

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



November, 2004

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 802409

Hampton Cottage, 64 Church Street, LEATHERHEAD

Surrey, KT22 8DP

Tel: 01372 386348

Email : leatherheadmuseum@localhistory.free-online.co.uk

Web site : www.leatherheadweb.org.uk

CHAIRMAN

Peter 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.

2005 Membership Subscriptions

Ordinary.....£15.00

Associate.....£6.00

Junior (under 18)..... £1.00

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Jenny Morris

01372 362524

The Museum

is open at the following times

(closed for winter; last day open Sat. 11th December reopens April): -

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 SECRETARY

Fred Meynen

01372 372930

Archaeology

ARCHAEOLOGY SECRETARY

Pauline Hulse

01483 282917

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

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

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

CHAIRMAN

John Wettern

01372 459277

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Once again we held what I believe was a successful Heritage Open Days event in Mole Valley in September. Once again many activities were arranged or helped by members of this society and on behalf of the organising committee I would like to thank everyone who took part in any way. If you have any ideas how these events could be improved or changed please let Linda Heath or me know so that the committee organising Heritage Open Days may consider them.

Our new lecture series has started with a large attendance at the Friday meetings. We believe that this is due to our increasing publicity and if any of you is able to use any flyers or posters advertising our talks please let Graham Evans know and he will ensure that you are supplied with the necessary material.

After what we considered to be a successful society dinner this year we have decided to repeat the event in 2005. You will find full details elsewhere in the *Newsletter*. We would like to see a large attendance on 28th January so please come and bring your friends, neighbours, partners or family. We all enjoyed ourselves this year, help us to do so next year.

Next year the Archaeological Research Committee of the Surrey Archaeological Society is again holding its annual symposium in Ashted. It will take place in the Peace Memorial Hall on Saturday 26th February between 10.00 and 17.00 with coffee being served from 09.30. This is an ideal opportunity for you to see what is happening on the archaeological and local history front in the county, as well as to view the displays by various other societies. It is hoped that our society will have a display but a number of our members attending will be otherwise engaged on the day and so if anyone who is coming is willing to man the stand for a short time it may enable us to bring a display.

Two changes have recently taken place in our museum. Firstly, the time clock now works and is keeping time, and secondly, the telephone exchange is connected to a remote handset so that calling and speech can now take place between them. The latter is especially welcomed by our younger visitors who always enjoy using the telephone exchange. We are very grateful to Ron Early who has kindly carried out this work for the society.

Peter Tarplee

FROM THE EDITOR

The Chairman explained in last month's *Newsletter* that I had tendered my resignation as editor and that the February 2005 edition would be the last one I would edit. I have written some notes explaining the process of putting a *Newsletter* together and getting it proof read and published. The editor does not need to write any contributions as these come from various sources within the Society and normally these are regular contributors with whom one has close liaison. Editing the *Newsletter* is not a difficult task, but it does take a few days every four months of the year and it is essential that press deadline dates are met. It is published in February, May, August and November each year. Accuracy and a high standard of presentation are vital as the *Newsletter* is the society's main means of keeping in contact with members and informing them of society activities and news. It is also read by others. I do not have access to any sophisticated publishing software on my computer so use 'Word', but, I am finding that existing commitments are making it more difficult for me to continue as editor. If any member is interested in taking on the editorship my telephone number and address are inside the front cover of the *Newsletter*.

Peter Wall

NAME CHANGE

Please note that the Nonsuch Antiquarian Society has changed its name to the Epsom and Ewell History and Archaeology Society.

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARIAN

From a recently published book on "Roman Surrey" by David Bird comes this extract from the chapter on "Villas".

"Lowther cut his archaeological teeth at the Ashtead Common villa, which was dug between 1926 and 1928 and published with commendable speed. The digging technique left a great deal to be desired and the site conditions were often difficult on the clay. This is most unfortunate as the site is very unusual: the villa plan has been described as unique among British villas, the detached bath-house is of a rare pattern and there are many other oddities. Although caution is necessary, it is likely that the plans we have are reasonably trustworthy and that building started in the later first century and the site was abandoned by the early third. It is, however, difficult to be sure of additions and changes through time. The villa had heated rooms and its own bath-house which seems to have been a later addition, and was apparently surrounded on at least 3 sides by a drain or gutter lined with tiles, probably essential on the sticky clay site. It is possible that the original bath-house was later adapted into a house, as happened at Rapsley, and it certainly underwent changes, including replastering. The buildings were obviously associated with the adjacent tile works and used many of its products".

