

*LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT  
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY*

*NEWSLETTER*



FEBRUARY 2010

# 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

## 2010 Membership Subscriptions

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

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY    David Wall**

**01372 374773**

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**

**01372 372930**

Further details are given on the inside back cover

## *Editorial*

Yet another Newsletter and yet another appeal for all its readers to supply articles for it. Currently the articles repeatedly come from the same small faithful few but I feel sure there are more of you who could write something of real interest to our readership. You all have experiences in perhaps your working days which give an insight into life as it was – perhaps it was a wartime memory, perhaps a person you met. It is fascinating to see how Brian Hennegan’s book describing life not so long ago in Leatherhead has aroused so much interest – surely there are many more stories to be told. They are the tales we would love to see in the Newsletter.

The most important topic in our History Society is the proposed merger between the Society itself and the Museum. Currently the History Society and the Museum operate under two distinct Trusts or Charities. Trusts are controlled under the Charity Commission and are legally established bodies. However what has been true for so many years is that the funds of the History Society are mainly used to support the Museum. This does not really make sense and the obvious correct course of action is to amalgamate the two trusts. From the Charity Commission point of view this is no problem. What does it mean to us?

Under a combined arrangement there would only be one Trust called the ‘Leatherhead & District Local History Society’ but its objectives would include those which are currently covered under the Museum Trust. In practice it would not make a major difference as the control of the museum would operate under a sub-committee of the main Trust.

It all sounds so simple but of course anything like this has to be done properly and will in fact take time. Hopefully you all will not notice any change in the practical operation of the Society.

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## *Index to Articles*

Aeronautical Inspection Directorate	16	Lecture Program	20
Archaeological Report	3	Letter to the Editor	20
Ashtead Roman Villa	3	Madge Titheradge Park	14
Chairman	2	Membership Fees	9
Christmas Memories	10	Merger Proposal	18
Editorial	1	Museum Committee	18
Friends of the Museum	19	Sir George Edwards	12
Heritage Trails	9	Vickers Vimy	15

# *Chairman's Report*

Welcome to this our first Newsletter of 2010.

Like Janus of Roman Mythology, used here to symbolise transition, change and progression of the past to the future we have the opportunity look back and reflect on the events of last year, some events of national, local and personal importance to us. This year I hope we can look forward with a new sense of optimism to something of a new beginning for our History Society.



A case in point is for six months of last year following the AGM we were languishing without a Hon Treasurer and a Membership Secretary, worrying how the History Society was going to continue without filling these important posts.

After some successful networking by members of the committee, two members in the persons of David Lokkerbol and David Wall offered their services to fill these posts of Hon Treasurer and Membership Secretary respectively. Thanks to all those concerned, especially those two new office holders, we are now back on track and moving forward in these difficult times.

There are still however a number of vacancies on your executive committee which we would like to see filled this year. I have previously referred to these posts in the last November Newsletter and should you be interested I would be pleased to hear from you.

## **Proposed Merger of Two Charities**

Some of our membership may or may not be aware that there is in existence two separate registered charities, one designated the 'Leatherhead and District Local History Society', the trustees of which are your elected executive committee who manage the business of the History Society and run the day to day business of the museum.

The second charity is the 'Leatherhead Museum Heritage Centre Trust'. The Trustees are responsible for the management of the Trust's assets, the property and building fabric of the Museum at Hampton Cottage at 64 Church Street Leatherhead.

As part of our role and responsibility your executive committee has been in mutual discussion with the Trustees of LMHCT to set in train the proposed merger of the two charities into one Charity under the L&DLHS for the purpose of consolidation and efficient future management of the History Society, the Museum Building and the Society's artefacts.

A further explanation is presented elsewhere in this Newsletter together with the notice of the AGM, nomination papers and the special resolution that is to be ratified at our AGM on Friday 16th April 2010.

The merger of the two Charities should not affect the good work of the 'Friends of Leatherhead Museum' under the Chairmanship of Dr Fred Meynen. The Friends provide much needed fundraising and manage the Museum's volunteers Stewards without whom the museum could not function properly.

### **Members' Interests**

Reluctantly have to report that since the last Newsletter in November I have received only one further expression of interest in any of the subjects on offer. The total number of responses is 22 members. There is in my view insufficient numbers in any one interest group to make it economically viable.

I would like to thank those members who took the time to respond not to be daunted - we will revisit the subject again at a future date.

*David Hartley*

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## ***Archaeology Report***

Following last years excavation of the Roman Villa Site at Ashtead I have received the fourth interim report together with photographs from Dr David Bird. I hope you will find it of interest and that it may spur you to visit the site during this year's excavation in August 2010.

I should also like to draw your attention to the Surrey Archaeological Society's Annual 'Archaeological Research Symposium 2010' on Saturday 27th February 2010 to be held at the Peace Memorial Hall, Woodfield Lane, Ashtead Surrey KT21 2BE

Tickets are available in advance @ £8.00 for Surrey Arc members - non-members, or at the door on the day, £10.00. Otherwise please send your remittance payable to Surrey Archaeological Society with a stamped address envelope to Emma Coburn at Surrey Archaeological Society, Castle Arch Guildford GU1 3SX.

