

LEATHERHEAD AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

President: J G W Lewarne

Chairman

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Ashtead 77876

NEWSLETTER 3/85

November 1985

Dear Members,

MORRIS SNELLGROVE - From J G W Lewarne

With the death of Morris Snellgrove in August, the Society lost an enthusiastic and well-liked member who contributed greatly to its activities in an unassuming and quiet manner. He did not seek publicity and shunned any outward recognition of his worth. He gave several contributions to the Leatherhead Miscellany which were always of a high standard. He came from a family of teachers and he too followed the profession, his subjects being History and English. He was an original thinker who did not conform to normal patterns for their own sake.

During the long years of his membership, beginning in 1946 at the formation of the Society, he attended nearly all lectures and visits, and his one regret was that, owing to unavoidable circumstances, he missed being present at one solitary Annual General Meeting. He served on the Committee from 1973 to 1983, where he did good work though he was never to accept office. In the writer's mind, Morris Snellgrove's personality may be summed up in one incident. A vote of thanks was being given to the organiser of one of our summer excursions to a venue of historical interest, and the writer had described the event as "an outing". After completing his remarks, he was conscious of Morris approaching with a twinkle emerging through his glasses. "It is not an outing" he whispered. "'Visit' is the right word." Indeed it was!

He kept a diary continuously from 1914 and it is hoped that any information of interest to the Society will eventually be made available.

The Society was richer by his membership and is very saddened by his passing.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING : Friday, 4 April 1986

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday, 4 April 1986, at 7.45pm for 8.15pm in the Small Hall of the Leatherhead Institute. Coffee will be available before the meeting.

We are very pleased to be holding our AGM in the Institute in view of the very close association we now have with it.

All papers for the meeting will be enclosed with the next Newsletter.

We are badly needing new members for the Committee. If you can help us, please contact the Chairman or Secretary as soon as you can. We shall be more than pleased to hear from you.

1986 SUBSCRIPTIONS

As this is the last Newsletter before the end of the year, we must remind you that subscriptions for 1986 are due on 2 January, at the rate of £4 for individual subscriptions, £6 for our new "Husband and Wife" subscription, and £1 for Juniors 18 years and under.

The "Husband and Wife" subscription was approved at the last AGM, and gives both partners

all rights of membership, but they will get only one set of the Society's Newsletters and Proceedings. We hope that many more members' partners will now join as a result of this special subscription. If at the moment both husband and wife are individual members they can, of course, change to the new £6 subscription if they wish. If you pay by Banker's Order for one or two full subscriptions, a form is enclosed to alter the amount to be paid by your bank.

A form is also enclosed for you to pay subscriptions in cash.

MR F B BENDER

An anonymous donor has given to the Museum a garden seat in memory of Mr F B Benger. This is a most welcome gift and a fitting memorial to our late Editor.

THE SOCIETY'S RECORDS

Our Record Secretary is Mr E Marsh: his address is Chandelle, Orestan Lane, Effingham, telephone Bookham 53433. Working with him are four "Parish Archivists" who hold all the records for their particular parishes. They are:

Ashtead: Mr E Gardener, 35 Chaffers Mead, Ashtead. Ashtead 72219

Fetcham: Mr G Hayward, Ypriana, 173B Cobham Road, Fetcham. Leatherhead 372674

Bookham: Mr D Bruce, 7 Fox Lane, Little Bookham. Bookham 58722

Leatherhead: Mr L Sumption, 89 Windfield, Epsom Road, Leatherhead. Leatherhead 372760

If you have any queries, please contact Mr Marsh or the Archivist for the particular Parish involved.

INDEX TO VOLUME III OF THE PROCEEDINGS

This Index is now available to members free of charge, upon application to the Secretary. A form is enclosed for your application.

THE LIBRARY

For the winter months the opening times of the Leatherhead Institute Library, and therefore our own, have been altered to:

Tuesdays	1.30pm to 4pm
Thursdays	10am to 12.30pm
Fridays	1.30pm to 4pm

This will give more opportunity for the Library to be available during the hours of daylight, and will operate from Tuesday, 3 December 1985.

We are sorry that those of you with Ashtead addresses had the third day of opening shown in your last Newsletter as Saturday. This should of course have read "FRIDAY" but your copies had already been delivered before the mistake was discovered. All other copies were altered before they were sent out.

Thanks are due to those members who have volunteered for duty as Stewards as a result of the appeal in the last Newsletter.

In view of the considerable additions to the Society's Library since the list of its contents appeared in Newsletter 3/84, an up-to-date list is included with this Newsletter.

