

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Registered Charity No 802409

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NEWSLETTER 4/1994

NOVEMBER 1994

THE SECRETARY HAS MOVED -

Not far - from a flat to a bungalow in the same road. Her house number is now 15 (not 21), but everything else is the same.

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to those members who have joined since the last Newsletter was issued:

Fetcham

F Melia

Leatherhead

Mr & Mrs R A C Gardner
Mrs S N Reeves

Epsom

Mr & Mrs P Clifford
Mr & Mrs J Moysey
Miss Brooke Sanders

RON JOHNSON

For many years, Ron Johnson has reported our news and events for the local press. He has rarely missed a story, but he has now decided he must retire, unfortunately due to ill health. Our thanks to him for all the work he has done for the Society. We hope that when he feels able he will still come to our meetings.

Dr D R (Dick) Whittington has kindly offered to take over Ron's duties. His address is Tall Timbers, Farm Lane, Ashted K21 1HP, telephone 01372-277180.

1995 SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is the last Newsletter in 1994 - so we must remind you that subscriptions for 1995 are due on 1 January. The amounts for the Society remain unchanged, ie £8 Single Membership, £12 Husband & Wife, £1 Junior 18 years and under. A remittance form is enclosed.

Subscriptions to the Friends of the Leatherhead Museum are also due on 1 January, and can be included with those for the Society (cheques payable to Leatherhead & District Local History Society); they will be transferred to the Treasurer of the Friends. Amounts are £1 minimum, or £20 minimum for Life Membership. PLEASE join the Friends: the Museum can only thrive with as much help as possible.

THERE IS NO LIFE MEMBERSHIP FOR THE SOCIETY - only for the Friends of the Museum.

MUSEUM REPAIRS - A Cri de Coeur from Geoff Hayward, one of the Trustees of the Museum, and an enthusiastic Friend of the Museum

"In the President's words, the Museum is the Society's flagship. We have an excellent Curator and an enthusiastic team of Stewards, and lately the Museum has been a hive of activity.

Unfortunately we lack something vital to the continued success of Museum attractions. We need one or two people to take an interest in painting a window frame - inside in wet weather, outside when weather permits.

Two members of the Friends of the Museum have been trying to get on with more technical work on the exterior, but are hampered by having to spend time painting window frames and doors. **CAN ANYONE HELP?** We must keep the voluntary spirit going if we are to save our funds for any catastrophe that might happen to an ancient building.

Please leave your name and address at the Museum and we will contact you. You cannot imagine how much your help will be appreciated!"

The Museum will be closing to the public for the winter, on Saturday, 17 December, but letters left there after that date will be dealt with.

FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM

On Monday, 5 September, the Friends of the Museum made a visit to Nonsuch Mansion House, (built 1802-1806 on the edge of Nonsuch Park) as the guests of the Friends of Nonsuch, formed in 1991 to help preserve the park and gradually to conserve the Mansion, whilst developing its potential. The Nonsuch Friends have restored the service wing of the Mansion House, and our own Museum Curator, Janet Goldsmith, has loaned some of her private collection of kitchen ware of the period to equip the kitchen. The main reception rooms were also visited as no functions were being held that day.

The visit was led by Gerald Smith, Chairman of the Nonsuch Friends, who have achieved an enormous amount since 1991.

Nonsuch Park itself is, of course, the site of Nonsuch Palace which was demolished in the late 17th century and excavated in 1959. Artefacts excavated from the great palace built by Henry VIII are on show in a Nonsuch exhibition at Jonathan Horne Antiques, 86c Kensington Church Street, London W8, telephone 071-221-5658, until 20 December. An interesting article on the exhibition appeared in The Times of 5 October.

THE WELL AT HAMPTON COTTAGE

On Thursday, 27 October 1994, a sad little trio composed of Ernest Crossland, Ken Rogers and John Wall, assembled in the Museum garden to dismantle all the equipment used for the excavation of the Well. The excavations had reached a point where the available ropes, ladders and safety and lifting equipment were not enough to cope with the depth, so for the time being anyway, the project has been abandoned. The Secretary was watching out of the office window, and the acrobatics performed by the trio whose combined ages top two centuries, were more than her nerves could stand. Especially when one of the ladders had temporarily to go back down because Ernest's watch had disappeared to the bottom. No doubt an official report of the occasion will be produced!

