

*LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT  
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY*

*NEWSLETTER*



NOVEMBER 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

## 2011 Membership Subscriptions

Ordinary.....£18.00    Associate.....£6.00    Junior (under 18).....£1.00

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY    David Wall**

**01372 374773**

The Museum is open at the following times

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*

In his letter to the editor (p18) Brian Bouchard raises the question of how we should differentiate between articles for the Proceedings and the Newsletter. He points out that there have been cases where some articles appearing in the Newsletters have been of considerable depth and research.

I am not sure that there can be an exact definition of the decision. My objective is to work to maintain the Newsletter as a very 'readable' magazine to contain articles of general interest and also to inform the membership of the activities of the society. Articles of the Proceedings and the Newsletter must surely overlap. If there is research or findings then a progress report on the matter would be expected to have been reported at some time in the Newsletter.



It is also always possible to write things up at more than one level. An article in the Proceedings should be comprehensively researched and a full set of references to sources should be listed. This depth of information is not suited to the Newsletter where more of a summary of the salient points should be presented. If the reader is interested then the full information can be found from the Proceedings.

The Newsletter is always open to members to submit articles of general interest and there is a constant plea for submissions. There are so many facets of history. In this edition articles cover archaeology, buildings, people and how people lived. You are invited to write up your own interest and submit it to us.

*Martin Warwick*

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# *Chairman's Report*

September proved to be a busy month for particularly those of our members of the history society and the museum who participated in the culmination of the Heritage Open days 2010 held at the Leatherhead Museum and the Letherhead Institute.



Special thanks should go to Linda Heath our past president and this year our representative on the Mole Valley's Steering Committee for this national event. Thanks should also go to Rod Shaw and Mole Valley District Council and the sponsors for their support without which this annual event would not have taken place. The theme and title of this year's Heritages Days was 'By George' a celebration of our Georgian Heritage in Mole Valley.

Linda Heath, Gwen Hoad and Alun Roberts provided three excellent displays all of which are currently on display at our museum. If you missed them first time around they come highly recommended and worth a visit. Congratulations and thanks to all three of them for a very commendable presentation.

On 17th September we convened an Extraordinary General Meeting of the History Society just prior to the start of our main lecture for the autumn season.

The purpose of this meeting for those who were unable to attend was to adopt the resolution to amend the Objects Paragraph b) of the History Society to include the words 'to own, maintain and manage the museum at Hampton Cottage, 64 Church Street Leatherhead', our previous Objects made no provision for owning and maintaining the museum's building fabric.

The motion was unanimously approved by all those members present. This now fulfils the requirement of the Charities Commission and clears the way forward for the merger of the two charities into one single charity to proceed to a satisfactory conclusion later this year.

*David Hartley*

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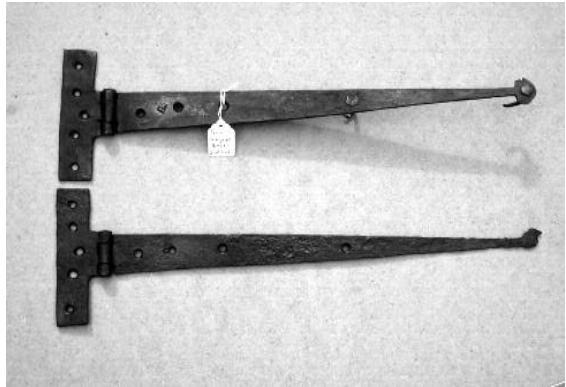
## *Archaeology Report*

### **Two Wrought Iron Door Hinges from Ewell**

During the redevelopment in 2007 of 15 High St, Ewell part of a range of mid C16 buildings, a timber plank door was discarded from the site. The door was badly damaged but the wrought iron, handmade strap hinges were salvaged. When cleaned these revealed a maker's/blacksmith's mark – IR – stamped on the face of each hinge.

The style of the letters would seem to be of late C17 early C18 date. A search of local

records for Epsom and Ewell has showed no blacksmiths with initials IR in the C17 or C18. However, the Kingston Apprentice Registers note a Jacob Rushen, son of Thomas Rushen of Ashted, blacksmith in 1696. As ironmongery was often made locally and no blacksmith with IR initials is known in Epsom or Ewell we think that these hinges were a product of the Rushen family in Ashted. As



the writer has been unable to find out any more of the Rushens in Ashted other than a reference to an Isaac Rushen in 1740 we wondered whether any members of L&DLHS have any information on these blacksmiths or their premises in the village.

*Stephen Nelson*

(Steve Nelson of Ewell is a keen and active Medievalist and archaeologist, a member of Epsom & Ewell History and Archaeological Society (EEHAS))

If you are able to provide any additional information on this family I will be pleased to acknowledge your assistance in our next (February 2011) Newsletter - please contact Steve directly by email at; [steven\\_nelson4@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:steven_nelson4@hotmail.co.uk) and copy me in at; [Hartley1949@msn.com](mailto:Hartley1949@msn.com)

## **Hawks Hill – Anglo Saxon Burial Ground**

Recently I became aware of a new hoarding across the frontage of a site on Hawks Hill along the Guildford Road. Immediately I sent an email to Gary Jackson, SSC Archaeological Officer for our area of Surrey requesting confirmation on the proposed development of this site and asking him if an archaeological condition had been placed due to the archaeological sensitivity of the location on Hawks Hill. Both an Iron Age homestead and Saxon burials have been revealed in the past in this area. Gary responded indicating that SCAU (Surrey County Archaeological Unit) was due to carry out an evaluation of the site to which I expressed an interest. In late August I was given an opportunity to visit the excavation one Friday morning.

When I visited the site, I met with Tom Mummery the site director and Becky Lambert who I had met on another site. Tom, I recalled, was responsible for the evaluation and excavation of the Prehistoric and Roman site in Fetcham which I visited in May 2009 with Alan Hall and the Roman Studies Group, the report on which is currently being written up.

