

The Newsletter



Leatherhead Museum

August 2014

The Quarterly Magazine of the

Leatherhead & District Local History Society

Editorial

Another year is slipping away and we are in August already. Soon the monthly Friday lectures will begin again with the first of the new series on September 19th.

Unfortunately the membership of the Society is relatively small and a constant problem is how to fund its activities. It is very difficult for the Society to meet all its obligations especially as apart from the Newsletter, Proceedings and lecture expenses the Museum needs constant expenditure for its upkeep. A way needs to be found to fund all this without vastly raising subscriptions.



Please come to the special meeting to be held on September 19th before the normal lecture where a proposal will be put forward to save on the costs associated with the Proceedings. The Committee has already discussed this at length and wants the general consent of members. The proposition is that while the Proceedings will be available to all this will only be via the website. If a printed copy is required then this will be charged as an addition to the yearly subscription - see page 12 for details.

Martin Warwick

Make sure you visit the History Society Website

www.leatherheadlocalhistory.org.uk

Next Edition Deadline - 4th October

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Chairman's Report

At the 67th Annual General Meeting held on Friday 21st March 2014 our Treasurer addressed us on the need and requirement to increase funding to maintain the current commitments of the History Society and its museum. It was agreed at this AGM to defer the question of raising the subscription for January 2015 to a Special General Meeting to be convened in September this year. Following further deliberations of the executive committee at the May EC Meeting our Hon Treasurer has to set out the simple facts of the case and the costs of running our Society and its museum and presents an alternative option to raising subscriptions for 2015.



The text of our Treasurer's report is in this Newsletter, a separate notice calling the Special General Meeting (SGM) for Friday 19th September 2014 together with the Agenda and Proposition for the SGM has been inserted as a separate A5 enclosure in this Newsletter. It is important that as many members as possible attend this meeting as your engagement and voice in running the society is important to us all.

The Special General Meeting will start at 7.15pm on Friday 19th September promptly to enable the business of the meeting to be conducted efficiently, allowing sufficient time for discussion and questions from the floor before taking a vote on the resolution. The Chairman will then close the meeting at approximately 7.45pm to enable the normal lecture meeting to start at the usual time of 8pm.

If for any reason you do not receive a copy of the Notice and Agenda for this SGM please contact me as soon as possible by phone or leave a message on 0208 3933 922 or mobile 07947 471165 or failing that by email to Hartley1949@msn.com.

Thanks to Anne Fraser our Librarian for organising the Coffee Morning at the Letherhead Institute Library on 4th June. It was very busy when I popped in and thanks also to Gwen Hoad and Roy Mellick and all those who supported the event.

Thanks to Roy Mellick for standing in for me at this year's 'Bookham Village Day', setting up the History Society's display and selling books. Thanks also to Peter Tarplee and Doug Hollingsworth for their valued support and other members who visited during the day. Book sales on the day amounted to £82.00.

Gabrielle Gale of the National Trust gave both an interesting and enlightening a talk to us on 21st February on the subject of Leith Hill Place.

Leatherhead Museum

I wonder how many of our members have recently visited the Hampton Cottage museum and noticed or were aware that we now have a polished brass dedication plaque mounted above the door in addition to a new name board and number for the museum.

The dedication plaque states that the cottage was acquired in 1976 by the generosity

of our donors and restored by dedicated volunteers to form a museum of local history opening in 1980.

It houses artefacts from Leatherhead, Ashted, Bookham and Fetcham.

David Hartley



Archaeology and Forthcoming Events

Woking Palace - Call for Volunteers dates 8th - 29th September 2014

The 6th Season of excavations at Woking Palace is planned to take place from 8th September to 29th September with a public open day on Sunday 28th September. This season is part of the current three year 'Woking Palace and its Park' the project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund headed by the Friends of Woking Palace with the valuable assistance of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU). Full details of public participation will be released shortly on line at www.woking-palace.org.

The programme will include 'Dig for a Day' and 'Finds for a Day' and the popular three day 'Basic Skills in Archaeology' courses as well as opportunities for local schools, groups and work teams to take part. If you would like to take part you need to register your interest directly with Abby Guinness who is collating details of all volunteers - contact Abby Guinness at education.scau@surreycc.gov.uk or telephone: 01483 518722.

Mole Valley Heritage Open Days - 11th to 14th September

This year's theme is '100 years ago'. The History Society plan to mount a display at the Leatherhead Museum on WW1 and a full programme will appear in our August Newsletter. The History Society will also be mounting a display on the theme of 'Leatherhead & District 100 Years Ago' comprising old photographs of people and places in Ashted, Bookham, Fetcham and Leatherhead all to be exhibited at the Letherhead Institute in Room 6 on both Saturday and Sunday 13th & 14th September from 10.00am to 4.00pm.

Saturday 6th December 2014 at 10.30am - 4pm in the Education Centre at Guildford Cathedral.

A meeting of the Medieval Studies Forum a group of the Surrey Archaeology Society will be meeting at the Education Centre at Guildford Cathedral. If you would like to join the groups Forum you should email medforum@hotmail.co.uk for details and an application form.

The speakers John Arnold Professor of Medieval History at Birkbeck and Diane Watt,

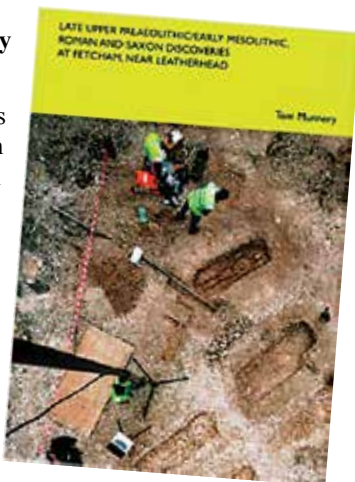
Professor of English Literature who specialises in Medieval Literature with a particular interest in anchorites will be dealing with the issues of ‘Belief and Unbelief in the Middle Ages’.

