



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

Newsletter *December 2019*



A view of a crowded Leatherhead town centre more than 80 years ago. The picture may have been taken upstairs from the bank building that would become Barton's Bookshop many years later and finally closed earlier this year. The street scene is clearly recognisable, with Church Street off to the right and what is now the NatWest Bank on the corner. But no pedestrianised High Street, no parking restrictions, young cyclists - some in special costume - travelling safely without the need for helmets, and a policeman controlling such traffic as existed. It was a very different world in those days.

Corporate Member:

MICHAEL
EVERETT

58 The Street, Ashted

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The 2020 membership subscription form is enclosed with this edition. See Page 39 for more details.



Left: The Grange in Great Bookham c1900. This was known as the School for Stitchery and Lace before becoming the Grange Centre in the 1970s. For more information see Page 21 .

**EDITORIAL**

The L&DLHS is in its 74th year so the next one will mark another historical landmark. As we also move into a new decade it hardly needs saying that the world is changing faster than ever before.

All the more important to appreciate the familiar and those who form a crucial part of it. This *Newsletter* has contributions from several longstanding stalwarts of the Society. Their work continues to enhance knowledge of our local history, some of it covering events and people that many members will themselves recall, other subjects from the more distant past, now the preserve of books and written records only. The Society began with specialists investigating often dry original sources and texts to build the colourful pictures of life in our patch of Surrey that we now see in our own publications. Before these existed there was comparatively little to inform the wider, less dedicated public about their own area and its origins.

History never stands still of course. We are all part of it and future historians will look back on our own times with curiosity. While so many of those original researchers are now gone, those who remain continue their priceless work and the need now is for a new generation to maintain the momentum. History teaching in schools has radically changed and it is up to local societies and museums like our own to help influence - and indeed create - those historians of tomorrow.

In the meantime, L&DLHS members will continue to enjoy the talks, events and facilities we treasure so much. Another year beckons and our officers and volunteers continue to work on your behalf. In return we need your support in helping to attract newcomers, reading and listening to the results of our work, and providing your own thoughts and contributions towards the local history record.

TONY MATTHEWS



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As our treasured Museum moves into its winter hibernation, I would like to thank our managers, curating and maintenance teams and stewards for their sterling work in 2019, especially their organising such a rapid preparation for the season following the restoration work.

Also of note was a new venture, the retrospective exhibition of the work of highly respected local artist Anthony Hill. A substantial number of pieces were collected from family members and similar numbers from local collectors.

There is still much to be learned about our past, and excavation work has taken place at Rowhurst this year revealing a Bronze Age connection. The house itself remains very much an architectural mystery. Our lecture programme has been very successful, particularly the return tour de force by Professor Pat Wiltshire whose October talk on forensic ecology will be covered in the next *Newsletter* and whose new book, *Traces* is reviewed on Page 36.

I would like to thank all officers and trustees of the Society for their continuing contributions during 2019. Of particular note is that of Tony Matthews, Editor of this *Newsletter* who has served us proud during 2019 under personally difficult circumstances. Wherever I go in our district, the excellence of our *Newsletter* is mentioned and I also receive letters of praise from a certain founding member.

This brings me to the issue of finding members who could step forward to fill the vacant roles listed on Page 40. I realise this is related to two factors – none of us is getting any younger and people are remaining in full-time employment for longer. In 2020 we shall be looking to broaden our demographic and thereby find role players as well as new members. Existing members can help by promoting us to friends or bringing them as guests to our monthly meetings.

So, turning now to the Christmas holiday, I offer you all my compliments of the season and a happy and prosperous New Year, hopefully maintaining the traditions of your family.

JOHN ROWLEY

NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM



Unseasonal squally weather changed the venue for the joint L&DLHS and Friends of Leatherhead Museum summer party on Friday, 9 August, but did not stop everyone having a good time.

What would have been a garden party at Hampton Cottage became an indoors affair at the Abraham Dixon Hall of the Letherhead Institute. The evening gave Museum stewards and Friends a chance to meet the managers and L&DLHS officers and pass on their views about this year's renovations and innovations at the Museum. A nominal charge of £5 was made for the evening.

Entertainment was provided by Robin Christian and a seven-piece band, The Courgettes featuring the Zucchini Sisters, who played favourites from the 1960s to the 80s. Three married couples based in Horsham and Dorking, they have been together for more than four years and headed afterwards to the Edinburgh Festival.



Above from the left, The Courgettes with Robin Christian: Anne Kidd, Mike Docker, Faith Docker, Dave Tobbitt, Robin, Roger Kidd, Linda Tobbitt.

PROGRAMME OF FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Meetings are held in the Abraham Dixon Hall at the Letherhead Institute. Coffee/tea from 7.30pm, talk at 8pm. Admission £2.

Friday, 6 December: *Christmas Miscellany*, presented by Brian Hennegan. **Speakers:** John Rowley on Commander Alexander 'Alastair' Guthrie Denniston of Ashtead, a senior code-breaker with 30 years service, including both world wars. Nigel Bond on the recent Test Pitting at Rowhurst and what may happen next. Bill Whitman to show a short photo and film programme, *Walking in Leatherhead*.

Friday, 17 January: *Photographs, Pen Pals & President Trump's Mother*. Leatherhead artist and author Cathy Brett discovered five faded photographs of her grandmother Agnes's pen pal, Mary Ann MacLeod, in 2015. A lengthy research project has since culminated in a TV documentary for BBC Alba entitled *The President's Mother* and a graphic memoir exploring the lifelong friendship of Agnes and Mary Ann, mother of US President Donald Trump.

Friday, 21 February: *Spies and Trained Assassins - How events in Mole Valley changed the direction of WW2*. Former Museum curator Lorraine Spindler will uncover Surrey's historic links to espionage including crossword clues, undercover bank managers, and six Special Operations Executive (SOE) training centres.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Letherhead Institute, 8 pm Friday, 20 March 2020

Leatherhead & District Local History Society CIO

Registered Charity No. 1175119

This is the third Annual General Meeting of the Society in its new incarnation as a charitable incorporated organisation. (It would be the 73rd AGM of the previous Society.) Chaired by Honorary President Alan Pooley. The AGM will be followed by a talk by Simon Ritchie on *Ordnance Survey Trig Points - Industrial Archaeology Hiding in Plain Sight*. The OS network of trig points for producing maps has been superseded by GPS so the trig points are now just relics.

NEWS REPORT

IN MEMORY OF JOHN NORTHCOTT (1935-2019)



The path across Woodfield from Barnett Wood Lane to Ashted Station has been formally renamed Northcott Way in tribute to the late Councillor John Northcott (left), the much loved local resident and one-time chairman of Mole Valley District Council.

The naming ceremony on 24 August was attended by over 50 colleagues and friends, with representatives of the council, Independents, and residents' association.

John's wife Gill wrote: 'My dear late husband John would have been amazed, embarrassed but very flattered that the residents of Ashted should wish to remember him with such a remarkable and appropriate gesture.

'He had walked this path frequently from the day in 1973 that we moved into our first house in Barnett Wood Lane, from which we both commuted to London. At this time the surface was rough and at night it could be dark and spooky with overhanging branches. More recently in his so-called "retirement" John was still walking the same route briskly. Occasionally he went to catch a train but usually he was on his way to try to sort out a problem with the railway or to visit his constituents, often wearing wellingtons as he tried to resolve problems with floods or drains. Over the years John managed to persuade Mole Valley to improve the path considerably to the benefit of very many residents not just those from Common Ward.'