Tom informed me of the current archaeological evidence being recovered from the front end of the site off the Guildford Road which comprised part of the known Anglo Saxon Cemetery on the slope of Hawks Hill with views over Fetcham in one direction

and Leatherhead in the other. Seventeen burials had been excavated by his small team of archaeologists, an eighteenth burial was discovered just before the conclusion of the excavation. The burials were aligned East to West and SE by NW - they were all but one discovered in shallow graves cut directly into the chalk. The skeletons were discovered in various states of preservation, some of the skeletons were accompanied by an iron knife and one with a whetstone, one particular skeleton was found to be better preserved than the others due in part to having been buried about 90cm deeper.

The evidence from this site has yet to be evaluated by SCAU and conclusions drawn before the report can be written - at this moment evidence appears to indicate that the people buried here were the local inhabitants of Feccham (Fetcham) or even Leochred (Leatherhead).

I would like to thank Gary Jackson of SCC, the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU) in the person of Tom Mummery the site director for affording me the opportunity to visit the site and view the excavation.

### **St Andrews School Ashtead (St Peters Primary School) - Prehistoric Roman & Medieval Site**

In October I received a further email from Gary Jackson telling me of a new site this time in Ashtead where Archaeology South-East (ASE) had been asked by him to carry out an evaluation at the site of the demolished St Peters Primary School during the summer. The evaluation revealed that much of the site had been previously impacted by landscaping likely to have occurred during the laying out of the grounds surrounding the former school building, but in two of the trenches in the south-west of the site, two gully's and a pit or ditch terminus of prehistoric date were revealed. Gary Jackson recommended that the area around these features be subject to further investigation and excavation and advised ASE (the Project Manager is Andy Leonard and the archaeological consultants CgMs - Duncan Hawkins) that I might be interested in visiting the excavation. Not to miss this opportunity I met up at the site by prior arrangement on 11th October with Duncan Hawkins the consultant and Greg Priestly-Bell the Site Supervisor Archaeology South-East.

Greg informed me that when he had previously dug on the site in Ottways Lane ASE had discovered a similar alignment and configuration of ditches. This appears to indicate that they formed part of a larger extensive late Iron Age field system of ditches with both Iron Age and Roman pottery evidence. The site also produced some evidence for some medieval smelting operations. It is hoped that the pottery and the environmental soil sampling taken from these ditches and features will shed more light in the forthcoming report.

I would like to thank Gary Jackson of SCC, Duncan Hawkins of CgMs and Greg Priestly-Bell for ASE for affording me the opportunity to visit the site.

### **Roman Coin Donated to Museum**

Dr Fred Meynan has informed me that Mrs Jean Renwick the wife of the late Hugh Renwick a member of our Society has donated a Roman coin to our museum's

permanent collection for display.

The coin is believed to be a Sestertius of Antoninus Pius, 138-161. It shows Amona seated left between letters S and C and on obverse head with wreath right ANTONINVS/AUG PIVS PP TR P COS III

I first met Hugh Renwick and his wife in 2006. The coin was discovered in autumn 2005 at their home in Oaken Coppice Ashted whilst he was cultivating his vegetable plot in the back garden. The coin was taken to Bourne Hall Museum at Ewell where the coin was identified by a member of the Museum Staff.

Hugh was a keen gardener, past chairman and then president of the Ashted Horticultural Society. He won many cups and prizes for his flower and vegetable displays. He was a member of the local Gardeners Benevolent Society and Ashted Probus. By profession he was a marine broker and after retirement worked as a volunteer in the Museum of London where he was able to pursue his interest in archaeology.

I would like to thank Jean Renwick for her gift to our museum.

*David Hartley*



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## ***Membership Fees 2011***

Will all members please note that, due to rising costs and the fact that the membership fees has been fixed for a number of years, the fee from the 1st January 2011 will be £18.00 for a full member. All other fees remain the same and the entrance fee for lectures will be £1.00 per head to all who attend.

The membership renewal forms issued with this newsletter have been revised to reflect the new subscription fees. In the past a number of members have been very late in paying their fees. In view of this the executive committee decided that a cut off date of the 31st March 2011 will be enforced. After that date membership will lapse together with the benefits that go with it.

I am sorry if this seems a little hard but as a Society we have costs to bear and cash flow is vital to the efficient running of the Society.

*David Wall, Membership Secretary*

## *Lest we forget*

### *Lieutenant John Oliver Edgar RN: HM Submarine Thunderbolt*

In July 1914, at Kensington, Stanley Clarence Edgar (born 16 January 1889 in Richmond, Surrey) married Elizabeth Ruth Warwick (born 12 February 1889 at Ponteland, Northumberland). They set up home at The Oaks, Ashtead Woods Road, Ashtead in succession to C K J Rooke who became a WWI casualty – the latter's story has already been outlined in an earlier edition of the Newsletter and appears on the War Memorial pages of the Society's website. S C Edgar, as a Lance Corporal in the Inns of Court Officers' Training Corps, was appointed a temporary 2nd Lieutenant in the East Surrey Regiment on 29th August 1915 and served until 3rd July 1921 when he relinquished his commission.

Stanley Edgar re-enlisted 19th September 1939 and was promoted to the rank of Captain in the Intelligence Corps on 28th February 1942.

Meanwhile, his youngest son, John (b. reg. Epsom 9/1920), had joined the Royal Navy to be appointed in due course as a Lieutenant in the crew of HMS Thunderbolt. This submarine was formerly the ill-fated HMS Thetis which sank during sea-trials on 1st June 1939 with the loss of 99 lives: she had been salvaged, repaired, and re-commissioned for war-service. Details of the vessel's exploits from 15th December 1940 may be found on [www.submariners.co.uk/Boats](http://www.submariners.co.uk/Boats) whilst photographs, including images of Lieut. J Edgar, are presented in [www.cyber-heritage.co.uk/thetis/thun3.jpg](http://www.cyber-heritage.co.uk/thetis/thun3.jpg).