NEWS FROM THE RECORDS SECRETARY

1. The Society is most grateful to Lionel Green of the Dorking Museum, for a document of personal significance that he and his sister have given to us. This is a testimonial made to his Grandfather, T R Loveless, who retired in 1921 after 14 years' service as Station Master at Leatherhead. There is a long hand-written subscription list containing well-known names such as Lord Beaverbrook, who donated one guinea. The total collected was £64.

The document is in excellent condition, and also contains press reports of the occasion. Accession No LX865 has been allocated.

2. Mr Thomas Lewis of Cobham Road, Fetcham, has presented the Society with four photographs of the Leatherhead Fire Brigade. Three relate to the period before the Great War, when Mr Lewis was a boy. One of them shows the Merryweather Steam Boiler which used to be kept in the grounds of the Water Company at week-ends.

A photograph of the early 1930s is of the arrival of the first motor fire engine in Leatherhead. It was christened "Margaret Rose" after the Princess who was born in 1930. The window of the mortuary, firmly shut, can be seen in the picture. Mr Lewis explains that when there was a body there, the window was always opened.

The photographs have been referenced LP 1367 to 1370 inclusive. We are most grateful to Mr Lewis for pictures of such good quality.

UPDATE ON THE ST GILES CHURCH, ASHTEAD, PROJECT - By HJ Davies
The fieldwork has now been completed. The structure and materials of the building have been observed and recorded from a historical angle. Samples have been taken at points of

historical and archaeological importance uncovered in the restoration work which is now complete. Measured drawings are in preparation. The process of evaluation will begin shortly and it is hoped to produce a full report in due course.

Of particular interest has been the application of the sophisticated technique of tree ring dating, dendrochronology, to some of the timbers in the church tower. It has been established that the felling date of a group of rafters was between 1497 and 1522, but it is too early to say what the significance of this will be for the history of the tower or the main body of the church. Further help from an experienced timber dating expert will be required before we can go further, as some of the timbers may have been re-used in their present position. It is fortunate that the timbers have been preserved in the tower and can be inspected again. The Surrey Archaeological Society has met the cost of the dendrochronology study. Our own Society has met the expenses incurred so far on photography and administration, for which I am grateful. I also want to acknowledge the debt we owe to Derek Pegg, FCIQB, and Vernon Barrow of the Domestic Buildings Group who have given freely of their time to help with this project. Ernest Crossland has also given me wise counsel and support.

RECOGNITION FOR JOSEPH PAYNE

Members may recall Richard Aldridge's article in the Society's 1992 Proceedings, on Joseph Payne and the Grammar School he founded at the Mansion in Leatherhead in 1845. Dr Aldridge also gave us a talk about Joseph Payne. For several years the Society has been campaigning to have a room at the Public Library in The Mansion named after Payne, and this was finally achieved on 24 August 1994 when Mrs Cecilia Gerrard, Chairman of Surrey County Council, came to open the new reading room in the Conservatory at The Mansion and to unveil a plaque to Joseph Payne. There is also a framed biographical note compiled by the Society with a photograph of Payne. The ceremony was attended by Dr Aldrich and two members of the College of Precentors, of which Joseph Payne became Professor of Education in 1873 - the first such appointment in England.

EUROPEAN HERITAGE DAYS IN LEATHERHEAD

September 10 and 11 were celebrated as European Heritage Days in Leatherhead. The Society played a large part in the celebrations, having arranged for Sweech House, Thorncroft Manor and St John's School to be open to the public on the Saturday, and ten guided walks round the town on the Sunday. All events were well attended, with over 100 people at each place and over 100 on the walks. Our thanks to all members who helped to make both days so successful.