Published by Tempus Publishing Ltd this book is to be found in the Society's library along with the following new additions:-

SURREY - Walks,

BRENNAN, Tim - Prospectus: a manoeuvre. [Mole Gap Trail; a recreational walk linking Leatherhead, Boxhill & Dorking stations].
Norbury Park Art & Landscape Project, 1999

SURREY - Individual towns & villages

MICKLEHAM & WEST HUMBLE

NORBURY PARK ART & LANDSCAPE PROJECT - Images of Norbury Park. [Poetry, drawings and photographs]. Norbury Park Art & Landscape Project, 1998

The above are housed (along with other books in the Society's Library) within the Letherhead Institute Library room. The library is accessible to our members only when the LCA 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. Any queries should be addressed by telephone to the Librarian and not to whoever is on duty in the library, unless of course, you know them to be L&DLHS members and can help.

Gwen Hoad

ANNUAL DINNER

The Society is holding its second annual dinner on Friday 28th January 2005 at 7.00 for 7.30 pm at the Bookham Grange Hotel, Bookham Common. This is a good opportunity for members, spouses, partners and friends to meet in a relaxed and informal environment.

The meal will have three courses, the cost being £21 per person including coffee. A cash bar is available and seating will be at tables for six and eight people. Please feel free to bring your friends and indicate on the return slip with whom you would like to sit.

To reserve a place fill in the enclosed form including your choice of menu and seating preferences, making a note of your choice as this

avoids confusion later. I am afraid that cancellations made after the 23rd January will not be refundable.

The evening will be concluded by a short light hearted talk given by our President, Linda Heath. We look forward to seeing you there.

Fred Meynen

DOWNSIDE FARM, COBHAM

Following the geophysical survey and preliminary trial trenching carried out in February this year (*Bulletin 374*), a team from the Society returned to the site recently to follow up the earlier work. Over four days a trench was cut across the line of the possible extension of the moat, indicated by the resistivity survey, another was opened in the garden to the rear of the existing 18th century house, over the site of a sondage which had produced medieval pottery and a small trench was excavated within the house itself, under a section of the flagstone floor. Two other small test pits were also opened further away from the house to look for further features, but without success.

The extension to the possible 'moat' lies to the east of the house and appears to be a now dry continuation of the existing open water-filled ditch to the north, at the front of the property. In the event the trench confirmed that a 4.5m wide c1m deep flat-bottomed ditch does indeed run along this side of the property, though it appears, on visual grounds, to become shallower uphill and to terminate just to the south of the trench at a point where the already rising ground reaches its highest level. There were very few finds from within the ditch, which showed no signs of silting and appeared to have been deliberately back filled, probably in the mid 19th century.

A resistivity survey failed to pick up any signs of a southern arm of the ditch, though it is just possible that, if it existed, it could run underneath the metalled trackway that passes between the garden and the field to the rear. Any trace of a

moat arm to the west is now undetectable, as it would lie under the main access road and farm barns. It therefore seems very possible that any moat at Downside was three sided, perhaps, given the rise of the ground from north to south, with some means of maintaining a higher water level in the southern end of the side arms - as is known from other moated sites (Dennis Turner, pers comm).

The trench in the garden revealed a 19th century yard surface which overlay earlier 18th century demolition material, perhaps connected with the construction of the existing house but, apart from one large posthole cut into the 'natural', held no features as such. Much of the material recovered was residual, but this nevertheless contained reasonable quantities of sherds of medieval coarse grey and Tudor green wares. Interestingly one large sherd of the shell-tempered ware was also recovered, hinting at the possibility of the site being occupied from as early as the Saxo-Norman period.

Within the dining room of the house itself, a small area of the, probably 18th century, flagstone flooring was lifted, revealing a series of earlier floor levels. The upper of these consisted of a hard packed ashy soil level associated with the remains of a small chalk/mortar lined hearth. From the dating evidence this level may be connected with construction of the existing house. Approximately 12cm below this level a second floor was encountered, this time consisting of a well-packed stone layer on the surface of which lay a number of roof tiles. This is almost certainly the floor of an earlier house, which, on the dating evidence - mainly clay pipe stems and some pottery - should have been out of use by the early/mid 17th century. No attempt was made to go below this level, as the whole room will become available for excavation later this year. The date for the construction of the floor is, as yet, therefore unknown.