In 1941, as a Sub-lieutenant, John Oliver Edgar became engaged to Patience ('Paddy') Dorothy Verty Anderson, younger daughter of Colonel and Mrs William Anderson of Causey House, Gosforth, Northumberland: the marriage took place during the Summer of 1942.

On Sunday 14th March 1943, off Capo San Vito, Sicily, the Italian corvette Cicogna obtained a contact with HMS Thunderbolt and launched a depth charge attack. An explosion lifted the submarine's stern out of the sea at an angle of 90 degrees before the vessel sank through a discharge of air and oil. When two further depth charges





were dropped, air bubbles, oil and smoke appeared on the surface. Although Cicogna remained on station for another hour there were no more contacts.

The fact that HMS Thunderbolt was missing had not been announced until 28th March 1943: this is shown as the officer's date of death on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

Colonel William Anderson CB DSO MC DL ADC (additional, to the King, since 1935), retired Army Officer and partner in Messrs Anderson and Garland, Auctioneers and Valuers, died 2nd January 1944 from an illness contracted on active service.

His daughter, the widowed Mrs Edgar, re-married in 1948.

This is but one of the tragic stories of lives tragically cut short, as reflected by the names on our local War Memorials.

*Brian Bouchard*

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## ***Bookham in the War*** **“We Must Remember This”**

Personal memories of the last war remain precious, but as time passes are becoming increasingly rare. Prompted by this thought, a local group has just started work in Bookham to try to capture what life was like and what happened in the Village between 1937 and 1945.

The group has been set up by the Military History Section of the Bookham and District U3A (University of the Third Age). The group is hoping to be able to interview, and possibly to record, the personal reminiscences of people who were living in Bookham at that time. It will also look at contemporary accounts of the period such as newspaper reports, parish magazines and other journals and view records held by the Leatherhead Museum and the Surrey History Centre. They will in addition be researching the Canadian links with the area.

Anybody who knows anything of interest they might be willing to share with the group are asked to contact either Michael Anderson, who is leading the project on (01372) 454790, or John Chadwick, the leader of the Bookham and District U3A Military History Group on (01372) 454601.

The group's aim is eventually to put together an illustrated talk on its findings and also to present these to The Surrey History Centre at Woking to keep for future reference.

*Michael Anderson*

## *Elm Bank House Cistern*

A cistern or soakaway which was once located in the grounds of Elm Bank House in Dorking Road has recently come to light in a rather dramatic fashion. Elm Bank House was built around 1780 and one of its most famous occupants was the solicitor Edward Rickards, 1815-1893, a churchwarden and local benefactor, whose grounds were often opened for parish functions. His particular interest was sanitation and the water supply – he was for 19 years Chairman of the Parochial Committee concerned with these issues.

Last month a small depression appeared in the lawn of one of the houses built on the site (Elm Bank itself having been damaged by bombing during the war and subsequently demolished) and upon investigation it turned out to be the structure pictured.

The current owner's grandchildren often play in the area and a garden party was recently held there, so he counts himself rather fortunate that the discovery was not even more dramatic - he told me that he has passed over the spot many times with a heavy lawn mower. A network of fine tree roots was all that was supporting a thick



*Elm Bank.*



plug of soil over the hole. There must originally have been a cover of some sort, either a stone slab which might have cracked and fallen or a wooden lid which has rotted away. At present it is about five feet in width and twelve feet or so in depth, with a partially arched top. The bottom is dry but its composition cannot be determined at the moment as it is covered with the earth which fell during excavation. It is somewhat too wide to be a well and appears to be a rainwater

cistern, although it does not have the characteristic bottle shape of other cisterns which have been located in the area, and may have been a soakaway (the brick courses which line it for most of its depth stop at around ten feet below ground and do not appear to

have been rendered with cement or bitumen, as is often the case). There is a lead pipe leading into it at the top and a cast iron pump about fifteen feet away, although it is not yet known if this is original. There is no sign of an outlet pipe. Neither a well nor a pump is shown on any Ordnance Survey map.



If the structure was a soakaway Rickards, with his known interest in sanitation, would certainly not have permitted foul water (for example from the nearby stables) to penetrate it. This would have been doubly important as the estate was very close to the spring line, the Sharnwell for example being about 100 yards away. The feature would have been located quite close to the house on its south eastern side and may have combined the functions of cistern and soakaway, perhaps to drain the nearby tennis courts and to provide a source of water for the garden. The gardener, incidentally, for many years was Isaac Young, whose son John became Secretary of the Leatherhead Water Company. One cannot help wondering if he was set on a career path by hearing his father talking about Rickards' interests. The family lived in an estate cottage off Worple Rd which is still standing (now No 33 St Mary's Rd). It has a plaque inscribed 'EJR 1869'. The adjacent No 35 was the coachman's cottage.

Elm Bank House passed out of the ownership of the Rickards family in 1924, the last occupant being Isobel Rickards (née Budd) who had married Edward Rickards' son Lionel. The estate was broken up and much of it was bought by FH Bartlett, who built the St Mary's Road development on it. The house itself was divided into two parts, which continued to be occupied until the Second World War. There is anecdotal evidence (unconfirmed) that it was used by Eisenhower and his staff during the D Day planning. It sustained some bomb damage (which may have given rise to the story) and the existing houses were erected on the site in the 1950s.

Edward Rickards and his wife Harriett are buried in Leatherhead churchyard, some of which was formerly part of the Elm Bank grounds, the family having given it to the parish. Their gravestone is very modest compared to some, although in life they ran a large household, with a butler, footman, coachman, gardener and many other servants.