PROGRAMME OF LECTURES

All lectures are held on the third Friday of the month, in the Dixon Hall of the Leatherhead Institute at 7.30pm for 8pm, with coffee available before the talks. Entry 50p for members, £1 for non-members (who are most welcome).

December 16 - "Christmas Miscellany"

Our annual presentation of short items by members themselves. Gordon Knowles is organising the evening, so if you can contribute something, please get in touch with him at 7 Squirrels Green, Gt Bookham KT23 3LE: telephone Bookham 458396. Items (of 10 to 15 minutes) can be as light-hearted as you wish.

On this occasion, there will be an interval for coffee and mince pies (gifts of which would be most welcome).

1995

January 20 - "Ranmore, in Bookham".

A talk by our President, Stephen Fortescue, which will no doubt include some of the history, past and present, of Denbies.

February 17 - "The Old Palace, Croydon".

A talk on the very varied history of this building, given by Liz Walder, an Archaeologist and Secretary of the Croydon Scientific and Natural History Society.

March 17 - "A Year in the Life of Polesden Lacey" - From the National Trust's point of view. A talk given by Bruce Edwards, until recently a member of the staff there.

April 21 - The Annual General Meeting, plus "Early Fliers and Flying from Farnborough and Brooklands" - A talk given by Gordon Knowles, a member of our Committee and well-known for his talks on industrial history.

PROGRAMME - VISITS

JOINT VISIT WITH THE LCA TO WARWICK - Wednesday, 22 March 1995

There will be a guided tour of Old Warwick, with a Blue Badge Guide, a guided tour of the Lord Leycester Hospital with coffee in the Brothers kitchen. The afternoon will be spent touring Warwick Castle.

Lunch can be purchased at Warwick Castle or you may bring a packed lunch. Cost for the day is £18 - £17 for OAPs, and includes coach fare, guided tours, morning coffee, castle entrance.

Full details from Joan Kirby, LCA Post Box, The Institute, 67 High Street, Leatherhead KT22 8AH, or 0372-376859. Please

send a stamped addressed envelope with all applications, with cheques payable to Leatherhead Community Association.

This will be an interesting but very long day. Departure around 8am, reaching home hopefully by 8pm. Please send your requests NOW as bookings are already being taken.

VISIT TO WILLIAM MORRIS GALLERY & VESTRY HOUSE MUSEUM, WALTHAMSTOW - Friday, 9 June 1995.

The Gallery is in Water House, the 18th century boyhood home of William Morris. Collections include textiles, wallpapers, designs etc by Morris, the Pre-Raphaelites and contemporaries. There is also the Frank Brangwyn collection of pictures and sculptures by 19th century and others artists. Lunch will be at The Bell (2-course). The cost is £12 which includes coach, lunch and entrance charges.

Vestry Museum is the local history museum housed in an early 18th century workhouse in Walthamstow Conservation area.

Full details of pick-up times on tickets, but leave Bookham 9am, depart Walthamstow 3pm for home.

Joan Kirby has arranged this day specially for the Society but she is handling it through the LCA - hence the booking arrangements.

NUMBERS RESTRICTED TO 35 - SO BOOK EARLY!

HISTORY OF LEATHERHEAD IN ACTION

Linda Heath has written a dramatisation called "A Rich Inheritance" of scenes of life in Leatherhead from 1395 to 1897. This will be performed in Leatherhead Parish Church on 9, 10 and 11 March 1995. Details of tickets etc will be in the February 1995 Newsletter.

SURREY INDUSTRIAL HISTORY GROUP - NEW YEAR SOCIAL EVENING

This group will be holding a New Year Social Evening at Dorking on Friday, 6 January 1995 at 7.30pm, at the Dorking Christian Centre, Church Street, Dorking (adjacent to the Parish Church). Some entertainment with a slightly industrial history flavour, as well as a talk by Michael Giles entitled "Industrial Reminiscences of South Georgia".

All welcome at the meeting. Please pay at the door - £3 including wine and mince pies.

AND LASTLY -

A very happy Christmas and a good New Year to all our members and their families. We look forward to seeing you in 1995.