

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



May, 2003

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 802409

**Hampton Cottage, 64 Church Street, LEATHERHEAD
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CHAIRMAN

**Peter A. Tarplee
01372 452301**

SECRETARY

**Judith Mills
01372 372146**

TREASURER

**Norma Robertson
01372 453795**

The Society meets on the third Friday of the month at the Letherhead Institute from
September to May. For details see programme in this issue.

2003 Membership Subscriptions

Ordinary.....	£12.00
Associate.....	£5.00
Junior (under 18).....	£1.00

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Jenny Morris

01372 362524

The Museum is open at the following times: -

Thursdays and Fridays 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.
Saturdays 10.0 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

CURATOR

Graham Evans

01372 386348

The Library at The Letherhead Institute is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10.0 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. **It is no longer open on Saturdays.**

Exceptionally, arrangements may be made to use it at other times by applying to the Librarian.

LIBRARIAN

Gwen Hoad

01372 273934

The Records are available for study by arrangement.

RECORDS SECRETARY

Brian Godfrey

01372 454654

Lectures . Co-ordination of the Society's lecture and visits programme and L & D L H S speakers for local societies.

PROGRAMME & LECTURE SECRETARY

Vacancy

The Newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August and November.

Copy for the August 2003 edition should be sent to my address by 18th July, 2003.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR Peter Wall, 8 The Renmans, Ashtead, KT21 1PH. Tel. 01372 277690

The Friends of Leatherhead Museum support the Society's work on behalf of the Museum.

SECRETARY

Thelma Lucas

01372 844345

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

On 22nd February the Society had a display and sales stand at Ashted Peace Memorial Hall on the occasion of the Annual Symposium of the Archaeological Research Committee of Surrey Archaeological Society. We were very pleased that our display was awarded the first prize in the Margary Award and we congratulate Graham Evans on this as he was responsible for producing the display. With the award there was a welcome cheque for £100 for the Society.

Our museum is now open again after the winter closed period and we have the three new display cabinets in place. These have been paid for partly from the bequest from Sheila Burrough and partly from an SMCC grant. We are very pleased with these and feel that they have immensely improved our facilities. Again, Graham has produced excellent displays in the new cabinets and I do urge any member who has not visited the museum since the winter to do so and see how the galleries have been improved.

I am writing this just after the Annual General Meeting when two of our long-serving committee members stood down. Gordon Knowles and Jack Barker have both done an amazing amount for the Society and they will be sorely missed. They have both served on the Programme Committee whilst Gordon has been Programme Secretary and Lecture Secretary and Jack has been our Membership Secretary. We thank them for all that they have done in the past and know that they will still be active members of the Society.

Thanks were also expressed at the meeting to John Wettern who had edited the *Newsletter* up to the end of 2002 and had been responsible for much improvement to it during his editorship. John had also produced the Society's publicity leaflets and posters and we are hoping to find a member willing to take on this task.

Three new committee members were elected at the AGM. Peter Wall has edited the last two editions of the *Newsletter* and was co-opted to the committee earlier in the year. Jenny Morris has undertaken to be the Membership Secretary and we

welcome her on to the committee. Also Fred Meynen, who had been co-opted to the committee since the last AGM, was duly elected to the committee this year. Fred inter alia provides a useful link between the Executive Committee and the Friends of Leatherhead Museum.

The Society now has no Programme Secretary and whilst the sub-committee is continuing to arrange our meetings and visits we do need someone else on an urgent basis to join them and to be on the Executive Committee as the Programme Secretary. Our Friday meetings are well attended and we feel are an important part of our activities, but they do need to be arranged. Is there someone amongst our members who would be willing to help in this? Please see either Linda Heath or me for further information.

Vacancies still exist for a Lecture Secretary and a Sales Secretary.

Peter Tarplee

ANNUAL DINNER

The Executive Committee discussed recently whether the Society should hold an Annual Dinner. Before this is pursued any further we would like to know what support there is likely to be from the membership.