The present owner feels that such a potentially dangerous structure should not merely be covered up again or even filled in and has plans to make it a striking feature of his garden.

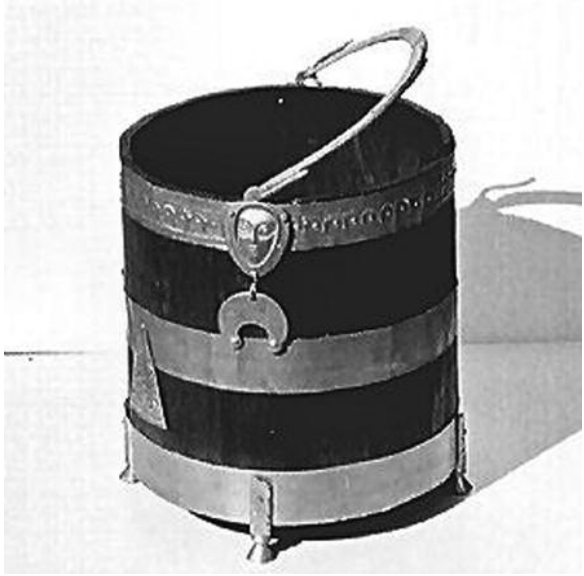
*Alun Roberts*

## *Museum Musings*

Is it possible for someone to say that from among the museum's collection, that they have 'a favourite exhibit'? Well, in my case I do have such a thing - it is the so-called Saxon Bucket.

Not all our readers will know what this is, so a short description would seem to be appropriate.

The bucket is a model – a reconstruction of an object discovered in the water meadows of Fetcham where Saxon graves had been found. All that remained were pieces of bronze, and these are on display beside the model. Using these as a clue, a replica of the bucket has been created, the body being staves of wood. But the handle, the legs and the straps in metal were skilfully made to resemble the original pieces and the result is a convincing representation of the artefact as it would have looked when placed among the grave goods.



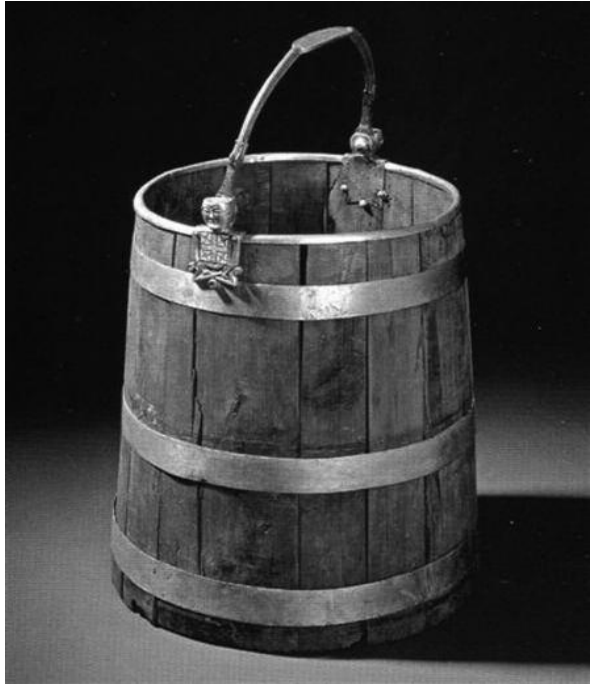
It appears that a bucket of this kind is not a unique occurrence. Similar buckets have

been discovered at other Saxon sites in England. But what appears to be the unanswered question is the purpose of such an object. One might guess that it was part of a pagan tradition; that it served to go with the departed person into the next world containing something 'for the journey'. This is conjecture, though perhaps not unlikely. So there seems to be no answer to the question; "what did the bucket contain?". Some liquid, no doubt, but what - something to



fortify the traveller for his journey, perhaps – beer, mead or some such ? We shall probably never know the answer and we can only guess. In this connection our bucket has a story.

A few years ago when the museum was celebrating its 21st anniversary, our guest of honour was the then chairman of Mole Valley District Council, Councillor Homewood. During his tour of the museum he showed great interest in our exhibits but he was particularly attracted by this object. It turned out that he was an Anglo-Saxon scholar, and he revealed that he could speak in that language. I put to him my thoughts on the question about



*Viking Bucket from Oslo*

the probable contents of the bucket and to our delight he composed a brief poem in Anglo-Saxon, musing on this very topic. He gave us the text – and the translation – and, before leaving us, he recited it to our group. An event never to be forgotten.

My ‘bucket’ story has one more chapter. This year during a visit to Oslo I had the good fortune to see the Viking Ship Museum . Besides the spectacular sight of ships recovered from ancient burial mounds there were many artefacts which had been found at the various sites. Perhaps the reader has guessed already what one of these was. Indeed, a Viking bucket. But what was staggering to me was its similarity to the Saxon bucket, down to quite small details. Perhaps one should not be surprised, after all we are dealing with the same era of history, but still I felt that this was remarkable.

**Footnote:**

Maybe there are other members who recall an object in our museum that they rate as their ‘favourite’. If so perhaps they could be persuaded to write about in a future number of the Newsletter.

*John Wettern*

# Heritage Weekend



Heritage weekend, 11th/12th September went well, as it always does, and the weather was kind to us. The theme of Georgian Leatherhead gave rise to some particularly interesting displays, not least the 'By George' display of photos of our collection of Georgian underwear at the museum, which was both amusing and informative. At the Institute there was a display of Georgian Leatherhead by Linda Heath, and a very comprehensive one by Alun Roberts about Benjamin Simmons, the greatest Leatherhead Georgian builder. Pictures of his buildings included the fine terrace in Bridge Street, the Workhouse in Kingston Road and the barn opposite the parish church where Nelson bought timber from him. Simmons was a keen bell ringer, both for the parish church and at other churches, and memorials of this were also recorded. (These two displays are now on view at the museum.)