THE MUSEUM

David Bruce is away at the moment so we are without his notes on the Museum. However, we can tell you that the Museum will be open for the last time this season on Saturday, 21 December from 10am to 4pm, after which it will be closed until April. The exhibition on Leatherhead Pubs will remain in the Museum until it closes.

'Bluebird' Steering Wheel

We have just realised that in the last Newsletter we credited Lewis Vardey with writing the text for the 'Bluebird' steering wheel mount. We should of course have given this

credit to his wife Edwina who, in addition to being the prime mover, researched and wrote the text. To use modern computer language, Edwina programmed the software and Lewis put together the hardware!

JUNIOR WALK - Saturday, 21 September

Mr Crossland was waiting for our Junior Members to telephone him to let him know that they and their friends wanted to join him on the "walk" arranged specially for Juniors. What happened to you all? Not one of you rang him. What was it - no legs - no friends - or no enthusiasm? Only you can tell us what you would like organised specially for you. Come on Linette, Elaine, Ekpen, Gina and the rest of you - get in touch with the Secretary and let her know what you would like to do. Or ring Mr Crossland on Oxshott 2589; he just might still be waiting by his telephone.

"ANCESTORS WANTED"

We have had a letter from one of our distant members, Mr L P Jarman of Rugby, who is interested in tracing his ancestors, who lived in Ashted and Leatherhead, and in particular, to discover their trades.

He has sent us a list of those ancestors he has traced going back to 1690. Two of our members have already given some information which has been passed on.

If any of our members have any information, or access to records, which would assist Mr Jarman, would they kindly notify Harry Mears, our Treasurer, who has been corresponding with Mr Jarman. His address is: 43 The Glade, Fetcham, telephone Bookham 53071.

Alternative spellings found in the records have been: GERMAN, JERMIN, JARMIN, JERMAN and JURMAN.

SURREY LOCAL HISTORY COUNCIL SYMPOSIUM ON LOCAL HISTORY - "ROAD, RAIL & AIR" - From Mary Rice-Oxley

This Society's exhibit at the Local History Symposium at Surrey University on 16 November 1985, was devoted solely to E Ventham & Sons of Bridge Street, Leatherhead.

Established in 1835 they were one of the leading coachbuilders in the country. They also had a world-wide reputation for excellent craftsmanship and amongst the coaches built by them were two for the London-Boxhill run. Later they built car bodies, their garage selling cars and motor-cycles. During World War One they made shells and tank gears. They ceased trading in 1936.

ARCHAEOLOGY - From Ernest Crossland

Work began on the site of the Goblin Works in Ermyn Way, Ashted, in September and continued for four weeks, during which time 25 graves were discovered in addition to the two revealed by the contractors and reported in the local press in July.

The excavation was under the direction of Mr Rob Poulton, an Archaeological Officer of the Surrey County Council, and several members of our Society helped.

The graves were of two types. One group had well cut graves cut into the solid chalk and several of the burials in this group had articles buried with them, including spears, knives and bronze buckles. A woman had a cowrie shell and a bone comb. Another wore a string of beads. These people were quite certainly pagan Saxons probably of the seventh century. Very few pieces of pottery were found and this makes dating difficult, but the style of the weapons gives an indication of this date. Having objects buried with them shows that the people were pagan. All of these had their heads to the west and the graves were on the same alignment.

The other group were in ill-defined, rather shallow scrapes in the ground and mostly with their heads to the south. The impression was that they had been unceremoniously thrown into the graves. When they were excavated it was seen that several had been buried face downwards and some seem to have had their hands tied behind their backs. A further indication of their treatment was the fact that some had quite certainly been decapitated one had the skull between the lower limbs.

The first group included several children but all the others were adults over 20 years of age, mostly quite tall - one man was well over six feet. All had remarkably well preserved teeth with no signs of caries, though the crowns of the teeth were worn down due to the grit in their stone-ground flour.

All the skeletons were carefully lifted with different parts of the bodies put into separate bags and then into large cardboard boxes, and sent to the Ancient Monuments laboratory for detailed examination. The experts may be able to tell us more about the causes of death and the diseases suffered during life. The grave goods have gone to Guildford Museum for conservation and comparison with finds from other sites. It is hoped that when all the reports have been received it will be possible to mount an exhibition in the Museum and to bring together material from other Saxon sites in the Leatherhead area, ie, the Hawks Hill cemetery and Watersmeet, Fetcham.