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## ***Ashtead Roman Villa And Tileworks***

### **Part I**

The fourth main season of excavation on Ashtead Common was undertaken by the Society's Roman Studies Group between 26th August and 14th September. The weather was very kind and a larger digging team could be accommodated than previously because work took place in well-separated areas (numbers are restricted by nature conservation requirements). As a result, it was possible to achieve all the objectives for the year and indeed exceed them. The enclosure wall for the villa was found to extend at least as far west as just to the north of the bath-house attached to the villa; the phasing of the villa is now much better understood; a rough tile-paved area was found that may prove to be part of a tileworks structure; and the remnants of a tile kiln were found. As before, trench supervisors were David Calow, Nikki Cowlard and Frank Pemberton;

Alan Hall controlled site recording and Margaret Broomfield was finds supervisor. Many other team regulars play a crucial part. David and Audrey Graham kindly provided a detailed survey of the locations of all the trenches of this and earlier seasons, a matter of some difficulty because of the site vegetation cover.

## Trench 5

A small part of Trench 5 was reopened in order to record the section below the tessellated floor where it was cut by the robber trench of the wall of room 8. This showed that the floor was laid on a layer of crushed brick over brownish clay which was noticeably gritty nearer the top, presumably as a result of disintegrating mortar leaching down into it. This clay in turn overlay the surviving wall foundation, making it clear that the floor was laid after the wall was built. There was no sign of a lower floor level, and this needs to be further tested as the clay would represent a considerable build up if it was always intended that the floor would be at the higher level.

## Trench 8

A new trench was opened to extend Trench 3 to north and east. The corridor floor was found to survive in reasonable condition, but was absent within the 'porch' area where instead there seemed to be the remnants of a layer of pebbles in the surface of the yellow clay which served as floor make-up.



*View of Trench 8 from the south showing from left to right higher level of corridor and porch floor; section through floors down to chalk surface; later wall (with tile) sitting askew on earlier foundation; remnants of inner gutter wall; gutter base tiles; gutter outer wall overlying apse foundation; chalk floor. Beyond floor can be seen the mortar base where the tiles of the gutter return had not survived, then the remnants of the front wall at the base of its robber trench and the surviving corridor floor.*

Much of the area of the trench had previously been taken down to the level of a chalk surface seen further west in 2008 and noted by Lowther in his final plan (for references see earlier notes), who had no doubt removed the archaeology to this point. The edges of his cut followed roughly along the outer face of the corridor wall and its porch return, but the robber trenches following these two walls had been left untouched, as seen in other trenches. The tile gutter had been exposed by Lowther but survived in situ, except that several tiles from the west end of the base were entirely missing and had probably been removed because they were complete examples of tegulae (they are shown on Lowther's plan, in contrast to the opposite side of the porch).

With permission from Richard Massey of English Heritage it was possible to examine

the sequence in the area around the junction of the corridor south wall and the porch east wall. This was aided by sterling work to remove a large tree stump, which had caused surprisingly little damage to the archaeology. The chalk floor was found to cover a wide area and seems to predate all the known walls. Robbing makes it difficult to be certain, but where the walls survived at chalk floor level a thin line of yellowish clay was seen lining the cut in which the wall was built (a feature seen also cutting the grey clay level in Trench 4 along the wall dividing rooms 11 and 13), and if the 'beam slot' noted below does mark a partition wall then it is too close to the front wall to be contemporary. In this it is matched by the extent of the chalk floor to the west, as this ends not far beyond the eastern porch wall. An undated sub-circular shallow feature was found cut into the chalk surface and carefully packed with flints. It seemed to show signs of heating but no charcoal was found and it could perhaps have been the base for a brazier.

The chalk floor certainly continued to the north under the corridor as far as the trench extended, with a possible shallow beam slot cut into it less than one metre north of the line of the later front wall. A very thin black layer was noted on the floor in places and above this a disturbed clay (and north of the 'beam slot' mortar) layer with chalk lumps and a more general chalky spread at its surface; this may relate to occupation and then the results of cutting out the foundation trenches through the chalk floor. The later chalk level was sealed by the thick yellow clay make-up of the crushed brick corridor floor. This latter was found to overlie a close-packed layer of quite large flints in places (over the clay), which had not been found in Trench 3 and whose presence remains unexplained.

The porch and corridor walls both had close-packed unmortared flint foundations. Above this was a faced wall with signs of mortar bonding and tile courses; the line of the porch wall continued north beyond the junction with the front wall to form a short spur. A large fragment of a semi-circular column tile was found in the robber trench at the junction of the two walls, which places it near the findspots of others as indicated on Lowther's final plan. The attached half columns made from the tiles were most likely a feature at the entrance therefore, and it is not impossible that they were set on the protruding stub wall and inward facing.

