

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Registered Charity No 802409

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NEWSLETTER 3/95

AUGUST 1995

MEMBERS

Sadly, once again we have to report deaths among our members:

- George Bixley, who had been a member for many years. Although approaching his 90th year, he still attended some of our evening lectures, and quite recently helped a great deal with a section of the new Ashtead History that the Society is publishing.

- P C Christensen, who will be remembered best for his kindness and hospitality when we visited his beautiful home - Half Way House - during one of our recent Bookham Walks. We are glad that Mrs Christensen is remaining a member.

- John G W Lewarne - Our charming Past President, in his 92nd year. He was a very early member, having been elected (as members were in those days) on 3 December 1946. In his time with the Society he served in many capacities: he was Honorary Auditor from 1953-56; a Committee member from 1956-59; Secretary from 1960-69; Vice-President from 1976-78 and President from 1979-1989. He was made an Honorary Member in 1973.

Condolences are sent to the families of these three members, who be greatly missed by the Society.

Mrs Juliet Frankland - On a much happier note, we are always pleased to have news of members who no longer live in this area. Congratulations, therefore, to Mrs. Juliet Frankland, who now lives in Cumbria. This year she is President of the British Mycological Society, which involves her travelling all over the country to attend meetings. Alas, none of them has yet been held in Leatherhead so that we could meet her again.

MUSEUM TRUSTEES

At our Annual General Meeting on 21 April 1995, three new Museum Trustees - Janet Goldsmith, Alan Gordon and Tony Tuffery - were appointed. Due to the fact that Tony Tuffery is now planning to leave this area, he has withdrawn. The Society must therefore appoint another Trustee and John Wall has been proposed. He has been associated with work on Hampton

Cottage for many years and was one of the regular "diggers" of the well. A short Special General Meeting will be held before the lecture on Friday, 20 September 1995, to appoint Mr Wall. This announcement serves as official notice of the meeting.

"A HISTORY OF ASHTEAD"

Many of you already know that the Society is producing a new book entitled "A History of Ashtead". It has now reached the stage of being printed and the Editor, Jack Stuttard, has already corrected the proofs.

The new history concentrates mainly on the 19th and 20th centuries and its 250 pages will include 70 black and white photographs, drawings and maps. The price cannot be fixed until final production costs are known, but it is expected to be around £10. It will be on sale in the autumn at most local book shops and also at:

Ashtead - The Library, and Memory Lane Antiques in The Street.

Leatherhead - The Public Library and the Museum. The Museum will be open at its usual times until 16 December 1995, and also on some other afternoons from 1-16 December. Details in the November Newsletter. Copies can be ordered from the Sales Secretary, c/o the Museum: cheques payable to Leatherhead & District Local History Society; plus postage and packing.

LEATHERHEAD CHURCH - A post-graduate study has been received from Andrew Hunter on "The Victorian Restoration of Leatherhead Church". This is an interesting and well-presented study with illustrations, and has been given the reference number LX.1011 in our records

EXCAVATION AT EFFINGHAM PARISH CHURCH - From S E D Fortescue
A small hole appeared in the Effingham Parish Churchyard. A team of five excavated about 7 tones of soil to reveal a straight-sided brick cylinder approximately 7ft in diameter and 10ft in depth, with at one time a domed top and brick ledges at the bottom.

It is believed to be an ice-house but the County Archaeological Officer, David Bird, feels an investigation should be extended to the outside of the structure. From the evidence at present available, it would appear to be a "top loader" if it is an ice-house, which is unusual. Work is continuing.

LEATHERHEAD IN THE 1920's - From the Records Secretary
We are grateful to Miss Joan Stedman for some reminiscences of Leatherhead in the 1920s, received by courtesy of her sister,

Mrs Pickett. Particularly interesting is a photograph of her Grandfather, Septimus Wellings.

Mr Wellings is shown as an imposing figure with a long grey beard, and wearing the uniform of the first World War equivalent of the Home Guard. He was employed at the Swan Hotel during the time of Mrs Moore. Mr Wellings was serving at the hotel on an occasion during Derby Week when King Edward VII came over from Epsom for lunch. Seeing the grand figure of Mr Wellings, the King remarked "Your Cellarman would make a very good Bishop".

The photograph is referenced LP1391 Section J; the notes are LX898.

DEVONSHIRE COTTAGE, CHURCH STREET, LEATHERHEAD - From Mary Rice-Oxley.

Mrs Janet Williams, whose family, the Ockendens, owned both Hampton Cottage (our Museum) and Devonshire Cottage, recently wrote to me commenting on the extension at the back of Devonshire Cottage. She writes:

"What a shame about the extension to Devonshire Cottage and the garden there being a car park. I well remember what a nice garden it was with little low box hedges edging borders round the house with gravel paths in between, then a large lawn.

In my Father's young days when he played with his cousins there, they played a trick on the gardener. There was a compost heap against one side of a wall and when the gardener came by on the other side, they blew up the compost with some gunpowder, and the poor gardener was covered with it. They seemed to be able to get hold of gunpowder in those days. I don't know how old Father would have been but he was born in 1905 and I have often heard this tale!"

THE WAY WE WERE?!!

The following extract is from a Gills Oxford & Cambridge Geography "updated to 1903". Its local connection is that the fly-leaf bears in best school writing, the name P Hamshar, and the little book was found in the old Hamshar forge (from which the Tying Platform in the Museum garden came) in Lower Road, near Preston Cross, Bookham. The forge has been dismantled and taken to Singleton Museum, where it is awaiting re-erection.

"COMMERCE

"England is the chief commercial nation of the world and her ships are found in every sea. The commerce of the United

Kingdom now reaches an annual turnover of about 877 millions sterling.

