Headley, Elizabeth told Edwina Vardey: ‘Quite extraordinary because I’m sure they had electrical radios by then. Surely you didn’t have a battery did you? I have never seen Patrick laugh so much. Anything more absolutely hopeless and un-businesslike. It might have been one of his own works.’ Vaughan Williams had made no mention of the clarinet.

He died in 1958 aged 86, from a coronary thrombosis. Elizabeth died in December 2003, less than two years after her oral history interview. Ursula survived both of them, dying in 2007 aged 96.



Above: Leith Hill Place where Vaughan Williams grew up.



Left: The house in Rose Hill, Dorking, where Elizabeth’s neighbour heard of the composer’s wish to learn how to play the clarinet.

FEATURE

G. ASTRIDGE & SONS OF ASHTEAD

by ANN WILLIAMS

In 1976, the 73-year-old road haulage firm G. Astridge & Sons of Woodfield, Ashted, was wound up and remaining contracts were transferred to Lawrence Astridge Removals Ltd of Bookham (later W.H. Cox & Astridge Removals). Its Elm Croft buildings were demolished and the owners, brothers Arthur and Percy Astridge, retired. Arthur moved to Shaftesbury, Dorset, while Percy remained in Ashted.



Above: George Astridge and Jim Cates with his second cart in Barnett Wood Lane, Ashted.

The firm dated back to 1903 when their father, George Astridge, a brickmaker's carman of Glebe Road, Ashted, bought a horse and cart and established a green and cream liveried cartage business.

In 1913 he was appointed Ashted cartage agent for the London & South Western Railway Company, meeting goods trains at Ashted Station and delivering goods in the local area. Around then

he bought a second cart and hired Jim Cates to help him in the business. Freight service would continue from the station for some 48 years.

From 1912-21 George rented Oak Cottage on Ashtead Common from James Weller and the business was run from there. In 1920 George brought land fronting Woodfield from the Steadman family which he named Elm Croft.

Arthur Astridge turned 17 in 1927 and George bought him the company's first vehicle - a one-ton, two-gear Ford. A second vehicle followed for Percy when he too reached 17 in 1931. All three men had driving licences (although there was no testing until 1935) but George never actually drove. In 1937 Percy was photographed driving a decorated lorry in a parade, probably to celebrate the coronation of King George VI.

George's last horse, Tom, was put down in 1940 following its distress on the first night of World War 2 bombing. The business carried on through the war despite difficult conditions for civilian transport. The Ministry of War controlled all transport vehicles and its local offices planned and allocated loads to ensure maximum efficiency.

In August 1942 an Astridge lorry drove Ashtead scouts to camp at Broadstone Warren near East Grinstead. In October that year Percy was called up and served as a driver with the Royal Army Service Corps until 1947. On 7 November, George transferred the contracts and goodwill of his business to Arthur and Percy. No money changed hands but the sons undertook to pay weekly rent and be responsible for all rates, taxes, insurance and expenses relating to Elm Croft including George's residence..

Election of the Labour government in 1945 brought nationalisation of all road haulage undertakings. The industry mounted campaigns against this and petitions were presented to Parliament but most transport companies became part of the newly formed British Road Services.

G. Astridge & Sons continued but was restricted to carrying general goods within 20 miles of Ashtead station, chemists' supplies within 40 miles and personal luggage, building and decorating plant, furniture and effects within 50 miles.

The change of government in 1951 reduced the controls. A large

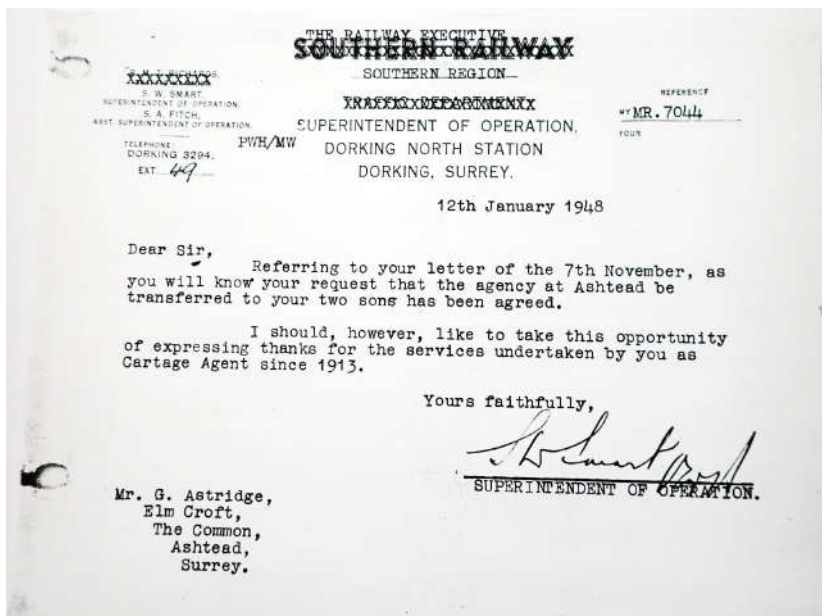
brick warehouse was built allowing the firm to offer storage services and a garage was built and leased to Louis (Jum) Boxall for an auto-body repair shop. Cousin Ron Astridge also operated a shoe-repair business there.