We would envisage holding this event at a local hotel or restaurant and would anticipate that the cost would be in the order of £20-£25 per person, including wine. All members would be welcome at the function with as many spouses, partners or guests as they would like to invite

Will members please return the enclosed slip to me indicating whether they would be likely to attend such a function

Peter Tarplee

OBITUARY

I am sorry to have to report that the death occurred in February of Society member Keith Archer. Keith was born at No. 30 The Terrace, Bridge Street, Leatherhead, in 1928. He was the son of Cecil Archer and née Neate, the youngest daughter of Stephen Neate, the High Street grocer (the Proceedings article about the family could not have been written without Keith's help). He

worked for many years as a research chemist and, since his retirement, at the Museum in his home town of Woodbridge in Suffolk. He left Leatherhead in 1951 when he married but was always very fond of the town and subsequently visited it frequently. He has requested that his ashes be interred here. He is survived by his widow Hazel and sons Ian and Tony, to whom we offer our sincere condolences.

Alun Roberts

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARIAN

In this current time of war, here is part of an account of a rather different war taken from "Bookham in the Twentieth Century" by Bill Culley, published by the Society in 2000.

"Bookham received several hundred school children evacuees from London including all of the Strand School at Tulse Hill, for the duration of the war Mr A R Smith, a retired lecturer who lives at West Clandon, was a child evacuee in Bookham. His recollections give an idea of life at that time. His first guardian was a frail, 73 year-old lady at 3 Shaftesbury Cottages, Little Bookham Street; but he was later moved to 14 Dowlans Road where he was surprised at the length of the gardens compared with those at home. He remembers eating peanut butter from Mrs Hayter's shop at the corner of the Park; the Local Defence Volunteers (later the Home Guard) with pikes, sticks and a farmer's confiscated shot gun; later they were armed with Canadian rifles from the First World War; each road had an air raid warden who ensured that black-out regulations were adhered to; most wirelesses were powered by accumulators which needed to be taken to be charged every one or two weeks; most people grew lots of fruit and vegetables and many shot pigeons and rabbits; he recalls walking past a crater near the station in which a bomb was still wedged. Mrs Greville arranged for the Bookham school children to be taken to her garden at Polesden Lacey where they were given a sixpence and saw a Punch and Judy show."

The first printing of this book sold out, but it has recently been reprinted, so is once more available.

Recent additions to the library are :—

SURREY - Archaeology

WILLIAMS, Jill - "*Thorpe, a Surrey village in maps: a record of its growth and development.*" Surrey Arch. Soc. 2002.

SURREY - Records

SURREY RECORDS SOCIETY - "*The 1235 Surrey Eyre. Vol 3 - Index.*

Surrey Records Soc. 2002.

These books and others in the Society's Library are housed within the Letherhead Institute library room. It is accessible to our members only when the L.C.A. library is open to its members, but not on Saturdays (see details on the inside cover of this Newsletter).

It is most important that you show your current L&DLHS membership card to the librarian on duty when you use the library.

Gwen Hoad

LEATHERHEAD AND ITS TITANIC CONNECTION

Saturday April 12th saw the opening of a new temporary exhibition at the Museum. It tells the story of a Leatherhead family, the Collyers; Harvey, his wife Charlotte and their young daughter Marjorie, who sailed on this ill-fated ship almost 91 years ago to the day. The story, which is supported with photographs, letters and other documentary details, tells of who they were, why they sailed, the sinking and tragic loss of their father, rescue and life afterwards.

Relatives of the Collyer family who still live in the area attended the opening, along with members of the press and other interested parties.

The exhibition, which runs until September, has been the culmination of many months work and research and I must mention a word of thanks to Alun Roberts and Edwina Vardy for their help in the construction of the exhibition.

I hope you will come and see the exhibition, along with all the new displays and features in the museum next time you visit.

Graham Evans (Hon. Curator)

REPORT OF THE FEBRUARY MEETING OF THE SOCIETY

Paul Sowan, President of Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society, gave the February lecture to the Leatherhead & District Local History Society. His subject was 'Reigate and other Building Stones' and it attracted a large audience of members and visitors. Paul cleared up several confusing points for the layman. Reigate is the generic term for stone from the Reigate - Chaldon - Godstone area and may not indicate its actual source, whereas Chaldon or Merstham stone definitely came from quarries in those areas. It is possible to schedule a hole in the ground as an ancient monument, a number of the Surrey quarries have been after prolonged attempts.

Today a quarry is an open excavation for stone, sand or gravel, a mine is an underground excavation reached by a vertical shaft or horizontal adit. In mediaeval times in Surrey the term quarry was used to define an underground site where large building stones were extracted. A mine was where small irregular stones were extracted for hearthstone, often from the same beds.

