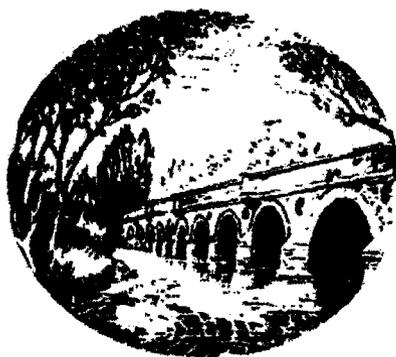


LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



May, 2000

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Hampton Cottage, 64 Church Street, LEATHERHEAD Surrey KT22 8DP
Tel: 01372 386348

Registered Charity No. 802409

CHAIRMAN
Peter A. Tarplee
01372 452301

SECRETARY
Vacancy

TREASURER
Judith Mills
01372 372146

The Society meets on the third Friday of the month in at the Letherhead Institute from September to May. For details see programme in this issue.

2000 Membership Subscriptions

Ordinary..... £9.00
Associate..... £4.00
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. to 4:00 p.m.
Friday 10:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Saturday 10:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

SUB-COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Alan V. Pooley

01372 374093

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 August 2000 issue should reach the Society's Office by 17 July 2000

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

John Wettren

01372 459277

The Friends of Leatherhead Museum support the Society's work in the Museum

SECRETARY

Thelma Lucas

01372 844345

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I am writing these notes just after our Annual General Meeting. At this meeting we lost the services of our Secretary and our Archaeology Secretary. I would like to thank Thelma Lucas for taking over the secretarial duties after Joyce Fuller's death and for maintaining the administrative functions until now. Ernest Crossland has been the Society's Archaeology Secretary for about 20 years : he is also a loyal participant in so many other areas of the Society's activities. He now feels that he will be unable to continue with committee work.

Ernest was unable to be present at the AGM, however our President, Derek Renn, paid tribute to his long service with the Society and spoke of a presentation that would be made to him sometime in the near future.

We were pleased that two new members were elected to the committee at the meeting . Ernest's replacement as Archaeology Secretary is Pauline Hulse. Pauline is a very keen archaeologist who has taken part in many excavations in Surrey. She is also one of the team who, for a few years, have been processing and cataloguing our society's archaeological collection. Trevor Marchington has also joined the committee. Trevor wrote the article in the 1999 Proceedings on wartime defences and he also gave a talk on the subject after last year's AGM.

We are, of course, without a Secretary and this must be our greatest need at present. I would, however, thank Pam and Gordon Knowles for volunteering to look after the distribution of the Newsletters, as the prompt dispatch of these is most important in maintaining contact with our membership.

After the A.G.M. Alan Pooley, the Chairman of our Museum Committee, spoke on *What is a Museum?* As was said at the A.G.M., under Alan's leadership the museum has changed out of all recognition and now, as well as the stewards, up to 13 members have been working there regularly so that a greater proportion of our collection has been documented than hitherto. There have been a number of changes made to the displays during the closed period and further improvements are planned

Peter Tarplee

KENNETH GRAVETT - R.I.P.

Many members will already be aware that Ken Gravett died on 20th November last. He had been a member of this Society for a number of years but was well known as the Chairman of the Surrey Local History Council. He was the main organiser of their annual symposia which have been held successively at Dorking, Guildford and Chertsey. Ken was also a Vice-President of Surrey Archaeological Society and for many years had been President of Kent Archaeological Society. Ken was perhaps best known for his knowledge of old buildings and his willingness to buy copies of every book published on Surrey.

A meeting to commemorate Ken's life is being organised by the Surrey Archaeological Society and the Surrey Local History Council at Wanborough Barn on Saturday 23rd September.

MAURICE EXWOOD - R.I.P.

Although his main local history activities have been with Nonsuch Antiquarian Society, Maurice Exwood was also a long-standing member of this Society. It is with regret that we report his death, aged 90, last January.

WHAT IS A MUSEUM ?

Following the Annual General Meeting, the Museum Committee's chairman Alan Pooley gave a talk entitled "*What is a Museum*" based upon the definition laid down by the UK Museums Association which states "*Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artifacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.*" He selected four topics from this definition: collect; safeguard; make accessible and hold in trust.

