

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



February 1998

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Hampton Cottage, 64 Church Street, LEATHERHEAD Surrey KT22 8DP

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Registered Charity No. 802409

CHAIRMAN
Peter A. Tarplee
01372 452301

SECRETARY
Thelma Lucas
01372 844345

TREASURER
Peter E. Starling
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The Society meets on the 3rd Friday of the month in at the Letherhead Institute from September to May. For details see programme in this issue.

1998 Membership Subscriptions

Ordinary.....£9.00
Joint Husband & Wife..... £13.00
Junior (under 18).....£1.00

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Jack Barker

01372 458469

The Museum is open from April until December at the following times :

Thursday 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Friday 10 a.m. ~~1:00 p.m.~~ - 1:00 p.m.
Saturday 10 a.m. ~~1:00 p.m.~~ - 4:00 p.m.

The Library is open from 10:30 am to 1:00 pm on Tuesday, Thursday & Friday and from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm on the first Saturday in the month or by arrangement with the Librarian.

LIBRARIAN

Gwen Hoad

01372 273934

The Records are available for study by arrangement.

RECORDS SECRETARY

Brian Godfrey

01372 454654

Lectures on the local history of the area may sometimes be given to other local societies by our members.

LECTURE SECRETARY

Gordon Knowles

01372 458396

The Newsletter is published quarterly.

Copy for the May issue should reach the Society's Office by 19 April 1998.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Anthony Gordon

01372 458180

Another year of the present has become history and with its passing comes another record of the Society's activities. Enclosed with this Newsletter is the Annual Proceedings. If you do not have one and the envelope carries the mark '1997' then contact the Membership Secretary, Jack Barker to ensure continuing membership.

With this Newsletter you should also receive your 1998 Membership Card. You will need this if you wish to visit the Society's Library in Letherhed Institute. Please also note the changed opening hours printed inside the front cover.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The 1998 Annual General Meeting will take place on Friday 17th April and details of the meeting should be enclosed with this Newsletter.

This year we have two resignations from the Executive Committee, Howard Davies and Janet Goldsmith.

Howard became Sales Secretary for the Society in 1992 since when he has conscientiously organised all sales on behalf of the Society. We see Howard, ably assisted by his wife Kathleen, behind the sales table at each of our meetings but he also co-ordinates the sales of all the Society's material, particularly the marketing of the Ashtead History and other publications. Without his effort the income of the Society would have been so much lower that our financial position would be in an unsatisfactory position. Howard has carried out this work for six years - longer than he originally agreed to - and he now needs time for the many other activities on which he is engaged.

Janet was also elected to the Executive Committee in 1992 and soon afterwards she took over the curatorship of the Museum after Trevor Edwards moved from the District. During the almost six years that Janet has run the Museum she has ensured that it remained an important part of the Society's activities. The Museum has been improved and become a significant attraction in the town.

We thank both Janet and Howard for their efforts on behalf of the Society as members of the Executive Committee as well as Curator and Sales Secretary respectively.

Peter Tarplee

JOHN HARVEY

John Hooper Harvey, Architect F.S.G., F.R.S.L., F.S.A died on the 17th November 1997, aged 86, at Frome in Somerset. He was one of the first members of the *Leatherhead & District Local History Society* and sometime member of the *Surrey Archaeological Society* but he had little time for the day to day officers of societies. He was a man of immense learning which shone through in his lectures and in his many books about mediaeval architects and architecture. It is claimed he was the greatest British historian of Gothic Architecture of the Middle Ages.

Although Harvey's forte was the great buildings of the mediaeval period and the conservation of buildings, in late years he turned his prodigious mind from a lifelong interest in botany to the history of plants and nurserymen. However he always had time to assist in local historical projects. Harvey was the first historian to research and put together a detailed history of Great and Little Bookham. This history appeared in a series of articles in the Society's Proceedings Volumes 1 and 2.

Harvey was also instrumental in the compilation of the first Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural, Historical or Artistic Interest within the Urban District of Leatherhead which included Ashted, Leatherhead, Fetcham and Great & Little Bookham. In this work he was assisted by Frank Benger F.S.A. of this Society. The list was accepted in toto by the Surrey County Council, the Town Planning Authority.