Both corridor and porch walls were set off the line of their foundation to east and south respectively. It is difficult to explain this as the result of slipping (particularly in both directions) so either the foundation was found to be somewhat on the wrong line when the wall proper was built or two phases are represented, the latter being perhaps the more likely interpretation. A slight gap, packed in one place with oyster shells, existed between the front wall and the rough flint inner wall of the gutter; this also had traces of an outer wall, particularly outside the line of the porch, where it had cut through the remnants of a small apsidal structure clearly matching the one found on the other side of the porch in 2008. The flint foundations of this structure were much shallower than those of the main wall.

The sequence is thus (including evidence from Trenches 3 and 4): grey clay (trample?)

over natural; a rammed chalk floor over this probably cut by the foundations for the porch and corridor walls (if that is what they were when first built); two small attached apsidal structures now or as an addition; a probably later phase of these walls (but not the apses), associated with the higher level of the corridor floor; and finally the addition of the tile-floored gutter. Finds including pottery and relief-patterned tile fragments sealed by the yellow clay corridor floor make-up (2009) and pottery associated with the lowest grey clay (2008) raise the possibility of reasonably close dating of the phases. There may be three different floor levels through time, represented by the chalk floor, the mortar floor seen in room 11 (Trench 4), and the late corridor floor. The way in which the ‘porch’-with-apses feature relates to the later villa recorded by Lowther has yet to be explained and it may well have performed a different function in an earlier building.

## Trench 9

Analysis of magnetometer survey by Archaeology South-East in 2008 suggested the possible location of one or more tile kilns near the western edge of the main quarry, and this new trench was opened to test these results. From early on it was clear that the trench was in an area where there had been a great deal of burning, but it was possible to find only a thick layer of burnt



*View of Trench 9 from the southwest at end of excavation (a work in progress). From right to left: burnt top of natural clay with tile feature; burnt rubble area partially excavated down to blue-grey clay; southern edge of line of central flue; partially excavated flue; northern side of central flue; partially excavated area with another tile feature and nearer to the camera possibly a surviving part of the eastern end of kiln proper.*

clay fragments and tile rubble with no charcoal, apart from an early hint of a possible structure formed of heavily overtired tiles. Eventually, after a great deal of hard work, it became clear that this was part of a central flue running through the much-robbled remnants of a tile kiln approximately 3.20m wide. Work has still to be completed in this trench and therefore what follows can only be regarded as a provisional interpretation. The kiln had been set into a pit cut down into the natural clay, which survived on either side with marked signs of burning. The cut was lined by tile walls of which only traces survived, including a small part of a structure on the north side. Between the outer walls and the walls lining the central flue the rubble fill overlay clean blue-grey clay, probably the top of the natural. As it was not burnt it must have been covered by tiles, which then served as a base for the cross flues. The clay to each side was at a higher level than the base of the central flue, which has yet to be bottomed. There was only one place, in the highest-surviving section, that showed signs of a possible entrance to a cross flue, and this suggests that the main kiln floor was indeed at the level here proposed. When the trench is reopened in 2010 it will be extended in an attempt to

locate the stokehole and the end of the kiln, where hopefully there will be better survival.

The whole area of the kiln was backfilled with tile fragments, some so overtired that they had vitrified while others were so underfired that they were like butter. Many of these fragments were of floor tiles, perhaps used in the kiln structure itself. There were also two as yet unexplained tile features, which are unlikely to be simply dumped material as they are at right angles to the line of the central flue and probably more or less on a line at the front of the kiln.

*David Bird*

(Part II of this article will be continued in the next edition of the Newsletter to cover the remaining trenches.)

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## *The Famous and Infamous*

The January lecture was given by Edwina Vardey, a well-known local historian and author of the book 'History of Leatherhead, a Town at the Cross-roads'. The lecture came as a welcome break after a period of cold wintery weather and described how Edwina came across these personalities while researching her book 20 years ago. Some of the legends such as Charles Wesley, the founder of Methodism, preaching under a cedar tree in front of Kingston House in 1791 were unfounded and other trails ended in a cul-du-sac or dead-end. Leatherhead has always been a 'commuter centre' in past times when travel was often difficult and hazardous. A local man called Happy Jack living in Brick Bat Alley when arrested for being drunk and disorderly told the magistrate he would 'go abroad' and live in Bookham.

In 1524 Elinour Rummyng sometimes associated with the Running Horse was fined for selling ale at excessive prices and was the subject of a bawdy ballad, 36 verses in length by John Skelton and later set to music by Ralph Vaughan- Williams.

The Mansion in Little Queen Street, now Church Street housed Robert Cheseman, yeoman falconer to Henry VIII and was subject of a painting by Hans Holbein, the Dutch artist. Queen Elizabeth 1st visited Edmund Tilney at the Mansion in 1591, Tilney being Master of the Revels for 30 years and censor and publisher of performance plays including Comedy of Errors



*The Running Horse*

and it is surprising that no portrait of him can be found; another cul-du-sac!