After a lifelong career in the steel industry John retired in 1999. He had long been involved with the Ashted Residents' Association and was elected Independent Councillor for Ashted Common Ward in May 2000. He supported the Scouts, Barnett Wood School and other organisations and was an active member of the Ashted Common Consultative Committee. He chaired Mole Valley Planning Committee from 2004-06 and again in 2012 and chaired the Council itself in 2010-11. He was also involved in the Local Government Association nationally and in 2014-15 was deputy-chair of its Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport board.

LECTURE REPORT

GEORGIAN BATHS AND BATHING PRACTICES



Queen Elizabeth I famously had a bath once a year, ‘whether she needed it or not’ during her reign in the 16th century. By the Georgian era 150 years later, advances in ceramics and the delivery of cleaner water allowed the better-off classes to be more fastidious in bathing, leading eventually to development of spa towns like Epsom, Bath, Leamington, Cheltenham and Harrogate. However this new health fad could also be used as a cover for more licentious activities.

IAN BETTS is the Museum of London archaeology expert on building materials and ceramics. Speaking at the Letherhead Institute on 20 September, he explained that he had become interested in Georgian baths through noticing tile work in some of the buildings he visited, then got funding to study the subject seriously.

The Romans had a sophisticated system for bathing, he began. Oil was applied to the skin and bathers went into hot and cold plunge pools to make them sweat the dirt from their pores. This was scraped off with a strygil and finally they were massaged. Once the Romans left Britain, their baths were abandoned. Anglo-Saxons bathed in rivers, if at all, and sometimes these were dammed to create

a bathing pool, but by the 13th century there are only a few references to wooden tubs used for bathing.

The Dark Ages arrived in Britain in the fifth century and the rest of western Europe but the Roman Empire survived in the east, based at Byzantium (Constantinople). That city was taken by the Turks in 1453 and has been a Muslim cultural centre ever since. Bathing and cleanliness are part of Islamic practice. In the early 18th century elements of Islamic life became fashionable in western Europe and Roman-style bathing returned in the form of Turkish baths, using the same system of hot and cold pools.

In England, the first modern baths were found in country houses such as at Carshalton and Claremont. Some had a single pool, others both hot and cold. In London, commercial bagnios, as they were known, were established around Covent Garden. The Italian ‘bagnio’ was quickly anglicised to ‘bendigo’. Covent Garden became a hotbed of creativity with artists, artists’ suppliers, booksellers, bookbinders, printmakers, theatres, actors, writers and a booming sex industry. The bagnios were aimed at the rich, with fine furnishings, high-quality tableware and steep prices. They catered for both sexes and upstairs rooms could be rented by the hour or the night.

Many were really of course just fronts for brothels and famous London madams established their own bagnios. Hogarth produced a picture of the notorious Betty Careless being carried home drunk from hers in a sedan chair. She ended her life in the poor house but others did very well out of the trade. The *Harris List*, a periodical of the day listing London’s prostitutes, said the bagnios ‘provide both sexes with pleasure’. Others promoted a more respectable image, with men and women admitted on different days and some advertised that they could cater for a whole family and their servants.

Spa towns developed separately from the bagnios. These involved drinking health-giving water as well as bathing in it, usually fully clothed. They were modelled on other European spas as at Baden Baden. The city of Bath, with its natural hot springs and rediscovered Roman bath, was an early example.

Bath was followed by others such as Harrogate, Leamington, Cheltenham and locally Epsom. The spa experience also involved eating and drinking far too much and gambling. Sea bathing also



*Left:
Bagnios
were
associated
with
licentious
activities
as well as
keeping
clean.*

became fashionable later with the coming of the railways.

The 19th century brought high-pressure steam-driven pumps and iron pipes to withstand the resulting loads of water, and local authorities were empowered to supply all homes. Few then had bathrooms so councils built public baths with individual slipper baths, wash houses for washing clothes, and later swimming pools. Urban lower classes were able to keep themselves clean for the first time. These facilities, and pressure from the Society for the Suppression of Vice, killed off the remaining bagnios although some buildings survived as wash-houses. There are few remnants left in London.

Ian's talk was based on a paper submitted to Transactions London & Middlesex Archaeology Society which is due out next year when L&DLHS members will have access to the full text.

EXHIBITION REPORT

TRIBUTES TO SIR BARNES WALLIS

Among this year's events marking Heritage Open Days, an exhibition was held on 14 September at the Little Bookham Tithe Barn to commemorate 40 years since the death of Sir Barnes Neville Wallis, inventor of the 'bouncing bomb' used by the Dam Busters during World War 2. The event was organised by the Effingham Residents Association, writes VIVIEN WHITE.

Widely known as the man behind the bouncing bombs used in the RAF raids on the Ruhr dams in 1943 and later immortalised in the 1955 film *The Dam Busters* starring Michael Redgrave and Richard Todd, Sir Barnes was a local resident. He lived in Beech Avenue, Effingham, for nearly 50 years.

Sir Barnes was very active in the local community, including serving as parish council chairman for ten years and secretary of the parochial church council for eight years. He was instrumental in the purchase of the King George V Playing Fields in Effingham. He also loved music and with his wife, Molly, was a member of the Bookham Choral Society. Both were regulars at the Leith Hill Music Festival.

All this, together with his career and life story, were featured at the exhibition, which attracted over 1000 visitors. Apart from information panels there were videos to view about the man himself and a video of a recent interview with his daughter Elisabeth. On view too were artefacts borrowed from the family (including the famous marbles), from Brooklands Museum, the Barnes Wallis Foundation and Christ's Hospital, his old school.

Sir Barnes was employed by Vickers but also worked for the war-time Ministry of Aircraft Production. Determined to develop a means of attacking the German dams and help cripple Nazi industrial production, he came up with the idea of a bomb that could skip over water to avoid defensive torpedo nets. When it hit a dam, backspin would make it sink while retaining contact with the wall, resulting in a far more destructive explosion.

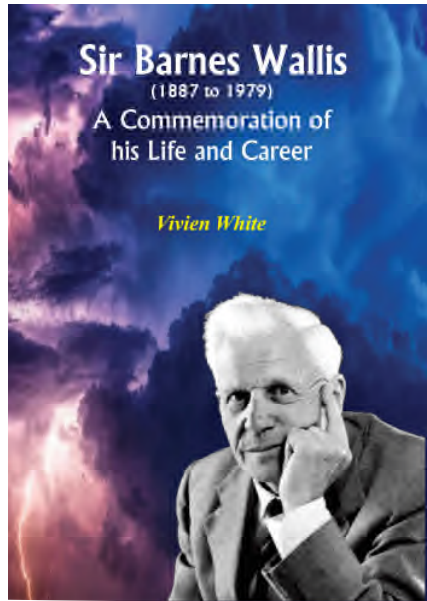
He calculated that the aircraft would have to fly extremely low to

operate effectively against the dams. They were flown by a specially created RAF squadron of Lancaster bombers known as 617 and led by the famous Wing Commander Guy Gibson, played by Richard Todd in the film. Sir Barnes Wallis himself was played by Sir Michael Redgrave. In the raid, eight Lancasters and their crews were lost but two dams were successfully breached.

