

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER



August, 2003

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 802409

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CHAIRMAN

Peter A. Tarplee

01372 452301

SECRETARY

Judith Mills

01372 372146

TREASURER

Norma Robertson

01372 453795

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

2003 Membership Subscriptions

Ordinary.....£12.00

Associate.....£5.00

Junior (under 18)..... £1.00

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Jenny Morris

01372 362524

The Museum is open at the following times: -

Thursdays and Fridays 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Saturdays 10.0 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

CURATOR

Graham Evans

01372 386348

The Library at The Letherhead Institute is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10.0 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. **It is no longer open on Saturdays.**

Exceptionally, arrangements may be made to use it at other times by applying to the Librarian.

LIBRARIAN

Gwen Hoad

01372 273934

The Records are available for study by arrangement.

RECORDS SECRETARY

Brian Godfrey

01372 454654

Lectures . Co-ordination of the Society's lecture and visits programme and L & D L H S speakers for local societies.

PROGRAMME & LECTURE SECRETARY

Vacancy

The Newsletter is published quarterly in February, May, August and November.

Copy for the November 2003 edition should be sent to my address by 3rd November, 2003.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR Peter Wall, 8 The Renmans, Ashted, KT21 1PH. Tel. 01372 277690

The Friends of Leatherhead Museum support the Society's work on behalf of the Museum.

SECRETARY

Thelma Lucas

01372 844345

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Since the last *Newsletter* the Society has replaced the computer which is in the museum. Our old equipment needed upgrading and we will now be able to do far more things more efficiently. Of course, much of the use is for the museum itself and we hope to soon get underway with putting the records of the Society's museum collection on computer as well as on paper. We are pleased to acknowledge a generous grant from Mole Valley District Council which covered a large part of the cost of installation.

The attendances at the museum are increasing, which is not surprising considering the improvements which Graham is constantly putting in place. We do ask all members to publicise the museum as much as possible as this provides a just reward for all the members who contribute to its operation.

Once more Mole Valley is joining in Heritage Weekend. This year it will be from 12th to 14th September and again there will be a wide range of properties open to the public as well as walks and talks throughout the District. A detailed programme brochure is being prepared and will be available well before the weekend.

At the AGM it was stated that as we have recently produced histories of all parts of our area there is no obvious scope for more books of this type at present. Hence there were no books published last year. By far the most popular of all our books, and the most financially successful, was Bill Culley's *Bookham in the Twentieth Century*. It seems that recent history, particularly that within living memory, sells better than earlier history. There may be scope, therefore, for someone to produce similar books for other parts of our area.

Following the meeting there was a suggestion that a history of Effingham was needed. However, we were very pleased to learn that the book compiled by Monica M O'Connor has been re-issued and is on sale at Sibley's newsagents in Effingham. There still remains the opportunity for books similar to *Bookham in the Twentieth Century* to be written for Ashted or Fetcham. This may suggest an interesting line of research for some members.

In the last *Newsletter* the committee asked for an indication from members to the suggestion that the Society hold an annual dinner. At present, some weeks after the last issue, I have received replies from about 18% of the copies distributed to members. We will advise you of the committee's response to the likely support for this event when replies have been analysed.

The Society again had a display at Bookham Village Day and thanks are due to all the members who manned the stall for a period during the day. Particularly we are grateful to Brian Godfrey for organising the event and to Graham Evans for arranging a novel display on the theme 'Fur, Fin and Feather' using artifacts from the museum - bearing in mind that our museum has no natural history items in its collection.

Peter Tarplee

SURREY'S COUNTRYSIDE AND HERITAGE

The 2003 series of illustrated talks by leading specialists from Surrey County Council's Countryside and Heritage Division looking at current issues and conservation projects:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 23 October | Surrey's countryside and heritage 2003 review
Mike Dawson , Head of Countryside and Heritage |
| 30 October | Our Heritage of buildings and landscapes
Martin Higgins , Historic Buildings Officer
Brenda Lewis , Historic Countryside Officer |

- 6 November** **Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**
Gail Sperrin, Surrey Hills Projects Officer
- 13 November** **Important habitats in Surrey**
John Edwards, Countryside Ecologist
Alex Baxter-Brown, Downlands Project Officer
- 20 November** **Digging up the Past**
Rob Poulton, Manager Surrey County Arch Unit
- 27 November** **Rights of way and Countryside access**
Steve Mitchell, Principal Rights of Way Officer

All talks will commence at 7.30 pm at Dorking Halls; there is no charge and all are welcome.