There was also a very interesting display by John Morris about Leatherhead's first known inventor, James Barlow. This included a model of his Patent Cask Stand, two of his business catalogues and copies of his patent and his eight registered designs.



The Society also provided our annual tour of Sweech House and a walk round the town centre, focusing on Georgian buildings past and present.

*Linda Heath*

## *Another dated building in Ashtead*

In response to my appeal in the August Newsletter for information of dated buildings in the district, Brian Bouchard has sent me photographs of an outhouse behind Watsons, the bakers at 76, The Street, Ashtead. The building may have once been a cartshed or stable, the hayloft over still having ornamental bargeboards. A stone plaque below the upper door reads

.W E BLISS.  
.Sep 29.  
.1883.

(The lettercutter started to write BLISS wholly in capitals but he had insufficient space.)



Mr Bouchard told me that William Edward Bliss was born in Faversham (Kent) about 1831 and in the 1881 Census was listed as a butcher in Epsom High Street. He had died by the third quarter of 1896. Did he set up a branch in Ashtead, or keep a stable here, or has the plaque migrated from elsewhere ?

Subsequently the plaque has been covered up by a replacement fascia board. This reminded me of the foundation stone of Montagu Burton's ('The Fifty Shilling Tailors') now Martin's the newsagents in Leatherhead High Street which I failed to record before it was covered over. Has anyone a note of the inscription or, better still, a photograph? The event may be mentioned in a local paper; the date was probably shortly after the Swan Hotel (which occupied the site) closed in September 1936 and the site sold for redevelopment.

Please send details of other dated buildings and their story to me at 7 (not 17 as published in the last Newsletter) Burrows Close, Great Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT23 3HB

*Derek Renn*

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## *News from the Friends of Leatherhead Museum*

### **Pottery Exhibition**

The museum played host to an exhibition of pottery in September. Justine Munson whose studio is in Garlands Road mounted an exhibition of her work in the garden of the museum on Friday and Saturday 17th and 18th September during the opening hours of the museum. On display and for sale were exquisitely designed pots made from porcelain with a floral motif. We also arranged a private viewing session on the Friday



*Justine Munson Exhibition*

evening with wine and nibbles being served to invited guests, many of whom stayed to look round the museum. The museum benefited from the extra footfall and donations and Justine sold some of her work. The event was judged to have been a success and could pave the way for similar exhibitions and events, the garden being suited for the purpose.

## **Visits to the Museum**

The museum was visited by Trinity School, Leatherhead and St. Peters, Ashted as part of our education programme and in October we shall be taking suitable and safe (!) artefacts to St Peters to talk about WW2.

An Epsom Women's Fellowship Group visited in September and was impressed by the new displays relating the Georgian Leatherhead. We had a nice 'thank you' card which is worth repeating as it demonstrates the importance of the museum's work and activities. 'I want to thank you and your colleagues for giving us such an interesting and enjoyable visit to Leatherhead Museum. You all took so much time and care to make our outing a great success, a comment that was echoed in the Blue Cafe afterwards. We felt very grateful that societies like yours exist to protect and present collections that might otherwise be lost.'

The Blue Café is clearly an added attraction!

## **Future Events**

**27th November** Junior Roadshow 10am to 12.30pm at The Institute

Youngsters are invited to bring their 'antiques' and artefacts, to talk about them and have 'experts' on hand to give advice. The Friends and the museum will have a display of interesting artefacts, the whole event being organised by the Leatherhead Community Association in conjunction with the Friends.

**10th December** Steward and Volunteers Christmas Party 7.30pm at The Institute

This is our annual 'get together' and a 'thank you' for all the time and effort put in by the stewards, the museum committee and volunteer helpers who keep the show on the road.

*Fred Meynen*



## *News from the Museum Committee*

First of all, we have had to change the lock on the front door of Hampton Cottage. If anyone still has an old key they will not be able to access the museum and they should see Alan Pooley in order to get a replacement. Secondly, we now have a new member of the Museum Committee, Alun Roberts, and we are pleased that his knowledge of both the local history and the day-to-day operation of the museum will be available to us.

We were disappointed not to receive any offers of information to help us to determine whether any of our old bottles are worth keeping, or selling, otherwise they will just add to the load of rubbish which we will have to dispose of. If there are any which are of any value it would be shame if they just went as cullet. But we must make progress in tidying our museum store.

A display entitled “By George she’s got it” was mounted in the museum for Heritage Open Days where the local theme was of all things Georgian. This display featured some of our textile collection and although it used a wide interpretation of the theme it gave us an opportunity to show some of this collection which is difficult to show in our miniscule building. The Society also produced displays for the weekend which were shown in Leatherhead Institute. Some of the panels are now used as a temporary exhibition in the museum for a while so that people who could not get to Leatherhead on Heritage Open Days can see the displays. This must be for a limited period because with our extreme space restrictions they necessarily obscure much of the existing displays.

On 27th November the museum is co-operating with Leatherhead Community Association who are holding a “Junior Roadshow”. Young people will be invited to drop in to the Institute during the morning to handle and learn about a number of artefacts from the museum collection. It is good to have this co-operation between the two organisations and it is hoped that the event will increase the awareness not on of the Community Association but also of the Society and its museum.

We continue to receive a steady flow of artefacts for possible inclusion in our collection but we would like to make a plea for all stewards to ensure that the documentation is completed on receipt. In some cases we do not even get a name of the donor and it is essential that the accession forms are with each item so that ownership is legally transferred to the Society. Also if we do not want something it is essential that we have the form which tells us whether the owner wants it back. A recent example of this is that there has been a CB radio in the office for many weeks with no paperwork whatsoever. We do not know to whom it belongs or whether it is intended as a gift for consideration as a donation to the museum. If the steward who accepted this should read this it would help us to know where it came from.