A commemorative booklet was produced for the exhibition containing family photographs never before on public view.

This is on sale for £5 at the Wishing Well in the High Street, Great Bookham, and at Parker and Son in The Street, Effingham. The proceeds go to the Effingham Residents Association.

The September exhibition was also followed by a talk about Sir Barnes on 25 October at St Lawrence Church, Effingham. Entitled *Wallis and Warriors*, this was given by Dr Robert Owen, official historian of 617 Squadron.



'Wallis and Warriors'

A talk by Dr Robert Owen
(Official Historian of 617 Squadron Association)
Marking the 40th Anniversary of Barnes Wallis

Friday 25th October

7.30pm

St Lawrence Church, Effingham

*Free entry – Retiring Collection towards
maintenance of our Parish Church Buildings*



*Above: Sir Barnes' daughter Elisabeth and grand-daughters gathered at the September exhibition in Little Bookham. Two of the organisers, Bryan Sherwood and Vivien White, are shown on the left.
Below: Visitors work their way through the exhibition panels telling the amazing story of the bouncing bombs and the Dam Busters.*



HISTORICAL REPORT

GEOFF BARKWAY - A MODEST MAN

BILL WHITMAN tells the story of one of Bookham's courageous yet modest past residents.

Early on D-Day morning - 6 June 1944 - six well laden gliders were cast loose by their Halifax towing aircraft somewhere off the French coast. The invasion of France had begun.

At 6000 feet, the gliders had 15 miles to travel, in the dark, with the aid only of compass, stopwatch and many hours of training to locate their targets - the bridges near Caen over the River Orne and the Caen canal - and to land in tiny, clear spaces close by. The

bridges had been wired for demolition by the Germans. The objective of the 180 troops carried by the gliders was to capture, hold and make safe the bridges before the noise of the main invasion started.

Staff Sergeant Geoff Barkway was the pilot of the third glider to land at Pegasus Bridge, tasked to achieve a pancake landing in the even smaller space remaining after the first two gliders had landed. Geoff located his landing target and made the landing but the glider had been over-loaded with extra ammunition and weaponry. Its approach velocity was nearer 90 mph than 60.

The glider slid forward into a pond and the plywood structure broke-up. Geoff found himself in the stagnant water, still in his harness. He released himself, his co-pilot and then the infantry trapped in the mangled glider before helping to unload the stores. At that stage he was shot in the arm, possibly by his own side, and was taken to the café nearby for his wound to be dressed before being returned to England on a tank-landing ship.

Within ten minutes the bridge was taken, made safe, and then held until the 7th Parachute Regiment arrived several hours later.



*GEOFF BARKWAY
(1921-2006)*

*Photo copyright:
Jane Barkway-Harney*

Air Vice Marshall Leigh-Mallory described the landing as ‘the greatest feat of flying in the war’. The first pilots were all recommended for the Distinguished Flying Medal but Geoff’s medal was mistakenly given to another pilot with a similar name. Geoff made no comment but much later the error was discovered and he duly received his own medal ‘for carrying out his task with great accuracy, skill and courage.’ Sadly, his wound became infected and gangrenous and his right arm was amputated.

Geoff Barkway was born in East London in 1921. He became an apprentice fitter and turner with the London and North East Railway before being mobilised in the railway branch of the Royal Engineers. In 1942 he volunteered for training as a glider pilot.

He was trained to fly powered aircraft and gliders and selected for special training for an undisclosed operation. This involved long flights to develop navigational skills and landing in ever more confined spaces, in the dark. Geoff’s stories of his training flights and of locating different landing targets could be very amusing, often ending with a wait in a near-by pub for the lorries to arrive to recover the gliders.

He taught himself to write with his left hand and when discharged from the Army, took an engineering degree at Kingston Technical College (now Kingston University). He subsequently worked for many years for London Transport, becoming a divisional engineer in 1973 after supervising testing of the new Victoria Line. After retiring in 1981, he became a consultant on underground transport systems in New York and Singapore.

His wife Eileen (née Underwood) had served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). They were married in 1945 and later had four children. Geoff and Eileen lived in Great Bookham for 45 years, first in Greenway and then Allen Road. He played an active part in local affairs but it was only after his retirement that he could be persuaded to talk in public about his wartime experiences.

In later years he re-visited Pegasus Bridge and D-Day reunions until his death from a heart attack in June 2006. His funeral was attended by a Colour Party from the RAF.

* Copies of Bill Whitman’s new improved edition of his booklet *History of Saint Nicolas Church, Great Bookham* are now available in the church, from the church office in Fife Way, or from the author.

HISTORICAL REPORT

ROYALTY IN FATAL ROAD ACCIDENT - OVER TWO CENTURIES AGO

BRIAN BOUCHARD discovered the following report of a road tragedy in *The New Annual Register: Or General Repository of History*, Volume 49, 1807. The event itself had happened the previous year.

It is with great concern we have to state the following melancholy accident. Her royal highness the Princess of Wales was this afternoon on her way to the seat of Mr Locke at Norbury Park, near Leatherhead, Surrey, in a barouche, attended by Lady Sheffield and Miss Harriot Mary Cholmondeley, and was driven by her royal highness's own servants. They took post horses, and were driven by the post-boys belonging to the Cock Inn.

Her royal highness's horses and servants were left to refresh in order to take her home that evening. Her royal highness proceeded to Leatherhead, when on turning a sharp corner to get into the road which leads to Norbury Park, the carriage was overturned, opposite to a large tree, against which Miss Cholmondeley was thrown with such violence, as to be killed on the spot. She was sitting on the front seat of the barouche alone.

Her royal highness and Lady Sheffield occupied the back seat, and were thrown out together. They went into the Swan Inn at Leatherhead. Sir Lucas Pepys, who lives in that neighbourhood [at Juniper Hill, Mickleham], and had not left Leatherhead (where he had been to visit a patient) more than a quarter of an hour, was immediately followed and brought back and a servant was sent to Mr Locke's, with an account of the accident.

Mrs L arrived in her carriage with all expedition, and conducted the princess to Norbury Park, where Sir Lucas Pepys attended her royal highness and, as no surgeon was at hand, bled her himself. On the following day the princess returned to Blackheath. Her royal highness received no other injury than a slight cut on her nose, and a bruise on one of her arms. Lady Sheffield, wife of Lord Sheffield, who was with her, did not receive the slightest injury.



Left: Caroline, Princess of Wales was married to the Prince Regent but denied the position of Queen when he became King in 1820. She died soon afterwards.



Above: William Locke II (1767-1847) was the son of Norbury Park's first owner. This portrait from c1800 was by Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830).

An inquest was held on the 4th, before C. Jemmet esq, coroner for Surrey, on the body of Miss Cholmondeley, at the Swan Inn, Leatherhead. It appeared, by the evidence of a Mr Jarrat at Leatherhead, and of an hostler belonging to the inn, that the princess's carriage, drawn by four horses, with two postillions, while turning round a very acute angle of the road, was overturned. The drivers, through extreme caution, had taken too great a sweep in turning the corner, which brought the carriage on the rising ground, and occasioned its being upset.