Enquiries: Bernice Hall, 020 8541 9433

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARIAN

When the Ashted Residents' Association invited their members to take photographs of places, people and events in Ashted to celebrate the Millenium Year of 2000, one of their members who is also a member of our Society, Albert Pruden, took up the challenge with great enthusiasm. He took several thousand photographs which were displayed in the Peace Memorial Hall, but now a selection of them has been published in book form in full colour. Compiled by K Combeer and published by Mole Valley Press, a copy has been added to our library. Copies are also on sale in the Museum at £8.99. *(See also below)*

Other recent additions to the library are :—

SURREY - History

WILSON, Lt. Col. L M and CROWLEY, Lt. Col. P T - *"The infantry regiments of Surrey."* Queen's Royal Regiment Museum Trustees & Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment, Territorial Trustees, 2002.

SURREY - Individual Towns and Villages

HORSLEY

BEACH, Peter - *"The history of Horsley Towers.* P B Publishing 2002 2nd edition.

The Society receives various periodical publications including:

The Esher District Local History Society News

The Nonsuch Antiquarian Society Newsletter

The Surrey Archaeological Society's Bulletin

The Local History Link

Although displayed on the notice board in the Museum office, if any member wishes to borrow any of these when they arrive they should contact the Librarian.

Also received are **The Local Historian; Surrey History; and The Surrey Archaeological Society's Collections** which are housed along with the books in the Society's Library within the Letherhead Institute Library room.

It is accessible to our members only when the L.C.A. library is open to its members, but not on Saturdays (see details on the inside cover of this Newsletter).

It is most important that you show your current L&DLHS membership card to the librarian on duty when you use the library.

Gwen Hoad

ASHTEAD IN FOCUS

Photographs by **Albert Pruden**. Compiled by **K Combeer**. Published by Mole Valley Press with Ashtead Residents' Association. ISBN 0-9540649-1-7. 2003. 96p. Paperback. £8.99.

This collection of some 170 photographs, a modern pictorial history, emanates from a Millenium project of the Ashtead Residents' Association to record the face of Ashtead in the year 2000 and provides a time capsule of the Parish at the turn of the century. Generous sponsorship from local firms has resulted in high quality colour reproduction at an attractive cover price. The photographs are arranged under six headings: Serving the Community; Hidden Corners; Churches & Schools; Shops & Shopkeepers; The Changing Face of Ashtead; Houses; Roads & Lanes and contain many unexpected shots of Ashtead. A numbered sketch map would have been helpful in locating some of these.

The photographs have captions which, where relevant, relate the subject to their historic context, although these vary in detail. In some instances, the captions summarise developments up to the year of publication. It is unfortunate that the caption (p.29) refers to the "railway built in the 1840s...". The line was opened in 1859. Errors such as this cause one to doubt the veracity of other facts in the book. Mention of "access to Crampshaw Brickworks" (p.73) is of interest, One normally thinks of such features being associated with the heavier clay areas further North; such as the Roman tile works on Ashtead Common, or brickworks which functioned at one time in Lower Ashtead. Certain facts could have increased interest if they had been added to the captions, For instance, one of the row of cottages (foot of p.76) served as Ashtead's first telephone exchange. Or again, at one time during the 19th century, Woodfield Lane (p.80) was known as "Station Road" - for obvious reasons!

Some of the photographs are of historic interest, such as those of Dobbe's Nursery (p.57) where the site is being developed for housing. The photograph of

flooding in Farm Lane (p.71) records an historic fact. Photographs such as those of the office block and subsequent development of its site as Clarendon Mews (p.63) demonstrate the changing face of Ashted during recent years. There is an index and a short bibliography

Alan Gillies

WHAT IS BAFM?

BAFM stands for the British Association of Friends of Museums which the Friends of Leatherhead Museum joined three years ago. So what does it do?

It publishes a quarterly newsletter which reports the activities of Friends' groups in all parts of the British Isles working in museums, art galleries etc, from very small voluntary museums like ours to large city museums and art galleries with paid staff.

It publishes a series of handbooks and leaflets on all aspects of running a Friends' organisation.

It runs a group insurance scheme which includes public liability insurance for activities in which Friends are engaged, to which our Friends belong.

It organises annual conferences and regional meetings.

It was to one of these regional meetings that John Wettern and Gwen Hoad recently went. Held at the Towner Art Gallery and Museum in Eastbourne it was a chance to meet other Friends not only from Eastbourne but also from such varied institutions as the Rural Life Centre at Farnham; The Julia Margaret Cameron Trust on the Isle of Wight; and the Anne of Cleves House in Lewes. Also attending, and ready to offer advice, were various officers from the national committee including one who is the International Representative at the World Federation of Friends of Museums.