We are endeavouring to discourage members and others from socialising in the front room and thereby restricting public access to the reception desk and the shop. If people gather there it can be intimidating to members of the general public and discourage them from studying the displays as well as looking at the wares in the shop.

*Peter Tarplee*

## *What's in a Name?*

This year we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Battle of Britain. The media, TV, Radio and Press, have provided detailed cover of the commemoration and there can be few people who are not aware of the key factors surrounding the battle. Above all, the two allied aircraft that played a pivotal part, namely the Hawker Hurricane and the Vickers- Supermarine Spitfire, have become engraved on our minds and found their way into the affections of our fellow countrymen (in this 'PC' age I have to point out that this includes the ladies, but you already knew that!).

The Battle of Britain must have been the first battle in history to have been observed by so many of the 'civilian' population. The vast majority of these observers lived and worked in the south- east of England.

You could say that it was in our own 'backyard'.

Thomas Octave Murdoch (Tom) Sopwith was born on the 18th January 1888 at 92 Cromwell Road London. He was the youngest child and he had seven sisters. His parents were well off, 'comfortable', as Thomas was to describe in later life. The family income was derived from lead mining in Linares, Southern Spain. There is not space here to give a full account of Thomas Sopwith's life. (This has already been done by Alan Bramson in his very fine biography of Sopwith entitled 'Pure Luck'). I recommend it to anyone who wishes to learn more of this truly outstanding gentleman. The following brief account will help to place this article in context.

Thomas was able to enjoy a varied childhood. The family had property on the Isle of Lismore off the West Coast of Scotland. It was during one of these visits that a tragic accident occurred. Thomas was in a boat with his Father and he (Thomas) had a loaded shot gun lying across his knees and for no accountable reason the gun fired, killing his Father. As we can imagine, this accident was to haunt Thomas for the rest of his life. It did not however deter him from shooting, a sport in which he would actively participate for many years.

The estate was divided between him and his Mother and the value was quoted as £51,721. Although this inheritance gave Thomas the opportunity to engage in activities which were not available to the majority of young men, he was to demonstrate that he



had a degree of 'get up and go' that was phenomenal. He possessed the gift of imagination, dedication, perseverance, and a feeling for others. He was able to use these attributes with great wisdom. He was to become an industrial giant in the twentieth century, as well as a fine sportsman, who almost won the America's Cup in 1934. It has been said that "Britannia Rules the Waves" and that "The United States Waives the rules". There is not space here to describe the incident, but Thomas was generous in accepting the result.



Thomas was sent to a school in Hove, Sussex and by all accounts was not a very diligent pupil. He 'bunked off' on a number of occasions. His school report did not rate him very highly and according to Thomas' recollection in later years, the feeling was reciprocated. Rather like the great W.S.C., 'at school poor, in life outstanding.' He left Hove aged thirteen in 1901 and wanted to join the Navy but they thought that he was not clever enough. He then went to Seafield Park Engineering College, near Lee-on-Solent, in Hampshire. Here he had the opportunity to become involved in a 'hands on' environment and work on the cars, motorcycles, and engines of the period. This stage in his life was to determine the direction his career would take.

On leaving he became involved with many and varied activities, including ballooning, motor racing, and sailing. Together with a friend, Phillip Paddon, he started his own car dealership in London, just off Piccadilly, selling cars for The Right Hon. Charles Rolls, amongst others.

Thomas Sopwith formed the Sopwith Aviation Company at Brooklands, and Kingston-on-Thames, in October 1912. During the First World War this organisation would be responsible for the design and manufacture of aircraft that would become household names, The Sopwith Pup, The Sopwith One-and-a-Half-Strutter and of course the famous Sopwith Camel.

Shortly before the end of the First World War Thomas had bought the Horsley Towers Estate in Horsley. This consisted of approximately 2750 acres, a number of cottages and The Duke Of Wellington public house.

On 1st April 1918 the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service were amalgamated to form the Royal Air Force. At the end of the war the new force found itself with an inventory of 22,000 aircraft, and 25% were of Sopwith origin. The demand for aircraft dried up and Sopwith Aviation had to look for other markets, or as we say today they had to diversify. They manufactured motor cycles and kitchen

equipment among other ventures. They might have just hung on but then came an almighty blow.

The taxman (bless him) decided that the company owed tax for the profit that had been made during the war. Thomas was not averse to paying what was duly required of him and asked if he could repay the amount over a period, but the civil servant in question was having none of it. Pay the outstanding amount in one go and right now. It was clear that the business could not continue. Thomas was an honest man who had firmly held principles. He was determined to ensure that every creditor was paid. He sold the estate and liquidated the company and ceased trading on 10th September 1920.

There was a strong body of opinion that he should re-commence in business and with his fellow Directors Fred Sigrist and Harry Hawker, the company began trading on 15th November 1920 under the name of Hawker Engineering Ltd. (Later Hawker Aircraft, then the Hawker Siddley Group, etc.) Harry Hawker was the Chief Test Pilot and it was agreed that a change of name would ensure that there was no confusion with the former business.

Had the company continued under the original name then we would have come to know and love the Sopwith Hurricane, the Sopwith Hunter, yes and even the Sopwith Harrier,

Thomas lived to be a hundred and one and even in his eighties he was still working in a consultancy capacity within the aircraft industry. He truly was a giant among giants in the twentieth century aviation world.

*Brian Hennegan*

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## *Letter to the Editor*

Dear Martin

I have just received, and read with interest, the Newsletter for August 2010.