He held the post of Inspector from 1963 to 1970 for the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in York and was the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of the University of York.

In spite of his vast erudition Harvey Harvey had his impish side. In his younger days he lived at Half Moon Cottage , Little Bookham. The writer recalls how he sometimes wore a tunic and breeches of Lincoln Green stuff appropriate to the age of his cottage. His eldest son continues to live at Half Moon Cottage.

Obituaries setting out Harvey's National and International standing appeared in the *Independent* (25.11.97) and the *Daily Telegraph* (4.12.97).

Stephen Fortescue

LEATHERHEAD MUSEUM

When it was known that Janet was relinquishing the post of Curator the Executive Committee immediately considered the future of our Museum. Although there was no immediate replacement as Curator, the Committee has decided that Leatherhead Museum should remain open, if possible with the same opening hours as previously.

There will obviously be difficulties initially but we feel that the right thing is to maintain the museum service as far as we can. We are, therefore, appealing for members to help us keep the operation going. As well as her curatorial duties Janet herself filled in a large number of sessions in the Stewards' rota and so we start with an immediate shortfall in the required number of stewards.

In order that the Museum may continue to flourish the Committee are asking the members for any help which they are able to provide. First of all we hope that all the existing stewards will continue with their duties as before, but would ask that if anyone feels able to do any more sessions they should consider this. Similarly, if anyone who does not at present help with the Museum feels that they may be able to contribute some assistance, this will also be welcomed. Our aim is to keep the Museum going... if anyone is willing to help in this please contact Thelma Lucas and let her know what you may be able to offer. The Museum is an important part of our activities - please help us keep it operating.

In the last Newsletter I said that the Society had applied for Listed Building Consent to replace the existing notice board on the Museum and to erect an additional one so that the Museum and Society are more apparent to the general public. Consent was received for this work and you may have seen that the old notice board has been replaced by a new one.

Last year, for the first time, Mole Valley District Council included museums in the list of organisations to which they would give grant aid. The Society applied for a grant of £223, this being the cost of the additional sign board,. We have now been advised that the Council has decided not to make a grant as they feel that the cost could be met from the Museum's own resources. Nevertheless the Society has decided to buy the additional board, and this may well be in place by the time that you read this.

Peter Tarplee

THE ROMAN VILLA NEAR ABINGER

Steve Dyer, a former member of the County Archaeological Unit, spoke at our November Meeting on the recent discoveries at the project near Abinger.

In 1995 Steve had been looking for a new site for the Surrey Archaeological Society's annual research and training project and happened upon Abinger Hammer known for many years to be the possible site of a Roman villa. Part of the site at Cocks Farm, Abinger had been excavated in 1877 and disturbance by gardening or farming had left many pieces of tile pottery or other artefacts lying on or near the surface. No less a person than Charles Darwin took an interest in the site as he pursued his researches into earthworms.

Nobody was sure exactly where the earlier excavation had taken place although a plan existed. Steve chose a suitable area to start a dig and was quickly rewarded by the discovery of a spine wall just below the surface. As the dig progressed, 3 complete rooms and 3 partial rooms were uncovered although not all were excavated to the Romano-British level.

The most exciting find was made by a 13 year old girl from the Surrey Young Archaeologists' Club, who uncovered part of a mosaic floor. As more of it was revealed, even though much of it had been lost, it became apparent that this was an excellent example and the best extant mosaic in Surrey and also the best one found in Britain in the previous 10 years. The design of 9 panels showing either heart shaped vine leaves or 8 or 16 petalled flowers and a cup as a centrepiece, were absolutely symmetrical and of exceptional quality.

Further work in 1996 and 1997 added to information about the nature and extent of the villa or group of buildings, probably a farming or industrial centre.

The whole site was soon to be scheduled as an ancient monument by English Heritage, so there was no longer any urgency for further excavation as the site would be protected. All the excavated portions, including the mosaic, were back-filled after being carefully documented.