The main event of the day was a talk by Sophie Mirchandani from SEMLAC, the South East Museums, Libraries & Archives Council, outlining the purpose of SEMLAC and how it might give help and support to local Friends' groups. Geoffrey Williams, Vice Chairman of BAFM, followed this with a brief talk

stressing the importance in these days of large litigation claims, of public liability insurance.

After a pleasant lunch taken in the garden, with a chance to exchange ideas and progress with the other delegates, we were able to identify particular problems encountered by those present in their own museums, with suggestions as to how these might be remedied. How to encourage more visitors was a recurring theme as was also the relationship between the curator and the volunteers working in the museum, though this is not a problem for us in Leatherhead fortunately. How to keep our stewards interested and informed is something we should perhaps think about however.

Before we went our separate ways we were able to look round the Eastbourne Local History Museum in the Towner, which was well worth a visit. It was encouraging to meet volunteers from other museums and to realise that we do not work in a vacuum, and that we share similar problems, but that we have the support of BAFM and SEMLAC to go to for advice should we need it.

Gwen Hoad

APRIL and MAY VISITS

In April and May we had two very enjoyable visits - the first to Southside House in Wimbledon and the second to Reigate Priory. Southside was an amazing house - not least because of its delightful garden at the back, laid out in a series of small 'hidden' gardens. Also because it has been lived in by the same family since the 17th century. The Prince of Wales stayed there in 1750 and later on, William and Emma Hamilton and Nelson were frequent visitors and we saw the salon where Emma performed her famous 'attitudes'. One of the Pennington descendants married the author Axel Munthe who wrote 'The Story of San Michele' there. We had a marvellous tour of the whole house with an excellent guide who really brought everything to life for us.

The visit to Reigate Priory was also extremely interesting. The building is now a school, but the Orangery is a Museum, and Eileen Wood, who is in charge of the Museum, gave us a very good introductory talk about the history of the building from when it was founded as a Priory to its conversion to a private house. We were then taken all round the house, which is now a school and then to the Museum itself where there was an extremely good exhibition about World War II called 'We'll Meet Again' which was very evocative to those of us who remembered those days!

Linda Heath

VISIT TO HORSLEY TOWERS - 8th JUNE

On Sunday 8th June, 22 members of the Society and Friends visited Horsley Towers at East Horsley and were given a conducted tour of some of the more interesting parts of the building. It was built as a private house in the late 18th century and acquired some forty years later by the first Earl Lovelace, who made many additions to the building. These included an ornate chapel with spectacular roof trusses. Although never consecrated it was used regularly for prayers by the family and their servants. The 'secret garden' now rather overgrown, must have been a delightful retreat when first made. The Earl's wife, Ada, daughter of Lord Byron, was a brilliant mathematician and worked with Charles Babbage, designer of the analytical engine, the forerunner of modern computers. The house remained in the Lovelace family until early in the 20th century, since when it has had a variety of uses, including a house for Sir Thomas Sopwith of aviation fame, a girls' boarding school, a training centre for the electricity industry and now as a business conference centre and serviced offices. The extensive grounds provide effective insulation from the noise of traffic on the Leatherhead-Guildford road.

The visit, made on a sunny afternoon, appeared to be enjoyed by all present.

Jack Barker

EVENING VISIT TO WESTCOTT, 10th JULY 2003

As one drives westwards out of Dorking one comes upon Westcott, and it seems that no sooner has one entered the village than you are out the other side. But the fourteen or so Society members who attended this visit on a glorious summer evening, soon discovered that there is far more about the village than they would ever have imagined.

Our host, Terry Wooden of Westcott Local History Group, escorted the party on a circular route away from the main road. He opened our eyes to many interesting and attractive sights besides being a mine of information about the village, its buildings and inhabitants.

We learned that there were two churches (we set out from one and concluded the tour in the second); also three pubs - there formerly were six. Curiously one now has a Thai restaurant called *Beau Thai*.

The large parish church, Holy Trinity, was built in the 1850's. The architect being none other than Sir Gilbert Scott. We were told of several other notable people who had been residents including the actor Leslie Howard, the civil engineer Costain and a Mr Brook who gave us "Brook Bond tea". Our walk took us across the green, along the attractive and peaceful The Street: we then met and traced the Pippbrook stream behind a large estate of 1950's houses. Returning towards the centre of the village we visited the church of St John's, perhaps better described as a chapel with an intriguing history going back to the 1840's.

Apart from the excellence of Terry's narrative what perhaps struck us most was the diversity of the architecture that we found on every section of the walk. Elizabethan brick, well restored half-timbered houses, attractive 19th century cottages and a gem of a white-painted weatherboard 'semi' said to have been constructed the wrong way round: these and many others told us of Westcott's rich and diverse heritage.