He stated that whilst every museum must have a Collection, these collections can be of a very varied nature. He cited the Weald and Downland Museum at Singleton as an example of a particular type, whilst Sir John Soane's Museum in London had no specific theme. At Leatherhead, the Society's Museum had amassed a significant collection of

varied items but thought was now having to be given to defining more succinctly future collecting and display policy.

Splitting Safeguard into conservation and security, he outlined the principal factors that can cause deterioration, suggesting that the Society should in particular plan to improve humidity control.

Security starts with having accurate knowledge of exactly what is in the Collection and where it is, and extends then to prevention of theft or accidental damage. This section was concluded with a reference to the requirement for an emergency plan for rapid implementation should such a disaster as flooding occur, and expert assistance be needed for dealing with say sodden documents.

Alan explained that not only can a museum make its service accessible by receiving visitors but also by actively by going out to schools, holding exhibitions and in many other ways. It also had to comply with legislation, notably the Disability Discrimination Act, and both the Society and the Trustees were advised that although Hampton Cottage, i.e. the Museum, was a Grade 2-Listed building, this did not remove the responsibility to plan and implement significant improvements.

Holding in trust signified that for a registered museum, the Collection could in general not be disposed of, as it was regarded as being in the public domain.

Although there was still a vacancy for a Society Curator for its museum, the task had been significantly reduced in content by dissipation of peripheral activities to other volunteers, and this practice would be extended as and when new volunteers stepped forward.

He concluded by referring to the work of the Friends of the Museum who are intending to compile a list of people who have an interest in or expert knowledge of particular specific subjects, which would be of great assistance to those undertaking the auditing and updating of records and for the Stewards to use in fielding questions in the Museum.

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARIAN

"Mordecai Cubitt Cooke - Victorian naturalist, mycologist, teacher and eccentric" is the title of a book by Mary P.English which is in the Library. Published by Biopress Ltd in 1987, it describes how Cooke helped to found the Quekett Microscopical Club in 1865 for like-minded naturalists both amateur and professional. It goes on to say --

"The year 1868 saw field excursions firmly established as an important part of the Club's activities. The June outing to Leatherhead was followed for the first time by an Excursionists' Dinner at the Swan Hotel, an occasion which proved such a success that it became an annual event. The Swan, in Leatherhead's main street, was a seventeenth century coaching inn which was still functioning as such in 1905, despite the fact that the railway had come to the town in the 1850s. In the 1860s, however, the inn was famous for more than its *'post-horses and carriages; superior lock-up coach houses'* a handbill issued by its proprietor William Moore, proclaimed under an engraving of the building.

"The situation of this beautiful village is too well known to require much comment, as it is presumed to stand unrivalled for its views and delightful rural retirement. . . To the admirer of Nature, geologist, or disciples of Isaac Walton, Letherhead and its immediate neighbourhood hold out many inducements, and the quick transit which may be made by Railway to the Metropolis, must render it most desirable . . . An excellently supplied Larder. Choice Wines and Piquant Liquers"

An account written about ten years later confirms this:

"It would be too provoking perhaps, if I were to enumerate all I can recall of the stacks of varied eatables and drinkables which were heaped upon the tables . . ."

"Obviously the Excursion Committee knew exactly what it was doing when it picked on the Swan for its first Dinner, and it is easy to imagine the gentlemen, after a good day in the field, and untrammelled by the presence of the fairer sex, relaxing under the influence of the Excellent Larder and Choice Wines until the evening was drawn to a close with one of those sing-songs so beloved of the Victorians, and in which Cooke, with his good tenor voice and propensity for writing verse, would play an important part. A collection of the songs he wrote for these dinners was published in 1878 by Keating & Co., Steam

Printers. Nearly all at least have a reference to the pleasures of alcoholic refreshment of which Cooke was clearly, by now, a devotee. He had come a long way from his teetotal upbringing and his days in the Temperance Band in Norwich, but he has left no record of the circumstances which led to this radical change in his convictions.”

Here is the most charming, perhaps, of the songs quoted in the book.