The last Surrey stone quarry closed at Colley Hill in 1960, some had been used during World War II to store valuable paintings and wines and afterwards as mushroom farms. Reigate stone was soft and did not weather well but was nevertheless used extensively in London and the south of England, for example in Westminster Abbey, Hampton Court and the Tower of London. It was always considered inferior to Caen stone from Normandy and Sir Christopher Wren only used it internally in St Paul's Cathedral.

At least 50% of quarried stone never reached the surface, the rubble was used to back-fill the excavated tunnels. Hand tools and wedges were used, no explosives, tool marks and some tools have been found abandoned as well as remains of tramways, some of which used rails from the Croydon, Merstham & Godstone Railway, an extension of the Surrey Iron Railway, after it ceased to work in 1836

The Historic Royal Palaces and English Heritage have recently worked with Paul taking samples from Merstham quarry to see if it is suitable and possible to extract stone to use to repair the ravages of time in some of the capital's historic buildings. None of the quarries are accessible by the public for safety reasons, but access can still be made to a number of quarries by Paul and his colleagues from Subteranea Britannica and the Wealden Caving Group. A fascinating story well told and illustrated by Paul.

Gordon Knowles

REPORT OF THE MARCH MEETING OF THE SOCIETY

Lionel Green, chairman of the Merton Historical Society, was our speaker. He told us of the new epoch of monasticism in England immediately after the Norman Conquest. The Augustinian Order had been founded in France with its first house in England probably at Huntingdon. Few of the 276 Augustinian foundations in England were larger than eleven canons under a prior, all being priests who could serve hospitals and parishes, but each had a special duty to the priory: the granger, for instance, had to ensure corn supplies, their milling and the issue of flour to the bakehouse.

Merton Priory was founded by Gilbert, sheriff of Surrey, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, to whom king Henry I gave the vill of Merton in 1114. Gilbert persuaded some of the Huntingdon canons to move to Merton and a new site was chosen two years later, not only for the church (with a long nave) and cemetery, but also a mill and vineyard; the river Wandle was re-channelled for this. Guy the Italian set up a song and priestly training school, whose pupils included Nicholas Breakspear (the only English Pope), Thomas Becket (the martyred archbishop) and Walter de Merton. Walter set up a school at Merton which later moved to Oxford and became Merton College.

By 1150 Merton Priory had set up nine daughter houses in towns as far apart as Bodmin and Edinburgh. The priory held estates in sixteen counties. Local manors included that of Ewell, with Little (West) Ashted, Fetcham mill, Pachesham and Polesden. Many momentous events took place at the priory, including several great Church councils. Stephen Langton resolved the Church's

differences with king John and John himself issued the letters from Merton which eventually led to Magna Carta. Henry III maintained his own lodgings and chancery at the priory. Hubert de Burgh (his disgraced justiciar) sought sanctuary here and some important laws were passed at Merton a few years later. Henry IV was crowned in the priory in 1437.

At the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Merton Priory was rapidly demolished and over 3,000 tons of stone were carted to Cuddington to build King Henry VIII's Nonsuch Palace in 1538. A wall and chapel survived to become a calico printing factory in 1734. In 1814 an elaborately-decorated Norman doorway was found when pulling down Abbey House and re-erected next to the parish church. Excavation of the priory began in 1921 between the sleepers of the railway line which ran across the site and extended to the infirmary and chapter house in 1976. Today the site is largely covered by a supermarket and roads, but a memorial service is held annually at the site.

Derek Renn

REPORT OF THE APRIL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY

Following the Society's AGM held on Friday 25th April, Peter Tarplee gave a talk "The Story behind the Story of the Old & New Atlas Works in Bookham". As you will have seen in the latest Proceedings there is an article by Peter on the two Atlas works. His talk gave us much interesting background as to how he went about his research, but more it laid down a useful approach that any of us could follow if we undertake a similar project. It also confirmed what I and others have found, that research is 90% hard work, 5% inspiration and 5% good fortune.