G. Astridge & Sons now ran up to six vehicles at a time, including an iron-bodied 'tipper' for transporting coal and a pantechnicon removal van. Percy handled the day-to-day operations, book-keeping and vehicle maintenance while Arthur estimated for prospective removal customers and drove the large-capacity removal van up and down the country. On one ferry crossing to the Isle of Wight, the sea was so rough his lorry had to be lashed down with ropes to prevent it banging into the ferry's superstructure.

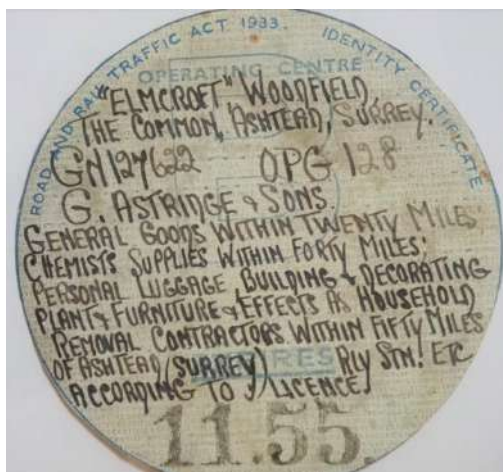
In the 1960s, local builder Fred Draisey began leasing part of the



Above: Haymaking at Elm Croft with a G. Astridge vehicle in 1945. George holds a pitchfork while grandsons Derek and Ivor sit on the bonnet.



Above: This letter from Southern Region to George Astridge in 1948 is a historic document whose letterhead reflects the very recent nationalisation and re-organisation of the railways.



Left: The firm's 1949 vehicle identity disc shows the restrictions that applied at the time. The reverse of the disc, headed WARNING, cites The Transport Act of 1947 and advises that from 1 February 1950 a permit would be required from The British Transport Commission for carriage of goods beyond 25 miles of Ashted station.

back field, building a wooden storage facility. The firm's vehicles were replaced by Ford-made, diesel-driven Thames Traders. Cousin Stan Astridge did the sign-writing on some of them.

The company's regular customers included the British Coal Utilisation Research Association in Leatherhead; Brifex, which produced leather cloth in Ashted for the motor industry; Thermega, which made electric blankets in Ashted; Leatherhead Theatre and Boots of Epsom. The lorries continued carrying local scouts and guides to and from annual camps and in 1964 transported the Ashted bells of St Giles Church to Loughborough for quarter-turning.

Not all customers were happy. A letter dated 12 October 1971 complains about the men who handled one removal job. One was said to have had asthma, another continuously sick, and a third suffering a kidney complaint! The customer thought being billed at all was a diabolical liberty but paid £30 for a residential move within lower Ashted.

A year or so after George had purchased Elm Croft, his brother Jim had bought Cliddesden on land further down Woodfield. From there he ran the orange-liveried haulage business James Astridge & Sons Ltd. The two companies were not connected but there was some neighbourly lending of men and vehicles.



Above: A rare photo of the Ashted bells in transit from Ashted to Loughborough for quarter-turning.

FEATURE

BUILDING LEATHERHEAD LEISURE CENTRE

by ROBERT SWADE

On graduating from university, from July 1973 to December 1974, I worked as site engineer for the main contractor on the construction of Leatherhead Leisure Centre. During the overall construction period between 1972 and 1975, various external events influenced how the work proceeded.

There was the first oil crisis. Petrol supplies diminished and prices rose. There was an informal arrangement that anyone on site could go out once or twice a week to queue for petrol during working hours. (I think there may have been a limit to four gallons per car to avoid garages running out too quickly.) The bulk diesel tank was carefully watched to make sure on-site plant such as the concrete plant, generators, dumpers etc did not run out of fuel.

There was also the three-day week. Did the UK Government or the trade unions run the country? Materials deliveries were unpredictable and orders were placed as far in advance as practical. There were rolling power cuts for some considerable period of time and all businesses were supposed to close for two days a week. Construction continued under cover during the short winter days, the justification being that most power was supplied by diesel generators.