The chief causes of England's commercial greatness are:

- (a) Her manufacturing superiority over every other country. Raw materials are required from every clime for this branch of industry, and manufactured goods are supplied to the whole world.
- (b) She occupies a central position among the trading countries of the world, and has a large extent of coast, with good harbours.
- (c) Large supplies of food are required from other countries for her excessive population.
- (d) Her merchants have accumulated much wealth in trade and the insular character of the climate promotes the energy of her people, who are naturally intelligent, prudent, and enterprising, and carefully use the many advantages they possess.
- (e) Many of the great trading nations of the world are either British colonists or British speaking people, and show a preference for trading with their mother country."

(In the words of a '60s Pop song, "Those were the days, my friend, we thought they'd never end.....")

PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 20 September - Half Day Visit to Strawberry Hill
The house was bought in 1749 by Horace Walpole who, for the next fifty years, converted the modest property into his own version of a Gothic fantasy. A century later Lady Frances Waldegrave added a magnificent wing to Walpole's original structure. You will love it or hate it, but either way you will be glad you saw it. The guided tour will start at 2.30pm and last about an hour, after which we have arranged tea of your choice - cream tea (which from personal experience we know is very good) £4, or tea and biscuits £1-10. Leave for home at 4.30pm. Cost of the afternoon is £5 coach, £3-50 entry, £3 OAPs, plus tea if you wish. Booking form enclosed: booking must close on 3 September as arrangements are being made specially for us. Numbers restricted to 35.

Evening Lectures

The winter season of lectures will be held in the Dixon Hall of the Institute, on the third Friday in each month at 7.30pm for 8pm, starting in September. Admission 50p members, £1 non-members, including coffee which is available before the meeting.

September 15 - The Ham Concordium: An experiment in community living 1838-1848 - by Dr Jackie Latham, (Open University, formerly lecturer at Kingston Polytechnic.)

In the disturbed years of the 1830s and 1840s, there were a number of communities set up by idealists in the hope of renewing society. One of these, in many ways the most successful, was here in Surrey at Ham Common, between Richmond and Kingston.

October 20 - The Dallaway Lecture - "Surrey In Postcards" by John Gent who is a member of the Surrey Local History Council and gave a most interesting talk on this subject at their Symposium in Chertsey last year. This is our annual lecture open to the public.

November 13 - "Surrey Villages" by Charles Abdy. A chance to see more of Mr Abdy's large collection of beautiful slides, this time of villages in Surrey.

December 15 - Christmas Miscellany. Our annual evening of short items presented by the members themselves. Gordon Knowles is organising it again: plenty of time to think about it yet, but if you have anything you can present - 5-10 minutes, serious or not so serious - please get in touch with Gordon Knowles on 01372-458396.

THE SYMPOSIUM OF THE LOCAL HISTORY COUNCIL will be held on Saturday, 21 October 1995 at the Chertsey Hall, Chertsey, starting at 10am. The theme is "The Houses We Live In". The accommodation at the Hall is good with a car park immediately opposite, and meals as well as coffee and tea are available. Tickets for the whole day can be bought in advance from the Secretary, c/o The Guildford Institute, Wood Street, Guildford: the price has not yet been announced, but it is hoped it will be much the same as last year (between £8 - £10).

MUSEUM STEWARDS AND HELPERS

Our much over-worked Curator has made another plea for someone to keep Hampton Cottage looking clean and cared for. There are ample tools for the job, and a once a week visit should be enough. At the moment Janet Goldsmith is doing it herself, but the more of such jobs she has to tackle, the less time she can devote to the real work of the Museum. Anyone who has seen her office will realise what a back-log she has to catch up on! The ideal solution would be to have several people offering their services, so that a rota can be arranged. Please get in touch with Janet at the Museum, or ring her at home: 01372-277611.

Stewards - The appeal for more Stewards is an on-going one. The more Stewards we have, the more we can open the Museum, but at the moment it is sometimes a struggle to cover the days we are already open. Duty periods are three hours, and again once a month would be appreciated on Thursdays, Fridays or Saturdays. Please get in touch with Janet Goldsmith if you can help.

FRIENDS OF THE LEATHERHEAD MUSEUM

Two projects the Friends have undertaken recently are:

1. Cleaning, restoring and re-framing the Museum's painting of Mickleham Church. This has raised the value and interest of the painting, to say nothing of its appearance. Details can now be clearly seen: for instance, the "blob" in the right-hand bottom corner has turned into a man in period costume. This picture was given to us in 1985 by B H Dowland, a local architect.

2. Fixing a hand-made wrought-iron "top" to the Hampton Cottage well, bought largely with a bequest from Jim Middlemas to the Friends and duly "opened" (what do you do to a well?) by Celia Middlemas at the Friends Coffee Morning on 27 June.

A circular waist-high brick wall will shortly be built round the well; this will make it almost visitor-proof, and form the base on which a winch and "roof" can later be erected.

Money-Raising Event. - "Early Twentieth Century Bookham" - The Friends have arranged a talk at 8pm on Friday, 13 October 1995 at the Old Barn Hall, Bookham. Bill Culley, a Society member, will tell us about twentieth century Bookham including his childhood in the 1930s. Instead of the familiar "Bygone Bookham", it will be an only-just-gone-by Bookham.

Tickets £2-50 on sale from 8 September 1995 at Patrick Gardner Estate Agents, Bookham, at the Museum, and from Bill Culley himself: Carrick, 2 Eastwick Drive, Great Bookham KT23 3PP, telephone 01372-458355.

Postcards

The Friends are continuing to add to their attractive and exclusive postcards produced from our photographs, paintings and records and two more have just been printed: an early 19th century view of Leatherhead Church, and an 1895 view of Church Street, Leatherhead. They are on sale at the Museum, with all the others, at 20p each.