Another notable person living in the 17th Century was Sir Thomas Bloodworth of Thorncroft Manor a man described by Samuel Pepys in his diary as a ‘silly man and a mean man’. He was Lord Mayor of London during the Plague and the Great Fire in 1660 and was visited in Leatherhead by another notable person Judge Jeffreys who was married to Bloodworth’s daughter. Judge Jeffreys was the ‘hanging judge’ so called because of his harsh treatment of the Duke of Monmouth’s Rebels during the Civil War of 1685 when the victims were hanged in groups.



Before the arrival of the railways stage coaches were a form of travel, the Swan Hotel acting as a staging point where travellers rested and the horses were changed. In 1806 a coach carrying Princess Caroline, wife of the Prince Regent, overturned outside the Swan and one of her ladies was killed. Henry Collier of

Middle Lane lost his life in the Titanic disaster in 1912 and was the subject of a recent exhibition and publication at our local museum. His wife and daughter were ultimately saved.

Famous writers associated with the Leatherhead area, were Fanny Burney of West Humble, Jayne Austin who visited her mothers first cousin in Bookham and Anthony Hope who wrote the Prisoner of Zenda in 1894 and is buried in the Parish Church yard. Edwina went on to mention two other famous ladies of Leatherhead. Emmeline Pankhurst, the Suffragette, was held in Leatherhead Police Station in 1913, accused of conspiring to place gunpowder in the tea pavilion of Walton Heath Golf Club. The birth control pioneer Doctor Marie Stopes living in Belmont Road was fined in WW1 for not observing the blackout. Later she married H Verdon Roe, the aircraft designer and moved to Norbury Park, where it is said he asked her permission to return home!

A notable benefactor to the town was Abraham Dixon who donated The Institute in 1893 providing ‘education and recreation’ for the citizens. He lived at Cherkley Court, later occupied by Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Aircraft Production in WW2; Donald Campbell lived in Priors Ford, now Campbell Court, and the driving wheel of Bluebird 7 now lodged in Leatherhead Museum.

By mentioning Sir Michael Caine, a famous resident of Leatherhead, Patron of the Theatre and the Drama Festival, Edwina concluded a fascinating and informative lecture.

*Fred Meynen*

## *Bookham Heritage Trails*

Just published is a folded leaflet entitled 'Bookham Heritage Trails' written by Derek Renn. It opens out to give a guided walk around Great Bookham and overleaf, Eastwick and Little Bookham. The path leads you past many the interesting buildings and points of interest and at each place gives a short write-up and history. It takes you to twenty four sites at Great Bookham and twenty nine at Eastwick and Little Bookham.

Also included is a short history of Bookham from the Norman Conquest to today. It tells of the Abbott of Chertsey, the annual fair granted to Bookham by King Henry III, the felling of the oaks from Bookham Common to use in the building of Nonsuch Palace and the granting of the manor to the Howard family, many of whom were buried in St Nicolas Church. It brings us

up to more recent times with the coming of the railway and the well known characters of Bookham such as Arthur Bird who gave us the Old Barn Hall, Mrs Chrystie a great temperance worker and Mrs Greville at Polesden Lacey.

The maps present the reader with very interesting and easy to follow walks around the villages with clear descriptions and all sorts of facts about the shops and houses, who lived there over the years, when they were built together with memories from the past.

There is a companion Heritage Trails leaflet for Leatherhead.

Every house should have one – they are available free of charge from Pippbrook, the Help Shop, libraries and the Leatherhead History Society Museum.



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## *Have you paid your Membership Fees?*

### *Membership 2010*

May I take this opportunity to remind those who have not paid their membership fees for 2010 to send them to me as soon as possible. As you may remember the Society has decided not to issue membership cards for the foreseeable future in order to save on expenses.

Thanks for your co-operation

*David Wall Membership Secretary 01372 374773*

## *Christmas Memories.....*

On December 18th we enjoyed a members social evening recalling 'Christmas Memories'. The convivial evening, compered by Brian Hennegan resplendent in his Victorian naval uniform was a warm contrast to the inclement weather outside.

We shared reminiscences of members' childhood and family Christmases in a variety of settings as we sipped wine and ate canapés. Brian Hennegan introduced the speakers in his own inimitable way with feisty yarns of yesteryear as Gwen Hoad, Gordon Knowles, Goff Powell, Fred Meynen, Frank Haslam contributed their special memories, giving a fascinating social insight into Christmases over the past seventy years. We listened to Linda Heath reading a passage from a book describing a Christmas in Dorking in the 19th century, as we drank a warming cup of coffee before braving the December weather again

Our grateful thanks to Ros, Maureen, Vivien, Doug and Margaret for their help in organising such a successful evening.

A raffle contributed proceeds to the evening



*Brian Hennegan in his prime?*

*Fred Meynen*

### **You will die after that....**

At our recent party people shared with us varied and most interesting memories of past Christmases that had remained prominent in their minds. This set me thinking of things that people had said or done in the past. Don't ask me why I should have connected the two things, but at times we have no control over the workings of the mind. Perhaps you have, but I was and always will be something of a 'scatter brain'.