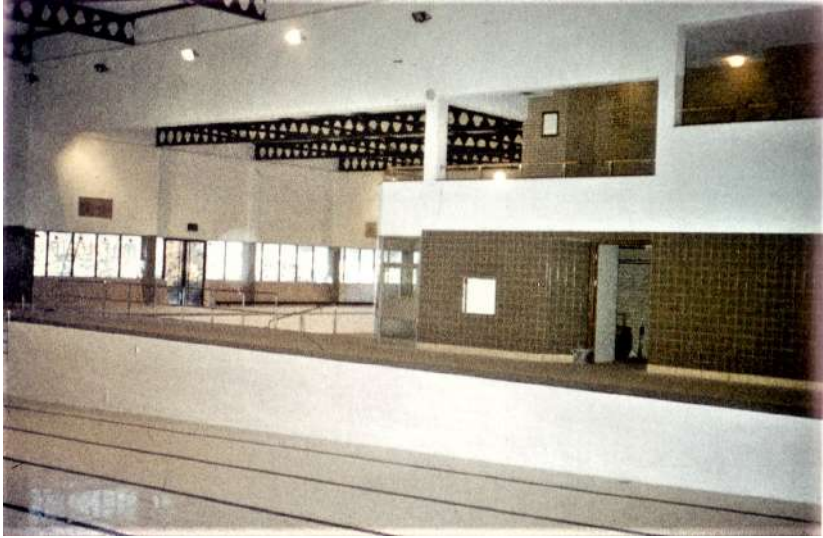
The economic boom brought by the government policies of Edward Heath and Chancellor Anthony Barber resulted in a period of intense construction activity with widespread materials and skills shortages. Anyone who was physically fit could usually get work on a construction site so it was very hard to recruit, and then to retain, skilled craftsmen.

An issue today relates to the tax rules for the self-employed. The same issue existed in the 1970s and was termed 'The Lump'. Labour-only sub-contractors supplied construction workers to main contractors. Sub-contracted labour was paid at a higher hourly rate than the directly employed and could potentially pay less tax. The main contractor for the Leatherhead Leisure Centre, Leonard Fairclough, had maybe a dozen people directly employed for concreting and general work. Everyone else was sub-contracted.



Above: Work gets under way. Left and below: The leisure centre was originally contracted on land outside the town before Leatherhead amalgamated with Dorking to form Mole Valley.





Above: One of the swimming pools nears completion.

Below: The adjacent land was scarred at first but later recovered much of its greenery.



Setting the context too was local government reorganisation, with Leatherhead and Dorking being combined to form Mole Valley. Both were constructing their own leisure centres before the marriage took place.

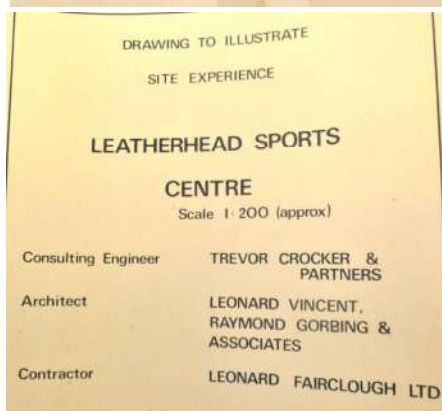
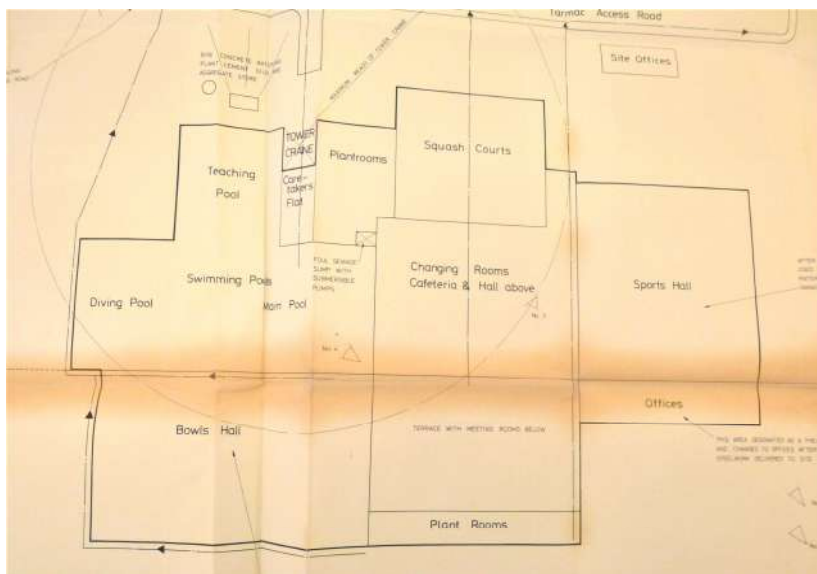
The main companies involved in the project were Vincent Goring, architect; Trevor Crocker, engineer; and Leonard Fairclough (LF of Lancashire), main contractor. LF of Lancashire had recently purchased Fram VCC (Vibrated Concrete Construction Company) of Thorpe near Egham. It was Fram VCC that had won the initial contract, presumably with Leatherhead Urban District Council.