New Publication from the Surrey County Archaeological Unit

The Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU) has published an important new Occasional Paper No.4 on two excavations in Fetcham under the direction of Tom Munnery of SCAU at New Tree Furlong, Hawks Hill and a Late Upper Palaeolithic, Early Mesolithic, Roman and Saxon at Fetcham Mill Near Leatherhead.

This publication is priced at £12.00 exclusive of postage and packing (£2.00). Copies can be ordered from David Hartley at Leatherhead Museum contact mobile 07947 471165 or directly from SCAU offices at Woking.

David Hartley



Coffee Morning at the LCA library

Wednesday 4 June saw a new venture for the L&DLHS and yours truly in particular in the form of a coffee morning at the Leatherhead Institute Library. The LCA are trying to encourage use of their very cosy and welcoming library and Sarah and June Robinson were most helpful in accommodating us. The locked cupboards were opened up and a Goblin Teasmade was displayed alongside information about the factory. There was also a variety of literature made available to peruse whilst having a cup of tea or a coffee.



Browsing through the locked cabinets

The aim of the morning was to allow members to socialise to see what was available in the way of resources both in the library and online and to show off a little of the research undertaken by members. We also hoped to attract outside interest and had advertised in various local magazines and newspapers as well as in the town.

As you can see a good time was had by all who came along and there were many positives from the morning. Non-members thoroughly enjoyed hearing about Mary Chrystie from



Judith and Roy at the ready

searching for the Woodbridge cottages in Gwen's map of Leatherhead and wondered if anyone knew when they were built. Does anyone know? Others were interested in the world war photographs – how amazing to see an effigy of Hitler swinging from a tree and to see soldiers marching past the Brewery in Ashted. All of the visitors appreciated the chance to come into the library some confessing that they had never been in there.

Members were very supportive and it was lovely for me to put names to faces and work out which John is which. I hope you know who I am too! One member was able to do more research and was also delighted to find Beverley Nichols' account of life at 'Merry Hall' currently resided in by a good friend of theirs. It was a good opportunity to quiz Roy about the online archives and to meet up before the summer break. It also allowed members to see where the books are and how to borrow them. We had about four or five non-members visit; while this was encouraging I hope we can improve on that in the future.

Many thanks to Roy Mellick for helping to set up and for bringing along his laptop, Judith Witter for her excellent display of her work on Mary Chrystie, Roy and John for WWII in Bookham and WWI in Ashted and Woodcote respectively. Also to Gwen for her support in coffee provision and for her wonderful map, Alan Pooley for carrying the boards over from the museum, Frank Haslam for advertising the event and Lorraine for support from the museum.



Anne Fraser Members having a natter – Jane browsing the box files

Judith who had set up a very attractive display. They also had great fun leafing through the pamphlets on Fetcham including the history of its church. The picture of the splendid tapestry owned by the Howard family brought gasps of admiration as did the beautiful binding found on the Antiquities of Surrey from the 'locked cupboards'. There is also a huge tome containing the LCA receipts so I shall keep that in mind for a rainy day. Mr Taylor from 'over the bridge' thoroughly enjoyed

‘Behind the Scenes at Leatherhead Museum’

Lecture by Curator, Lorraine Spindler

This was a talk that brought many surprises. Perhaps we had foreseen a glimpse of the small world contained within our diminutive museum. But it was otherwise. Instead we learned about events that had taken place worldwide, linked nonetheless to items connected to the Leatherhead district. It was not just about artefacts seen by our visitors, but stories of people and events obtained thanks to the wealth of sources now available to a museum management. Much of this was connected with the work being done to prepare for the World War I anniversary. In short it provided some answers to the question, “What significance did Leatherhead have in the events that unfolded between 1914 and 1918?”

This was a talk accompanied by a wealth of pictures and records culled from the archives covering both World Wars. Some of it concerning two individuals; one a Harry Cromack whose pay-book was found in our store. Work is still being done to reveal his role in World War II. Even more exciting were the Czech émigrés remembered by the people of Headley during the 1940s. Some of these are believed to have been associated with the assassination of the Nazi monster, Heydrich.

Newspaper cuttings, census records and pictures chosen from the archive examples of which were displayed on the screen were all presented by Lorraine to accompany a narrative revealing fruitful research and a host of interesting facts and stories. There was much to tell about unusual events brought about because of the war effort, for example the influx of Canadian soldiers which some locals still remember. Noteworthy was the construction of Young Street by their engineers. Not so well known was the factory at Headley where the Horsa gliders which took part in the D-Day landings were built.

In conclusion Lorraine described the preparations at the museum to commemorate the World War One anniversary. Exhibitions will be staged at various dates through the summer to mark some of these historic events. She hoped that many would visit the museum to be reminded of the world as it was during those fateful years.

This talk was the last of the current season. Meetings will be resumed for the autumn season beginning on the third Friday of September. The titles of the talks will be announced later.



Lorraine Spindler

John Wettern

Book Review - Out of Birmingham George Dixon (1820-98) 'Father of Free Education' by James Dixon

When I first picked up this account of how the Education Reform Act of 1870 came about I had no idea that I would also be reading about Charlotte Bronte, Dixon of Dock Green and Cherkley Court.