The carriage swung round a great tree before it fell. When the surgeon saw the Princess of Wales, she most benevolently desired him to go upstairs, as there was a lady who stood more in need of his assistance. The surgeon (Mr Lawden of Great Bookham) then went to Miss Cholmondeley, and found her totally deprived of life. There was a violent contusion on her left temple; and her death appeared to have been occasioned by the rupture of a blood vessel.

The jury returned a verdict of Accidental Death. Miss Cholmondeley was born in 1753, and was the daughter of the late Hon and Rev Robert Cholmondeley, rector of Hartingford-Bury and St Andrews,

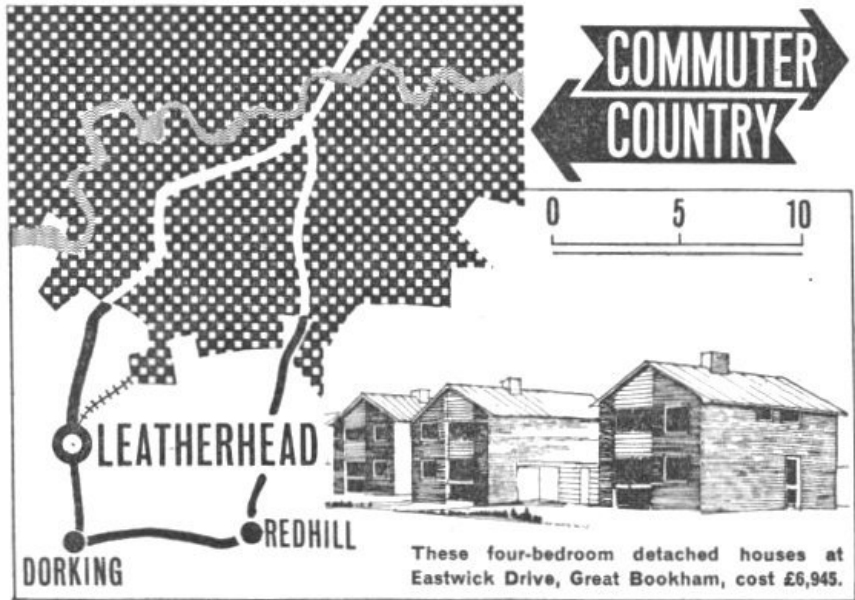
Hertford, who was son of the third earl of Cholmondeley, and uncle to the present earl. Her mother is living and resides in Jermyn-street.

On the 8th [October 1806], at 12 o'clock, the remains of this unfortunate lady were interred in Leatherhead church, close to the spot where Lady Thompson, wife of Sir John Thompson, some years since lord mayor of London, is buried. The body was, on the evening of the sixth, removed from the Swan Inn to an undertaker's near the church-yard, and was followed to the grave by her brother, George Cholmondeley esq, one of the Commissioners of excise; the hon Augustus Phipps; William Locke esq; S. Gray esq, and several other gentlemen. The fatal spot where this amiable lady met her sudden death is still visited by crowds.

HISTORICAL REPORT

NOSTALGIC PROPERTY PRICES

NOVEMBER 10, 1963



In 1963 new four-bedroom houses at Eastwick Drive in Great Bookham went on the market at £6945. Today they would probably be well over 100 times more expensive.

HISTORICAL REPORT

LOST - 'THE FINEST SYCAMORE IN ENGLAND'



Above: This is the majestic sycamore that gave the school its original logo. Thought to be some 200 years old, it stood on the left at the top of the rear entrance to Eastwick Park.

On Friday, 13 June 1958 the *Leatherhead Advertiser* reported: 'Said to be the finest specimen of a sycamore in England, the tree standing in the grounds of the new County Primary School in Eastwick, Great Bookham, has been chosen as the crest of the school.

'This tree which is estimated to be 200 years old and grows not more than 40 yards from the school, stands 40 feet high with a 15 feet girth and its largest branch is nine feet in circumference, a foot from the trunk.

'The crest is being designed by 12-year-old Martin Snellgrove, a pupil at Dorking County Grammar School whose mother is a teacher at Eastwick and whose father is on the staff of the Powell Corderoy School, Dorking. He lives in Gatesden Road, Fetcham.

'A notice on the tree reads: "Please take care of the finest sycamore tree in England." Mr M. E. Taylor, headmaster of the school, said the adoption of the tree as the school's crest was decided by himself and his teaching staff in symbol of the love of the countryside.'

A former pupil recalled: 'This sycamore was truly immense in height, in girth and in limbs. The lower limbs spread horizontally like immense arms. The tree as a whole created a vast canopy under



Left: Headmaster Mr M. E. Taylor and his staff in 1958 when the sycamore was adopted as the new school's logo.

which we walked each day. It was, reputedly, the biggest sycamore in England.'

By the 1980s the lower branches needed support and the ancient tree started to rot, becoming a danger. It was eventually felled and a replacement planted a little way away near the top of the drive. Sadly that replacement was dug up during classroom building work and never replaced.

The school is now Eastwick Junior School. In 2009, Ali Kelman, the school librarian, decided that in its 50th anniversary year a second replacement sycamore should be planted closer to the original spot. He contacted Martin Snellgrove who by that time was living overseas but paid for a sapling which was duly planted as close to the original location as possible. It remains to this day.

However in 2014 the then head of the school mistakenly assumed the logo was an oak tree and switched to two acorns.

Old maps show that the bottom of the rear driveway where the original tree stood was also the location of the generator that provided Eastwick House with electric lighting in the days of the Keswick family. It was among the first in Bookham to have the facility.

For more background and imagery of the site before after the loss of the giant sycamore, go to

http://www.datavu.host-ed.me/bookhamhistory/ejhis28_jpg.htm

** This story is kindly provided by Ali Kelman from his website on the history of Eastwick, supported by the Bookham Residents Association.*

HISTORICAL REPORT

THE GRANGE

In 2018, Bookham's Grange Centre for people with disabilities opened a Heritage Room with help from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Grange was originally known as the School of Stitchery and Lace and moved to the present site near Preston Cross in 1938, writes VIVIEN WHITE.

It was renamed The Grange Centre for people with disabilities in the 1970s, its mission to provide vital services supporting people with learning disabilities to lead independent and fulfilling lives. The history of the School of Stitchery and Lace is well documented in the Heritage Room which contains wonderful examples of textiles produced for Queen Mary, with whom the school had a close connection.

The earlier history of The Grange is not so well documented. It lies within Great Bookham but is located on the Little Bookham side of Rectory Lane. Some people assume that it was moved into Great Bookham recently but in fact it has been there throughout recorded history. Perhaps its location is why it has not been as well researched as other areas of Great Bookham. Like most old houses, its history revolves around the families that lived there – the Collins, Seawell and Bird Families to name just some of them.

The L&DLHS has published few articles about The Grange in either the *Proceedings* or the *Newsletter* although former chairman David Hartley attempted a sketch of some of the families – the Collins and Seawells in 2013 and added valuable new information.

Unfortunately, the watercolour of *The Seat of Thomas Seawell of Little Bookham* painted by John Hassell circa 1822 featured in the February 2013 and May 2013 *Newsletters* suggested that the painting was a house on the site of the current Grange. In fact, Thomas Seawell never lived on the site of The Grange, although he did indeed own it for a time. The painting is of an entirely different house on a different site and the clue is in the title.

