

*LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT  
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY*

*NEWSLETTER*



February 2009

# LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 802409

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The Society meets on the third Friday of the month at the Letherhead Institute between September and May.

For details - see programme in the Newsletter

## 2009 Membership Subscriptions

Ordinary.....£15.00    Associate.....£6.00    Junior (under 18).....£1.00

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

**Jenny Morris**

**01372 362524**

The Museum is open at the following times (from 2nd April)

Thursdays and Fridays .. 1.00pm to 4.00pm    Saturdays ..10.00am to 4.00pm

**CURATOR**

**(Vacancy)**

**01372 386348**

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

**CHAIRMAN**

**Fred Meynen**

**01372 372930**

The Library at The Letherhead Institute is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10.00am to 12.30pm. It is no longer open on Saturdays. Exceptionally, arrangements may be made to use it at other times by applying to the Librarian.

**LIBRARIAN**

**Peter Wells**

**01372 272367**

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

**PROGRAMME SECRETARY**

**Fred Meynen**

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Further details are given on the inside back cover

## *Editorial*

We are now well into 2009 and can look forward to a further set of interesting lectures, talks, visits and activities. Soon it will be April and the Museum will open.

It is encouraging to see a few more articles being received to go into this Newsletter. I wonder if sometimes members are reluctant to send in articles thinking they may not be 'intellectual' enough when in practice they would be of great interest to members and give a further insight into our local history. The Newsletter is just the place for such information – we have the 'Proceedings' for



research and investigations in depth. So many members must have memories that need recording and which afford knowledge of life as it was. It is easy to forget that to a person, say younger than fifty, the second world war is an event of history yet to those of seventy or more it was part of their life. As time goes by the recording of all those events becomes more and more valuable. Also so many have an insight into some aspect of their own local history. Members are encouraged to write it down for us all to see.

Once again comes the plea for further assistance in the workings of the Society. None of the volunteers is getting any younger and many activities of the Society would welcome an injection of new talent. The Society would welcome some of you to come forward to help. There are a variety of tasks and your particular talents would surely soon be put to good use. Go into the museum and discuss it with Alan Pooley or Peter Tarplee – it's rewarding work and good company.

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# *Chairman's Report*

This our February Newsletter is the first issue of the new year and is a particularly importance due to the fact that the Notice and papers for the 62nd Annual General Meeting of the History Society are distributed with this issue.

There are some important issues to be discussed concerning the History Society therefore I would earnestly encourage you to attend this meeting on Friday 17th April, not least because we need nominations to fill two of the very important posts on your Committee, namely that of Hon Treasurer and that of Membership Secretary. The History Society cannot properly function without the positions being filled.

I look forward to receiving your nominations for these posts and for the other positions vacant.

I am sorry to have to report the untimely death of Brian Godfrey who was our Records Secretary and Bookham Archivist, who will be much missed for his hard work and dedication to the History Society and the Museum.

Also I have been informed that one of our long standing members of the Society, John Bull passed away in December.

There is an appreciation of Brian Godfrey written by Peter Tarplee our former Chairman and now Vice President. Stephen Fortescue and Linda Heath have also written a brief appreciation of John Bull elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Following Dr David Birds talk to our Society in October we have received and published here his interim excavation report on Ashtead Roman Villa 2008 which we hope will be of interest to our members.

Before winding up this piece I would like to give a plug for more research at a Local, County and National level. As a History Society's we should in theory be engaged in all sorts of research, but how many of us are? We have our own archive, a wealth of material pertaining to local parishes of Leatherhead & District. At a county level we have available to us the Surrey History Centre at 130 Goldsworth Road Woking GU21 6ND, telephone 03456 009009 email: [shs@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:shs@surreycc.gov.uk) on line at [www.surreycc.gov.uk](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk).

At a national level we all have access to the National Archive at Kew Richmond Surrey TW9 4DU, telephone: 0208 876 3444, on line at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk). I have just received their January Newsletter by email which is full of interesting research topics including the launch on the 13th January of the 1911 census. So why not make the most of our resources and start planning a research project today.

*David Hartley*

## *News from the Museum Committee*

Although we opened late this year it is pleasing to report that the attendances are about 7% up on last year with 1,114 adults and 296 children visiting the museum. During the weekend of Heritage Open Days we had a total of 166 visitors.

We are rather proud of the fact that Surrey leads the national table for HODs with 318 events during the weekend of which about a quarter were in Mole Valley.

The museum is now closed until 2nd April but that does not prevent anyone donating artefacts; we are there every Monday and other days by arrangement. In fact, this is our busy time and, thanks to monies raised by the Friends, we are planning to have the upstairs rooms re-carpeted. This entails emptying all the display cabinets and replacing the artefacts afterwards. The regular helpers are hoping for some additional assistance with this work.

Also before we re-open we are hoping that the Bull pub sign will have been re-painted and that an entrance for disabled persons will have been made off the footpath at the side of the museum.

*Peter Tarplee*

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## *Archaeological Secretary's Report*

For this first report of the year I have compiled a number of notices of forthcoming and future events outside the History Society's that I hope will be of interest to a number of our members.

### **Surrey Archaeological Society Annual Symposium**

The Research Committee of the SAS will be holding its annual symposium on Saturday 28th February at the Ashted Peace Memorial Hall Woodfield Lane Ashted.

Tickets are available in advance at £8.00 members, £10.00 for non members.

All tickets purchase on the day £10.00

### **Medieval Studies Forum Meeting**

Saturday 28th March at St Mary's Church Quarry Street Guildford. The subject of this meeting is 'Saxon Surrey'.

If you would like to attend please contact Richard Savage: medforum@hotmail.co.uk

### **Hatch Furlong excavation at Ewell**

The 4th season of excavation at Hatch Furlong site in Ewell, sponsored and supported by Birkbeck College, Surrey Archaeological Society (SAS) and Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeological Society (EEHAS).

## **Dates Released for Birkbeck Students and Community Archaeology**

18th - 19th April 1st weekend,

20th -24th April - Birkbeck students and community - 1st week.

25th - 26th April - 2nd weekend

27th April - 1st May - Birkbeck students and community - 2nd week.

2nd - 3rd May with an open day on 4th May, 3rd weekend & Bank Holiday Monday

Registration forms I am told will be circulated shortly or contact Frank Pemberton by email: [frank.pemberton@btopenworld.co.uk](mailto:frank.pemberton@btopenworld.co.uk)

## **SAS Annual Summer Lecture**

Friday 5th June the Surrey Archaeological Society will again hosts the Annual Summer Lecture at the Menuhin Hall, Stoke d' Abernon.

This year the guest speaker will be Ptolemy Dean, artist, the presenter of BBC television series Restoration. Admission will be by ticket only purchased in advance directly from the Box Office The Menuhin Hall, visit the web site; [www.menuhinhall.info](http://www.menuhinhall.info) or telephone: 08700 842020

Tickets cost £12.00 which includes a glass of wine.

