

# Leatherhead and District Local History Society

President - Capt. A.W.G.Lowther, F.S.A., A.R.I.B.A.

Newsletter 4/72

December 1972

Dear Member,

It gives me great pleasure to wish the Society a happy birthday as it is just 25 years old. For the record, it was born at the Council Offices, Bull Hill, on Wednesday 27th November 1946, at an Inaugural General Meeting, with our President in the Chair and 52 members present. Congratulations! Captain Lowther. Other members personally known to me were recorded as present at some "pre-natal" meetings but it would be unfair to mention their names while omitting others. Perhaps some of them could get together and write a short history for the next Newsletter.

## VICE PRESIDENT

Greetings to our new Vice President. Since this letter will be coming to you at the beginning of the Season of Good Tidings, it is with great pleasure that I can now announce that Mr. J.G.W. Lewarne has been elected as our first Vice President. I am sure that all of us who have so much enjoyed his charm, good humour and wit, not forgetting his fountain of knowledge, are delighted.

## YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

Our Chairman will be making a B.B.C. television debut in Professor Barry Cunliffe's new series "The Making of the English" early in 1973. Make sure you are on the right channel and do not make any adjustments for height as the B.B.C. has arranged for him to stand back a bit.

## BACK NUMBERS OF THE 'PROCEEDINGS'

Many numbers of the 'Proceedings' are no longer available for sale. Even the hon. Sec's two official sets do not contain No. 1 of Vol. 1 (1947). If anyone knows of unwanted spare copies it would greatly help. Members willing to purchase a photocopy of Vol.1, No.1 should let me know immediately. The larger the number of requests the cheaper each will be, but I hazard a guess at around £1. each. The volume contains six pages of reports by Captain Lowther and Mr. John H. Harvey on the excavations at Patchesham Manor site. Just the thing for budding archaeologists.

## LEATHERHEAD'S FIRST INVENTOR?

Some of you must have seen the short article in the 'Leatherhead Advertiser' on the above subject last September. Unfortunately no-one has come forward to challenge this statement, for Jeremiah Johnson who lived in Church Street in 1854 hailed from Hampshire and was not really a Leatherhead man. Surely somebody in our Society's area had a parent or grandparent who has patented an invention since 1854? I would be grateful to anyone who can provide information leading to the discovery of the earliest Leatherhead and District born inventor before 1918. Nothing that has happened during my lifetime could surely be historical.

## ARTICLES OF GENERAL INTEREST

From time to time we hope to supplement the Newsletter with longer articles of general and topical interest. The first article, by our Chairman, describes the archaeological implications of the 1972 plans for the redevelopment of Leatherhead.

## THE TOWN PLAN OF LEATHERHEAD (566 MAP)

Early Leatherhead has been described as ribbon development extending from the crossing point of the roads from Epsom to Guildford and from Dorking to Kingston. The Tudor cottages fronting these roads give some support to this idea, but Leatherhead had been settled long before the Tudor period. King Alfred gave his son a Leatherhead estate, and the county court was held here in the twelfth century. The position of the parish church well away from the crossroads, the various fords of the river Mole and the "staggered" junction of Church Street and North Street all point to a complex growth history.

Mr. John Harvey has pointed out to me that George Gwilt's map shows clearly that the eighteenth century road system - basically unchanged for the next 200 years - had been superimposed on an earlier layout. Most of the property boundaries on this map were at right angles, not to the main roads but to other roads which survive today as lanes or paths; in particular Elm Road and Church Walk. The prehistoric east-west trackway following the sheltered slope of the chalk downland, is roughly represented by the line of the modern Epsom-Guildford road. However, in central Leatherhead it's alignment was Elm Road rather than the High Street, and a line continues westward as property or parish boundaries until it rejoins the modern road near the top of Hawks Hill. Church Walk branches off southward, continuing beyond the church as Worple Road, eventually becoming a trackway to Burford Bridge and beyond; there seems to be no trace of an early road going north.