LEATHERHEAD IN FEBRUARY 1831

Alun Roberts has discovered this fascinating letter whilst researching the Browne family of Leatherhead. It was found in a hand-written copy of the Leatherhead Parish Registers (1656-1814) which was made by Robert H. Browne in 1906. This and other letters were added as a footnote to the Registers which are in the Parish archive where Alun found them. The letter was written by Mary Browne to her daughters Catherine and Elizabeth and gives a glimpse of Leatherhead 167 years ago. The annotations in square brackets are Alun's and it is hoped he will publish his researches in due course.

My dear girls,

I address you both knowing you will be equally anxious to hear how your grandfather is [Benjamin Simmons, then a frail 80 year old]. Your uncle [William Simmons] is having a carriage made to fix a chair upon to carry him out. Your grandmother desires her love to you. I was there on Sunday and saw the two Miss Stones and Mr William. Thanks for sending my spectacles by Mr Sparkes. Mrs Gray has not called on your uncle and today your aunt [Mary Ann Simmons nee Neate] and I proposed going to enquire for her at Ashtead but the weather proved unfavorable. You will recollect that this day three weeks we had a heavy fall of snow. It was nine or ten feet deep between Captain Byron's [Linden House] and the handpost [the signpost to Dorking on the corner of Church Rd] which made it impassable. Brads stage [from Dorking, stopping at The Swan] , likewise the Horsham, could not proceed to London and was obliged to return. The Guildford did not go for two days!! The Brighton and Worthing which left town that morning had guides to conduct them across the Common Field. They came in front of William's house [The Nook] crossed the timber yard and down the lane [Church Rd] by your grandfather's [Church House]

I had a pleasant ride here on Saturday; there was a lady, myself and two gentlemen, so we had a corner apiece. Tell Robert [their brother] we passed Ewell Church 10 minutes past six and at Letherhead at half past. [Men in those days were evidently just as interested in journey times as they are today!]

Your affectionate mother

M. Browne

[aged 49]

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARIAN

Following the account of the Leatherhead Fair which I quoted in the August Newsletter, here are two more passages which may be of interest.

Firstly, from the "The Locks of Norbury" by the Duchess of Sermoneta:

"All the Locks took a great interest in the yearly fair at Leatherhead at which the Norbury Park booth was an institution; they worked for months beforehand to stock it, and any friend staying with them had to help."

Secondly, from "The World of Fanny Burney" by Evelyn Farr comes this extract:

"One beneficiary of Fanny's friendship with the Locks was little Princess Amelia who pounced eagerly on some presents they brought for Fanny - ornaments and workbaskets which they made every year for the Leatherhead fair. These "Norbury Fairings" soon became established presents from the Keeper of the Robes to the princesses."

Princess Amelia was the daughter of George III and Queen Charlotte at whose court Fanny held the post of Keeper of the Robes for a few years.

Recent additions to the Library include the following:

NATIONAL & GENERAL TOPICS

MUNBY, Lionel - How much is that worth? (The Local Historian at Work 4). Phillimore, 1989

SURREY - Archaeology

DYER, Steve - Cocks Farm, Abinger Hammer, Surrey: reports of archaeological excavations ... in 1995 & 1996. SAS, 1995-6

SURREY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY - Collections, Vol. 84. SAS, 1997

SURREY - History

COLLYER, Graham - The Surrey Village book. Countryside Books, 1986

SURREY - Industrial History

TARPLEE, Peter - Abinger & the Royal Greenwich Observatory: the recording of magnetism and time. Surrey Ind. Hist. Group, 1996

WAKEFIELD, Peter - A guide to the industrial history of Epsom & Ewell. Surrey Ind. Hist. Group, 1997

SURREY - Landscape

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL - ENVIRONMENT - The future of Surrey's landscape and woodlands. SCC, 1997

VASSEUR, Isabel & others - Arcadia revisited: the place of landscape. Black Dog Pub., 1997 (Norbury Park)

SURREY - Literary and other associations

HALL, Ruth - Marie Stopes: a biography. A.Deutsch, 1977

SKELTON, John - Poems: selected & edited ... by Robert S. Kinsman. (Clandon Medieval & Tudor Series). OUP, 1969

SURREY - Individual Towns & Villages

COBHAM

TAYLOR, David C. - People of Cobham: the Pyports connection. Barracuda Books, 1985