Last year I began to research its history for The Grange as a volunteer. I aimed to try and fill in some missing pieces, particularly the earlier history of the site. The watercolour conundrum was just one of the intriguing stories I have encountered so far. I hope to finish the research

in 2020 and the Society has agreed to publish it as a book for sale.

However, the problem with undertaking research like this is that the more you look the more interesting things you find and deadlines start to lengthen.

In the September 2019 *Newsletter*, Bill Whitman posed questions about one significant former owner of The Grange, asking ‘Who exactly was Arthur Bird?’ and requesting new background information. I hope to answer most of these questions. In fact Arthur Bird is the least of my worries. What I really want to find out is where did William Collins, owner of The Grange site in around 1600, originate from? But that may be a conundrum too far.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

JOAN ETHEL BURNETT
(1915-2005)

On 22 March 1982, EDWINA VARDEY interviewed Miss Joan Burnett at her home, 13 Windfield in Leatherhead. Joan had devoted most of her life to nursing, starting as a young volunteer with the Red Cross and working throughout World War 2 in a hospital ward with military and civilian patients. Afterwards she spent the rest of her career working at Leatherhead Hospital. Her mother’s family had lived nearby for generations and she recalled the town, shops and people from rural days before the 1930s.

I was born in 1915 in Plomesgate, Suffolk. My parents met in Leatherhead. Mummy was born in Leatherhead in 1888 and died in 1964. Daddy was born 1890 and died in 1967. My mother’s maiden name was Man. Ethel Seymour. She said she was married in Leatherhead Church and went in as a Man and came out as a woman.

I think he was probably stationed here in the Church Army. He used to come down here I think at weekends from Shrewsbury. He was always in the Church Army before they were married. He came from Yorkshire and after they were married he went to Cambridge in the Fen district.

They moved to Aldborough, Suffolk, in late 1909 or 1910 because their son, who was stillborn, was born in 1910. My mother didn't like Leatherhead at all although she was born here. When Daddy said we have to go back to Surrey she said I'm not going back to that place. You go back, I'm not going. She had to give in but I don't think she ever felt 100%. I think it is a very relaxing place. I can sit down sometimes in the afternoon and just drop off if I'm listening to something or reading something. It is a sleepy place. Epsom is better. It's different air somehow. There are so many trees we are encased in Leatherhead. I think lots of people remark on it.

I have one older sister, Dorothy Hopkins. She has lived in Epsom in the same house since she was married in 1936. She has no children unfortunately. It wasn't for want of trying. I think it was the war really that intervened soon after they were married. Anyway they are very happy and they have been married 46 years this September.

Where did you go to school?

When we came to Leatherhead we went to Miss Moncrieff's in The Crescent. Then we went to Miss Hewling's in Bridge Street and from there we went to the Central School in Kingston Road.

What did your mother do before she met your father?

She worked in Shinnars, the drapers in the High Street. And my aunt. It was quite a big store. It stretched from Boots' second shop right down to where the International is now [1982]. My grandfather worked at Waterloo in the office. He was a clerk on the railway. He died at 52 from consumption. My mother was in her late teens when he died in 1913 on 2 February. I was born two years after on the same day.

They lived in Myrtle Cottage, Church Road, but my mother was born in Poplar Road. The house was later called Quants. They were an average family for that era. I never heard Mummy say it was a struggle. When my parents came back to live in Leatherhead my father worked at Buchanans and then he went to Moulds before he was full-time Verger at the church. Up to then he was part-time in the evenings. He was the Verger for 45 years altogether.

When he first came out of the Royal Marsden in Fulham at Christmas



Above: The Victoria Memorial Cottage Hospital at the junction of Epsom Road and Forty Foot Road, in 1909. Joan started her nursing career there as a weekend volunteer with the Red Cross. It closed in 1940 when the new Leatherhead Hospital opened. The building later became known as Victoria House and operated as a disability home.

1966 his surgeon said to him: 'This Christmas Mr Burnett you will bring that choir down. You will take them up the aisle and you will bring them down.' He said: 'No I shall never do that again.' But the surgeon said: 'You will!' and he did. He had had about three major operations so it really was a great achievement. He died the following October.

All your mother's family are buried in the churchyard.

Yes. All her family. Her mother and father, and my aunt and my uncle and also a cousin I think of my uncle and my great great grandmother. Steel was my great great grandmother's name. My mother had two bridesmaids at her wedding and one pageboy. One of the bridesmaids was a cousin and the other was Miss Parrot. The page was Freddy Parrot, the family of the late Mr Parrot who was a photographer on the corner of The Crescent. Now offices. I think the original studio was taken down.

My father had a number of activities. He carried on with the Scouts which he started in Aldborough. He was Scoutmaster and took the

Rovers to lots of camps including Guernsey. He was also a founder member of Toc H in Leatherhead. He was a very keen bowler and won 11 silver spoons. He was playing bowls in July 1966 so really right until he was ill. He used to say: 'I'm just going out for a rollup. I won't be long.' Every evening. They played in the recreation ground up the Forty Foot.

During the Second World War he was in the police war reserve and an ARP officer as well as in the parish church. The church needed a lot of guarding. We had the stained glass windows broken. We had quite a lot of incendiary bombs. Ermyn Way was bombed. It was houses up there and also the convent. Some of the nuns and children were trapped in there.

What did you do for fun when you were young in Leatherhead?

It amazes me these days when children say I'm bored, I haven't got anything to do. We made our own amusements. We had a dolls house. My dolls were always ill. I always wanted to be a nurse right from the time I was young. We used to play for hours with these dolls. You were always busy. We used to go out for walks with the family. Up where the by-pass is now. It was lovely. Two banks. You used to run up one and down the other. It was beautiful. It was a small country road. More like the end of Forty Foot is now. No traffic at all. Right down to the Dorking Road. It was lovely.

Leatherhead changed from the 1930s. I remember the big houses and the people who lived in them. Mr and Mrs Still who lived on this estate. She looked more like Queen Mary, I always used to think. They were great church-goers. She used to open her grounds in aid of Queen Alexandra's Nurses, the district nurses association. Once a year she used to open the garden. I went when they had the Silver Band and the gardens were open. They were lovely.

I think this was one of the nicest gardens. The Leaches' was also very nice. They were all nice in a different way. It was a job to choose from them. Mr Donald Curtis used to be the chauffeur-gardener. Used to live in Byron Place and had the Curtis Taxi. He was the youngest son.

There were many characters around. There was Fetcham Ciss who the St John's boys used to tease to death. They put an old bedstead

up the Forty Foot once and wrote on it 'For Fetcham Ciss'. She didn't sleep on it but she used to chase these boys. They used to tease her unmercifully and then run off. She used to put her fist out at them. I think she died in Epsom Hospital. When it had the old part, which they called the workhouse.

Did the church have a hostel?

Only the almshouses down Church Walk. They are still there but I don't know if they are still called almshouses.

Then there was one called Gentleman James. I don't know if he had a screw loose. He was quite a character. I remember people saying this is Gentleman James. There were two other people in Brickbat Alley, one of them called Golly. They had one boy. Very rough looking people. There was another person who used to walk around Leatherhead. She used to wear about nine petticoats. She had everything on in case of fire. You used to see her along the Dorking Road. I don't know what her name was.