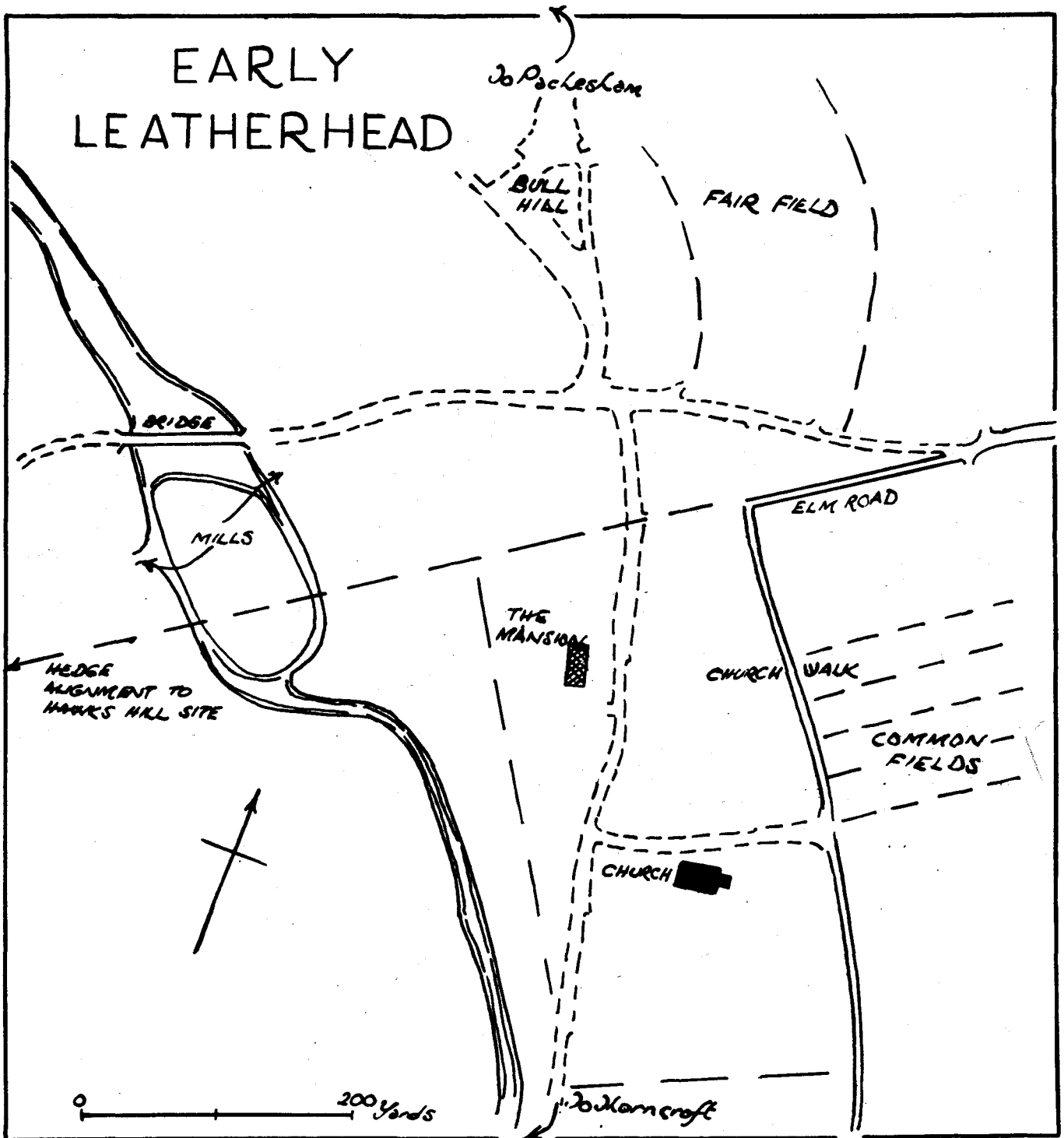
The Gwilt map shows the commonfields east and south of Leatherhead. The strips are usually rectangular, but those in the Fair Field are curved as if they followed the boundary of an earlier enclosure round Bull Hill, overlooking the junction of the trackways. The siting of the church so far away from the centre suggests that the area around the mansion was 'built up' by the eleventh century. No discoveries as old as this have yet been made in the area, but the extensive cemetery on Hawks Hill and the finds at Watersmeet, Fetcham, indicate a substantial Saxon settlement, not necessarily on the Fetcham side of the river. A comparison may be made with Guildford, where the same east-west trackway again crosses a river, with a Saxon cemetery on the far bank from the late Saxon church and settlement.

The creation of the manors of Patchesham and Thorncroft some way from Leatherhead must have led to the construction of new roads linking the old settlement and the new manorial buildings. Domesday Book mentions several mills here, and the millraces of two of them were sited across the line of the old ford, which had to be diverted downstream in consequence. A permanent bridge existed by the thirteenth century, and pottery and carved stone of this period have been found in the High Street, which suggests that the road diversion had occurred by then. Again Guildford provides a parallel: a bridge was built to serve a new town laid out north of the older nucleus, and a mill drowned an old ford in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. An alternative suggestion is that Leatherhead was replanned after the major fire in 1392.