As a result of the four days work it is now possible to suggest that the earliest occupation of the site dates to the Saxo-Norman period, that in the medieval period the site lay within a three (?) sided moat and that any associated buildings appear to be centred under the footprint of the existing house. The physical evidence, at least as far as available at present, seems to support the documentary research carried out by David Taylor, which indicates that Downside was the site of an important and high-status medieval hall.

Thanks are due to Dominic Combe and Charlotte Broadbent for giving permission for the work and for providing an earth moving machine and to all those who came and helped on the site.

David & Audrey Graham

Re-printed from the August Bulletin of the Surrey Archaeological Society

VISIT TO TWO WEST SURREY MUSEUMS

It is fairly common knowledge that local museums differ widely in their character and in what their collection contains. It is perhaps this which makes it of special interest when the chance arises to visit yet another museum. We inevitably ask: "What is in store for us to study and enjoy?"

There could hardly have been a greater contrast between the two West Surrey museums which were the destination in early August for a group of our members, who again had teamed up as last year with a party from The Friends. The museums in question were at Haslemere and Godalming.

The former is a spectacular 18th century building in the High Street and named The Haslemere Educational Museum. It has many spacious rooms, an educational centre and a garden. The scope of the exhibits was impressive, covering geology and the earth's history, the plant and animal kingdoms and the story of evolution: finally the history of man from earliest times until the recent past. A recent refurbishment meant that the quality of the displays was of the highest order with excellently presented narrative labels. One might almost describe it as "*a mini South Kensington*".

The weather was sunny and car parking easy. The town offered many choices for a lunch break which followed our visit. After this we set out for Godalming where the curator and staff of the town's local history museum awaited us. The difference compared to the morning's venue was extreme. Here was a small establishment, very compact and very much attuned to the story of local affairs, particularly the people associated with Godalming's history. Alison Pattison the curator gave us a guided tour preceded by a talk about her role which was of particular interest to those in our party concerned with the running of our own museum. We were privileged to go 'behind the scenes' to view the store room. The library was impressive as was the study room available to researchers. Each gallery had its own special interest with displays covering local industries and agriculture, always with emphasis on local people. A picture display depicting many varied personalities included some who became famous as in the case of Sir Edwin Lutyens the architect and Gertrude Jekyll the garden designer. A small replica of her style could be seen in the delightful garden outside the back door. Everything about this museum left a strong impression on every member of our party. A pleasant end to a delightful day.

John Wettern

REPORT OF A VISIT TO LAMBETH PALACE

On 15th October about fifteen of our members met at Lambeth Palace for an escorted tour. We had hoped that Joan Cottle, who gave us the talk about the Palace last May would be able to take us round, but she was on holiday and so was not available. However, our guide was most informative, and after seeing a short video we went down to the crypt which had been used for various purposes in the past, including a wine cellar, but is now a very attractive and peaceful chapel.

We went back to the ground floor and out to a large open courtyard in front of the Palace main entrance while our guide told us a bit about the history of it. We then went into the Great Hall (oak Hammer-beam roof circa 1660) which now houses their magnificent library, and is in fact open to the public on application. There was a great deal to see there, apart from the hall itself and all the books, as there were books and documents on display in cases all round the hall, and a pair of gauntlets said to have been worn by Charles I at his execution.

After that we went upstairs to a small corridor with portraits of various archbishops, and then on to the former Guard Room which is another huge hall, used for conferences and official entertaining. From there we went into the dining room - a very pleasant intimate room with a dining table to seat a maximum of fourteen people. Next to this was the official drawing room - a long, beautifully proportioned room overlooking the gardens.

The final part of the visit was the Lollard Tower and Post Room, where the post used to be collected daily, and finally the chapel. The ceiling of the chapel was re-painted in the 1980's (by Leonard Rosoman) with modern figures, which were not to everyone's taste, but very symbolic and interesting to view. Altogether it was a very rewarding visit, with something for everyone.