Looking back, to me it's an entirely different place because in Poplar Road and Highlands Avenue there were no houses when we came here. It was all fields. It was lovely. Quite safe to run around. You never had any fear. You never went out and locked the doors or anything. Entirely different world really.

I started nursing with the Red Cross. I joined the juniors and we used to go to the pantomime at Wimbledon every Christmas which Mrs Henderson of Randalls Park used to treat us to. When I was too old for the juniors I went into the seniors and worked at the hospital which is now Victoria House every weekend. [*This was the Victoria Memorial Cottage Hospital which opened in 1904 with six beds and a cot. It served a population of 4000 and some 58 patients were admitted in the first year. It closed in 1940 when the present Leatherhead Hospital opened. The building was called Victoria House when it served later as a home for the disabled. Demolished in 2005 it was replaced by apartments.*]

When I first left school I was 14 because I wasn't old enough to go into nursing [professionally]. Somebody got me a job at the Blind School, finishing off the garments that the blind used to make. Suits and cardigans and jumpers. We were on piece work. I was there for



Above: School for the Blind where Joan worked for a decade.

ten years. Quite honestly I can't imagine how I stuck it for ten years, knowing all the time that I wanted to do nursing.

So when the second war was almost imminent the chaplain of the Blind School, Rev Griffiths, came round and had a talk with all the sighted people. He said if war is declared you sighted people will have the choice. You can either go into [part of] the Blind School which will be an emergency hospital or you can stay with the Blind School. I will give you a few days to think about it. I said I don't need to think about it. I will go into the emergency hospital. I was there the first Sunday when war was declared and I was there up to the end, the whole time.

If you were in the Red Cross you had to join the Civil Nursing Reserve run by Kings College Hospital from London. They came down here. An absolutely wonderful experience. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. It was hard but you didn't mind. It was worth it.

We had patients from Dunkirk. I've got a photo of when the Queen Mother came. We had air raid casualties from London. We had all sorts - military, civilian. We were overworked but enjoyed it because you really thought you were doing something. Then after a few years I was put on the roll of assistant nurses. After that I was in charge of some of the wards, especially the military wards. We had over 60 beds. There were two of us on at night.

Some were foreign soldiers. We had one German prisoner whose plane came down in a garden between Highlands Avenue and Highlands

Road. Of course there was a guard on him. He was not awfully injured and afterwards he was moved on to another camp. There are many stories I could tell of those soldiers. You couldn't blame the poor things honestly. All the things they had been through.

When you were on night duty you had to sit in the ward if you were in charge. There was a door at the back which led down the side drive. When you went on night duty everybody was supposed to be in. They had a roll call and you'd go round after it. The sister would hand over and you would say where is so and so. He's just gone out nurse. But how has he gone out because surely he had to answer his name. Well, we said he was in the loo. He'll be back. So I said I hope he's back before night sister comes.

She came back to do war work and used to wear a cap right down her forehead. Really one of the old school. A real battleaxe. Anyway, one particular night I heard this fellow coming up the drive and I heard night sister coming up the corridor. My heart stopped. I thought gosh, who is going to make it first? He came in the door and I was busy writing. I made out I didn't see or hear.

'What was that nurse?' I said: 'I don't know, sister. I didn't hear anything.' She said: 'I thought I heard something.' When she went round she had a torch about a foot long. She used to shine it on them and wake them up, saying: 'Can't you sleep?' This particular fellow jumped into bed with his boots on. When she went round he was snoring like anything. Really loud snores.

I didn't know how to go round with that. I was nearly exploding. So when she got to the door she looked me and she said that patient, nurse, is a very good actor isn't he? I said: 'Is he sister?'

After she had gone the ward was in an uproar. I laid down the Riot Act in the morning. I said: 'Now when I come on tonight if you are not all in I am not going to cover up for you. Last night I should have reported that you were out but you got in in time. But it's not fair really and you shouldn't do it. I know you have been under great strain and I can't blame you but I would get into trouble if they knew that you were out.'

They went to the pub. They had two khaki suits. One they would hand in, the other one would go under their mattress. They would have the hospital blues. So of course when they went out they would

take their khaki suit and put it on. I expect they knew that they were from the hospital. The next night when I went on they were all there sitting playing cards and looking terribly glum. Of course a night or two afterwards they were out again but got in before the night sister.

When the war was over I thought I had really had enough because it was a gruelling time. You saw far more things than nurses in training see today. When you think of patients straight from the front line. I think I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I felt I couldn't do nursing for a while so I went part-time to the surgery, Dr Gavin's surgery when Dr von Bergen was there. Then I went full-time. I was there from 1945 to 1950 and then I went into the hospital. I was there nearly 25 years.

Dr Gavin's surgery with Dr Everett was in Montague House. That was pulled down. That's where the shops are. Collets and Dixons. They built the new surgery with the flat behind which was part of a lovely garden.

How many doctors were there in the surgery?

There was Dr von Bergen. Dr Benson came before I left. He wasn't there all the time I was there. Dr Reichsfeld and Dr Gilbert were in Ashted. Dr Gavin came when Dr Everett was away in the army. So there was only Dr von Bergen and Dr Gavin then. Dr von Bergen was old then. He was a real gentleman. Marvellous. But when Dr Everett came back the patients wouldn't go into Dr von Bergen, they would go into Dr Everett instead. So one day he came out and said: 'If nobody is going into Dr von Bergen I am not seeing anyone else.' I suppose people felt that a younger man was more up to date.

[Dr Carl Wahlgren von Bergen, newly arrived as a local GP, had provided much of the energy and inspiration for the building of the Victoria Memorial Cottage Hospital back in 1904.]

I always remember. Dr Everett was once doing the surgery and thought he had finished everybody. He looked out into the waiting room and it was absolutely full of smoke. They had one of these paraffin stoves. A little voice came from over the other side of the waiting room and said: 'It's all right doctor, I'm here.' It was this little old man sitting in the room full of smoke. Dr Everett didn't realise anybody would sit there with all this smoke.

It was a happy place. I still go up there from time to time. Different friends I know. I used to go up and see the nurses but there are not many of the old ones left. Sister Higgins is not too bad really. She's got a friend who lives in Bridge Court at the bottom of Bridge Street. Used to live at Oxshott and she was trained with her. She was there for the weekend and spent Saturday with me.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

GLADYS LILLIAN MOORING
(1900- 1997)

The Steere family of Glebe Road had lived in Ashted for more than 200 years when Gladys Mooring, née Steere, was interviewed by EDWINA VARDEY in April 1991. Many of them were buried in St Giles churchyard, Ashted. James Steere, her grandfather, had been kicked in the head by a horse during the Crimean War. He was trepanned with a silver plate inserted in his head and could never work again.

James's youngest son Ralph, Gladys's father, left school age 12 and entered the building trade. He was about 40 years old when she was born in 1900 as his seventh child and he ended his days as a gardener. Ralph, his wife Emma, and their nine children lived in Vine Cottage, Skinners Lane, which had a very large garden that provided the family with all their fruit and vegetables throughout the year. Ralph grew enough potatoes and beans etc to last from one year to the next. They had greengages, Victoria plums, quinces. Emma would make jam to last all year and what she didn't make into jam she bottled. They always had running water.