The awkward junction of Church Street and North Street may be due to the survival of an early building of importance, (perhaps at the entrance to the Bull Hill enclosure) either on the sites now occupied by Taylor's shop or the bank diagonally opposite.

The most important area for the elucidation of the early growth of Leatherhead lies in a narrow strip between the parish church and the L.U.D.C. offices. The progress of every development in this strip, whether of alteration or rebuilding should be carefully watched. Some of the present buildings probably contain early timber framing within. Most of the known buildings of architectural or historic importance may be preserved in the proposed traffic free area, but the new Fairfield link road will destroy several interesting buildings which need to be surveyed.

The extension to the car park behind the Thorndike Theatre will obliterate the ancient centre of Leatherhead whose oldest surviving road (Elm Road) will disappear also. The excavations for the Fetcham leisure centre and for the gyratory road systems need to be carefully observed, since the alluvial meadows here have produced scattered but important finds dating from the Mesolithic to the Saxon periods. Finally, if the New County Hall is built on Hawks Hill, or if the road pattern here is altered, it will destroy the extensive Iron Age farm and Saxon cemetery. The County Council have been asked for prior research facilities on the site.



## PROGRAMME SECRETARY'S NOTES

having tried the Red Cross Hall, near Leatherhead Station, for our November meeting, this has been found satisfactory from the points of view of cost, space, kitchen facilities and car parking. We can arrange to switch on the heating an hour or so before a meeting so this will overcome the only criticism we received. We always hope that one day the large hall in the institute will be re-opened so that we can get back to a central meeting place.

The programme for the year has been successful as a result of members' support, suggestions and friendly encouragement, together with luck with the weather and the help received from representatives in each district.

Miss Hind as Publicity Officer has written very good accounts of our activities for the local press but members will probably realise that these reports do not always appear nor do they often appear in their original form. She also deserves our thanks for the amount of work she undertakes in preparing for the Newsletters and not least in assembling the sheets and inserting them in about 300 envelopes.

Part of our future programme concerns our increasing involvement in the future road pattern of the district. Members of the Society have joined in two Field Walking outings with members of the Nonsuch Society in the course of which flint and pottery finds were made along the line of the proposed Northern Route. Those volunteers who were unable to attend the first M.25 meeting and wish to be kept informed of future activities should lose no time in contacting Mr. T.H.Massey, 99 Grove Road, Sutton, (no 'phone yet as he has just moved from Bookham) in order to have their position allocated in the chain of contacts.

Members will recall that in a previous Newsletter we called for a volunteer to act as Assistant Programme Secretary. I think we can feel proud that so great is the interest within our society that in a matter of hours of the despatch of the Newsletter Mr. Eric Barnwell had offered his services. Shortly afterwards Mr. Berry of Bookham also volunteered, and help was offered by Mr. & Mrs. T.H. Massey. We are indeed grateful to these members, and Eric Barnwell has worked very hard on next year's programme which promises to excel all previous efforts. Please give him your support and encouragement.

WANTED - a small research team to fill a gap in our Proceedings. One day someone is going to ask us what we know about the family who built and donated the Letherhead Institute. They were not only wealthy and lived at Cherkley Court, but they were benefactors to the district and were much loved by the townsfolk of the time. Please help us to avert having very red faces when the question arises. We need names of persons who:-

- A) work close to the Guildhall library in London;
- B) are about during the week at Leatherhead to inspect old newspapers or old parish magazines or council records;
- C) work in Guildford and could inspect old Surrey Advertiser newspapers;
- D) work close to Somerset House in the Strand to inspect wills and possibly refer to the index of births, marriages and deaths;
- E) can do shorthand or possess a tape recorder.

Name and telephone number or address to Programme Secretary who will explain how we can achieve our objective from the many clues in our possession. When the result is finally written up the names of members who took part will be recorded.

PROGRAMME NOTES FOR 1973

From the many and varied suggestions for lectures and outings we continue to receive we have laid on or are in the process of organising the following events.

This coming year we are using both All Saints and Red Cross Halls. The Red Cross hall is in Oaks Close and there is ample parking across the road at the Public Car Park in Randalls Road but not please in the road outside the hall. All lectures begin at 8.15 p.m. unless stated otherwise and are on Tuesdays at All Saints or Friday if at the Red Cross.