There was a small site management team comprising five people. John Squires, the site agent, was in his forties, originally a carpenter and very experienced. John Stewart, the quantity surveyor, was in his late twenties. He covered several sites and visited one day a week. Mr Hughes, clerk of the works, had spent many years working in Africa and travelled each day from Worthing by train. Collum Lally, the ganger-man, lived in a caravan on site, going home to the Andover area every other week. As site engineer I was the fifth team member. I was from East Horsley. There were no secretarial staff or a resident engineer. There was an on-site canteen.

At that time we didn't have pocket calculators, mobile phones, fax machines, Internet, computers, or computer aided design. I don't think there was a photocopier. My calculation aids were a six-inch slide rule and an *Addmaster Baby* mechanical addition/subtraction calculator, operated with a steel stylus. Construction drawings were pen and paper received in the post. All design was done manually.

Wages for the directly employed came by registered post every Thursday. If the money had not arrived by Friday lunchtime John Squires and I walked into town to see how much we could raise from our own bank accounts to provide a 'sub' for the weekend. The men had to be paid.

The original contract for the leisure centre included two swimming pools, six squash courts, a sports hall and changing rooms. The price was £500,000. Shortly after construction had commenced the work was extended to include a diving pool, a bowls hall, meeting rooms, an extension to the sports hall and a cafeteria. The revised



Above and left: Documentation provided at the time by site engineer Robert Swade. Building materials were stored along both sides of the access road. The tower crane reached the far side of the access road but could not reach every part of the site so more manual handling of materials was needed.

cost was £1.3 million. Alterations were needed to work that had already been completed in order to tie the new and old sections together. Subsequently there were several design changes. Some required demolition of finished internal work while others meant altering structural steelwork awaiting erection. Finally, a £60,000 contract was let for car parks and landscaping.

Incorporating all the additional work affected everything from underground sewers, foundations, structural steelwork, through to

tiling, doors and door frames. The list was endless. Sid East from the contract engineer and Geoff Daniels from the contract architect visited the site probably every two weeks and we spent hours marking up drawings, having worked out between us how to get everything built. A small number of the marked up drawings were signed and approved by 'Michael M Mouse'. Documenting the changes was a continual process.

In the 1970s the influence of London was not as extensive as now. Towns south of the North Downs were in the countryside. For people living near London, Leatherhead was a long commute, especially as there was plenty of work in the inner suburbs and the City. For those living to the south in Reigate, Horsham, Dorking and so on, Leatherhead was as far north as they wanted to travel.

The two groups were noticeably different but worked together perfectly amicably. I was indebted to the bricklayers, steel-fixers, carpenters and many others who helped me out. However I recall at least one mistake. A row of concrete columns should have been each 300 mm x 300 mm but measured 12 inches x 12 inches. As 12 inches are actually 304.8 mm, none of the windows fitted!

The Health & Safety at Work Act came into force in 1974 and everyone was apprehensive. Without realising it, we were already carrying out risk assessments. For larger operations such as lifts with cranes or concreting etc we usually talked through what we were intending to do before starting work.

Experienced people knew the risks and were careful. Safety boots, helmets and personal protective equipment were not widely used. Accidents did happen occasionally but luckily there were no serious injuries and many may have been a result of the amount of manual labour required. There was far less mobile equipment used at the time and materials such as bricks and timber were unloaded by hand. The tower crane had been placed to serve the original contract and many areas were beyond its reach, leading to increased manual handling of materials.

One unusual risk was in the swimming pool area. The walls above the level of the tiles were coated with sprayed asbestos to deaden the sound in the pool area, a non-reflective surface. Everyone working on the site was worried about the health risk but we were assured

there was not an issue. The supplier installing the material used breathing gear and worked behind huge plastic sheets. Nevertheless, the risk was brought up later on in the local paper, raising concerns for the public using the pools.