**Kent Archaeological Field School** - have just published their Programme for 2009

A full programme of Training Digs & Field Trips, contact Paul Wilkinson or visit their Web site: [www.KAFS.co.uk](http://www.KAFS.co.uk)

Of particular interest to me - on 3 & 4th October - An Introduction to Roman Pottery a weekend course led by Malcolm Lyne.

Again on 8th - 9th October Archaeological Drawing Course led by Jane Russell, who was senior illustrator at the UCL Field Archaeology Unit.

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## ***Lest We Forget - Charles Keith Jago Rooke***

In the November Newsletter David Hartley proposed that as a memorial to those who lived and died in the first world war we should gather together information on their lives and times. At David's request, I agreed to contribute the following poignant account of a man whose name appears on Ashted's War Memorial, beside St George's Christian Centre on Barnett Wood Lane, but had only a relatively brief connection to the district severed almost 100 years ago. Although the entry is cut 'Cpt. C.K.J.Rooke', the 't', by a slip of the stonemason's chisel, suggests a posthumous promotion from an actual rank of Corporal. No unit is recorded and, surprisingly, he served with Australian Infantry, Australian Imperial Force (AIF).

Charles Keith Jago Rooke came from a distinguished family being descended from

Captain Frederick William Rooke, Royal Navy, of Lackham House, Wiltshire. He had been born in 1868 as one of the numerous children of Rev Frederick John Rooke, Rector of Rampisham, Dorset. Charles qualified as a Solicitor in 1891 before coming to Ashtead about the turn of the century to live in on Woodfield Lane in one of the newly built villas on the Greville Park Estate. He appears to have commissioned the erection of a new house, The Oaks, on Ashtead Woods Road of which he took possession on 23rd March 1905. Evidence of his involvement with the community is provided by (honorary) membership of the Working Men's Club and, pursuing an enthusiasm from his college days, fielding an amateur football team. By 1909, he had moved on, with a brother, to settle in Mangalore, Tasmania.



On 4th August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany, recruiting of troops in Australia began within a week, and by 20th August Charles had volunteered for the AIF (the only army on either side which did not resort to conscription throughout WW I). Since the new units were regionally based, he was assigned, during October 1914, with other men from Tasmania to A Company, 12th Infantry, with the rank of Corporal and a Service Number 64. By the 20th of the same month, that unit had embarked on Transport Ship A2 Geelong at Hobart before sailing to rendezvous with two brigades from New Zealand in Albany Bay, Western Australia, and join a group of 38 transports escorted by warships.

The convoy was diverted from England to Egypt where the force engaged in further training before it was committed to an attempt to seize the Gallipoli Peninsular with the aim of neutralising Turkish defences that controlled the Dardanelles. Starting on 25

April 1915, Australian soldiers were ferried ashore in lifeboats, each of which held 30 men: casualties were heavy and Corporal Rooke, aged 47, was one of those who lost their lives on the very first day of the landings. His name appears on Panel 64 on Lone Pine Memorial, Gallipoli, which commemorates more than 4900 of ANZAC killed who have no known grave. Throughout 1916, Australian newspapers contained repeated appeals to 'Returning Soldiers' for any information about missing men by name, including that of Rooke. C.K.J. Rooke's



Plaque in St Giles Church, Ashtead

supreme sacrifice is also recorded on a brass plaque in St Giles Parish Church, Ashted, and by Pontville War Memorial at St Mark's Anglican Church, Tasmania. Further details may be found on various websites including [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) for Commonwealth War Graves Commission, [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au) for Australian War Memorial, and [www.aif.adfa.edu.au](http://www.aif.adfa.edu.au) for The AIF Project.

*Brian Bouchard*

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## *Sir Frederick Milner*

In the last Newsletter I described the operation of the Thermega and Remploy factories whose buildings at present stand empty beside the Milner House nursing home in Ermyn Way. Who was Sir Frederick Milner whose name has been given to the home?

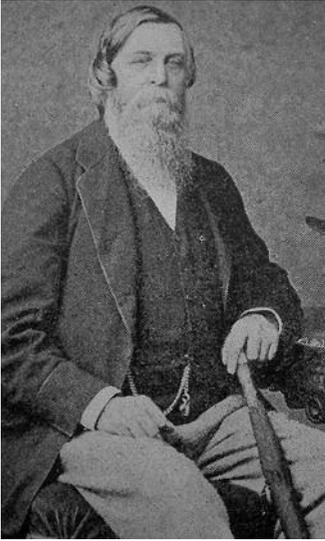
The Right Hon Sir Frederick Milner Bt was born on 7th November 1849 and died on 8th June 1931. He followed three of his predecessors in the title in becoming an MP for York. He was elected in 1883 but was defeated in 1885; he later represented the Bassetlaw Division of Nottinghamshire from 1890 for 16 years when he retired due to problems with increasing deafness. On leaving parliament he told his constituents that during his time as their MP he had written, by his own hand, over 5,000 letters in his work as their representative.

He had been appointed as a Privy Councillor in 1904 and what had been a promising career appeared to be closed by his enforced retirement. However, his main work was only just beginning. He had been moved by the poor treatment of injured troops returning from both the Boer War and the Great War and this caused him to greatly increase his voluntary work, particularly regarding the treatment of mentally disabled ex-servicemen. He was instrumental in getting the Ministry of Pensions set up and then he spent the rest of his life pleading for higher pensions and fairer treatment for many of the recipients.

Early in World War I Sir Frederick saw the need for a recuperative hostel for shell-shocked veterans and he opened one in Hampstead, and before long the government began to open similar institutions, but Sir Frederick refused their request for him to close his. In fact, the government was soon sending patients to his hostel. He went on to support two village settlements, at Papworth and Enham, both of which enabled disabled ex-servicemen to receive treatment and to live satisfying lives.

Soon after World War I Sir Frederick formed the Ex-Services Welfare Society, of which he was President, which opened a home at Beckenham followed by the Sir Frederick Milner Home in what had been 'The Long House' in Ermyn Way, Ashted. Here they set up the Thermega factory producing electric blankets and other products. Even at the time of closure they were making nearly 2,000 blankets a week as well as plastic wallets, tool pouches, portfolios etc. and making flare parachutes and packing parachute lines for Schermuly in Newdigate. There was a basket industry there where cases referred to the Society were tested and if they showed aptitude for normal commercial manufacturing they were transferred to the blanket factory.

Sir Frederick and the Society did much more than run the homes. He spent nearly all his life working on behalf of the neurasthenic and mentally disabled ex-servicemen and from studying articles and letters which he was constantly writing it is seen that



he used his time after he left parliament on behalf of this rather unfashionable cause. As an example I quote from a letter which Sir Frederick wrote to the father of someone he was trying to help.

“I have been trying to work your son’s case through the Director Gen Medical Services, who is the only official I know with any idea of humanity.....The Pens Min Boards are most harsh and unjust. I have upset them over and over again at Tribunals. I am sorry to say I am breaking up fast, and fear I may not be able to carry on much longer, but I will do all I can for your son, and with a good certificate I may succeed. If he is told to go before a Board, be sure to let me know in time, and I will give him a letter to the Chairman. If they know I am behind him they will be more careful.”