There are still quite a number of arrangements to be made in connection with the outings - it may be necessary to make certain alterations in the proposed programme - but we hope to give full details in our March Newsletter.

FRIDAY, 12th January, Red Cross Hall

Talk "bridges of Surrey" by Mr. D.F. Renn.

THURSDAY, 25th January.

Visit to the Muniment Rooms, Guildford, the official Archives of Surrey by kind permission of the Archivist, Miss G.M.A. Becke, who will show items of Surrey interest. Meet at the Castle Arch, Quarry Street, Guildford at 7.15 for 7.30 p.m. This is perhaps a bit early but we have to be out of the building again by 9.00 p.m. For those working in London it might be easier to go straight to Guildford and there should be no problem in getting a lift home. Unfortunately the number must be restricted to about 15 owing to limited space at the Muniment Rooms so please let the Programme Secretary know as soon as you have read this item.

TUESDAY, 6th February, at All Saints.

Talk entitled "Conservation" by Mr. N. Nail who is Chairman of the Nonsuch Antiquarian Society and an expert speaker in this field.

SATURDAY, 17th February.

Afternoon visit to Westminster Abbey. Leaving Leatherhead at 1 p.m. (suggest bring lunch to eat in coach), leaving to return home at about 5.30 p.m. There are many of us who daily see Westminster Abbey but how many have really been inside? we hope this will prove of interest and be the forerunner of visits to other historic buildings in London. It is not really a "conducted" tour but if any members are well acquainted with the Abbey and surroundings we would welcome suggestions and advice. The Coach fare is 60 p. a head. Admission charges where charged to see certain parts of the Abbey are not included. A booking slip is provided which please return as soon as possible but not later than 12th January 1973.

MARCH (late) The A.G.M. on a date to be announced.

FRIDAY, 13th April, at the Red Cross Hall.

A talk with slides on the renovation of the White House (which is no longer white and now named "Crosslands") at Effingham Cross Roads, by two of our members, Mr. & Mrs. D.C. Gifford.

SATURDAY, 28th April.

Afternoon visit to West Horsley Church (burial place of part of Sir Walter Raleigh) and possibly including West Horsley Place and Hatchlands, time and permission permitting.

SATURDAY, 19th May.

Day visit to Canterbury. It may be possible to see something of the work of the Canterbury Archaeological Society.

SUNDAY, 17th June.

Visit to Wey & Arun Canal thence to Arundel - Leader, Mr. M. Snellgrove.

SUNDAY, 15th July.

Afternoon visit to Godalming and Charterhouse if can be arranged.  
Return to Guildford along the river bank.

SATURDAY afternoon in August.

Walk round historical Ashtead.

SATURDAY, 18th August.

Day trip to Crick Tramway Museum etc., Derbyshire and thence to Cromford which had much association with and is in fact the burial place of Richard Arkwright. This could be pretty long but should be worth while!

SATURDAY, 15th September.

Day visit to Bath and district

SATURDAY, 29th September.

An afternoon round Mickleham and district.

OCTOBER and NOVEMBER - to be arranged

FRIDAY, 7th December.

Leatherhead Miscellany

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Dear Member,

You will probably be aware that at an extraordinary General Meeting in November it was resolved that the annual subscription to the Society be increased from 75p to £1.25p. We all regret this but the rising cost of all our activities make it necessary. Accordingly I would like every member who has a bank account to complete and sign the appropriate form (attached) and pass it to your Bank Manager. I ask this to be done since there is a considerable lightening of the load to the officers of the Society if members do pay by Banker's Order. Not only that, there is a saving in time and worry to the membership.

Yours sincerely,

F. A. STOKES.

Hon. Treasurer

#### VACANCY FOR NEW HON. SECRETARY

It is with great regret that I have to tell you I shall not be able to stand for the post of Hon. Secretary at the next A.G.M. Much as I have enjoyed taking an active part in the Society's activities, I find it impossible to combine the time-consuming life of a commuter and the demands of a family together with the work of Hon. Secretary, and I hope that someone will come forward as speedily as happened when we asked for an assistant to the Hon. Programme Secretary.

For those of you who manage to reach the end of this Newsletter before the 25th December, may I wish you a very Happy Christmas and an unfrozen and Prosperous New Year.

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Fetcham,  
Leatherhead  
Tel: Bookham 54806

A. M. EDWARDS.

Hon. Secretary.

As this Newsletter was about to go to press we heard with great regret of the sudden death of our President, Captain A.W.G. Lowther, F.S.A., A.R.I.B.A. A full obituary will be published later.