We had walked for nearly two hours when the tour came to an end. We left as the light was fading but not before giving a hearty vote of thanks to Terry for an informative and stimulating evening.

John Wettern

WHAT ARE FRIENDS FOR?

Members of the Friends Committee recently acquired a set of papers which had been presented at an international congress of Friends of museums. Not all the writings were of direct interest to us but one speaker gave us something valuable; a definition of what Friends' organisations are all about.

It cannot be said that the Friends' of Leatherhead Museum carry out *all* the activities outlined in this text, but most of it lines up exactly with our own aims and aspirations. Here is an extract:

"Associations of Friends are non-profit, non-government organisations whose members are volunteers carrying out those tasks the museums trustees cannot accomplish with the same freedom of action. They are the natural bond between the Museum and the community. Their members are part of that community, common citizens immersed in its everyday life and concerns.

"We should not fall into the usual mistake of believing that their only aim is to raise funds to help the museums. That's not the case at all. They are organisations that produce culture in an effort to develop cultural curiosity and interest in the people. They do this with manifold activities such as courses, concerts, trips and cultural tourism; issuing catalogues, books, posters, postcards, slides, CDs, films, videos and reproductions in general. that is, undertaking to educate through art.

"One of their main aims is to teach adults and children, teachers and students, to appreciate the Cultural and Historic Heritage around them, in their country and in the world at large.

"To have a child learn that the square in his neighbourhood is not only his, it belongs to everyone, it is part and parcel of our heritage. If we could learn this elementary concept, things all round would be very different indeed."

John Wettren

PENNY READINGS

During the Mole Valley Arts Alive Festival on **24th October** Edwina's Bookham and Leatherhead U3A Creative Writing Group will revive again the Victorian tradition of *Penny Readings* by sharing their latest work with music and wine at Corbett's Bookshop at 7.30 pm. All for one penny!

Edwina Vardey

AUTUMN PROGRAMME

GUIDED WALKS and VISITS, LECTURES and TALKS

Saturday, 6th September. 2.00 pm. Guided walk round Ripley village led by Les Bowerman, a member of the Send & Ripley History Society (and an authority on cycling in Surrey!). Application forms for this went out with the *May Newsletter*. If you would like to go on this walk please send £1.00 to Linda Heath, 5 St John's Avenue, Leatherhead, KT22 7HT (telephone 372603) and say if you need or can offer a lift. We meet in the car park at Ripley Village Hall in time for a prompt start at 2.00 p.m.

Heritage Weekend, Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th September. Full details of everything are in the Heritage Weekend booklet. We are giving guided tours of Sweech House on the Saturday morning (see booklet for times) and guided walks round the town on Saturday and Sunday afternoons leaving the Institute at 2.00 pm. No booking required for these events. Linda Heath is giving her talk on 'Fanny Burney in Surrey' in Dorking at 11.00 am on Saturday.

Also;

Edwina Vardey is giving a talk on "*Three lost Tudor palaces of Surrey*" at Wesley House on **Sunday 14th September** at 3.00 pm.

LECTURES

Lecture meetings are held on **Friday evenings** in the Dixon Hall of the Letherhead Institute, High Street, normally at 8.0 p.m., with coffee beforehand at 7.30.

September 19th. 'Sir Christopher Wren - our Great English Architect' by Dennis Ashbourne. Mr Ashbourne is a retired Chartered Architect from Town Planning and as well as guided tours round Hampton Court, he lectures on buildings in Tudor, Stuart and Georgian London. His talk will focus on Wren's buildings rather than on his life, including Chelsea and Greenwich Hospitals and the many churches built after the fire in 1666. He has some very fine slides to illustrate his talk.

October 17th. THE DALLAWAY LECTURE - 'Pigs, Pasture and Pleasure at Polesden Lacey' by Heloise Collier. Mrs Collier is a full-time member of the National Trust staff and is now the Regional Land and Property Data Officer, looking after records of Trust properties. In this talk she gives a fascinating account of the history of the property from earliest times.

November 21st. 'Epsom Past and Present' by Ian West, a member of Nonsuch Antiquarian Society. Ian has given talks to us before and shown us some of his excellent slides as well as leading us on a marvellous walk round the Woodcote part of Epsom last Summer. In this talk he uses two screens - rather like running a brace of sheepdogs at sheepdog trials!

December 19th. Christmas Miscellany. NB. Please note that we shall start the talks at **7.30 pm** and this year we are planning to have one half hour talk before an interval for mince pies and coffee, followed by two fifteen minute talks. If you would like to contribute a talk for this, please contact Linda Heath before November.