I come from a family who were originally what we would now refer to as 'country folk'. From an early age I was aware that Mother and my Grandfather would come out with some quaint suspicions and sayings. Dad was a 'feet on the ground' sort of chap and he was far less likely to indulge in such 'frivolity'. I have no doubt that some of the following memories will be familiar to you and that some of us still trot out similiar sayings.

Mum would go 'ballistic' if she saw that a pair of knives had been left in a crossed position on the table. This would foretell a disagreement or family row. In later years I felt the very fact that Mum had seen the offending knives was in itself the instigation

of the predicted outcome. Still on the knife front, anyone caught stirring with a knife would be sure to be ‘stirring up strife’. Again later in life I would delight in performing the offending ritual, making sure of course that I had a pre-prepared ‘escape route’.

As a small lad I spent a lot of time with Grandad. Dad was away in such places as Africa and Italy (not forgetting Catterick Camp) as indeed were many other Dads. I was one of the lucky ones. My dad came back to us. Where was I? Ah yes, one day when I was with Grandad in the Ashtead woods gathering leaf mould for his allotment I had the misfortune to cut my hand. Grandad was a dab hand at first aid and he took his handkerchief from his pocket and said to me ‘spit on that boy’ and he then tied up my hand with the handkerchief (at least it was my own spit) Now comes the ‘punch line’. He then said “You will die after that”. Well I was just a little lad and it put the fear of the Lord into me.

I expressed great concern to Grandad. His reply was, ‘think about it boy’. When we returned home I of course told Mum. Grandad was ‘told off’ and went into his shed and of course I did eventually understand the saying, but you can imagine the effect it had on me at the time.

We all have heard the old sayings such as ‘touch wood’, ‘the pot calling the kettle black’, ‘dont put new shoes on the table’. My wife’s Nan did not like to see people sitting on the table. She would repeat the mantre, “Tables made for cups and glasses not for peoples dainty bottoms”.

Why do some of us try not to walk under a ladder? Is it because the triangle represents the Trinity and entering its aura is not worthy of mortal man (or woman).

In a thunder storm my dear Mother-in-Law would cover the mirrors with a cloth or turn them to the wall if that was possible. Well there you are. You could all add to this list infinitum.

After you have read this some of you no doubt you will say ‘well, I will go to the foot of our stairs’.

I wish each and everyone of you a healthy and peaceful 2010.

*Brian Hennegan.*

## ***OVER THE BRIDGE***

***Have you got your copy of  
the new book by Brian Hennegan and  
published by the  
Leatherhead & District Local History  
Society***



## *Sir George Edwards*

The November lecture was given by Robert Gardner MBE - 'Sir George Edwards: From Bouncing Bomb to Concorde' - the subject of his recent biographical book. The daughter of Sir George was present at the lecture together with her family and it was noted that he was very much a local man living for 17 years in Bookham and later in Guildford.



*Sir George on the steps of Concorde on a maiden flight*

George Edwards was born in 1908 in a suburb of Walthamstow, his father running a small shop. From a modest background he rose to eventually lead the great aircraft company Vickers and the British Aircraft Corporation. After showing ability in mathematics and engineering he came to work in the drawing office at the Vickers works at Weybridge working under Rex Pierson as chief aircraft designer and Barnes Wallis as chief structural engineer. The pressure was on to design and produce new aircraft in the run up to World War Two, developing the Vickers biplane followed later by the geodetic monoplane the Wellesley and the Wellington bomber. George Edwards designed the tailplane of the Wellington, one plane surviving to this day at Brooklands Museum.

As experimental manager Edwards worked on many secret projects including the magnetic mine, and fitting a single jet Whittle engine to a plane and pressurising aircraft so that they could fly above air defences. After the Weybridge factory had been bombed he moved his workshop to Foxwarren, Cobham (now the Cobham Bus Museum) working with Barnes Wallis on the bouncing bomb. Being a keen cricketer and a leg spin bowler he used the principle of counter rotation to enable the bomb to hurdle the dam's defences.

After the war George Edwards was promoted to chief designer adapting the Viking for military use. Although not a natural pilot he learned to fly and insisted on flying every aircraft for which he was responsible. He was living at that time in the grey stoned house 'Durleston' on the Lower Road in Bookham, worshipping at Fetcham Parish Church. In 1948 the world's first gas turbine powered prop jet the Viscount made Edwards internationally famous, a unique plane whose pressurised cabin allowed

cruising at 30,000 ft. He chose a Rolls Royce engine ‘The Dart’ instead of the government backed rival, a courageous but highly successful choice. The Viscount went into service in 1950 with British European Airways making it Britain’s most successful airliner in corrected terms. Another famous plane designed by Edwards was the Valient in 1956, a state of the art V bomber with nuclear carrying capability. Robert Gardner recalls Edwards coming to his house in Fetcham to collect his daughter and saying he was ‘ working night and day ‘. He was later knighted for his work on the Valient.