LEATHERHEAD

MOULSON, Bernard - Some notes on the Catholic Church of Our Lady & St. Peter, Leatherhead. Privately pub., 1997

These and all books in the Society's Library are housed within the Institute Library room. Many books are on the open shelves but some have to be kept in locked cupboards and may not normally be taken away. Don't forget your L&DLHS Membership Card when you go. **Please note the changed library opening hours which are printed inside the front cover of the Newsletter.**

Gwen Hoad

SURREY LOCAL HISTORY COUNCIL

The Society is affiliated to the Surrey Local History Council which, in addition to publishing each year '*Surrey History*', holds an annual symposium in the Autumn with talks on local history subjects and stands mounted by member societies. There is also a half-day Spring meeting with similar talks and an AGM held in various parts of the County which is followed by either a talk about the history of the locale or a guided tour of it. *Members of affiliated societies may attend the latter (but are not entitled to vote on resolutions). They are also allowed a discount on the admission price of all meetings. Individuals may join the Council as associate members for an annual fee of £5 for which they receive free copies of the quarterly Newsletter and '*Surrey History*'.*

Ernest Crossland

PROGRAMME

Lectures

All meetings are held in the Dixon Hall of the Letherhead Institute at 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m. Entrance 50p for members and £1 for guests. Coffee is served from 7.30 p.m. and is included in the price.

Friday 20 March - The History of London's Docklands by Lesley Broster

Lesley Broster has grown up with the tradition of the Thames in the heart of Docklands and she worked for the Docklands Museum as part of the Museum of London. She now works as a lecturer and guide for her own business, Dockland Tours, and will be taking us on a conducted tour of Docklands on Saturday, 11th July. Details under Visits.

Friday 17 April - Society AGM followed by "Parry Thomas, 'Babs' and the Land Speed Record" by Gordon Knowles

Friday 15 May - The History of H.M.S. Warrior by Richard Muir

Richard Muir is President of the Surrey Archaeological Society and is an authority on this subject. A joint visit with Surrey Archaeological Society is being arranged by coach to Portsmouth to see H.M.S. Warrior, the Mary Rose exhibition and ship hall, and H.M.S. Victory on Saturday, 5th September. Details under Visits.

Visits

Three coach visits have been arranged for this summer and we do hope that they will be well supported this year. Only members may apply for tickets, but we need to fill the coaches if possible, so members are welcome to bring friends or relatives with them. PLEASE BOOK EARLY so that we get an idea of numbers as soon as possible in case the coach size needs to be changed. This can't always be done nearer the time.

Details of costs, coach pickup times and car sharing are printed on the application forms.

Saturday 16 May - Coach visit to the Brighton Pavilion and Preston Manor. This follows our excellent Dallaway Lecture on the Pavilion by Cynthia Campbell. In the morning we shall visit Preston Manor - a delightful private home furnished in Edwardian Style. We shall then be taken to the Pavilion and have 1½-2 hours to have lunch or a picnic and wander round. After that we shall have a guided tour round the Pavilion and time for a cup of tea before returning.

Thursday 4 June - Morning visit by cars to see the Privy Garden at Hampton Court, following the talk by Anthony Boulding in January. The morning has been chosen so that members will have time to go round the Palace afterwards if they wish. In view of the car park charge (£3), members are recommended to share transport where possible.

Saturday 11 July - Coach visit to London's Docklands with guided tour by Lesley Broster. The coach will take us to Tower Hill where members can buy sandwiches or a meal for lunch. The tour will take most of the afternoon, but we shall have a break for tea and will probably leave between 4:30- 5pm. Lesley will tailor the tour to our wishes and stamina!

Wednesday 5 August - Afternoon visit by cars to Shere to have a guided walk round the village and visit the privately owned Museum. Arrive at 2.30 for walk and then visit the Museum. There is a tea shop where members may have tea afterwards. Walk (very gentle) takes about 1½ hours but people can return to the village centre for refreshment at any time!

Saturday 5 September - Coach visit with Surrey Archaeological Society to Portsmouth to have guided tours round HMS Warrior, the Mary Rose exhibition and ship hall and HMS Victory.

N.B. All bookings for this visit MUST be made by 30 JUNE.