The Objects of the Society include research into local history and publication for general information including, by implication, future generations. You appeal for further articles but it seems to me that the Newsletter is beginning to encroach upon our annual Proceedings. In addition to 'Occasional Notes' we have been provided with three substantial pieces in what is by definition an informal printed report rather than a formal record of the Society's transactions. May one ask, therefore, what convention is to be followed in making a choice between the two organs, please?

As an addition to David Hartley's Archaeology Report, copies of various Hassell paintings are held in Bourne Hall Museum, Ewell. Three appear in articles on the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer website – [www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk](http://www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk) – under 'The Dog House', Woodcote house, J. Hassell, 1823, & Epsom Poor House (formerly a residence of the Earl of Berkeley), whilst 'Durdans' includes an image by John Hassell from 1816.

With every good wish,

*Brian Bouchard*

## *The Leatherhead Institute Post Box*

The Leatherhead Advertiser regularly contains snippets from its archives. Its issue of Thursday September 9, 2010 (page 28, 'Glance from the Past') printed the following:

'1955: Because it is no longer large enough to cope with increased post, the wall letter box at Leatherhead Institute which has been in operation since 1895, has been removed and a pillar box has been erected on the opposite side of the road. This is a modern box bearing the cypher "EII R" the first of the new reign to be installed in Leatherhead.'



There is a tall narrow round-headed recess just inside the present Institute car park gate which might have contained the wall letter box, probably planned as part of the Institute opened in 1893.

Other wall letter boxes have had even longer lives: at least two Victorian examples in Leatherhead are still in use, The wall box on the platform at the railway station has a George V cypher on its door, but the brickwork around it has been reset, so that the box behind may have originally opened for business (like the station) in 1867.

Can anyone answer the following questions:

Where was the 1955 pillar box sited?

The press report says 'the other side of the road'. Which road?

When did it move to its present site immediately outside the Institute?

*Derek Renn*

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## *Early Years of Motoring in Surrey*

The September lecture was given by our President Gordon Knowles, the subject of his book entitled 'Surrey and the Motor' published in 2005. The county was involved with the motor car since its introduction into Britain in the 1920s and Gordon has traced its development and its influence on motor design in the county through to the 1920s.

The motor developed from the pedal cycle as a form of independent travel with roads being improved as a consequence. Road building can be traced back to the first turnpike in 1696, the last being built in 1836. Roads were 'dust bowls' in summer and mud in winter until the advent of asphalt, produced in a plant at Dorking in 1908.



Pioneers in the county associated with the development of the car were John Henry Knight of Farnham and Charles Jarrett. Knight was instrumental in 1895 in repealing the 'Red Flag Act' where the motor vehicle, then the steam car, had to be preceded 60 yards by a man holding a red flag. He later founded the magazine *The Autocar* and *The RAC*. Jarrett set up patrols on the Brighton road to warn motorists of speed traps which

then evolved into the AA. The event was marked by the 'Emancipation Run' which is still commemorated in November to this day.

The first road vehicles were steam road locomotives, one well known make being the Stanley Steamer made in the USA and imported and serviced in Ashted up to WW1. The first practical vehicles using the internal combustion engine were produced in Germany by Karl Benz in 1885 and Godfrey Daimler in 1886. Initially Benz first car had three wheels while Daimler's first car or 'horseless carriage' had four wheels with the engine slung between the back wheels and having tiller steering. John Knight built a Benz type car in 1895 initially with three wheels, later converting it to four with a Trusty engine at the Reliance Works in Farnham in 1896. Coming from a wealthy family he was an engineer of many parts inventing a patent digging machine and a trench mortar.

Notable Surrey car builders were The Dennis Brothers and AC Cars neither volume car



builders but still surviving 100 years later to this day. The Dennis factory moved from Guildford High Street to the Rodboro building on the corner of Onslow and Bridge Streets, now a Wetherspoon pub and the oldest purpose built multi-storey car factory in the world, rescued and restored by Guildford Borough Council in the 1990s. John

Dennis was the inventor and his brother the marketing manager, the firm producing cars built with a 6hp d'Dion engine and later moving into commercial vehicles, the first of which

in 1904 was a 25cwt van built for Harrods. The first



Dennis fire engine was made in 1908 for the City of Bradford fire department and later car production ceased in 1913. Since then the name Dennis has been associated with bus and commercial vehicle production, the firm being subjected to changes in ownership but always concentrating on building vehicles to customer specifications on the current Guildford Slyfield estate factory.

AC Cars were developed from the three wheeled ‘autocarrier’ in 1907 with a 5.6hp air cooled single cylinder engine with chain drive to a single rear wheel ,the passenger originally sitting in front of the driver in a wicker chair but later sitting side by side. Designed by John Weller production was at the Ferry Works in Thames Ditton and in 1913 an AC sports car was tested on the circuit at Brooklands. Since then AC cars have been produced under various owners, the current production being at Camberley and in Malta making it the longest surviving car manufacturer in the country.

There were many car manufacturers in Surrey during this Edwardian period including ‘cyclecars’, simple vehicles with brakes often as an extra. Some builders only made a single car, others with a limited production. Names included Pilgrim (Farnham), Trojan (Croydon and Kingston), Carlette (Weybridge), Jappis(Wimbledon), Lagonda (Egham) and General, an attempt at streamlining in 1902(Norbury)

Gordon concluded a fascinating and informative lecture by mentioning Brooklands, a race and test track built in 1907 by Hon Fortesque Locke King on his Weybridge estate. It had a unique reinforced concrete construction with steep banking and a rather bumpy surface. Many distance and speed record attempts were made until the mid 1920s. The track is associated with famous personalities including Percy Lambert, the first to exceed 100mph in 1913 and Eldridge in Mephistopheles who reached 145mph in the early twenties. The race track was eventually closed at the outbreak of WW2 in 1939.