It is possible that when the buildings on the site are demolished, there will be further finds and a watch is being kept as work progresses. Thanks are due not only to the volunteers who worked on the site but also to Esso for permission to carry out the excavation and for providing the use of a machine to remove the topsoil. This saved much laborious work even though the graves were all close to the surface; in some cases they had been damaged by cable trenches.

PROGRAMME

All lectures at the Red Cross Hall, Oakes Close, Leatherhead, at 7.45pm for 8pm. Coffee before the meeting at 8pm, except for the Christmas Miscellany.

Friday, 13 December 1985 - Christmas Miscellany : Coffee & mince pies in the middle

Our evening of short talks by members themselves - and you will be glad to know that Mrs Crawford will be giving her annual photographic report of changes in the district. However, we still need volunteer speakers. Please ring the Chairman, Mr L A Smith, on Ashted 75466 if you can help make this evening its usual success.

Friday, 10 January 1986 - "Thirty Years a Digger"

Our Archaeology Secretary, Ernest Crossland, will talk about his life-time interest in archaeology. During the summer he spent some weeks at the Anglo-Saxon burial ground at East Marden, near Uppark, in Sussex - his second year of research there.

Friday, 14 February 1986 - "Domesday & Leatherhead and District"

A very "topical" talk by Dr Peter Edwards in the year celebrating the 900th anniversary of Domesday. Professor Edwards is lecturer in history at Roehampton College.

March Meeting - Details in next Newsletter

Friday, 11 April 1986 - "The Gunpowder Works at Chilworth"

A talk by Professor Alan Crocker, who is Professor of Physics at the University of Surrey and is Chairman of the Surrey Industrial History Group.

1986 Visits

Our Visits next summer will be to St Albans and Hatfield House on 17 May, and to Lewes during September. More news of these in the next Newsletter.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF FETCHAM AND LEATHERHEAD

I recently had a letter from the Rev Ralph Mann, who visited Leatherhead in September this year for the first time for many years. He was appalled by the new town and I thought his letter would be of interest to many of you. He was, incidentally, born in 1927.

"I was a founder member of the Society when Mr Lewarne recruited me in 1947, and I read and carefully preserved the Proceedings from 1947 to 1967, which I now have in their hard covers; indeed, I think I still have my original membership card, which must be a historic document in its own right! However, it now seems certain that I shall not return to live in Surrey again, and having seen Leatherhead yesterday, it is evidently not the same place in which I grew up between the wars. I think I prefer not to pass through the town again - the effect is too painful!

When I went to the West Indies in 1954, I deposited all my Surrey books etc with the L & D L H S, I think, so that I now have very little to remind me of my childhood there.

But I do have very clear and vivid recollections of growing up between 1931 and 1946 in Leatherhead and Fetcham, and having been a professional history teacher for over thirty years, with a special concern for Local History, I occasionally wonder whether my memories of the Leatherhead district are of any interest now that so much has disappeared for ever. Somewhere or other, I have my wartime note book in which I recorded my observations of all the air raids on Leatherhead (times of warning and all clear sirens, bombs dropped etc); I now realise that such information is quite hard to come by.

We lived in The Drive, Fetcham, but had very close links with Chalgrove, St Nicholas Hill, Leatherhead. As a child I was taken to Sunday services at Mount Zion Strict Baptist Chapel in Church Road. My first school was at Miss Hewlin's (now the Halifax Building Society office in Bridge Street - I thrust my nose into the Manager's office to see my old classroom recently); my private junior school was at Home Farm, Fetcham (Mrs Rivett); subsequently I attended Dorking County School from 1937 to 1940, and St John's, Leatherhead from 1940 to 1945. After joining the Navy in 1946 I never returned to live at Leatherhead for any length of time, and have now lived in north Oxfordshire for twenty-three years.

Yesterday I stood beside your appalling bird-cage-bandstand in the middle of Leatherhead, and tried to see it as it once was, with the Old Swan Inn and its lovely statue of an angry swan over the porch; Wakefields, with its wire cash-transporter system where I bought my mother's birthday present - a pair of stockings at two-and-eleven-three; the little cigarette shop squeezed into the corner of the mock Tudor offices at the top of Bridge Street; the toy shop which sold fretwork animal templates made in the Blind School; the little sweetshop at the bottom of Gravel Hill which sold the very best sugared almonds (long-sticking variety); the bicycle shop (Taylors) at the top of Bridge Street, where I bought my first and only bicycle in 1940 (my son still uses it!); the Clock Tower, once a fire station but in my day a rather scruffy Gents (and Ladies at the back); the War Memorial where all the children were paraded in rows on 11 November (and I was snatched away by my grandmother on the entirely fallacious grounds that I was about to faint); Moulds in the High Street, where dear old Mr Jesty used to sell nails as required (and not pre-packed in fiddly plastic squares); the Manor House (?The Mansion) demolished to make way for the Crescent Cinema; and Sid Oxborrow's tobacconist shop.