This letter somehow got to Whitehall and some very acrimonious correspondence ensued with all staff being told to pass any letter from Milner to head office and not to reply to it. Sir Frederick, of course, got sight of this instruction and wrote saying that they should not be acting on private correspondence. It’s all very much like the present time when documents are leaked from official bodies and cabinet ministers become very active.

During his post-parliamentary life Sir Frederick Milner devoted his time and energy to mentally disabled ex-servicemen and although I only quote from one letter, there are many like this and I think it underlines the differences between the official line and that of the Welfare Society. I will give a few short quotes from correspondence from Milner.

“The department dealing with widows and dependents is hopeless”

“If you write to a department you either get no answer or are fobbed off with a buff post-card saying the matter will be attended to, which it never is”

“I have just past my 80th birthday, and am still fighting for the ex-serviceman....the poor fellows who have lost their reason or their lives through their service for their country have not had their share of the country’s generosity”

I think I have written enough to indicate the sort of man that Frederick Milner was and the work that he undertook. Before his memory disappears altogether it seems worth recording something of the man whose name has been given to one of our local nursing homes. It should also be noted that the society which he formed, and of which he was president, still operates in the town as ‘Combat Stress’ at Tyrwhitt House.

*Peter Tarplee*

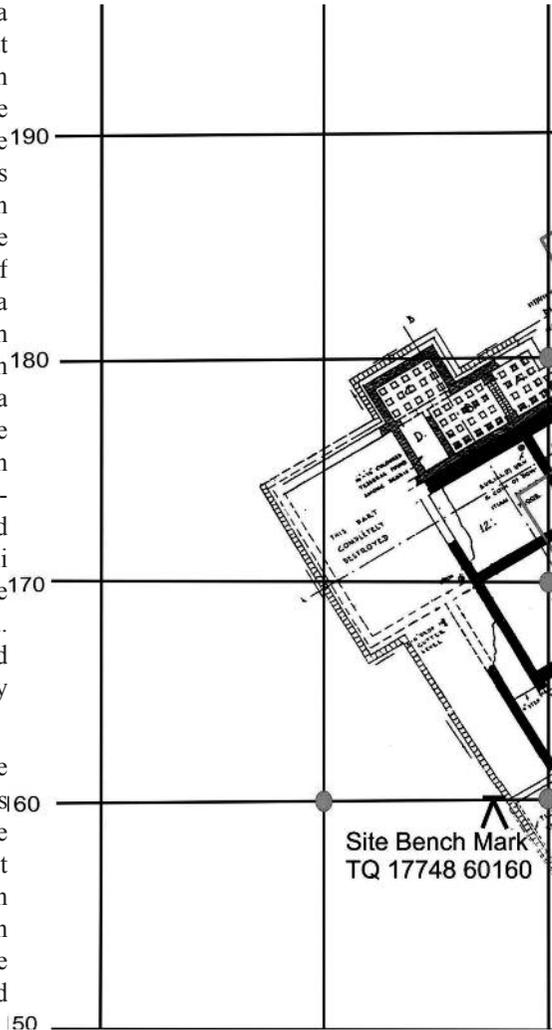
Material for this article has been obtained from back issues of ‘The Times’ and from Ministry of Pensions and Ministry of Labour files at the National Archives

# *Ashtead Roman Villa and Tileworks*

A third season of fieldwork was undertaken by the Society's Roman Studies Group on Ashtead Common between 27th August and 15th September last year. We were much less lucky with the weather, and at times it rained so much that it was not possible to work at all. Of course this affected site cleaning and photography, but in compensation it undoubtedly made digging easier, both physically (the clay was not rock hard) and visually (colour differences were much more apparent). It was surprising how much work was possible, a great tribute to the skill and dedication of the diggers; we also now have a greater appreciation of what AWG Lowther and a few helpers achieved at the site.

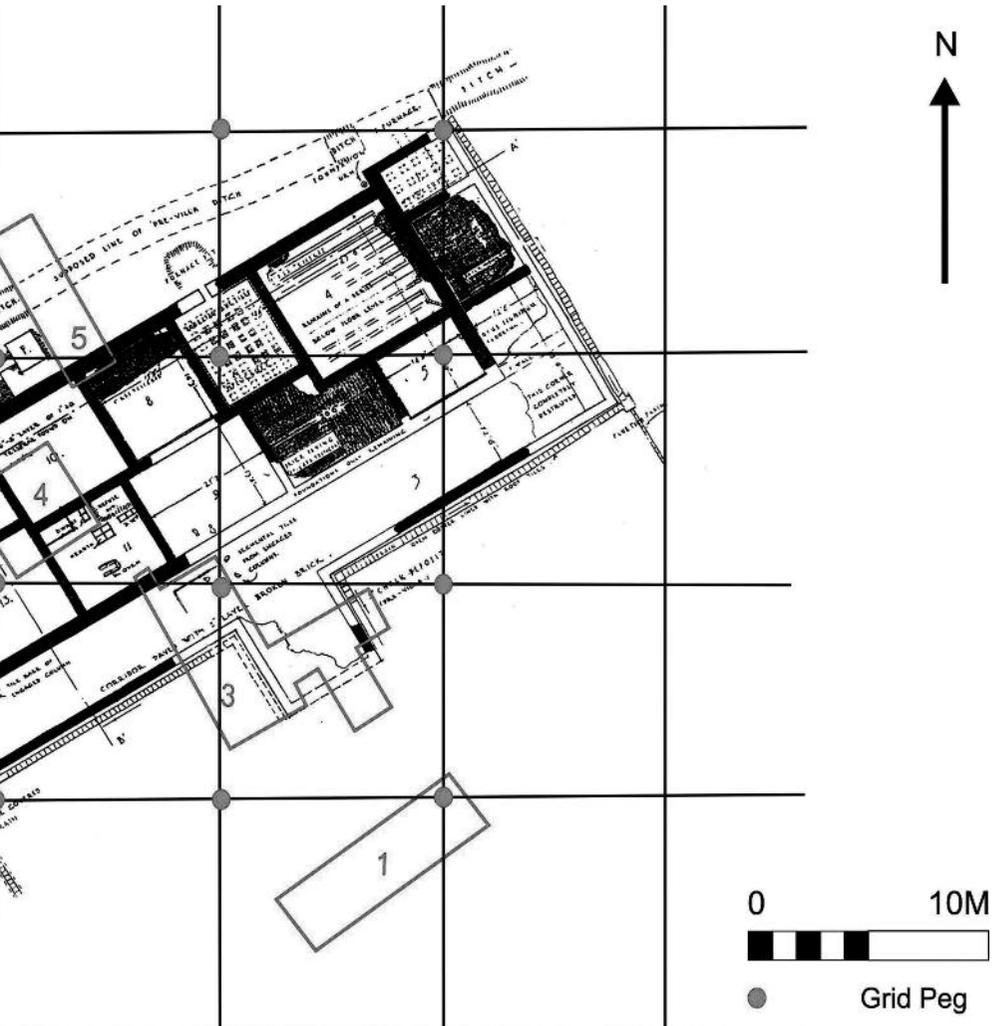
As a result of the work this year, we are in a much better position to begin to identify at least basic phases on the villa site, with stratified pottery and other finds to provide dating. We can also begin to understand more clearly information gleaned from Lowther's reports (1927, 1929, 1930, 1959). The main aims this year were to complete the excavation of a two metre wide section of Trench 3 across the area interpreted as a porch by Lowther, to cut a section out from room 8 across the postulated line of a ditch running along the north side of the villa (Trench 5) and to relocate the corner of the enclosure wall found by John Hampton (Trench 6: for location see Bird 2004, 122-3, figs 54-5). These trenches were supervised by, respectively, David Calow, Nikki Cowlard and Frank Pemberton; site recording was under the control of Alan Hall. Anyone referring to the earlier reports should note that our site north is in fact roughly north-west.