Afterwards, about half of us had lunch at the Courtyard Cafe in the Garden Museum next door, and in some ways this was the most entertaining part of the visit! Partly because it was a bit chaotic at first, but the food was excellent - all home-cooked with very imaginative dishes, and piping hot; and also because it was nice to have a bit of a 'social' together after the visit, which I think we all enjoyed. It made a good finale.

Linda Heath

'REPORT OF THE SEPTEMBER LECTURE 'Old London Bridge'

The first of the season's lectures took place to a full house. One noted that not only were the Society's members well represented but there were many 'guests' whom we hope will become 'regulars'. Our speaker was Clive Chambers, architect and industrial historian whose subject was Old London Bridge. Perhaps the most memorable feature of his talk was the wealth of pictures which he used to illustrate his narrative - not just the few illustrations garnered from various archive sources, or even the Victorian 'reconstructions' which he presented. As well as these his own most talented artistic products in the form of diagrams, drawings and paintings all helped to tell the fascinating story of this most famous structure.

Nearly everyone claims to know something about the legendary London Bridge with its shops and those traitors' heads on spikes, but there was so much more to learn as we soon found out. We were regaled with insights into history, engineering, contemporary life, laws, and disputes. Events involving famous personalities at all phases of its history contrasted with tales of ordinary people and happenings sometimes tragic and sometimes comic.

London Bridge was completed in 1176. It had taken 33 years to build. The earliest picture dates from the year of Agincourt, a view from the Tower of London seen by England's ransomed prisoner, the Duke of Orleans. With its many piers and small arches it was a virtual dam with a difference of level of six feet during a full tidal flow. '*Shooting the arches*' was a dangerous and sometimes even fatal experience. It had a chapel and a drawbridge in addition to the many shops and dwellings which rose high above the roadway. Tolls were collected both from those passing over it and from passage under its arches. These helped to fill

the coffers of the City of London although much had to be spent on maintenance.

The story was enriched by descriptions of the people who inhabited the bridge and those who used it. For instance, the Keeper of Heads who saw to the empalement of the headsman's victims. More mundane were the shopkeepers and traders each displaying a sign to denote the nature of their trade for the benefit of an illiterate populace. We learned how an average day was spent, from 'prime' (the early morning shopping period) to the tolling of the curfew bell. Churchgoing was a feature even on weekdays, with early mass at 6.0 a.m.

The structural interest was not neglected. Aided by his imaginative drawings Mr Chambers described each stage of the bridge's construction from the driving of piles into the riverbed to the masonry arches and then the roadway (only 12 feet wide). Finally there was the motley collection of buildings straddling the road. These overhung the sides of the bridge supported by timber props.

As the 1700's progressed the end could be foreseen. There were frequent blockages by increasing traffic, and deterioration of the buildings eventually led to their removal. Other modern bridges had now been built and it was now time for this most crucial artery to be renewed. The end came in 1830 when Rennie's new bridge arrived alongside it, and Old London Bridge passed into history.

John Wettern

REPORT OF THE OCTOBER LECTURE 'The History of Croydon Airport'

Robert Duffett from the Croydon Airport Society spoke to a full audience of Society members and many guests and told the story of the rise, the heyday and ultimately the abandonment of this historic site. He showed an excellent series of slides covering every phase of its history, which augmented his lively dialogue.

The locals living in Wallington and Beddington could hardly have imagined how two small aerodromes, side by side, separated by a public highway, both created during World War One, could eventually become Britain's first international airport. From one of these airfields fighters engaged German zeppelins bent on bombing London. Alongside, in the immediate post-war years war planes converted into primitive passenger carriers began the history of civil aviation. Even the passengers were exposed to all weathers and they were advised to hire heavy protective clothing to resist the elements. Former bombers now had a cabin with windows although the pilot was still perched above them in a windy cockpit. Travellers would be brought from London in black limousines with baggage strapped to the roof. Features familiar to all modern airports emerged in primitive form : customs sheds, the control tower, landing lights and radio all appeared in pictures from the 1920s. Early radio still relied on the morse code until eventually radio telephony took its place.