There were many interesting incidents. A young lady from a well known local family regularly visited the caravan on site overnight. People coming from Dorking were part of Oliver Reed the actor's drinking circle. (He had moved from Wimbledon to a huge house there in 1971 after divorcing his wife.) A trip to Nunns the builders merchant on the Chessington Road could lead to a recreational visit elsewhere. There were offers of £5 cash in hand for signing bogus delivery tickets.....

The earth banks around the Leatherhead Leisure Centre buildings mask concrete flood walls to keep the River Mole at bay. On several occasions the access road was flooded and once the site was almost under water. In the dry summer of 1976 the Mole lived up to its name and went underground between Dorking and Leatherhead. My wife and I walked along the river bed.

In September 1974 I was appointed temporary site agent for six weeks. Leonard Fairclough had won a contract near the Thames needing continuous concreting and labour was borrowed from everywhere in the region to enable 24-hour working. The contract architect and contract engineer said I was not sufficiently experienced for the job and I agree. Nevertheless they and everyone else were still very supportive and I was fortunate to be in the right place at the right time.

I left to widen my experience, actually next door at Thorncroft Manor, and to get married. My wife worked in Epsom. I used the new leisure centre while I was living or working in Leatherhead but after we moved to Dorking my attendance dropped off. I left the area altogether in 1988 and now live in Sittingbourne, Kent.

In the following years there were features in the local press about the cost, technical shortcomings and defects of the leisure centre as well as activities taking place there. But for me it had been a very satisfying job.

FEATURE

DOWAGER VISCOUNTESS DAWNAY

St Nicolas Church, Great Bookham, has a memorial plaque to Lora Dawnay, died 1812; a window and tomb for Catherine Dawnay, died 1821; and two windows and a cross outside for Guy Cuthbert Dawnay, killed by an African buffalo in 1889. Ten years ago the *Newsletter* sought more information about the Dawnays and further research in preparation for a talk for Heritage Open Days has now revealed more on Lora as the wife of 4th Viscount Downe, writes BILL WHITMAN.

The following wording appears on another memorial plaque to her in York Minster: ‘Midnight, 24 April 1812, The Rt Hon Lora Burton Dawnay, Viscountess Downe died at her house in Charles Street, near Berkeley Square, London, where she resided alternately with her seat Bookham Grove in Surrey for a period of above 35 years. Happy and respected after illness of three weeks. In the presence of all of her five children and of three of her old and faithful servants in the 73rd year of her age.

‘Widow of John Dawnay, 4th Viscount Downe, mother of the fifth Viscount and other children and only child and heir of William Burton Esq of Ashwell, Rutland, by his wife Elizabeth Pitt, daughter of George Pitt of Stratfieldsay by his second wife Lora Grey of Kingston, Dorset. For her character and other particulars see the *Gentlemen's Magazine* for May 1812. from which the following is an extract.

“A real, unpretending and almost unconscious good sense and a firm desire to act right on all occasions to the best of her judgement were her most distinguishing characteristics. Activity of mind and body, sound health, cheerful manners, the open confidence of an honest mind, the lively serenity of an easy conscience with a benevolent disposition and hereditary personal graces both of form and face which even in age had not disappeared, complete her picture.” ’

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Saturdays 10am-4pm

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* Emails will be dealt with where posts are currently vacant.

Historical Enquiry Service

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

QUARRY HOUSE

Fetcham archivist Alan Pooley responded to a recent enquiry about Quarry House in Hawks Hill, Leatherhead, which stands in a former chalk pit mentioned in the 1791 Tithe Terrier parcel 183, as part of Cannon Farm, then owned by Elizabeth Hankey on eight acres.

Chalk pits were a source of lime for field dressing and also road surfacing. In the 1920s, George Barnard Hankey, the last Squire, sold most of his estate to Percy Harvey, a developer. An extract from a 1924 plan showed the pit in a reserved plot and a 1930 plan showed the plot split for house-building although the pit itself remained empty at that time. Another pit, now filled with houses, is at the junction of Kennel Lane and Lower road. This was used for almshouses.

A lot of chalk from this area was taken up to London when the Thames embankments were being created. Quarry House also occupies an area once littered with Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts and graves. Romans relics have also been found, although generally closer to Fetcham Mill Pond.

DORKING CONCERTGOERS AT THE DORKING HALLS

Dominic Degavino
Piano

Saturday 5 June 2021 7.30pm

Bach:
English Suite No.1 in A major, BWV806

Chopin:
Ballade No.1 in G minor, Op.23

Liszt:
Années de Pèlerinage, Première année: Suisse

Sponsored by The Countess of Munster Musical Trust

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Dominic Degavino