George Dixon, Liberal MP, Mayor and Chairman of Birmingham's School Board was to be known as the Third Man working alongside Joseph Chamberlain and John Bright. His belief in the power of education to improve the lot of the poor also led to his being known as 'the father of free education'. His elder brother Abraham would establish the Letherhead Institute for the educational, social and recreational use of the population of Leatherhead in 1892.

We learn about George and Abraham's early life in Yorkshire and how their schooling shaped their later moral and religious values as reforming Anglicans. We read about a failed romance and how George came to be in Birmingham and how the dynamism of this 'city of a thousand trades' opened his eyes to becoming involved in politics. The entrepreneurship shown by George allowed him to become wealthy; if you have ever passed by the mansions of Egbaston's industrial barons you'll know they can certainly give Surrey a run for its money! Educational reform had stagnated as nonconformists and the established church battled over the curriculum for moral and religious teaching in a free universal schooling system. George was able to bridge that gap. It is really interesting to understand the challenges that faced the reformers, how they overcame them and how ultimately their opinions came to be split. Also ironically as I write Birmingham is in the news regarding religion and education in the poorest parts of its city.

The book is full of snippets based on family oral tradition, the family archives having been destroyed by bombing in 1941. I also particularly enjoyed the use of original resources in the book including a wonderful account of the 'female Blondin' from *The Times* and a table of reasons for school absenteeism including 319 children 'in want of clothing'. How many were absent due to housework duties would you think? The author, great-great grandson of George empathises with his passion for the power of education and royalties go to the Prisoners' Education Reform Trust. There is only a little about Abraham and his move to Surrey. I know that members of LDLHS are in contact with James Dixon and there is enough here to give us an insight into Abraham's motivations and his reasons for building the Letherhead Institute. There are some delightful illustrations of Cherkley Court too.

The book is really very readable – I sat down in the garden in the sunshine with a pot of tea and got through it cover to cover in an afternoon! I do encourage you to pick it up too and to find out exactly why Charlotte Bronte is in there!

Introduction by Asa Briggs - Brewin Books 2013

Anne Fraser

Ray Alan - Ventriloquist and Television Entertainer 1930 - 2010



Ray Alan lived in St. John's Avenue, Leatherhead for several years and could often be seen in the town chatting to anyone when doing his shopping but never with 'Lord Charles' in tow! . Before moving to Leatherhead he had lived in Cobham. He was a real gentleman. He was born on 18th September 1930 in Greenwich, London. With his handsome good looks and artistry he was a television favourite for almost half a century. With his upper-class dummy Lord Charles – who always seemed to be sloshed – he appeared on countless variety shows; indeed he made the most appearances on the BBC's hugely popular *The Good Old Days*.

In 1954 he worked on the farewell UK tour of the famous American comedians Laurel and Hardy after Harry Worth (the future comedian but then working as a ventriloquist) was forced to pull out. During that tour he got the idea of the dummy Lord Charles and spent some years developing the character of the humorous rogue with an eye for the ladies who used the famous catch-phrase 'you silly arse' at the most inconvenient moments. Technically he was an outstanding ventriloquist and much admired by colleagues. He put in hours of practice and perfected a stage presence that not only let him perform hugely demanding vocal feats but also gave him free range to change accents and add extra colour to a character.

He was educated at Morden Terrace School in South London and set his heart on a career in show business. He entered many local talent competitions from the age of five and at 13 became a call-boy at the Lewisham Hippodrome Theatre where he started to do magic tricks between acts. It was in his late teens that he started to perfect his ventriloquist act and concluded it with a song on the ukulele.

It was the fortuitous date with Laurel and Hardy that inspired him to base Lord Charles on the features of Stan Laurel. The boozy toff's mannerisms and slurred delivery however came from a character he spotted at a table during a cabaret show. "He was wearing a dinner suit, drinking champagne and had a delightful young lady with him." he recalled. "He kept patting her on the knee and saying, 'By Jove you're a lovely little thing, have another glass of champers'." Lord Charles the tipsy aristocrat was born there and then.

He introduced Lord Charles at a charity show at Wormwood Scrubs prison in 1954 and later that year to a wider public on *The Good Old Days*. The two became popular and were soon household names. They made regular appearances on television in shows such as David Nixon's *Comedy Bandbox*, *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*, the *Billy Cotton Band Show*, *The Two Ronnie's* and *The Liberace Show*. In 1985 he was a special guest for Bob Hope's birthday show at the Lyric Theatre in London.

He was the consummate ventriloquist/comedian. He often delighted in sending up his act with Lord Charles being wildly irreverent. He had a routine which became a classic in which as he worked the toffee nosed dummy Lord Charles gave the appearance of working a second dummy named 'John'. The complexities and vocal hurdles were immensely challenging but he performed the sketch with a refined ease. While his manipulation throughout the sketch remained perfect Lord Charles slurred his way through it. He cleverly let Lord Charles make mistakes with certain phrases that are well-known ventriloquist's nightmares. Ladies and gentlemen became one continuous word with a hiccup; hospital became hoskital and bottles of beer just a hotchpotch of nonsense. It was a tremendous performance and is remembered as a real comic tour-de-force. The art in any performance was to make it all look easy.

His natural ability quickly helped him take over as the nation's favourite ventriloquist from Peter Brough whose radio show *Educating Archie* had been a big success in the Fifties. He was technically a much better 'vent' than Brough who was well suited to radio in that his lips moved when he did his act – which proved fatal when he attempted to transfer to television.