A new phase, leading up to Croydon's heyday, began with the construction of a giant new complex of buildings on a site opposite the now inadequate aerodrome. With its control tower, passenger building, cargo sheds, hangars and tarmac apron this was ceremonially opened in May, 1928 as "*The Airport of London*". Beside it lay a luxury hotel. By now airlines both British and foreign were offering regular services to

nearby countries. The British flag carrier, Imperial Airways had introduced giant four-engined biplanes carrying 38 passengers in Pullman luxury, serving a five course meal on the way to Paris. Later in the 1930's air routes began stretching out to the far corners of the British Empire.

The glamour of Croydon is reflected in press stories of the time. Not just V.I.Ps arriving and departing but intrepid, record breaking solo fliers touching down from their ventures mobbed by dense admiring crowds. The names are familiar even today: Lindberg, Amy Johnson, Bert Hinkler and Jean Batten.

In 1939 it was all to change. Civil aviation ceased and a fighter station was set up to defend London. The buildings were camouflaged to escape detection but it did not prevent devastating damage being inflicted by German raiders. Little doubt that the German civil pilots had been carrying out detailed surveys of what was vulnerable among the buildings in the area. After the war civil aviation resumed but there were only a few more years remaining for the airport. The airfield, still grass and without runways, was now becoming too small to accommodate the ever larger air liners that were appearing. Services with smaller machines and charter operations continued but in September 1959 these came to an end with the final departure of de Havilland Heron G-AOXL.

Flying was at an end and buildings sprung up over the former airfield. Some original buildings still remain including the hotel and the terminal block, imaginatively restored by its present owner, a property developer. Outside on a pedestal overlooking Purley Way (A.23) can be seen the aircraft that was the last to fly from there. Inside, the booking hall and the control tower have been arranged to recall how things were in former

times. Mr. Duffett added that this has become a Visitor Centre open to the public on the first Sunday of each month. He hoped that those interested would take the opportunity to come and visit the Centre being run by his Society; admission free.

John Wettern of The Friends

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS 2005

Subscriptions for the calendar year 2005 become due on 1st January next and enclosed with this *Newsletter* you will find a subscription renewal form. Please complete the form and send it with your cheque to me at the address shown on the form, at any time from November. Subscription rates are: **Ordinary Member £15 for the initial member in any household; Associate Member £6 per head for any additional members at the same address; Junior Member £1.**

You will see that you can pay a subscription to the Friends of Leatherhead Museum at the same time.

If you are a taxpayer and wish the Society to benefit from tax refund under the Gift Aid Scheme please complete the form at the bottom of the renewal form. Last year's declarations will still be effective but, if in doubt, complete the form.

Jenny Morris, Membership Secretary

AUTUMN PROGRAMME

LECTURE

Friday, 17th December , Christmas Miscellany : "What Happened to that Road ?"

Dr. Derek Renn and Jack Willis will appear as a "Panel" to offer answers to questions which preferably should be sent in prior to the date of the meeting. Questions from the floor will also be welcome as well as contributions to the discussion, perhaps throwing more light on each topic raised.

We will explore why no road was built to join Bookham with Cobham, or Epsom with Walton-on-the-Hill. Why is the ancient Ermyn Way no more than a path? We hope to find answers and to receive more questions too.

John Wettern (15, The Green, Fetcham, KT22 9XE) will pass questions to members of the panel and looks forward to receiving a lively response.

VISIT

Croydon Airport Visitor Centre. Although there will be no organised visit, members may wish to avail themselves of an opportunity to learn more about the history of Croydon Airport, especially after the well attended lecture on this subject last month.

On the first Sunday of each month the former terminal building and the control tower are open to visitors between 11.0 a.m. and 4.0 p.m. Admission is free. Exhibits include a 'reconstruction' of the control tower

as it was when the airport operated and a plethora of pictures and memorabilia from former days. A bookstall is well stocked with books, postcards and souvenirs.

The Centre is at Croydon Airport House, Purley Way, (A 23), between Purley and Waddon. Nearest station: Waddon. Website is: www.croydonairport.org.uk

2005 PROGRAMME

Lectures from January onwards will include talks on the history of Claremont, and one by James Dixon about George and Abraham Dixon - his grandfather and great-uncle.

(Lectures are held on Friday evenings in the Dixon Hall of the Letherhead Institute, High Street, at 8.0 p.m., with coffee beforehand at 7.30.)

Items for February 2005 *Newsletter* to the editor by 31st January please.