*“Down in a green and shady bed,
Not very far from Leatherhead,
A modest violet grew;
Its stalk was bent, it hung its head,
And hither sixty Cockneys fled,
To take a private view.
This lovely flower in secret bower,
Invisible did dwell;
They found it out, ‘tis past a doubt,
Discovered by the smell.
They sniffed the odour with delight,
They saw the sun set out of sight,
They saw the moonlight pale;

They heard the ‘Swan’ of Leatherhead
Flutter her pinions overhead, . . .”*

This and other books are housed within the Institute Library.

Recent additions include: -

SURREY - INDIVIDUAL TOWNS AND VILLAGES

EPSOM & EWELL

Abdy, Charles – “*Epsom & Ewell in Parliament.*” Nonsuch Antiquarian Society Occasional Paper No. 26, 1995 [Includes Surrey W. to 1885 Leatherhead was in Surrey W.]

LEATHERHEAD

Stanbury, Florence A. – “*The Story of the Cotonian Collection.*” Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery, 1992 [The cover bears a painting of the interior of The Priory]

MOLE VALLEY

Mole Valley District Council - *Mole Valley Local Plan*, deposit version, April 1996; schedule of proposed modifications, May 1999; also Schedule of Inspector's recommendations & Council's response, May 1999.

In case of difficulty in finding what you want please contact the Society's Librarian (details on the front inside cover of this Newsletter).

Don't forget your current L&DLHS card when you visit the library.

Gwen Hoad

Leatherhead Museum – “On the Web”

The History Society and the museum are keeping up with their peers and are now able to boast having a web site as well as having facilities to exchange E-mails with Internet users world-wide.

The web site, the address of which is

<http://freespace.virgin.net/frank.haslam/sites/ladlhistoc/index.html>

has already attracted enquiries from far away places.

A message from Canada was from an individual who had been educated at the City and Freemans School in Ashtead. He wanted information about the history of Ashtead Park.

A former resident of Fetcham who was a child during World War 2 told us that he was writing up his father's diaries. He asked if anyone living in Leatherhead during that time remembered attending the Crescent Cinema. He said he would like to know the names of some of the films that were showing during the 1940's. [*Any Newsletter reader who can assist, please drop a line to your Editor. Thanks*]

The same correspondent has also sent us some valuable information and reminiscences about his family's life in Fetcham and his mother's shop at 89 The Street.. Here's one quote : “ *The shop had its window blown out by a VI bomb. It housed my mother's hair dressing business but it also had a lathe where my father turned parts for torpedoes. He was a foreman at Stoner & Saunders of Paddington run by a Mr Saunders who lived in Eastwick Drive, Great Bookham*”. He also mentions by name many of their neighbours, also describing the shops and their owners.

John Wetttern

BOOKHAM COMMONS

At the Society's March meeting Ian Swinney, Warden of Bookham Commons, gave a well-illustrated and fascinating talk on the history of the Commons.

The oldest record of ownership of the Commons is in 666 AD when the Abbey at Chertsey owned "The Ley Northward", with grazing for 40 hogs and a for a further 20 on adjacent land. The woodland was then very much a *wild wood* with oak, elm and willow, though, with increased grazing, the patches of scrub and grassland would have been kept down. There would have been deer, cattle, and even possibly wolves on the common. Ian reminded us that Surrey was still the most heavily wooded county in the country with some 19.5% of the land area given over, though much of the common land today was scrub and heath.

Bookham Commons today cover 450 acres of which 300 are given over to oak, many being the 5th generation. Aerial photographs showed the three commons and the changes which have taken place over the last 50 years. Cattle had grazed up to 1949, but their withdrawal and the demise of the rabbit population through myxomatosis allowed uncontrolled growth of grasses and scrub causing the demise of numbers of wild life.

Controlled management of the commons by the National Trust, owners since 1923-25, was now ensuring that many different types of flora and fauna were thriving again. Blue orchids now grew in one area and over 1,000 different types of insect had been recorded. The work of coppicing and maintenance of paths etc. is undertaken by Ian and a group of volunteers, some of whom we were pleased to see at the meeting.

The commons were almost lost in 1923 when a builder bought Bookham Common with an eye on development. The community raised £1,100 to buy it from him and gave it to the National Trust.