One outcome of publication of such a project is that it stimulates others to come forward. Peter has already been contacted by a member stating that "my father worked for Gillett Stephens, I'll ask my mother about it". Peter first studied street directories, in the Society and local libraries, the Surrey History Centre and the London Guildhall Library collection of Kelly's Directories. The local Rate

Books, of which the Society has a good number, were also used. He also studied existing publications on Bookham by Fortescue and Culley, always trying to avoid repeating research already done. He also contacted Dr Jake Alderson in Sheffield, who had corresponded earlier with Bill Culley. He is archivist of the Morgan Motor Club, one of many manufacturers using Blackburne engines. Alderson referred Peter to someone in Dorking who had an aerial photograph of the new Atlas works. A copy was duly obtained. There was an article in Motor Sport magazine in 1948 which was referred to in the Morgan Magazine. Copies of these are held in the Brooklands Museum; Peter obtained a lot of information from this source.

Texts quoting Blackburnes were lent by a number of Society members and others, all of which provided further information. A visit to the National Motor Museum archives at Beaulieu added to the data available. From these various sources Peter was able to compile a list of 11 aircraft manufacturers, 70 motor cycle makers, 24 car makers, 2 fire appliance makers, 3 agricultural machine makers and 7 lawn mower firms, all of whom used Blackburne engines built at Bookham. Even this list may not be complete, further information may yet come to light!

Peter also mentioned two unsuccessful approaches to museums he had made, accepting that often volunteers staff libraries and archives and that they may be inundated with requests. But it does add to the frustration of the researcher, particularly when it is known that one of them has a Blackburne engine on display.

Thomas Gillett was the founder of Burney & Blackburne and Peter also researched his history. The archives of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers and the Royal Aeronautical Society, both of which he was a member, were most helpful in this respect, Discussions with his niece cleared up some issues as to where he went to school and where the family lived before Bookham. An example of 'good fortune' was when some old material cleared out of a loft was brought to the Society museum. In it were some copies of 'The Motor Cycle' from 1928 which contained Blackburne advertisements which in turn provided more information about the business.

A very interesting talk which will perhaps stimulate others to undertake similar research into local business or families.

Gordon Knowles

LAST CALL FOR POST BOXES

Many thanks to those of you who have responded to my appeal for information. However, I believe that there are more in Leatherhead itself, so *please* help complete the Society's records with the following details of your local post box:

Number (on the collection plate, beginning KT)

Position (the road or building in which you post a letter and the nearest road junction)

Type (cylinder, oval, rectangular, freestanding, in a wall, on its own post, attached to telephone or lamp post)

Royal Cypher (none, VR, ER, EVIIR, GR, EVIIR, GVIR, EIIR)

Maker (usually low down on the back)

Material (iron, sheet steel, plastic)

If embossed **ROYAL MAIL** (rather than POST OFFICE)

Traces of **direction plate** on the top (pointing to post office)

Attached **stamp book dispenser** or large cubical 'pouch box'.

Changes are taking place all the time, since the survey began last year, the information on the collection plates has been altered and stamp dispensers sealed. Thank you. My address is 7 Burrows Close, Great Bookham, KT23 3HB

Derek Renn

REPORT FROM THE FRIENDS OF LEATHERHEAD MUSEUM

The Committee have been looking at aspects of education involving the museum, in particular the relationship of the museum with local schools and groups such as youth organisations and clubs. The museum is used as a resource,

not only using its displays and artifacts, but also drawing on the expertise of its officers and volunteers.

Two members of the Committee have been attending meetings of the Museums of Surrey Education Group (MUSE) and in common with other museums have identified a need to have an education policy which sets out to define the educational aims of the museum, to produce an educational information pack and to look at its target audience in terms of the visitors to the museum and the schools and groups in the community. In common with education policies child protection issues are being addressed.

The Friends Committee hopes that members of the History Society will endorse the educational aims of the museum and seeks help from any members who have an interest in being involved with visits and talks to schools and groups. These visits are both challenging and rewarding and help to dispel the image that museums are boring and stuffy places, rather that knowledge of history and in particular local history, can be interesting and exciting.

Please contact any Committee member or myself if you are interested

Dr Fred Meynen telephone 01372 372930

NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS OF LEATHERHEAD MUSEUM

The Friends held their Annual General Meeting on Monday, 28th April. Attendance was good and some constructive suggestions from members were put forward.

The chairman and committee gave a brief review of 2002, touching on financial matters, membership, the publicity effort and events that had taken place during the year. However, the aims and proposed activities in the current year were covered in more detail since some of these had a direct bearing on the future of the museum.