Gladys remembered the wealthy local gentry who all kept nursemaids and gardeners but few chauffeurs as cars were rare. When they went out to dinner they would hire a horse and cab from a man named Astridge based at the station. All the big houses had gas lighting but not electricity.

Her mother Emma came from the Penfolds of Walton on the Hill, a significant local cricketing and golfing family. One of her nephews - her brother's son - was a cricketer. One was a professional golfer at

Walton Heath Golf Club where Lord Beaverbrook and Lloyd George played during the First World War.

Gladys's earliest memory was of going to Epsom to see the decorations for King Edward VII's coronation. She remembered walking with her mother holding the side of the pram containing her baby brother, two years younger than she was. She was only two years old but remembered being told not to step in the puddles. She recalled big wooden tubs filled with flowers along the pavements, each with a decorated pole looped from one to the next. Epsom clock was the landmark.

From the age of four Gladys went to St Giles Cof E School where she remembered having Scripture lessons. Once a week the Rector would lead prayers. The pupils always sang a hymn before starting school. The headmaster was Mr Booker who took standard seven and eight while Mr Coombs took standard five and six.

The children would always go home for lunch as there were no school dinners in those days. They had a mile and a quarter each way to walk to school. Her elder sister or brother took her. They came out at noon and had to be back at 1.45pm. Her mother would have the dinner waiting for and then they would have to go straight back. At 4pm they came out again to go home. So they walked six miles a day from the age of four. It kept them healthy and they thought nothing of it. They always had to walk to Walton on the Hill and other places as there weren't any buses. Even the Rector and the doctor came round on bicycles. Nobody had cars.

The family doctor was Dr von Bergen from the Leatherhead & Ashted partnership with Dr Reichsfeld at Ashted. She remembered Dr Reichsfeld's predecessor, Dr Gibbons.

Ashted was very beautiful with a pond down by the station and a green. Gladys's brothers used to go there fishing for small tiddlers. They also went swimming at the Bathing Hall near the station, teaching themselves to swim. A boy drowned there. The girls never went.

When the children were old enough they went to Sunday school and every year a Sunday school outing was arranged to the seaside. A special train came to a dedicated siding at Ashted Station. They would go to Worthing, Brighton or Littlehampton for the day. That was the only holiday taken in those days.

Gladys remembered when the First World War broke out. She was 14 and she and two brothers were taking a cousin back home to Epsom Grandstand where the girl's father was clerk of the works.

Her four brothers all served in the First World War. One of them, two years older than her, joined up aged just 16 although he claimed to be 18. When his father asked him what had made him do that he replied that he couldn't sit at home with his three brothers out fighting. He was wounded twice before he turned 18 but his age was never discovered.

All four brothers survived the war. William, the eldest, joined the Royal Navy just as radio came in and served under Lord Mountbatten who was especially interested in the new technology. While they were based in Malta, William would go to Mountbatten's private house once a week and test his radio to see that everything was working in order. The family would say they were the first people in Ashted to have radio because William built his own set before the war. He fixed an aerial to a big elm tree in the garden but was not allowed to use it during the conflict.

After she left school Gladys went to work in an insurance office in the City of London aged 16. The trains ran one an hour and took an hour to get from Ashted to Waterloo. She would catch the 7.15am train to reach the office at 9am. Her youngest sister worked at Sutton telephone exchange, her eldest went to Peter Robinson's to work. Very gifted in needlework the sister sewed showcases for railway stations and created fine embroidered gowns and cot linen for the store's baby department.

Gladys would never forget the day that peace was announced in November 1918. She was in London working. Everybody was on edge awaiting confirmation of the peace agreement signatures on the 11th month at 11 o'clock.

She said: 'As soon as the sirens went everybody downed tools. I shall never forget it. There were people riding all day on the steps of the buses, people were riding in taxis with their legs all hanging out. The offices all closed. People just walked out and made a day of it. I had to come past the Mansion House to get to the station and the Lord Mayor of London was out on the balcony speaking. Everybody was there. I had to get through there to get to the station. I shall



Above: Women workers at the Atlas munitions factory opposite Bookham Station during World War I. Gladys may have been aware of the works a few miles down the road from her Ashted home.

never forget this crowd. I was terror stricken. I thought I was going to be suffocated. I wasn't very big.'

There were local celebrations too in Ashted. The procession marched past the station, waving flags with a celebration at what was then the cricket field down Woodfield Lane.

Gladys always lived in Skinners Lane until her wedding at St Giles Church. She met her husband, Harry Victor Mooring (1897-1965) - known as Vic - at the post-war dances organised in the Letherhead Institute. His family came from Brighton and had moved to Ashted during the war. He had gone into the Army after school so had no training for work but by the time they were married he had become a mechanic working for Trojan Motors at Purley. He stayed there until shortly before he died aged 68 in 1965.

Vic and Gladys had just one son, Tony. He lived with them until he was married. He went to live at Hurst Green near Oxted but died aged 36 of a coronary. Many years later after Vic's own death his mother's death certificate came to light and showed she too had died of a coronary. Her grandson Tony had inherited the condition.

SOCIAL HISTORY FEATURE

ENGLAND'S SHORT YEARS AND THEIR TAX IMPLICATIONS

BOB KELLEY of Bookham U3A Social History group recently searched an 18th century parish registry for the baptism of his great, great, great, great grandfather. As the man lived in a small village where nothing much happened, two pages covered over five years. Bob quickly noticed that 1751 and earlier years started on Lady Day (25 March) while it and all subsequent years ended on 31 December. This was evidence of an 18th century change that partly answers a question still asked today. **Why does our tax year start on 6 April?**

Even before the change, there was some use of the Gregorian calendar in England. This causes occasional anomalies in Samuel Pepys' diaries, which he started on 1 January 1660, so historians and family history researchers should be on their toes with dates prior to 1752. For example, in The Tower of London there is some graffiti scratched into a cell wall by someone imprisoned in January 1642 for his role in the Battle of Edgehill, the first major action of the Civil War in England - which didn't take place until 23 October that year!

The year had started on 1 January since Julius Caesar's calendar of 45 BC but the Third Council of Tours in 755 AD formally abolished that day as necessarily the start of the year. Some countries retained it but the English adopted Lady Day instead. That is the date Archangel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary - known as Our Lady by the Catholic Church - that she would become the mother of Jesus Christ on a date assumed to be 25 December. This had been calculated by counting back exactly nine months to 25 March, also called the Feast of the Annunciation.

In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII ordered a change from the Julian calendar, which differed from the time taken for the Earth to travel around the sun by approximately 11½ minutes per year (0.002% or a day every 125 years). By the late 1500s this discrepancy had put

the Julian calendar behind the solar calendar by ten days so it needed to be corrected. Adopting the Gregorian calendar would do so and this reinstated the start of the year as 1 January.

It made perfect sense but imagine yourself in the position of England under Queen Elizabeth I. Her father, Henry VIII, had broken with Rome in order to marry her mother, Anne Boleyn, half a century earlier. It was just 24 years since English Protestants had been martyred by her Catholic predecessor, Mary I. Pope Pius V had excommunicated her 12 years earlier and she faced a hostile continent with papal authority to depose her and restore Catholicism under Mary Queen of Scots. Was she really going to ask her fragile Protestant realm to obey a papal edict? Accordingly, England ignored Pope Gregory's order and continued to use the Julian calendar starting on Lady Day.