Little Bookham Common was given to the Trust by the landowner in 1924 and Banks Common in 1925 was also gifted. The three cottages on the common date from the 16th and 17th C, as does the original house around which the Bookham Grange hotel was built, though unfortunately the Warden's own cottage dates only from the 1960's when it was built on the site of a demolished 16th C building.

"100 Pound Bridge" in the northwest of the commons is nothing to do with its weight or value, but rather from the fact that it is on the boundary between Effingham and Bookham '*hundreds*', the medieval parish land measure. Equally "Mark Oak", on the boundary of the commons with Fetcham, refers to the traditional '*beating of the bounds*' on New Year's day. There would have been an oak which identified the boundary and marked as such. The origin of the name of the "Isle of Wight " ponds is not so clear. The map of 1615 shows "fishponds", which would have been stewponds for carp, a staple diet of the Chertsey Abbey monks. Photographs of the late 19th C. show the man-made dam still in evidence. Today the ponds have changed their outline and, currently work is in hand to stabilise the banks and to re-introduce appropriate plants.

Ian strongly believes that records and photographs of the commons should be in the public domain and asks that if residents have old postcards or photographs to contact him so that copies can be taken.

A walk on the Commons took place Saturday 8 April when visitors could see some of the features he had so vividly described.

Gordon Knowles

NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS OF LEATHERHEAD MUSEUM

At our recent Annual General Meeting we said goodbye to John Rosser who has been Chairman of the Friends Committee for many years. We thank you most sincerely for all you have done and we are glad that you are continuing to be a steward.

Gwen Hoad made a presentation to John on behalf of us all.

The Chairman's report to the members included a mention of a very enjoyable visit to Chatham Dockyard. For future outings it was suggested that we visit other museums. This could be of interest to stewards. If anyone has any other ideas, please let me know. The meeting discussed a suggestion that the annual coffee morning and *bring and buy* sale should this year be held on a Saturday so that more people would be able to attend.

At the election of officers the existing committee members were all re-elected and John Wettren was unanimously elected as our new chairman. We welcome him to the post and we hope he will enjoy his time with us. John is also the Society's Publicity Co-ordinator.

The meeting also agreed that the subscription to the Friends should be increased to £3 per person; £5 for a couple. The present £1 subscription has been in force since the Friends group was formed. Now it is not enough to cover expenses.

Stewards We still need more stewards. The numbers have shrunk due to retirements, also the sad death of Peter Calnan. We have three new volunteers which is great but we could certainly do with a few more. Anyone who would like to know more about what is involved in being a steward is invited to contact me.

After the business meeting Alan Pooley gave a talk which is reported below.

Thelma Lucas

MUSEUM IN NEED OF EXPERTS

At the Friends' Annual General Meeting Alan Pooley, Chairman of the Museum Committee gave us some valuable reflections on the role of the museum, its problems and aspirations. His presentation stimulated some useful discussion and provoked many ideas. Some of these will be reported more fully in a later edition of the Newsletter.

One important theme was the nature of the collection and the recording of the many items, not only those on display but those which have to be kept in store because of the restricted space at Hampton Cottage. He explained that some items are objects that we know very little about. We are fortunate to have members who are expert in subjects such as geology, archaeology, industrial history and so forth but there many areas where we just have not got the knowledge. The question was where to seek it.

In the ensuing discussion it was agreed that there surely had to be a pool of knowledge on many subjects from among the Society's members, perhaps even their friends and contacts. It was suggested that the word "expert" was perhaps off-putting : people are often too modest to claim to be an expert. Rather, the museum committee needed to be able to call on anyone who, either through their work or their hobbies has a 'pet subject' which they had made their own. One example given was military medals, and one of those present , whilst denying that he was an expert,

offered to help in identifying these or at least helping to find an authority who might offer the necessary knowledge.

Alan undertook to help by indicating some of the areas where his committee would welcome assistance. Meanwhile any Society member who feels that he or she would be interested to share in this work might like to contact Alan Pooley or a member of the Museum Committee.