Stewards. A serious position had nearly arisen owing to a decrease in the number of stewards available on the days of opening. An urgent need for

new volunteers was expressed. So far there are just enough to prevent a curtailment of opening times. All concerned were urged to help in finding new recruits for what in effect is a pleasant and interesting job, requiring no previous skills and a very small commitment of time (three hours per month).

Publicity. The committee is resolved to use every means possible to publicise the museum so as to bring an increase in the number of visitors. The new colour brochure referred to elsewhere should help to this end. The recent death of the committee's publicity officer, David Robinson, gives rise to an urgent need for a replacement.. David had done much to help in bringing the museum to the notice of local people and the work needs to continue.

Schools. Some helpful suggestions about the involvement of schools were made and it was agreed that more needed to be done to interest teachers and their pupils in local history matters. More initiatives are being planned for the current year.

Events. Two traditional summer events are being planned again this year. Firstly, the Coffee morning which will take place at the museum on Saturday, 14th June. This will provide a pleasant opportunity to meet and chat. As usual there will be stalls for the sale of books, garden plants and other objects. History Society members and their friends, as well as members of the public are cordially welcome. Please make a note of the date.

The second important event brings an innovation. For the summer outing the Friends and the History Society's members will for the first time be undertaking a joint visit: the destination will be The Rural Life Centre near Farnham. The date: Saturday, 9th August. More details are given elsewhere in the Newsletter. Those wishing to come should use the application form enclosed.

The Annual General Meeting concluded with a month-by-month review of developments at the museum presented by the curator, Graham Evans. This told a tale of continuous and continuing improvements covering displays, the recording and conserving of artefacts and special exhibitions. Most notable was the reported success of the currently running "*Leatherhead and its 'TITANIC' Connection*" exhibition. After a successful launch, it has been well attended since it opened. The displays which include a scale model of the liner itself, will continue until September.

John Wettern

MUSEUM HAS A NEW COLOUR LEAFLET

"If it's good, it will go fast". The Tourist Office Manager at Dorking Halls had this comment to make when she was handed copies of the new colour leaflet advertising Leatherhead Museum. It obviously had her approval. The Friends have produced this for the 2003 season, the first time the museum has been featured in colour. Part of the cost was met by Mole Valley Council, the balance by the Friends' own funds.

This represents an important part of the campaign to ensure that greater numbers of visitors come to the museum over the coming months. Colour pictures show a variety of the museum's more important exhibits: the Saxon bucket, the Roman villa model and the swan statue in the garden are among those featured. As well as a short history of Leatherhead and a brief description of the museum and its contents there is a useful *'How to find us'* map.

Copies of the leaflets are being distributed around the district and to neighbouring museums. It is hoped that History Society members will join in the work of promoting their museum. Stocks are held in the Museum.

John Wettern

WALKS AND VISITS

Sunday 8th June at 2.30 pm. Visit by cars to Horsley Towers, former home of the Earl of Lovelace. *The application form was included in the February Newsletter. Contact is Jack Barker (tel. 458569).*

Thursday, 10th July. We have been invited for an evening visit to the historic village of WESTCOTT hosted by Mr Terry Wooden of the Westcott Village Local History Group.

We shall assemble at 7.0 p.m. at Westcott church and after hearing a brief history of the village we shall be shown some of the local places of interest. The walk will last about 1½ hours.

Saturday, 9th August. There will be a combined visit for History Society members and Friends of Leatherhead Museum to **The Rural Life Centre** at Tilford near Farnham, arriving at 11.30 a.m. This is an open air museum with a wide variety of attractions covering many aspects of village life. Country crafts are well represented but in addition one can visit a chapel, a village hall and a cricket pavilion. There are also rides on a miniature railway.

Admission charges, payable in advance are £5 for adults and £4 for senior citizens. The journey by car takes about 45 minutes, via A 31 and A287. The museum has an excellent café for which bookings should be made in advance.

Please use the form to reserve places – no later than 18th July, please. Further information can be obtained from John Wettern (01372 459277).

Saturday, 6th September. An afternoon guided walk round Ripley village on Saturday 6th September. Ripley is an interesting place which many of us just tend to drive through without noticing what is there. This will be an opportunity to enjoy the village by observing some of the lovely old buildings and learning about their history. Cost £1.00. Application forms enclosed.
Meet in the car park at Ripley Village Hall in time for a prompt start at 2.00 p.m.