In North Street, Dr Ormond, Admiralty Surgeon and Agent, had his surgery, where he prominently displayed a card saying "Guerir quelquefois, soulager souvent, consoler toujours" - a rather pleasing motto. Beyond, Mr Haylor the cobbler worked in his tiny shop opposite the Priory. In Bridge Street was Rens the Bakers (the other bakers were Gregory's in the High Street) and nearby was the sweet shop where a stout irritable man used to be baited by us boys during the early days of the war, before sweet rationing was introduced. "Do you have any sweets or chocolates?" we would demand, in order to get the inevitable answer, "No, nor oranges neither". Stephenson & Rush, the old-fashioned family grocers was the shop where we registered for our grocery rations; Clark's, THE ONLY SHOP STILL THERE, was our greengrocers (there was also Fairs, near the Bull, and a little shop called Wafforn and Mundy near St Nicholas Hill). There was also Shoolbred, the gent's outfitters, and another shoe-repairing shop in Bridge Street.

I shall never forget the time when the Mole flooded, submerging the islands and pouring across the street by the Running Horse; our bus - it must have been the 418 - gallantly plunged into the floods and emerged on the hump of the bridge surrounded by water on all sides. I still have nightmares of that moment. There was an old, black, wooden, disused water-mill just up-stream from the bridge, which was burnt down one night, allegedly because someone started the wheel turning and the grind stones sparked off a fire. A very real fire was when the oil storage tanks behind the Pumping Station were bombed during the blitz: three of them containing apparently 105,000 gallons, blazed all through the Saturday night and Sunday morning; we stepped carefully over the hose-pipes on our way to Chapel.

Back in North Street, I found that the Bull is still there, and DYERS THE PRINTERS (despite the bathroom fittings in the window) where blind Mr Robert Dyer was in charge, always so courteous and skilful; his brother, Mr Clifford Dyer, did the printing up the alley behind. There was another sweet shop there, next to Fairs the greengrocers -

Channons, I think; and the little snub-nosed 462 bus used to wait in its special bus park outside the Bull. At the bottom of Bull Hill, opposite Thorne's Garage, was a little market garden or garden centre as it would be called today.

All the memories came flooding back, the more vivid because they were not overlaid by more recent experience, and I can still visualise Mr Jenden, with his aristocratic white goatee, at the Leatherhead Wine Stores; Councillor Young, his brother-in-law, with his club foot and bald head; old Mr Ward the artist (I still have one of his masterpieces in my bedroom today); Gordon Hughes the chemist; Mr Mould the ironmonger, and young Mr Mould who tried to modernise the premises; Miss Virgo at the Leatherhead Bookshop; old Granny Upton in the almshouse in Church Lane - she died in about 1934 at a very great age, and when we cleared out her room she had a great pile of those little white boxes with slices of wedding cake - uneaten and uneatable - still in them; Mr Lucock, the sweet little crippled man, and his dear old wife who who 'took in' washing; Dr Grainger in the Crescent well, I fear I could go on for ever."

Since this first letter Mr Mann has sent many more pages of his childhood memories. Perhaps we can publish some of them in another Newsletter.

Now..

May we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and contented New Year.

Yours sincerely,

JOYCE FULLER

D I A R Y

- December 13 - Christmas Miscellany - 8pm, Red Cross Hall, Oakes Close, Leatherhead. Coffee and mince pies in the middle
- January 10 - "Thirty Years a Digger" - talk by Ernest Crossland, our Archaeology Secretary. 7.45pm, Red Cross Hall - Coffee and notices before the talk
- February 14 - "Domesday and Leatherhead and District" - a talk by Dr Peter Edwards, who is lecturer in history at Roehampton College. 7.45pm, Red Cross Hall
- March 14 - Details in next Newsletter
- April 11 - "The Gunpowder Works at Chilworth" - talk by Professor Alan Crocker, Professor of Physics at the University of Surrey. 7.45pm, Red Cross Hall
- May 17 - All day visit to St Albans and Hatfield House. Details in next Newsletter
- September - All day visit to Lewes. Details in later Newsletter.