According to George Edwards ‘the greatest blunder of all‘ was committed when BAOC commissioned the turbo-prop Britannia instead of the jet V1000, a civil version of the Valient. Edwards had to defend the reputation of the Vanguard, a successor to the Viscount on the Raymond Baxter Panorama programme in 1959. Policy changes within BAOC affected sales of the long range rear engined VC10, an aircraft which later was voted by passengers as their ‘favourite airliner’.

1964 saw the maiden flight of the military aircraft TSR2, built by the British Aircraft Corporation formed from the merger of Vickers-Armstrong and English Electric with Sir George Edwards as managing director. The project was beset with wrangling between government committees and between the RAF and Navy, resulting in Dennis Healy cancelling the order in favour of the American F111. Two other military aircraft the Jaguar and Tornado were produced later.

The last civil aircraft to carry the stamp of Sir George was the BAC One-Eleven, a contract with BEA in 1967 being a turning point for Weybridge. The world’s first supersonic aircraft the Concorde went into service in 1976, Sir George leading the British team of the joint British/French project. He flew with test pilots Brian Trubshaw and Andre Turcat on the first Concorde. Robert Gardner was privileged to fly in 002 in 1972 over Singapore.



At the time of Sir George’s retirement in 1976 BAC was the finest aerospace company in Europe later emerging as British Aerospace and now BAE Systems. He died in his home in Guildford in 2003 at the age of 94, his epitaph at St Martha’s reading ‘ferme et tenacite’ (don’t give up: press on).

Robert Gardner ended his lecture by summing up Sir George Edwards as ‘ a remarkable man, a man of honour and great perception’. It was a fascinating and informative lecture, the large and appreciative audience reflecting the interest there is in aviation and its history.

*Dr Fred Meynen*

## *Madge Titheradge Park*

Goff's article about Madge Titheradge in the previous Newsletter, immediately struck a chord with me as I remembered that somewhere in my possession I had two letters written by her to me. After a search I found them.

In the 1920s my mother and her best friend used to queue up for the 'gods' after work to see whichever production Madge Titheradge was appearing in. They were ardent admirers of hers, so as they both lived and worked in London at the time, they followed her progress and in time became personal friends of hers, a friendship which lasted many years.

Madge obviously knew all about me from my birth and my mother talked about her frequently. Unfortunately all correspondence between them has been lost but I still have the two letters which were sent to me. They were both headed 'Orchard Walls, Fetcham, Surrey' and with the phone number 'Leatherhead 2366'.



I received the first in 1952 when I became 21. In it she congratulated me and said "I am, as I think you know, a very old friend of your very nice mother!"

The other letter is dated March 1954 and reads

How very sweet of you and your husband to send me the delicious wedding cake. I had no idea your marriage was to be so soon. I was hoping to send you a wire of good wishes - but I send you both now my fervent wishes for great happiness and my congratulations and love.

Yours very sincerely,

MadgeTitheradgePark

At the time I had never heard of Fetcham, and had the impression that Madge lived somewhere near Esher. I had not looked at the letters since living in this area, though at the back of my mind, I had wanted to find Orchard Walls once I moved here but had done nothing about it. Now I know where it is. Thank you Goff!

*Gwen Hoad*

## *The Vimy comes home*



The replica Vickers Vimy NX71MY which since 1994 has flown over 30,000 miles, including flights to South Africa, Australia and across the Atlantic, replicating the famous first flights by its predecessors, landed at Brooklands on the afternoon of Sunday 15th November having been flown from Dunsfold by John Dodd. This year Dodd has flown the Vimy to Ireland and back to commemorate Alcock and Brown's landing in a bog after successfully crossing the Atlantic for the first time. The aircraft had to be partially dismantled to take it into the museum and its final resting place in the Wellington Hangar. This was achieved on Thursday the 19th November.

On Saturday the 21st a highly successful Vimy Day was held at the museum when a good attendance of the faithful joined most of the pilots and the teams who had flown the replica's first flights, the major exception was Steve Fossett who had piloted the Vimy on its Atlantic flight and who crashed and was killed earlier this year.

The history of the type was covered in a presentation by the well-known aviation historian Phillip Jarrett, then Peter Elliot from the RAF Museum at Hendon spoke on the relics from the Transatlantic flight in his care - the aircraft itself is preserved in the Science Museum in South Kensington. The Hendon exhibits include some of the notes made by Brown during the flight as well as items of clothing and equipment. These are not on public display at present but can be seen privately by applying to Peter. John LaNoue, the builder of the replica in California and co-pilot on the South Africa flight, told of the highs and lows of the construction. After lunch Lang Kidby, pilot on the Australian flight and John Dodd, pilot for the final season this year, led a discussion under Jenny Moseley of the National Geographic Magazine, who has been a major sponsor. Jenny was project manager for the Australian flight and played major roles in managing the African and Transatlantic flights. After a lengthy question and answer session we all then moved over to the Wellington Hangar where Peter McMillan, the American founder and financier of the original project officially opened the Vimy Exhibition.