Trench 3 was reopened and extended to the east in order to answer some of the questions raised. The general sequence outside the building was seen most clearly at the west end of the trench, starting with a greyish sandy clay above the natural yellow, with some finds suggesting activity perhaps in the later 1st century, presumably to be associated



with the construction of the first building. In this area it precedes a spread of smallish flints perhaps forming the base for a yard or road surface (probably as a continuation of the approach road), with a yellow sandy layer above it and a top dressing of small pebbles. There was a layer of debris over this, mostly a layer of mortar and plaster with tiles, below a more general spread of tile, earth and some flint rubble. The front wall of the villa was found at foundation level, along the front of, but well below, the surface of the corridor floor found in 2007. It consisted of flints packed into a trench that narrowed as it went down (rather like the walls around room 11, also examined in 2007).

The wall went through two ninety degree turns more or less on the line of Lowther's porch but much less deep north to south. On the south side of this reduced 'porch' were



*(Continued - Ashtead Roman Villa and Tileworks)*

found two tile-built stub walls on flint foundations, one set somewhat lower than the other apparently in an earlier shallow pit (which produced finds including pottery, some smashed in situ and certainly earlier than the front wall foundation). The tiles in these stub walls had been badly affected by heat, adding weight to a possible explanation, that they were related to a furnace. The ground surface sloped away to the south and was notably rich in charcoal. This area was later covered by two layers of broken tiles of all types sandwiching a spread of large fragments of opus signinum, including shaped pieces.

Beyond the 'porch' to the east a rammed chalk floor was found, as previously recognised by Lowther (1930, plan opposite 148); its extent was tested by augering and found to be approximately 5 x 4m. It was noticeable that the general debris layer was absent over the chalk floor; it was covered only by dark earth bounded by a line of flints apparently forming a rough wall set along the western edge of the chalk. This was a very unconvincing 'wall', with little sign of proper edging, only dark earth between the flints and no foundation, and it may have been no more than a flint heap created in Lowther's day. It is likely that this area was thoroughly dug over at that time as it falls within an area of broken pottery and refuse 'explored' in 1928 and found to be productive of small finds (1929, 5). The chalk floor was probably earlier than the front wall, and must have been inside a structure although no evidence for this was found. It may have been related in some way to the construction period, but that can only be established by future work.

In the angle of the wall return on the western side of the 'porch', the foundations of part of a small apse were found, seemingly a later addition. Unfortunately all trace of the inner junction of the front wall, the western side of the 'porch' and the apse had been removed, probably by robbing. Two tiles of the base of the gutter found by Lowther were discovered still in situ (confirmed by their prepared base of yellow sand) making clear that it post-dated the apse. It was also later than the yard or road base and must relate to a later version of the front wall, probably when the corridor was made in the form in which it was found last year. The latter's floor of crushed brick was laid over a substantial make-up deposit, mostly of yellow clay. This raising of levels was probably carried out over much of the site, and may have included the spreading of debris in front of the building, perhaps at the same time as the filling of the U-shaped ditch to the north (see below). A major period of refurbishment is implied.

Trench 5 was dug to cut the ditch recorded by Lowther so as to obtain a proper section and hopefully provide a stratigraphic link back to the villa, with some associated dating evidence. It was also hoped to obtain environmental evidence from the ditch with the assistance of Professor Martyn Waller of Kingston University, who kindly took a sample of the fill. The trench was set out with some difficulty to avoid tree stump problems and immediately located the line of the wall between rooms 8 and 10 where it joined the outer (northern) villa wall. As in Trench 4 last year the lines of the walls were clearly marked almost at the surface by orangey-brown sandy material with some

tile and tesserae, but only a small part of the outer wall survived and the rest of this and the inter-room wall otherwise only existed at foundation level. The material left above the walls was therefore the remnants of the robber trenches, left undug by Lowther. The tessellated floor they enclosed survived more or less as his plan indicated, but at an unexpectedly high level. Where it was damaged it could be seen to be laid over a crushed tile base. Not far to the north a modern ditch cut across the line of the trench; part of a United Dairy milk bottle of 1920s pattern was found and may indicate that the ditch was one of those dug for drainage purposes in the 1927 digging season, which was very wet (Anon 1929, xix). Its dark fill was found to overlies in places a black, charcoal-rich layer with tile that is probably to be associated with the furnace pit recorded by Lowther to the east of the attached bath-house at the North-West corner of the villa. The modern ditch had cut along the southernmost side of the Roman-period ditch. The latter was not immediately apparent after the removal of topsoil except that north of what proved to be the line of the ditch the surface was covered in a thick layer of broken tile. In due course it was found that the original ditch was roughly V-shaped and had at some stage been recut to a U-shape; this shape remained very crisp and must therefore have been quickly backfilled with the building material found in it. The tile layer north of the ditch was probably laid at this time, perhaps intentionally as a rough surface. According to Lowther's plan, the gutter round the attached bath annexe of the villa discharged into the ditch, and it may be suggested therefore that the recut backfilled with building material was intended to serve as a linear soakaway. Similar features are known for example at Rapsley (Hanworth 1968, 15-16) and Ashted itself, south of the isolated bath-house (Lowther 1927, 149).

Trench 6 was intended to relocate the enclosure corner so as to make possible further testing of the wall line and the possibility that there was a building there, especially in view of its proximity to the tileworks. The corner was found, with two related tile-built features that perhaps suggest a building, but there were no associated finds and only a clean sandy surface above the natural clay. If it was a structure then perhaps this could be explained by a use such as a drying shed. The walls were only two or three courses high, with broken tegulae used for binding. There was no sign of loose flint so robbing is perhaps unlikely and the walls must be seen as the base for a timber structure of some sort. More work is needed.