John Wettern

VIDEO OF OLD FILMS

The South East Film and Video Archive has transferred the films deposited by the Society on to a video, and we now have a copy. This contains eight items with a total running time of about two hours. The order of the items on the tape (with approximate running time) is as follows : -

- 1) 9.5 mm home movie : *Drunken Driving and Hunt Meeting* -
Fetcham : late 1930's (?) 10 mins.
- 2) 16 mm : *Unveiling of Coat of Arms - Leatherhead* : 1946. 3 mins
- 3) 16 mm documentary : *Guarding against Tooth Decay* - 1970's(?)
22 mins.
- 4) 8 mm : *Leatherhead Newsreels* : 1939-45 32 mins.
- 5) & 6) 16 mm : with commentary - *Civilians in Uniform* - Leatherhead
: 1946 40 mins.

Blackheath Film Unit

- 7) 16 mm : Safety Documentary "*Safe or Sorry*" : 1950 (?)
4 mins.
- 8) 16 mm : Safety Documentary "*Unguarded Moment*" : 1951 (?)
8 mins.

The video is presently held by the Records Secretary (see inside front cover)

Brian Godfrey

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - VISITS and GUIDED WALKS

GUIDED WALKS

Sundays, 4th June, 2nd July and 4th August

GUIDED WALKS round LEATHERHEAD leaving the Museum at 2.30 p.m. prompt. These walks are open to the public, and we do need more guides for them, (and also for Heritage Weekend, 16th and 17th Sept.) so if you could help with this, come on the first one to 'learn the ropes' and you can have a full text to lead any of the other walks.

Saturday 24th June, 11.0 a.m. – SLYFIELD MANOR. This visit is limited to 24 people and is already sold out with a short waiting list.

Saturday 15th June, 2.0 p.m. – PAINSHILL PARK. This will cost £3.80 (£3.30 concessions) payable on the day. Meet at ticket sales kiosk. Please send your application to Jack Barker. (*Form enclosed with this Newsletter*).

Saturday 12th August, 2.0 p.m. - Guided walk round ASHTEAD VILLAGE led by Howard Davies and Jack Willis. Donations of £1 for expenses and Society funds, payable on the day. Meet at car park outside Peace Memorial Hall.

Please send your application to Howard Davies . (*Form enclosed with this Newsletter*).

Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th September – HERITAGE WEEKEND. For details of all events look out for the Mole Valley booklet to be published later on.

LECTURES

All meetings are held in the Dixon Hall of the Letherhead Institute at 7.30 for 8.00 p.m. Entrance £1 for members and £2 for non-members, including coffee served from 7.30 p.m.

Full details of all lectures will appear in the August Newsletter, but here is the outline of the autumn programme:

Friday 15th September. “*The Management and Historic Value of Ashtead Common*” by Bob Warnock, Head Keeper of the Common.

Friday 20th October - Millennium Dallaway Lecture : "*St. Mary & St. Nicholas Church - the First Millennium*" by Linda Heath.

Friday 17th November. - "*The Surrey History Centre*" by Julian Pooley.

Friday 15th December. Christmas Miscellany, arranged by Gordon Knowles - members' talks on the theme "*Historical Hobbies*".

THE PROGRAMME - WHO CHOOSES IT?

Who arranges the programme of events for the Society? Lectures and visits don't organise themselves! Gordon Knowles is Programme Secretary and there is a small group to assist him consisting at present of Jack Barker, Linda Heath, Derek Renn and Pat Thursby who meet two or three times a year to work out the programme for the forthcoming year. If anyone would like to join this group they would be very welcome, and ideas from all members for lectures or visits are always welcomed. It is YOUR Society and the programme should be tailored to what you want to hear about and the places you want to visit, so do please give any suggestions for talks or visits to Gordon or any other member of the programme group. The inside front cover of this Newsletter gives some useful telephone numbers.

Linda Heath

TALKS BY OUR SOCIETY'S MEMBERS

We are grateful to members of the Society who have given lectures on our behalf to other bodies : -

January 2000 To The Oxted Society -

"Leatherhead - a Town at the Crossroads" by EDWINA VARDEY.

February, 2000 To Leatherhead Round Table -

"Leatherhead in Old Photographs" by ALAN POOLEY and GOFF POWELL

March 2000 To All Saints School -

"One Hundred Years in Leatherhead" by ALAN POOLEY AND THELMA LUCAS

To Banstead U3A -

"Old Leatherhead" by LINDA HEATH

Gordon Knowles