Alan on the other hand was perfect for the television age. Though he sometimes wore high neck jumpers to disguise the leaping of his Adam's apple, he was with his respectable good looks essentially a flawless performer. Indeed he once arranged to have a series of X-ray photographs taken of his jaw whilst he did his act and hardly any bluffing could be detected.



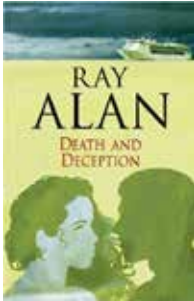
He had his own children's series in the Sixties on television. *Tich and Quackers* was set in a school with him and Tony Hart (who played Quackers) having much fun trying to outdo each other for sheer naughtiness. His success both live and on television enabled him to move to a house at Cobham, Surrey that had once been owned by the Labour Chancellor Sir Stafford Cripps and acquire a wardrobe filled with silk socks and a range of natty blazers. But success never went to his head and Alan – a fastidious, cautious, very

practical man – was on the whole free of the eccentricities associated with his profession. He was also a guest on game shows such as *Celebrity Squares*, *Give Us a Clue* and *3-2-1*.

In the 1980s the market for ventriloquism declined partly in the face of competition from *The Muppet Show*. Alan's career became more low-key as he moved into the worlds of cruise ship entertainment and corporate events. In 1998-99 he had a successful spot in the

cabaret on the QE2

In later life he had three thrillers published: *Death and Deception* (2007); *A Game of Murder* (2008); and *A Fear of Vengeance* (2010).



He was always the real professional. While many ventriloquists allowed their dummy to take on an almost human persona he would have none of it. He and Lord Charles may have been inseparable in the eyes of the public but not when the show was over. Alan once said: “I am not one of those ventriloquists who thinks he’s real. When I finish my work I put it back in the tool box and I don’t take it out again until the next job.”

He was twice married. His first marriage to Greta was dissolved in 1972; he subsequently lived for many years with Barbie; they often performed together as husband and wife although she in fact merely changed her surname to Alan. His second wife was named Jane.

He died aged 79 on the morning of 24 May 2010. It is thought he stopped breathing overnight after complaining of feeling unwell at his home in Reigate, Surrey. His agent Peter Prichard said: “He passed away very suddenly.”

Goff Powell – With thanks to various web-sites and personal knowledge

Bluebird - April Lecture

Fifty years ago, Donald Campbell became the first (and probably the last) man to break both the World Land and Water absolute speed records in the same year. Leatherhead Museum has a special exhibition in his honour since he lived briefly at Priors Ford (now rebuilt) just down the road from the Museum

Sir Malcolm Campbell’s Bluebird K4 boat was sold as he did not want Donald to follow in his footsteps. Donald who was planning to attempt the Waterspeed record had to buy it back but commissioned Norris Brothers Ltd, an engineering consultancy to design and develop a new Bluebird.



A large audience heard our April talk by author Donald Stevens, Norris Brothers' first employee. Then a teenage design draughtsman his first major job was the analysis of John Cobb's crash in a previous record attempt. Before the days of telemetry and 'black boxes' the data had to be extracted from film shot from boats on each side of the run. Using ruler protractor and slide rule hundreds of measurements were made manually.



Cobb's *Crusader* had tackled the excessive 'lift' problems of conventional designs by introducing rear mounted sponsons but the nose broke off killing him. The Norris team moved the sponsons right forward for Bluebird. The record was then repeatedly raised from 202 to 320mph in just over a decade,.

After National Service as an RAF pilot our speaker returned to Norris's to work on the CN7 Bluebird project for the World Land speed record. The International Rules required the vehicle to have four wheels (not in one line like a motor bike) be steered by two wheels and with drive to at least two of the wheels. An aircraft turboprop engine offered the most powerful solution to meet these rules.

CN7 had to be designed around a modified Bristol Proteus engine with the drive being taken from front and rear with a complex exhaust system. Many aspects of the suspension and steering had to be adjustable as no scientific data was available for the 52 inch diameter wheels specified by Dunlop. Their large protuberant fairings added considerably to 'drag'. A novel aluminium honeycomb sandwich construction provided strength.

The 'launch' of the car at Goodwood in the presence of previous record breaking vehicles was somewhat fraught. The team were uncertain about the gearbox - in which direction would CN7 go? Ominous tinkling and clunking noises turned out to be caused by idling rotor blades and brake discs running cold rather than at their high operating temperatures.

For the record attempt the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah were chosen. The 'flat' course including the measured mile had to take into account the curvature of the earth. Unfortunately Donald Campbell drifted into the oil slick used to mark the centre line. Bluebird slewed and took off at over 320 mph for several hundred yards. Rebuilt with a tail fin the car managed to achieve 403 mph but had the potential to have reached 550mph.

Subsequent 'absolute records' by others ignored the wheel-driven requirement. Donald Campbell had a 'mock up' made of a rocket propelled Bluebird capable of reaching beyond the sound barrier to 850 mph.

Donald Stevens answered many questions from the appreciative audience including: what if smaller aluminium wheels had been used? what if carbon fibre had been available? Norris Brothers was an exciting firm in which ideas passed freely to and fro between specialist designers - 'morphological thought'. He praised Campbell's bravery.