Further magnetometer and topographical survey was carried out by Archaeology South East in the spring in the area west of the clay pits and this hinted at features crossing the area tested by Trench 6, but nothing was found that seemed to be related to them. More convincing anomalies were noted nearer the pits and they suggest the possible location of tile kilns that we hope to test in the future. Professor Martyn Waller has produced details of analysis of the material that had accumulated in the main clay pit after it ceased to be used and has been able to obtain a radiocarbon date giving a range of AD60-240 for the initial silt, which fits very well with the other dating evidence for the Roman-period tiling. Pollen evidence suggests that oak was predominant in the area at the time (Martyn Waller, pers. comm.). This is being subjected to further dating

*(Continued - Ashtead Roman Villa and Tileworks)*

and the range of samples is being extended. Scientific research on the tiles has begun, arranged by the Estate under the direction of Dr Ian Betts; study of the ceramic building material from all of the excavations continues in parallel, run by the Society's Artefacts and Archives Research Group. Finds work on site is also carried out by AARG, led by Margaret Broomfield; notable finds this year included a small bronze cockerel, pottery vessels smashed in situ, fragments of Cologne colour coat pottery and other fine wares, part of an open lamp from Trench 5 and a samian stamp (SERVI.M), part of a pipeclay figurine and a large lump of lead, partly worked. Recovery of metal finds gained considerably from the expert assistance of John Cole and Bill Meades with their metal detectors. The finds have yet to be properly assessed but the general impression as before is that most are of the second century, with some pottery perhaps a little earlier and occasional sherds that could be prehistoric.

Thanks are due to all who took part, especially those who endured the worst of the weather. As before, key roles were played by Alan Hall and Margaret Broomfield both on and off site, and the assistance of the Estate keepers (especially Sean O'Kelly and Lizzie Bruce) and their nature conservation volunteers was vital; they not only cleared and fenced the site but also provided a compound, delivered tools, water and other necessities and removed the finds when required. Dr Richard Massey of English Heritage and Dr Ralph Hobbs of Natural England were again supportive. This year the site was 'open' for one of the Heritage Open Days; tours were led by a Roman tunic-clad Sean O'Kelly and displays were arranged by Margaret Broomfield and AARG. Over 200 people visited the site (with probably another 100 on other days) and more than 500 saw the displays in the Estate Office.

This was the third year of the Project and the results were more than expected. Many other parts of the site require attention and it is time for us to step back and consider what else can be achieved in a reasonable timescale. The Project Design will be revised following consultation.

*David Bird*

Anon, 1929. Report of Council for the year ending December 31st, 1927, Surrey Archaeol Collect, 38.1, xvii-xxi

Bird, D G, 2004. Roman Surrey

Hanworth, R, 1968. The Roman villa at Rapsley, Ewhurst, Surrey Archaeol Collect, 65, 1-70

Lowther, A W G, 1927. Excavations at Ashtead, Surrey, Surrey Archaeol Collect, 37.2, 144-163

Lowther, A W G, 1929. Excavations at Ashtead, Surrey. Second report (1927 and 1928), Surrey Archaeol Collect, 38.1, 1-17

Lowther, A W G, 1930. Excavations at Ashtead, Surrey. Third report (1929), Surrey Archaeol Collect, 38.2, 132-148

Lowther, A W G, 1959. The date of the Roman buildings and brickworks on Ashtead Common, Proc Leatherhead District Local Hist Soc, 2.3, 69-72

## *Brooklands and the Hurricane Aircraft*

On Friday 21st November Brian Hennegan gave us a talk entitled 'Brooklands and the Hurricane Aircraft.' Brian talked about the role that Brooklands played in the development of cars and aircraft. He also said that it played a part in the life of people living in the Leatherhead District. It was of course a large employer especially from the mid 1930s onwards right up until the mid to late 1980s.



He described a journey on the 462 bus in the early 1950s. The journey started at Leatherhead station and by the time the bus arrived at Vickers Armstrongs at Weybridge the passengers left the bus rather like toothpaste leaving the tube. It was packed. (During the war the site was occupied by both Vickers and Hawkers who relocated to Langley in 1942). People travelled there to work by all means of transport, many by push bike.

Brooklands racing track was opened in 1907 and from 1908 aircraft manufacturing had begun. One of these companies was the Sopwith Company started by Thomas Octave Murdoch Sopwith. During the First World War they built many aircraft for the Royal Flying Corps. The most famous being the Sopwith Camel. When the war ended the need for Aircraft diminished and the company turned to the manufacture of other products. Today we call it 'diversifying'.

The Treasury then dealt Tommy Sopwith a crippling blow demanding a huge tax payment for the past three years (forget the huge debt that the country owed the company for its vital contribution during the war years!). Sopwith asked if he could make the payment over an agreed period, but the Treasury would not play ball. Sopwith being an honourable man wanted to be sure that his creditors got their due payments so he arranged for the company to be placed in receivership.

In November the company was reformed under the name Hawker Aircraft. Harry Hawker was the test pilot for Sopwith and he had made a vital contribution to the development of its aircraft. Harry was to be killed in a crash on the 12th July 1921.

The first Hurricane flew on 6th November 1935. Brian went on to describe the role the Hurricane played during the Second World War. At the time of the Battle of Britain the Hurricane shot down more enemy aircraft than all other allied aircraft and ground defence put together. Their pilots had ammunition for 15 seconds only and fuel for say two hours or thereabouts.

For the remainder of his talk Brian described the rebuilding of Hurricane number Z2839 currently being carried out at Brooklands Museum. This project has been ongoing for the last ten years and is reaching completion. Brian was in at the beginning and has been at Brooklands for most Thursdays during that time.

The talk was given to a packed house and was very well received.

# *Leatherhead Clock Tower*

Members and guests of the Society met at their pre-Christmas event which provided a cheerful social occasion as well as a stimulating insight into the story of one of Leatherhead's former monuments. The speaker, Goff Powell, had kindly agreed to give the lecture 'The Leatherhead Clock Tower' at extremely short notice owing to the scheduled presenter having had to cancel due to illness.

The story, well illustrated with slides, traced the history of the quaint edifice which stood in North Street from 1859 until 1952. Older residents remember it well. Others came to learn of its location and of its function as well as its history. This small building, dominated by its clock, stood at the intersection of North Street and Gravel Hill. At its base behind double doors the Town fire engine was stored. We enjoyed a colourful description of episodes when this horse-drawn vehicle was summoned to local emergencies – the firemen in their brass helmets and the horses with gleaming harness. This was the focal point of Leatherhead's life. Close by the Town Band gave concerts, and public speakers held forth. Goff's pictures highlighted some of the most memorable moments on record: the celebrations at the conclusion of World War One,



and similarly those that followed victory after World War Two. In 1917 a shrine was built nearby, displaying a roll of honour bearing the names of those who had died in the conflict. This is now housed in Leatherhead's parish church.

We learned what became of the clock tower. 1926 saw the opening of the town's new fire station and the lower level became a public toilet. Close by, in 1921 the war memorial was built, with its garden of remembrance as we know it now. We were shown many pictures which reflected the life of the town during these earlier years: a concourse of cyclists relaxing during their tour; days of celebration marking historic events; the sparseness of traffic, so much in contrast with nowadays and after its demolition, the bandstand that stood in its place during the 1980s.