It was a very nostalgic and most enjoyable day for us aviation aficionados. Do go

across to Brooklands to see the Vimy, she is quite something. Of course your contribution towards her maintenance costs would be appreciated. There is hope that she could be returned to the air for the centenary of the Transatlantic flight in 10 years time, but it is a very faint hope I fear. As well as finding the finance and sponsorship there is the major issue of gaining a current certificate of airworthiness.

There are some excellent videos of the last flight on You tube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHPe79Bhvb4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHPe79Bhvb4) and at ...?v=LUS1zXeAZ4.

Also there are still photos of the move into the museum on /picasaweb.google.com/joe90.06/vimymovedintobrooklandshangar

*Gordon Knowles*

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## ***Aeronautical Inspection Directorate in Leatherhead***

Recently, Brooklands Museum received a donation of an aircraft compass and the donor was asked for the source and any background information to its history. The notes were passed on to me to investigate further because of Surrey aviation connections. This investigation led to discovery of links with Leatherhead, Ashtead and Chessington.

The donor was a Jim Collins of Great Bookham, whom I already knew through St Nicolas church and Probus Club of the Bookhams. It seems that his father, Reginald Ernest Collins was trained as an aircraft engineer at de Havillands in Hatfield and in 1935 he became a civil servant working for the Air Ministry. He joined the Aeronautical Inspection Directorate (AID), which was responsible for quality and standardisation of aircraft components in mass production in the build-up to World War II. Its headquarters were in London at Berkeley Square House, but some staff were either permanently located at large aircraft factories as ‘resident’ staff or at Sector Divisional bases visiting local aircraft manufacturers or component contractors. Reginald Collins was initially sent to the Saunders Roe factory on the Isle of Wight and he took his family with him.

In May 1940 control of the AID was transferred from the Air Ministry to the newly formed Ministry of Aircraft Production, although the new minister, Lord Beaverbrook (resident at Cherkley Court), made difficulties as he saw the AID organisation as an obstruction to aircraft production, rather than an aid in assuring reliability and interchangeability of components. On the 30 September 1940, with the bombing of London on the increase, the AID headquarters was moved from Millbank to Leatherhead.

Reginald Collins was moved back to AID HQ in mid-1941 and was located in an ‘old house in Church Street’. His son believes this was in the area of what is now Campbell Court but in 1941 was known as ‘Priors Ford’ which was demolished in the early 1970s. While stationed in Leatherhead Reginald Collins lived with his family in St Stephens Avenue, Ashtead. He was involved in fire-watching at the Mansion so was

*"DadsArmy" AID Headquarters  
Leatherhead) Home Guard Unit*



probably in the AID Home Guard Platoon, and he was a civilian instructor at the Air Training Corps Squadron at Dorking.

Later on in 1943 his section was moved to 'The Mansion', also in Church Street, where he worked until late 1949 when they moved again, this time to Chessington. The Collins family also moved in 1960s to Ottways Lane in Ashted. The Mansion, in Church Street, was owned by a Mr. Herbert K. Reeves from 1923 until 1950. In 1939 he moved with his family to the West Country . Presumably the building was requisitioned by the government during the war, and in 1941 a Canadian AF unit was stationed there, but this may have been Canadian Army as there were many such troops and tank units in the surrounding area. After the war in 1947 The Mansion was put up for sale but had no bidders. In 1949 the Leatherhead Urban District Council agreed with the Surrey County Council to compulsorily purchase the building for use as a library, health clinic, and latterly as a youth employment and careers centre.

The AID HQ had previously moved in May 1944 to Harefield, Middlesex and then back to Leatherhead that July. The Chessington offices occupied in 1949 were in Leatherhead Road, opposite Garrison Lane, now the site of a new housing estate. I have not been able to identify when the AID left the Chessington offices or when the buildings were demolished.

During his career Reginald Collins worked within Marshalls at Cambridge and at a de Havilland factory at Broughton, near Chester. He worked on the Queens Flight and had many trips to RAF Boscombe Down, RAF Abingdon, RAF Benson, Blackburn's at Brough and Hawkers at Kingston. He finished his career at the StGiles Court offices in London in 1972/3.

Incidentally, the aircraft compass handed to Brooklands is radio-active and has been kept in a secure store until it can be disposed of. Jim Collins had previously used it as an aid to teaching map-reading to a scout troop. Any further information on 'The Mansion' or 'Priors Ford' during the Second World War or after would be gratefully received to add to our knowledge of these premises.

*Doug Hollingsworth*

## ***Proposed merger between the two Registered Charities, the Leatherhead & District Local History Society and the Leatherhead Museum and Heritage Centre Trust***

1. When the Museum Trust was established under the guidance of Stephen Fortescue, it was deliberately separated from the Society to safeguard the building in the event of the winding up of the Society for whatever reason. Also, it meant that should the museum fail it would not take down the Society with it. It also kept the finances separated.
2. Over the years both bodies have survived and generally prospered. The Museum Trustees have been able to maintain the Structure and enhance it by building the recent disabled access.
3. There has always been a sharing of certain expenses between the two charities, in particular, insurance.
4. The Trustees and the Society Executive Committee now feel that it is appropriate to merge the two charities, both are concerned with the Museum in its totality.
5. The Charity Commissioner is content for the merger to take place, provided we send him the nil accounts of the Trustees after funds are transferred and a copy of the minutes approving the merger.
6. It is intended that the Trustees will be replaced by a Museum Fabric Sub-Committee of the Society Executive Committee to carry on the work hitherto undertaken by them.
7. The Chairman of the Society and the Chairman of the Trustees therefore recommend to this Annual General Meeting that it approves the merger with effect from this date.