Derek Renn

L&DLHS Subscriptions

During my presentation of the accounts at this year's AGM I made reference to the need to increase the Society's funding and the possible impact this might have on subscriptions. Your committee have discussed Society funding and subscriptions in great detail recently and have concluded that rather than increase subscriptions we should take Proceedings out of the free offering that comes with membership. Since this is a significant change to the offer the Society makes to its members the committee believe this should be put to a vote of the membership at a Special General Meeting to be held before the September Lecture. What I would like to do here is try to explain the thinking behind this recommendation.

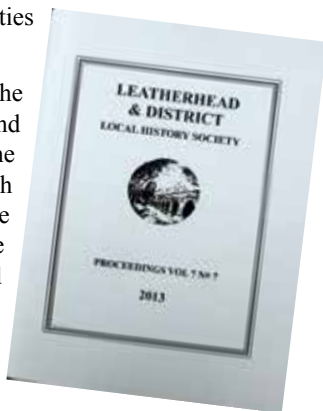
The simple fact is that the Society as a whole spends more than it earns. It has done for some time but increased costs particularly for museum storage have recently made the situation worse. Further despite lots of talk of fund raising initiatives and seeking of sponsors there is no-one currently committed to the task of increasing our revenue. All of your committee are already overworked and several key vacancies have remained unfilled for a long time – in this context most particularly a Publicity (and marketing) officer. The shortfall is in the region of £2000 per annum.

The Society has around 140 individuals and families belonging to the Society. To bridge the financial gap from subscriptions alone would mean that subs would have to increase to around £32 for individual membership and probably pro-rata for associate membership. At this price membership would almost certainly fall creating a further financial hole and an even smaller pool from whom to recruit new officers. An increase of subscription of £3 (to £21) might raise around £400. It would be a step in the right direction and if combined with other unknown initiatives we might be able to plug the hole. BUT we would need those initiatives in place and they are not.

So where does your current subscription go? In 2013 including Gift Aid membership income was £3,407 out of a total income of £10,601. It was spent on

- Publications – The Newsletter and Proceedings
- Lectures
- General Administration of the Society
- Financial support to the Museum – building costs, utilities and taxes, storage, insurance, exhibitions etc

The Proceedings is a key element of the Society's remit. The whole function of a learned society is to conduct research and publish findings. Your committee is committed to keeping the Proceedings going. However there are several factors which should be considered. It is increasingly difficult to obtain the quality of articles the Proceedings require, it is expensive to produce and distribute (approx. £1000 a year), the world of electronic communication has made the paper format increasingly anachronistic and finally because of HMRC rules the Society cannot sell copies to other people if membership fees are Gift Aided.



Yet the Proceedings is in many ways the same as other publications the Society produces and sells. So the question becomes why not treat Proceedings the same as the Society's other publications and sell to members and non members alike and make it available (at a price) electronically? Your committee believes this is the rational and sensible thing to do.

The proposal for the SGM is therefore to hold the level of subscription at its current level but to remove Proceedings from free issue to ordinary members. Proceedings will be offered at the sale-price of £3 to members but £6 to non members plus postage and packing (which remains inside Gift Aid rules). So to continue to receive the Proceedings as a member the total cost of membership would be £18+£3 = £21. If the resolution is defeated subscriptions must otherwise increase to £21. The difference is floating the Proceedings gives us a greater chance of breaking even.

Free versions of the Proceedings will continue to be available electronically.

Please vote **FOR** the resolution in September. Thank you

David Lokkerbol Hon Treasurer

DORKING CONCERTGOERS PRESENT

VIJAY JAGTAP SUBLIME SITAR

TRADITIONAL RAGAS FROM NORTH INDIA

Sunday 26 October 2014 Dorking Halls 3.00pm

The Sitar Concert playing traditional Ragas from North India, includes a series of improvisations based on traditional Indian classical themes, accompanied by Tabla and Tanpura.

Tickets £18

Sponsored by Dorking Brasserie

NATALIE CLEIN CELLO RECITAL

WITH SERGIO TIEMPO PIANO

Saturday 15 November 2014 Dorking Halls 7.30pm

Bach Cello Suite No 3

Mendelssohn Cello Sonata in D major

Chopin Preludes No.8, No.4, No.15 & No.16

Shostakovich Cello Sonata Op.40

Tickets £20

Tickets from Dorking Concertgoers' Box Office 01306 740619

or Dorking Halls 01306 881717

Details of membership from Dorking Concertgoers on 01306 740619

www.dorkingconcertgoers.org.uk

Season sponsored by CLASSIC *f*M



Vijay Jagtap



Natalie Klein © Susie Ahlburg



Leith Hill Place – update 2014



South Front of Leith Hill Place - a view from the Ha Ha in front of the House

Leith Hill Place, childhood home of composer Vaughan Williams opened to the public last summer - for a few short months and on a shoestring budget. The National Trust throws the doors open again in 2014 for a second trial season and visitors are invited to give their feedback.

Interpretation is light touch throughout the house with a few printed panels, scattered music stands offering 'Interesting Notes', a musical stave in the hallway where visitors can leave their own 'notes' as comments together with relevant books and music playing continuously via a streamed music system. Often there is live music from local choral groups. Visitors can sit on the furniture, play the pianos and make themselves a cup of tea while volunteer bakers whip up fresh treats in the original AGA.

To tell the main story – the life and music of Vaughan Williams - Visitor Operations Manager, Gabrielle Gale has collaborated with sound artist Jay Harris to install a 'soundscape' in the attic rooms where Vaughan Williams had his childhood nursery. Not intended as a full biography it gives a sense of the character of the man and what it was like growing up in the house. (It also gives visitors the opportunity to see the top floor which would otherwise be rather uninteresting as this was where the previous school tenants had their dormitories). Part audio guide, part art installation it is a shared experience where groups of 16 are guided through a series of rooms listening to narration, contemporary letters and music. Locals may recognise the vocal talents of one or two famous residents.