After the lecture came the opportunity to socialise and relax. Wine and canapés were served, along with hot mince pies. It all served to highlight the friendly atmosphere that the History Society has created for the enjoyment of its members and guests.

*John Wettren*

## *Early Water, Electricity and Gas Supplies in Surrey*

The lecture on the 16th January was given by Peter Tarplee, our vice-president, his subject being the early days of public utilities in the county. Peter is a well known industrial historian and is the author of guides to the industrial history of a number of districts in Surrey, including Mole Valley, published by the Surrey Industrial History Group.

Water was traditionally obtained from streams and ponds for domestic use, whilst large houses and estates took water from rivers and streams by waterwheel or windmill. Wells in the chalk provided supplies, drawn up by a windlass or hand pump. Domestic water was free, provided you could carry it from the source. Water carriers sold water at the door. Hannah Oakford, who died in 1898, charged a penny ha'penny per bucket to deliver to houses in Haslemere. There is plaque today on the town well commemorating her.

Local landowners often assisted. Lord Lovelace at Horsley Towers took water from the local waterworks and siphoned it into concrete tanks from which villagers could draw a supply. In Leatherhead there was small supply at Flint House, off Highlands Road, drawn from a deep well by a windmill. Villages often had their own pumped supply from a well on the village green. The pumps survive at Brockham and Leigh.

One of the earliest public supply systems was in Dorking. It was not universally popular as it had to be paid for. The building, at Archway House, off Church Street, survives. It carries a plate inscribed

R P Waterworks, erected 1738. The works closed in the middle of the 19th c when the spring became polluted. In 1869 the Dorking Water Company dug a 300ft deep well and built a steam-driven pump house in Harrow Road East with a reservoir on Tower Hill. The pump house was converted to houses in 1919 and still stands. The next station was built in Station Road in 1902 and was replaced in 1939 by a new system in Beech Close. Leatherhead's first supply was in 1884 from a borehole in Waterways Road. The buildings were only demolished in 1992 and replaced by housing. The 1930s building alongside, had diesel driven pumps, later replaced by electric driven ones. Supplies are still also taken from the spring fed mill pond in Fetcham.

Electricity. In 1881 Godalming became the first town in the country to have a public supply which was provided by a waterwheel at Westbrook Mill. There had been earlier street lighting in Holborn in London. Willans and Robinson moved into the Ferry Works at Thames Ditton in 1880 where they built steam engines for yachts and soon found these were ideal for coupling to dynamos. It was claimed in 1884 that the Ferry Works was the first in the world to be entirely lit by electricity.



Weybridge had a power station in operation in 1890. Like the Godalming one it was not continuous, reverting to gas for a period. Woking also had a system in 1890 which has remained in continuous use. Sutton had its first station in 1902 built predominantly to power the tramway system to Croydon. Leatherhead's first generating station was built in Bridge Street in 1902 with a 75kW diesel driven generator and lead acid batteries to absorb peak loads. A new station was built in 1925; output was increased in 1928 with a more powerful diesel engine. The site was closed in 1939 following the earlier connection into the bulk supply system from Croydon via Epsom.

Gas. Farnham and Dorking, in 1834, were the first towns in Surrey to have a public gas supply. Leatherhead Gas Company opened in the Kingston Road in 1851 mainly supplying street lighting. Woking had gas in 1891, a year after electricity, and is unique in the county in this respect. Mergers took place during the 20th c., Leatherhead being absorbed in 1936 by the Wandsworth & District Gas Company.

Altogether this was a fascinating and well-researched account by Peter of significant developments in the provision of public utility supplies in the county

*Gordon Knowles*

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## *Aviation Incidents in the Leatherhead Area*

Since my article in the May 2008 Newsletter I have received a letter and numerous emails from Brian Bouchard regarding a couple of aircraft crashes in the area covered by Leatherhead and district.

The earliest incident occurred on the evening of 2nd September 1926, when an Avro 504K (G-EASG) of Southern Counties Aviation Co., based at Brooklands, crashed at Phoenix Farm, Great Bookham. It was being flown back to base from Bognor by



*Avro 504*

Captain Ronald H Leavey with a mechanic, Arnold Keene, and a passenger, a Mrs Stallard. The machine burst into flames on hitting the ground when the fuel tank split, and the pilot and passenger were burned to death. The mechanic, who was possibly thrown out, was taken to Leatherhead Cottage Hospital where he died of his severe injuries.

The managing director of the company, Mr G V Peck, believed the aircraft had probably encountered fog over the North Downs, visibility being down to about 150 ft at that time, and was off its expected course. No mechanical faults were found later after inspection. Air Accident Report C.94.

The second accident occurred on the morning of 4th July 1943 when a Handley Page Halifax (JD203) of 78 Squadron from RAF Brighton in Yorkshire, force landed at 30 Acre Barn, Ashted after a taking part in a bombing raid on Cologne, Germany. The aircraft had one engine damaged by flak over the target, and another on the same side failed on the way back. The captain of the aircraft, Squadron Leader Peter Bunclark, ordered the crew to jettison all unnecessary equipment



*Halifax*

over the sea and the majority of the crew to bale out over southern England. Bunclark fought to keep the aircraft in the air with his flight engineer, Pilot Officer E F C Matthews, but eventually they had to make a landing at Ashted. Two young eyewitnesses said the aircraft ploughed a long furrow in the ground, the wings were torn off by trees and it then caught fire and burned. Both pilot and flight engineer were able to walk away to the village and were back at their unit the next day.

Squadron Leader Bunclark received the DFC.(Distinguished Flying Cross) for his efforts that night to add to his DFM awarded him in December 1941.

The source of this information was Bert Barnhurst, chairman of the Epsom & Ewell Local & Family History Centre on the internet. Information is being received of the Leatherhead & District Motor Cycle Club and will follow in the next Newsletter.

*Doug Hollingsworth*

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## ***Guided Tour of Historic Ashted***

On Sunday 31st May there is a guided tour of historic Ashted led by Barry Cox. The route is based on the leaflet Ashted Village Heritage Trail & Walks from the Village written by Barry for the Mole Valley some years ago (you may be able to obtain copies of the leaflet from your Public Library.)

The group will be made up of no more than 15 members (members given priority), and will start from outside Barry's home, Forge Cottage in Blacksmith Close (off Rectory Lane) at 2.30pm. The walk will take about an hour and a half. To obtain a place, please phone him on 01372 273167.

*Barry Cox*

## *How Significant is the Heritage of Mole Valley?*

The natural and cultural heritage of Mole Valley is very significant. Designations abound, as you know, and here are some.