*Gordon Knowles, Chairman of the Leatherhead Museum and Heritage Centre Trust*

*David Hartley, Chairman of the Leatherhead & District Local History Society*

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## ***News From The Museum Committee***

The museum is now closed until April and we have started clearing the society's office of all furniture and contents in preparation for the installation of new carpet tiles, the cost of which is generously being provided by the Friends of Leatherhead Museum. Before the carpeting is done we will need to paint the walls and ceiling of the office.

Once the new flooring is complete and the furniture and contents have been put back we will be able to get to the cabinets and make some changes to the displays before the museum re-opens on 1st April. If only we had a larger building we could make changes to the displays throughout the year rather than in the three months in the winter, but with Hampton Cottage this is not possible.

Water has been entering the building over the downstairs rear window and it is hoped that whilst the public are absent the cause of the ingress can be found and the problem

cured. This will prevent the need for a bucket to be positioned on the window sill behind the rear display cabinet. The Trustees of the building will be addressing this during the closed period.

Our visitor numbers this year were about 15% up on last year but in that year we had a shorter open period following the car coming through the front wall. However, the numbers were still higher than in 2007 and so we do feel that the Society is providing a useful museum service for the locality. The number of private visitors, that



is school groups, U3A groups etc. was more this year and we do appreciate that our outreach to schools is continuing thanks to members of the Friends.

We re-open on 1st April, hopefully with some new displays both in the museum and in its window.

*Peter Tarplee*

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## *Friends of the Museum*

We held our annual Christmas Party on 14th December for stewards, volunteer helpers and their spouses and partners. This was to thank them for all their time and effort given to the museum over the past year. Somebody once said when asked what is it like being a volunteer replied ‘I wouldn’t do it even if you paid me’, not, I hasten to add that this applies to any of our organisations! The rewards of being a volunteer are too numerous to mention here but come and find out if you are interested.

The evening started with the game of ‘dingbats’ and we then moved on to tuck into assorted eats aided by supping fine wines carefully chosen for the occasion. We ended the party with a poem about dustbin men; what more do you want ?

### **Congratulations**

Three of our stewards have hit the high spots, Brian Hennegan with the launch of his new book ‘Over the Bridge’ and David Lokkerbol and David Wall becoming treasurer and membership secretary respectively of the History Society. Many congratulations to them.

### **Future Events of The Friends**

11th, 12th and 20th March    Steward briefing sessions

17th March    Combined Friends/History Society visit to the Lightbox Gallery/museum

and the Mosque, both in Woking. Details in the enclosed Bulletin of the Friends.

1st April Museum opens

23rd April Friends AGM at The Institute 7.30pm

29th May Swan Centre display barrow

3rd,4th and 5th June Craft Days at the museum

12th June Friends Coffee Morning at the museum

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*Fred Meynen Chairman of The Friends*

## ***To the editor L&DLHS Newsletter***

Dear Martin,

I would like to dispel the impression that may be given by a comment in the Chairman's Report in the Newsletter received yesterday.

The Bookham archive is certainly NOT kept in our garage and I would not keep any of the Society's records in such a place. The archive is, in fact, in a bedroom and that is why we have been pressing the Executive Committee for about a year to keep it somewhere else. I, more than anyone, have always said that valuable papers need to be stored in correct environmental conditions and I am hurt that any of the committee would think that I would do that. I am not in favour of keeping these documents in members' houses and you can be sure that none is in our garage.

We anxiously wait for the time when we can reclaim our bedroom.

Yours sincerely

Peter Tarplee

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## ***Spring 2010 Lecture Programme***

All lectures are at The Letherhead Institute (top of High Street). Coffee : 7.30 p.m.  
ALL WELCOME. Lecture at 8.0pm. Visitors - £2 : Members - £1.

**19th March** 'The Work of the Surrey Archaeological Society' by David Calow

As Honorary Secretary of the Society established over 150 years ago he will describe its current activities. These include publications, and lectures as well as excavations and surveys at prehistoric and Roman sites.

**16th April** AGM followed by a lecture "Milner House, Leatherhead' by Peter Tarplee

The history of the Long House, Sir Frederick Milner and The Ex- Services Welfare Society and Combat Stress.

**21st May** 'Early Saxon Landscapes in Surrey' by Chris Howkins

How the Surrey countryside was affected by the coming of the Anglo Saxons. Lifestyle of the people in communities - farms, villages, religion, agriculture and trade.

*Dr Fred Meynen, Programme Secretary*

Archaeology

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Records

**RECORDS SECRETARY (Vacancy)**

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)**

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