Over the winter months the DIY team has been busy and returning visitors will notice some changes made in response to last year's feedback. The glorious views have been opened up, a subdivided room on the first floor is being opened out and renovated and visitors can also encounter some unusual graffiti in the cellar which is now open to explore. A series

of summer concerts in the main Terrace Room includes the Perks Ensemble, a local string trio and alumni of the Yehudi Menuhin School, Royal College of Music and Cambridge University where RVW was himself a student and Alexandra Kennedy, soprano and 8th generation Wedgwood as well as an evening of poetry and music connected to the Great War.

“Last year 8000 people visited the house and we need to keep up the interest or the future of the house may not be assured,” says Gabrielle. Winners of the National Trust Chairman’s Award for ‘Bringing Places to Life’ seems unlikely but with access and parking problems the future is far from certain and the support of the local community is crucial.

Gabrielle Gale

*Leith Hill Place is open Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays 11.00am - 5.00pm until
2nd November 2014*

*To join in as a volunteer contact lhpn@nationaltrust.org.uk or for more information on
visiting go to www.nationaltrust.org.uk/leith-hill/things-to-see-and-do/leith-hillplace.*

Helping to make the Society better known

Readers might like to think about the possibility of helping the Society whilst performing an interesting part time job. Moreover it doesn’t need any prior knowledge to make a success of it. We are seeking a volunteer to become our publicity officer. It involves a variety of activities aimed at letting local folk know about what we do and how we are working to make local history more accessible to everyone. Much can be done to promote the museum and to say what’s happening there. We need help to acquire more members and to publicise our various activities, such as the monthly lectures.

How should our volunteer go about this, you will doubtless ask ? We are ready to help in every way possible, with huge support in the process of getting to ‘know the ropes’. It’s essentially part time work with reasonable expenses covered. Anyone who would like to know more about what’s involved is welcome to contact me, John Wettern and I will put you in the picture. It’s an enjoyable job because I used to do it myself. You won’t be acting solo because I will be there to support and advise you.

Do contact me and let me know you’re interested.

John Wettern 01372 459277 email : johnwettern@ntlworld.com

John Craig - Vicar of St. Mary's Church, Fetcham 1836-1839 and Inventor of the Craig Telescope



On the 31st December 1805 John Craig was born at Fescati, County Dublin, Ireland. He was educated by his Scottish father, Rev R Craig at his father's scholastic institution for gentlemen. Later he continued his education at Trinity College, Dublin where he took his BA at the age of 21. He was ordained a deacon in 1829 and a priest in 1830. In 1834 he graduated at Cambridge with an MA. His first wife, Alley, died of cancer in Hastings. Later that year he married Jane Helena Johnstone. She was the youngest daughter of the Rev James Johnstone and had a personal fortune of £56,000 a considerable sum at that time.

In December 1836 he was appointed vicar of Fetcham in Surrey. It was here that his love for things 'beautiful' was to take him on a life of refurbishment and building. He had the windows altered from square ones to a more sympathetic Norman-style. His time at Fetcham was short lived as in 1839 he was appointed vicar of All Saints Church in Leamington and began his involvement with the National Schools. In 1847 at his wealthiest, he appoints 'collectors' to canvas for funds to rebuild All Saints Church destined to be one of the biggest churches in the country even though the proposed central tower and spire were never built. He had a love of sailing his yacht called 'The Black Dwarf'.

Between 1850 and 1851 he began initial work on his telescope project. The lens was started and preliminary designs were started on the 'monster telescope'. The telescope was built and opened on Wandsworth Common in 1852. However two years later in 1854 criticism of his telescope's performance forced him to abandon the project. His only son, Robert died aged twenty as did his beloved wife, Helena. In 1856 he was imprisoned for over a month in Warwick jail for an alleged misappropriation of funds during the building of All Saints Church, Leamington. In 1859 he married his third wife, Jane Goodchild Percival on 3rd March. His telescope falls into disuse about this time and is dismantled leaving just the tower. 1869 aged 64 he retires from All Saints as vicar and a year later Jane dies. Around 1871 the telescope tower is demolished and the land returned to the common. He died 30th June 1877 with 5,000 people attending his funeral.



*Craig Telescope, Wandsworth
Common*

*Goff Powell – written originally for the Ashead & Leatherhead Local 'Potted Histories Series'
- April 2014 issue*

Was It All but a Dream?

Yippee summer has arrived and it means only one thing - school was over for six weeks. Yes it was the same in the 1940s as it is today - the main difference being that today the time is spent in a far more 'financially challenged' manner.

Not for us a feast of trips and flights to foreign lands but a time for 'bonding with your friends and finding oneself'. Yes I know it sounds pompous but I have seen these phrases used elsewhere. So what was so special about those far off days and what on earth could we find to do?

Living in Leatherhead we were surrounded by nature's playground. I spent the majority of my formative years on the Woodbridge estate ie the 'B&Q' end of the parish. Here we had the choice of both the Ashted and the Oxshott Woods (although why they were referred to as the 'Oxshott woods' is beyond me).

Both these locations formed the backdrop to a magical land of make believe and fantasy. They also provided a place of practical experimentation and a picture of 'well done' sausages on sticks cooked over an open fire spring to mind. A favourite past time was building camps rather like those built by Ray Mears and Bear Grylls but possibly less water tight. We would spend all day just exploring and roaming. When we finally arrived home the parental question would not be 'where have you been?' but 'what time do you call this?' An answer to the latter would be considered as insolence and was only provided by fools so resist the temptation at all costs.