After celebrating 50 years as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Surrey Hills AONB is equal in status and protection to a National Park. Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) advises that it is essentially a landscape designation which seeks to ensure that planning control and new initiatives to manage the area respect the distinctive qualities of the landscape. The Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment of the North Downs is of international importance because of its European Designation. The designation indicates the importance of the area for its box and beech woodlands and its calcareous grasslands. Box Hill, Ranmore Common and Bookham Commons are all Sites of Special Scientific Interest with their own characteristic habitats that support communities of flora and fauna; Ranmore particularly for the Adonis butterfly and Bookham Commons particularly for the Purple Emperor butterfly and wetland habitat. Then we have the National Nature Reserve of Ashted Common, which is home to the Red Data Book species, the Stag Beetle, and, indeed, to hundreds of ancient oaks of 500 years or so that provide a valuable habitat for many invertebrates. In Leatherhead at Cherkley Court (mentioned below) are the Italian-style south-facing gardens (now restored) with a wide range of plants that provide a valuable habitat for numerous butterflies.

Turning to the cultural heritage, there is much to be found in Leatherhead and Dorking as well as in 20 or more historic villages, which among them all now contain more than 1,000 historic buildings and 26 conservation areas (three of which are in Ashted but are counted as one). A conservation area is defined as an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. MVDC advises that conservation areas are not museums; they will change. However, any change should respect the character and therefore the historic fabric of these special places. The villages of historic interest include Abinger, Westcott, Holmbury St Mary, Ockley, Capel, Charlwood, Betchworth, Brockham, Leigh, Newdigate, Buckland and Mickleham, Bookham and Ashted.

Mole Valley has a significant history. The Roman road, Stane Street, from London to Chichester, still visible today, passes Ashted, Headley, Mickleham and Dorking. On Ashted Common are the remains of an unusual Roman Villa Complex with associated Tileworks, circa 60-240 AD, currently undergoing a very interesting five-year re-excavation programme led by the former County Archaeologist, Dr David Bird.

There are significant historic buildings west of Dorking, such as the Milton Estate dating back to at least the 13th Century. The Milton Estate was in the ownership of the Crown during King Henry VIII's reign and was eventually given by Queen Elizabeth I to the Evelyn family at the end of 16th Century. Its manor house, Milton Court, is magnificent and houses one of a few early 17th Century Jacobean staircases surviving in England. In the late 16th Century, the beautiful Wotton House on the Wotton Estate became home to the diarist and poet, John Evelyn, and the whole of the Evelyn family

over several hundred years. Also, there is the well-appointed Grade I listed Wotton Church with Norman origins.

In Mickleham, Juniper Hall (owned by the Field Studies Council) has an interesting past - with links to Fanny Burney, the first female English novelist, who lived in Mickleham during the late 18th Century. During the early 19th Century, Thomas Broadwood of the famous piano-making family bought Juniper Hall in 1815 and during his time there he gave a fortepiano manufactured by his family to Beethoven. Also in Mickleham are some houses of Arts & Crafts design on the A24. The Saxon village of Bookham has Saxon tracks leading up to Polesden Lacey and beyond to Dorking. Our famous late 18th Century novelist, Jane Austen, was a frequent visitor to Bookham and Leatherhead. Either Bookham or Leatherhead was named Highbury in her novel, Emma (I believe the jury is still out on that).

Moving to more recent times, Cherkley Court and Gardens (Grade II listed) in Leatherhead are noted for Lord Beaverbrook's entertainment of Churchill and his War Cabinet during the second World War.

In the early 20th century, composer Ralph Vaughan Williams lived for some years in Dorking. The surrounding countryside was an inspiration for his music and as we all know RVW started the Leith Hill Music Festival. Dorking can also boast being the birthplace of actor and film director, Sir Laurence Olivier.

This is a heritage to be proud of.

*Margaret A Pettit*

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## ***John Bull***

Members will be sad to hear that John Bull, one of our earliest members, died shortly before Christmas. John was a long-standing and very loyal member of our Society. He was Treasurer from 1974-1977, Assistant Treasurer from 1977-1982, and Museum Treasurer from 1983-2004. Part of this time he was also Chairman of the Museum Trustees. Before retirement he worked for the Midland Bank in their printing department and was occasionally able to have some printing done for the Society.

He was an avid DIY man and had every conceivable piece of equipment, particularly electrical ones. He was always willing to help with the museum in every capacity, both practical and administrative. For many years he maintained the fabric of Hampton Cottage, almost single-handed. He was good at going up ladders, though possibly on the large side for such activity!

John's interest in the museum was unfailing and he attended most of the Society lectures until quite recently. His genial personality and his unfailing courtesy will be much missed by all who knew him.

*Stephen Fortescue and Linda Heath*

# *News from the Friends of Leatherhead Museum*

We are pleased to welcome Brian and Ros Hennegan and Duncan McFarlane who have joined our happy band of stewards and we wish them an interesting and rewarding future with us. We are always very grateful to our stewards and volunteers who give their time to the museum and in December we held a Christmas Party to thank them for their work. After Little Red Riding Hood had found the wolf and Humpty Dumpty had joined up with Kings Men we enjoyed eats and drinks. We were particularly pleased that Jill Godfrey was able to join us following the loss of her husband Brian who had done so much for the museum and the Society.

## **Future events of the Friends**

### **March**

12th Thursday, 13th Friday and 21st Saturday - Steward briefing sessions

25th Wednesday

Joint visit with the History Society to The Spike and Guildford Museum. The Spike is a 19th century workhouse for vagrants and a hospital for women and children. It is located half a mile up Warren road on the left from the traffic lights on the Epsom Road at Guildford. The tour of the Spike is at 11.00am and be warned, it has plenty of atmosphere with sights, sounds and smells! Come and find out why it is called the 'Spike'.

Lunch is at the the Kings Head next door to Guildford Museum at 1.00pm. We will have an introductory talk at the Museum at 2.00pm together with a demonstration of interesting artefacts after which you will be free to tour the museum.

If you would like to come please fill in the return slip enclosed with this newsletter. The cost is £2.50, payable on the day

### **April**

2nd Thursday - Museum opens

24th Friday - AGM of the Friends followed by a presentation by the Museum Committee

### **May**

16th Saturday - Swan Centre display barrow

28th Thursday, 29th Friday and 30th Saturday - Craft Days at the museum

### **June**

6th Saturday - Coffee Morning at the museum

*Fred Meynen*

# *Recent Additions To The Library*

## **Surrey – Individual Towns & Villages : Bookham**

Matts, Elizabeth; Fenner, Nigel; Renn, Derek; Whitman, William- 1800: Great Bookham at the time of Jane Austen, Fanny Burney and R B Sheridan. Parochial Church of St Nicolas, Great Bookham, 2008

St Nicolas Church, Great Bookham. 8th edition, revised (based on a guide prepared by B G Skinner, former curate of Great Bookham). St Nicolas Church, 2008

Both these booklets were described on page 7 of the November 2008 Newsletter.