Scotland was a different matter, however. Free of English rule at that time it reverted to a 1 January start to the year in 1600. For a century the two countries operated different calendars but in 1707 the Act of Union created the single Kingdom of Great Britain.

Cross-border contracts, annuities and other legal matters with dates for payments etc obviously became complicated and confusing. Any date between 1 January and 24 March would be in one year in England but the following year in Scotland. In 1714 the situation worsened further when the Elector of Hanover became King George I in Britain. Hanover, in Germany, used the same calendar as the rest of Europe while England remained out on a limb.

This anomaly was clearly untenable and Parliament agreed it should end but this didn't happen for many years. Eventually *The Calendar (New Style) Act 1750* finally brought in the Gregorian calendar, although even then the legislation was careful not to acknowledge its Roman Catholic provenance. Under the Act the year 1751 would be a short one, lasting just 282 days from 25 March to 31 December and 1752 would then begin on 1 January.

However, the Treasury had been budgeting on receiving a full-year's tax revenue, not 282 days. The solution? It decided that the tax year would still start on Lady Day. For the first time, England's calendar and fiscal years would differ.

England also had to drop 11 days from its calendar to align with

the solar year. The Act stipulated that Wednesday, 2 September 1752 would be immediately followed by Thursday, 14 September. Again, the Treasury had been banking on receiving a full-year's tax revenue, not 354 days.

The City was told to pay a full year's tax but merchants understandably protested. A compromise was reached. The Treasury insisted that the tax year 1752/53 would remain as 365 days and to achieve this without disproportionately taxing the merchants, the beginning of the following tax year was moved from 25 March to 5 April. But even this was not the end of the story.

The year 1800 would have been a leap year under the Julian calendar but was not under the Gregorian one. The Treasury again decreed that, to avoid a lost day of revenue, 1800 would be a leap year for tax purposes.

Accordingly, the start of the tax year was moved on by a single day to 6 April. This argument was dropped for the year 1900, so 6 April has been the first day of the UK tax year ever since.

BOOK REVIEW

By ANNE FRASER

**TRACES, Professor Patricia Wiltshire
Bonnier Books UK/Clays Ltd**



I expect, like me, you look up from time to time at a clear night sky and trace the line of the Plough or the Great Bear or perhaps wonder at the brightness of Venus and Jupiter so far away. Have you ever thought that the world beneath your feet hides secrets just as entrancing, just as intriguing? The skill is in knowing where to find them and how to dig down into the murky depths to yield up clues.

Patricia Wiltshire (shown above right) is a forensic ecologist who has worked on over 250 criminal cases, including rape and murder, across the UK. She gave the October L&DLHS lecture on the subject. This book is a mix of scientific knowledge, case studies and personal biography. Her attitude is somehow deeply honest, frankly brutal but also highly compassionate.

The author describes how her investigations can help prove guilt

or innocence, or identify the whereabouts of a body or of hidden remains. The cases under investigation are sometimes gruesome, sometimes plain bizarre; mummified remains and body parts call for a strong stomach.

She works with exacting precision when ascertaining the truth of a crime; matching different pollen found on a vehicle to form a picture of its movements, for example. She knows her stuff, and of necessity, needs to be confident in her judgements. The sheer beauty and number of different types of spores, pollen, lichens and fungi to be harnessed as evidence is mind-boggling. This is painstaking work, often leading the way in pushing the boundaries. As she says: 'Small differences matter.'

In all cases, Patricia respects those she works with, whether police or colleagues. The work is reminiscent of police detective series, but without the annoying mistakes or inaccuracies that would never do. The author always shows compassion for the victim. There is her realisation that this is a real person with loved ones and that there must be humanity and sensitivity without sentimentality. Intertwined with this and central to it, is her childhood. How did it define the adult she became?

Accounts and anecdotes tell of her relationships with her parents and grandmother in a small Welsh village. The burning curiosity and sharp intelligence are already apparent as a child, her determination honed by illness. Happy times are defined by sadness. There is a very honest and raw account of grief, enough to stop your breath and rend your heart.

No dry, scientific textbook this, although chock-full of incredible facts and figures. Sometimes, I admit, I found the scientific detail a little overwhelming. It was worth persevering though as each case brings new and fascinating aspects to her methods and some surprising conclusions.

Ultimately, the author draws you into the problem-solving, lateral thinking, determination and application involved in solving each case. It explains what drives her still to bring truth and justice and to imbue others with her enthusiasm for her life's work.

Traces is available from Book Potato in Leatherhead High Street and other outlets. See the next *Newsletter* for a report of her October lecture on using forensic ecology both in archaeology and crime investigations.

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No 1175119

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Online Archive: www.ldlhsarchive.co.uk

Monthly meetings at the Letherhead Institute every third Friday
of the month between September and May, 7.30pm for 8pm.

Museum (Hampton Cottage): Open April-December
Thursdays and Fridays 1pm - 4pm and Saturdays 10am-4pm

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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.

Kirby Library (Leatherhead Institute)

The Library is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 10am-12.30pm. Exceptionally, arrangements may be made to use it at other times by applying to the Librarian.

2020 L&DLHS MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Ordinary - £20. Associate /Student - £6. Friends of the Museum - £3 (£2 for additional Friends). Corporate rate for businesses - £125.

A renewal form is delivered with this *Newsletter*. Your subscription supports the Museum and provides the quarterly *Newsletter*. Payment is due from 1 January for the year 2020.

VACANCIES

The L&DLHS still has vacancies for all of the following posts. Filling these really is crucial for the Society's future, as is attracting more members. If you would like more information, to volunteer yourself, or to recommend someone suitable, please contact Society Chairman John Rowley on 01372/723417 or any of the other existing office holders on Pages 38-39.

Museum Curator

Leatherhead Archivist

Book Sales Coordinator

Additional Programme Committee members

Friends of the Museum Chairman and Treasurer

DORKING CONCERTGOERS AT THE DORKING HALLS

Barbican String Quartet

Sunday 12 January 2020 Martineau Hall 3.00pm

Haydn String Quartet in F sharp minor Op.50 No.4; **Berg** String Quartet Op.3
Schubert String Quartet No.14 in D minor, *Death and the Maiden*

Sunday 2 February 2020 Martineau Hall 3.00pm

Haydn String Quartet Op.77 No.2; **Bartók** String Quartet No.5; **Schumann** String Quartet No.1

Benjamin Grosvenor Celebrity Piano Recital

Saturday 22 February 2020 7.30pm

Rameau Gavotte & Variations; **Beethoven**: Piano Sonata No.4 Op.7; **Liszt** Ballade No.2
Liszt Valses oubliées Nos.1 & 2; **Liszt** Berceuse; **Gounod/Liszt** Valse de l'opéra *Faust*

Chamber Philharmonic Europe

Saturday 21 March 2020 7.30pm

Vivaldi Concerto in G minor; **Ponchielli** Concerto for Trumpet & Orchestra; **Suk** Serenade for Strings; **J. S. Bach** Violin Concerto in E major; **Rachmaninov** Vocalise; **Nielsen** Little Suite

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