I feel that at this stage in the proceedings I should insert a snippet of 'historical information'. Today if we view the Ashted Woods from the roundabout behind B&Q at the /M25 Junction we can see a swathe of open land between the end of the woods and the Rye Brook. In those days of yore the woods went right down to the edge of the brook. The open land was created in the early 1960's. This meant two things, our playground was larger and we had less distance to travel the woods being accessed from the back of Woodbridge Grove (I lived at No 1). We also had an Oxshott Woods that was not cut in half by the M25. Back then it was a larger area of peace and tranquillity.

Mention of the Rye Brook brings to mind those many hours spent in our 'wellies' (or plimsolls and bare legs) standing in the water and gazing intently into the stream with cupped hands trying to catch the sticklebacks and red throats and putting them in our jam jars. What would the young have done if Messrs Crosse & Blackwell along with others had not created their companies?

Another activity was walking along the brick wall that runs along the edge of the Rye Brook. A successful traverse along the whole length would impress the 'young ladies' or some of your mates. Parts of the wall can still be seen at the end of Woodbridge Grove and next to the car sales plot in Kingston Road.

For a part of the 1940's we also had fields and woodland behind the Kingston Road. The council estate was not built until 1948 and of course with no M25 the fields went from the

back of Woodbridge Grove to Links Road in Ashted. The fields were 'under the plough' (not the pub the noble farm implement!) and in the late summer the binders and reapers would collect the golden grains. We would help to stack the sheaves into stooks for drying facing North to South so as to get the most from the summer sun. Remember when we were kids it hardly ever rained, at least that's what my memory tells me.

Cricket featured in the summer calendar. Not of course on the well manicured grass of Lords but on the roads on the estate. There was an advantage in choosing this location, that of the weather. No matter how hard it rained the 'pitch' dried out in an instance and the state of the wicket was constant. Prewetts dairies supplied the wicket, one of their metal milk crates (no plastic around then provided of course you ignore 'Bakelite'). Usually the first man in was 'he that owned the bat'. A coat on the ground indicated the bowlers position and a chalk line showed the crease. A ball over one of the gardens was a 'six' and out. The ball was not always returned by the neighbour and play was off unless we could dive in and out of the garden before the wayward ball was noticed.

Looking back with the wisdom of a 'grownup' I am mystified how every past-time had its place in the yearly round. Games such as 'conkers' was self evident but hop-scotch - you tell me!

Talking about Conkers can you believe it there was not a pair of goggles or gloves in sight!

Roller skates - now there's an activity to conjure with! Some of you might have heard this story before, if you have stop me! In the 1940's and early 1950's skate parks were non existent unless you went to Littlehampton much too far to go and- hey- we couldn't afford it, all say ah! No in those good old days we used the Oxshott Road, not much traffic and most of it went up the Kingston Hill towards Kingston. The scenario was this. Do a 'risk assessment' - what's that? We required lookouts to warn of oncoming traffic. Take yourself with skates attached to top of the hill (roughly where the road now crosses the M25) and proceed in a downward direction. If the lookout shouted 'car' you would collide with the grass verge. This worked well until the 416 Leatherhead to Esher bus came along. We had of course seen this before and taken evasive action. On this occasion it must have had time in hand - it stopped. The conductor gave us clear instructions - I think that the way his words were grouped and used implied that we should end this irresponsible behaviour and what is more he was going to instruct the driver to stop at the 'cop shop' in Kingston Road and inform the desk sergeant what we were doing. Never mind the coppers, it would be hell to pay if our fathers were made aware of the activity. Don't go there!

Football and rounders (up the rec of course) were just a snapshot of those days of yesteryear Bored! Bored! we didn't know the meaning of the word.

The rosetinted glasses may now be returned to the optician.

(More information regarding our miss-spent youth can be found in my book 'Over the Bridge' published by the L&DLHS)

Brian Hennegan

Clandon Park - Did You Know Guildford had a Racecourse?



Clandon Park is an 18th-century Palladian mansion in West Clandon and is reached by turning north at the junction of the A25 from Newlands Corner with the A246 Leatherhead to Guildford road.

The estate which extended over Clandon and Merrow was bought in 1641 by Sir Richard Onslow named from the family being Lords of the manor of Onslow in Shropshire. Sir Richard was Speaker of the House of Commons and later Chancellor of the Exchequer. Several later generations of the family were also Speakers of the House of Commons - all were Whigs supporting Protestantism.

The current house, built 1730-3 is well worth a visit with its very fine interior, magnificent marble hall, fireplaces and stucco ceilings and a fine collection of porcelain, furniture,