## **Epsom and Ewell**

Brian Bouchard has brought to light two further publications by the Nonsuch Antiquarian Society:

Abdy, Barbara - Probate inventories for Epsom and Ewell from 1561 to 1834 (Occasional Paper no 39, 2001) and

Abdy, Charles - Medieval Ewell in Fitznell's Cartulary and the 1408 Register (Occasional Paper no 40, 2001)

## **Leatherhead**

Wall, David - The Yarm Court Trojans: the story of Yarm Court House (previously known as Flint House) and the subsequent development of Yarm Court Road and Yarm Close, Leatherhead, by the Trojan (Chessington) Self Build Housing Association Limited. Privately published, 2008

Included in the acknowledgements are: 'Leatherhead Local History Society' and 'Alun Roberts for his notes on the history of Yarm Court House'.

Short extract from David Wall's introduction:

'When I bought my house in 2001 I was told it was one of a number of similar houses built in the early 1950s by a Self Build group. Although I was born in the 1940s, and having been a surveyor all my working life, I had not until then heard about this method of house building. As you will see it proved to be, in this case, very successful.

The narrative is in two parts. The first deals with the property known as Flint House, later Yarm Court House; the second looks at the Trojan (Chessington) Self Build Housing Association.'

## **Surrey – Social History including Transport**

Womersley, Julian - The Surrey Union Hunt: our history unbuttoned. The Surrey Union Hunt Limited, 2007

'My special appreciation goes to: Leatherhead Museum and the Leatherhead History Society, especially John Morris, Alan Pooley and Ed Tims.'

Short extract: 'At the start of the 1831-32 season, 'The Squire', John Barnard Hankey, took up his second stint as Master of the Union Hunt. Although Hunt Kennels were still at Fetcham Park in what is now known as Kennel Lane, Fetcham, the establishment would undergo some radical changes during his tenure.'

*Peter Wells*

## *Brian Godfrey*

Members will be saddened to hear of the death on 1st December 2008, of Brian Godfrey, aged 80. Brian, together with his wife Jill, was a very active member of our society. He took over the responsibility of all the society's Bookham records from David Bruce some years ago and from 1997 he was the society's Record Secretary and a member of the Executive Committee. Whilst he held this post Brian was conscious of the need for all our indexes to be computerised, and he had achieved this with all the Bookham material as well as most of the remainder of the records. The ultimate aim, of course, was to have at least the indexes on the web and searchable.

Also whilst he was Records Secretary Brian formalised the way in which the society dealt with historical enquiries. All enquiries, whether by telephone, e-mail, letter or verbal, are carefully recorded and then monitored to ensure that the enquirer gets a response as soon as possible. At the Friday evening lectures Brian was also busy; he arranged for the projector and microphone equipment to be in place and so he was an essential member of the team responsible for organising these meetings. For many years now Brian has served on the Museum Committee thus ensuring liaison between the museum and all the society's archivists.

Brian's interest in local history and archives extended beyond our society. He was a volunteer at the regional office of the National Trust where he carried out research, principally on the earlier days of Polesden Lacey.

By profession he was a physicist working in the National Health Service but he had many other interests. He was an enthusiastic sportsman, orchestral musician and bell-ringer as well as a very active member of Leatherhead Methodist Church.

He will be sorely missed by our Society and others and all our thoughts at this time are with Jill and her family.

## *Future Events*

The lectures of the Society are held on the third Friday of the month in the Abraham Dixon Hall of the Letherhead Institute. Coffee and biscuits are served from 7.30pm and lectures start at 8.00pm. Everyone is welcome, admission £1 for members and £2 for visitors.

### **20th February 'Leatherhead Hospital, Past, Present and Future' by Dr Fred Meynen.**

Leatherhead has had a cottage hospital serving the community for over a hundred years. The present hospital dates from 1940 and has in-patient and extensive out-patient facilities. What are the plans for the future? Come and find out!

## **20th March ‘Godalming Past and Present’ by John Young. Born in Godalming**

John has lived in the town for most of his life and is passionate about its history and character. He is actively involved with Godalming Museum and is a member of several local history groups.

## **17th April AGM followed by ‘Air Travel in the 1930s’ by John Wettern.**

John will describe the workings of Croydon Airport from 1929 to 1939 together with the airlines such as Imperial Airways and the aircraft using the airport.

(continued on next page)

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## *Visit to The Spike and Guildford Museum*

Arranged by the Friends of Leatherhead Museum together with Leatherhead and District Local History Society there is a joint visit to The Spike and Guildford Museum Wednesday 25 March 2009 at 11.00am The Spike, Warren Road Guildford. 1.00pm lunch at the Kings Head, Guildford and 2.00pm introductory talk and visit Guildford Museum

To book a place please return reply slip or ‘phone Dr F G C Meynen 19 The Mount Fetcham KT22 9EB, tel 372930 Cost £2.50 payable on the day

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## **15th May 'A Butcher's Tale of Woe' by Keith Weston.**

Keith Weston is known to many of us as Rawling's & Kensett Butcher's shop in Bookham. He has spent 33 years in the butchery business and will describe the highs and lows and the various difficulties the butchery trade has faced in that period. Last year Keith cycled from Smithfield to Bookham and raised £7000 in aid of the rebuilding of Little Bookham Parish Hall.

## **Visits and Walks**

**25th March** Joint visit with the Friends of Leatherhead Museum to The Spike and Guildford Museum. Details are in this Newsletter under News from the Friends

**31st May** Guided walk through Ashted Village led by Barry Cox starting at 2.30pm Details are in this Newsletter.

*Fred Meynen Programme Secretary*

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**21st May** A Presentation 'The Group Photograph' by Andrew Tatham 7.30pm Leatherhead Parish Church Hall. Andrew has produced an animated film following the discovery of a group photograph of the officers of the 8th Royal Berkshire Regiment in 1915. It looks to explore who they were and their history. Coffee, tea and biscuits will be served. For further details contact Chris Evans (372169) or Jackie Hampton (376640)

## ***Volunteer Stewards Needed***

***The work is rewarding as it involves dealing with the public, receiving artefacts, answering queries and learning about local history.***

***Training is given, so come along and meet us - we are a friendly crowd. Please tell your friends and if you need more information give me a call.***

**Dr Fred Meynen 01372 372930**

Archaeology

**ARCHAEOLOGY SECRETARY**

David Hartley 01372 377839

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

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Records

**RECORDS SECRETARY**

tba

The Society has some archival material, documents, illustrations and maps which may be accessed through the following members:

|                              |             |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Ashted                       | Jack Willis |
| Bookham                      | tba         |
| Fetcham documents            | Alan Pooley |
| Fetcham photographs and maps | Ed Tims     |
| Leatherhead document         | John Derry  |
| Leatherhead photographs      | Linda Heath |
| Leatherhead maps             | Alan Pooley |

The Historical Enquiry Service offers to seek answers to questions about the history of Leatherhead, Ashted, Bookham and Fetcham submitted via the Museum

**CO-ORDINATOR**

Vacancy

Sales of L&DLHS Publications

**SALES SECRETARY**

Goff Powell

01372 374923