*Fred Meynen*

## *Nathaniel Lucas - a Convict*

Nathaniel Lucas is believed to have been born in Leatherhead to parents John Lucas and Mary Bradford in 1764 although there is some uncertainty as to his birthplace. When he was twenty two he was tried at the Old Bailey on 7th July 1784 for ‘feloniously stealing’ clothing with a value of 40 shillings. He was listed as a carpenter. Despite protesting his innocence the unrepresented man was found guilty and sentenced to



transportation for seven years. This was in the period when transportation to America was no longer possible following the American War of Independence and prisoners were kept in squalid conditions in Newgate Gaol and rotting prison hulks on the Thames. After spending some three years in these conditions he was transported to Australia with the ‘first fleet’ on the ship Scarborough before being hand-picked to settle on Norfolk Island.

‘First Fleet’ was the name given to the eleven ships which sailed from Great Britain in May 1787 with about 1,487 people, including 778 convicts (192 women and 586 men) to establish the first European colony in Australia, in New South Wales. The fleet was led by Captain (later Admiral) Arthur Phillip and reached Botany Bay between 18th and 20th January 1788. HMS Supply arrived on 18th January followed by The Alexander, Scarborough and Friendship on the following day and the remaining ships the next day.

After the ‘first fleet’ arrived at Port Jackson in January 1788 the captain ordered a lieutenant to lead a party of fifteen convicts (9 men and 6 women) and seven free men to take control of Norfolk Island and prepare for its commercial development. Lucas was aboard the HMS Supply, which arrived at Norfolk on March 6, 1788. On board the ship he had met Olivia Gascoigne (born 1763, died 12 Jun 1830) and he married her in 1791 on Norfolk Island. They had thirteen children two of which were twins (Sarah and Mary) who were killed when only two years old by a large pine tree falling on their house.

In 1791 Nathaniel received a grant of fifteen acres and in 1793 purchased another sixty acres from Charles Heritage, a former marine. Lucas farmed this land and the venture proved fruitful, for in August 1802 he sold wheat, maize and pork worth £450 to the government stores on the island. In May 1802 Lucas was appointed Master Carpenter, at Norfolk Island.

Lucas returned with his family to Sydney in April 1805 in the ship Investigator which



carried materials for a government windmill which Lucas was to erect in Sydney and he was allowed to carry materials for another windmill for himself.

The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser of June 1805 relate how ‘An excellent Post Mill, the first that has been erected in the settlement is now completed by Nathaniel Lucas, behind Back Row East. It was undertaken and finished within the space of six weeks; has been for several weeks at work, is capable of grinding, with a sufficiency of wind, upwards of six bushels per hour, which was last week accomplished for 12 hours successively.’



*Captain Phillip*

In 1808 Nathaniel was appointed superintendent of carpenters in Sydney and held this position until his retirement in 1814. In 1810 Nathaniel was on the list of persons holding civil and military employment in Sydney and settlements adjacent as ‘Superintendent of Carpenters’.

From 1810 until his death, Nathaniel appears on numerous Colonial Secretary documents. The majority of these documents refer to Nathaniel surveying land or property and constructing or repairing various structures. One of these was a second Post Windmill this time behind the Battery at Dawes Point. The price of grinding wheat into flour was fifteen pence per bushel if bought and taken away by the owners of the wheat or eighteen pence per bushel if bought and taken away by the owners of the Mill (a bushel is eight gallons).

Nathaniel became increasingly addicted to alcohol. Although retired he was involved in the building of St Luke’s Church in Liverpool, a suburb of Sydney. Francis Greenway the designer alleged that ‘Lucas was much addicted to the bottle and that he was using very poor stone at the church’.

In 1918 the dead body of Nathaniel was found left by the tide close to Moore Bridge in Liverpool. It was reported that ‘the unhappy catastrophe appears to have proceeded from his own act owing to a mental derangement. He had been six days absent from his family on a pretext of going to Parramatta but his long absence connected with other circumstances that gave rise to apprehension naturally induced his sons to go in quest of him, the result of which was that he was found dead by one of his own sons.’

It has been said that up to 40% of the current population of Australia are descendants of convicts most of which were transported there for very minor offences. Just as in the case of Nathaniel many took part in the major growth of the country. In those days committing a minor crime led to seven years transportation - for a major crime it was the gallows, for a theft of 40 shillings a prisoner was fortunate to escape the gallows. Only a small proportion of those transported ever returned to this country building a better life for themselves in Australia.

*Martin Warwick*

# *Autumn Lecture Programme*

**Lectures are held in the Abraham Dixon Hall of The Letherhead Institute (top of the High Street ) coffee 7.30pm lecture 8.00pm admission £1 All welcome**

## **Autumn Lecture Programme**

**19th November ‘Searching for Stane Street : Mickleham to Ewell ‘ by Alan Hall.**

Alan Hall lives in Leatherhead. He is Secretary of The Roman Studies Group and Honary Secretary of the Surrey Archaeology Society

**17th December Members Evening Presentations by Members on ‘My Favourite Building: Anywhere’.**

The evening will be informal with bistro-style seating ,wine and canapés followed by coffee and mince pies. It will be hosted by the Master of Ceremonies. Brian Hennegan and will end with a raffle. If you would like to take part with a short talk on your favourite building please get in touch with me. The evening is a social occasion with the accent on informality and conviviality! Guests and friends of members will be most welcome.

## **Spring Lecture Programme 2011**

**21st January ‘The British Computer Industry ‘ by Martin Warwick**

Martin Warwick was Manager of Advance Computer Development with ICL and has seen the development from simple calculating engines to the giant commercial systems of today. He is editor of the History Society’s newsletter.

**18th February ‘Guildford Past and Present’ by Phillip Hutchinson**

Phillip Hutchinson is the Senior Custodian of Guildford Castle Keep . He has published several books about Guildford and is a popular tour guide

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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

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