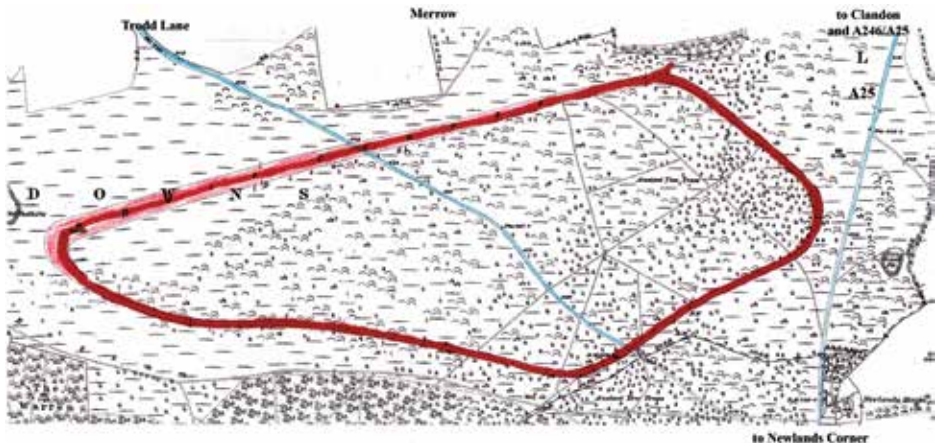
Scenes from the Interior of the house and picture of Sir Richard Onslow

paintings and tapestries. The basement now houses the museum of the Royal Surrey Regiment (and very knowledgeable curator). Since 1956 the property has belonged to the National Trust and is open to the public. In its fine grounds is a Maori meeting house which had provided shelter during an eruption of Mount Tarawera in New Zealand in 1886 and was shipped from by Lord Onslow the then Governor General of New Zealand at the end of his appointment.

On one of the walls hangs a painting showing a hunt with horses and hounds in the foreground but in the background is a horse racetrack with a wooden grandstand overlooking the end of the finishing straight. The course was known as Guildford Racecourse and horse racing started there in 1701.



The course was on the Downs at Merrow and was about two miles long. If you look at a current day map of the area most of the outline of the course is still marked as a footpath. Very approximately the old racecourse went round what is now Guildford Golf Course which lies just south of the A246/A25 road at Merrow. Travelling down from Newlands Corner on the A25 towards Clandon a road called Trodd Lane goes off to the left towards Guildford and this road crosses the path



of the old racecourse and what is now the golf course..

On the northern side of the racecourse was a long finishing straight nearly a mile long running east to west. Somewhere near the end of the straight was the not very grand grandstand – a very insubstantial looking wooden structure judging by the only evidence there appears to be from an old painting. Nothing now remains of the grandstand and from old accounts it was cruelly broken down and used to fuel a bonfire on Guy Fawkes night in 1854 not long after the course had closed.



Left: View down the present golf course of the original finishing straight

Right: The old 'grand' grandstand

Racing commenced in the reign of William III (1689-1702) who gave a King's Plate of 100 guineas (1 guinea was £1 1s or in today's money £1.05) which later in Queen Victoria's reign was named 'The Queen's Plate'. The importance of the course diminished in the later 1700s and when racing in England revived after the Napoleonic Wars it centred around Epsom and Ascot rather than Guildford. However the Queen's Plate Race held in Whitsun Week each year continued through to 1870.



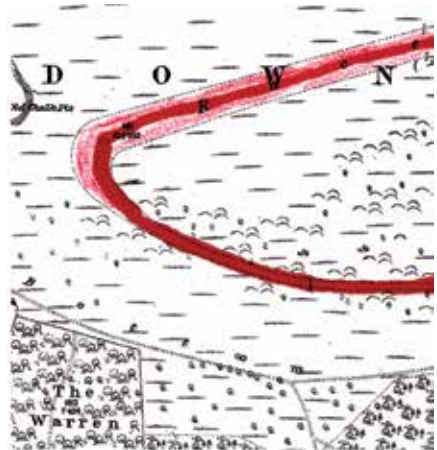
The memory of racing still remains in Merrow with a mounted horse on the village sign. The course of the track makes a very pleasant walk on the downs mainly around the golf course. The full distance walk is a little over two miles.

The Warren

Just slightly south of the west end of the track is an area known as 'The Warren' which was an enclosed walled area in the days of Lord Onslow for breeding hares for coursing and rabbits for food. Such a warren had its own keeper with an attached cottage. The Keeper's cottage still stands together with portions of the six foot high wall that surrounded the warren.



The Warren Keeper's Cottage today



The bottom left is marked 'The Warren'

Hare coursing was made illegal in the UK in 2005 but is still carried out in Ireland and many other countries. It was a popular sport especially amongst the nobility and was carried out under formal rules. Greyhounds or crossbred lurchers were used as 'sighthounds' - dogs that chase on sight not on scent. Images of greyhounds go back to the earliest history and appear in temple drawings in Turkey dating to 6000BC.



They are not given their name because of colour but one theory is that the name comes from them being 'gazeounds', a derivation of 'sighthounds'. They are the only dog mentioned in the Bible (Proverbs 30: 29-31: There be three [things] which go well, yea, four are comely in going: A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any; a greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up). Greyhounds were valued by Egyptian Pharaohs because of their speed, grace, elegance, and loyalty. Cleopatra and King Tutankhamen had greyhounds. Figures of the pharaoh's greyhounds were often carved into the walls of their tombs or mummified alongside their masters. In ancient Egypt the birth of a greyhound was often second in importance to the birth of a son. Entire families would mourn the passing of a greyhound by shaving of heads, fasting and weeping out loud.

In hare coursing two hares were released some 100 yards ahead of the dogs with the hares capable of running at some 25 mph. Greyhounds are capable of running at about 45 mph and they can see objects at over half a mile. The sport was not in the dogs killing the hares but in the chase and points were awarded in the ability of the dogs to turn the hares as they neared. Going purely on sight the hares could very often escape in undergrowth. In the walls of the warren there were also 'meuses' or holes made specially as escape holes from or into the warren and these can still be found in the remaining part of the warren wall at Merrow. Lurchers sometimes are used rather than greyhounds as they are better at turning on the run whereas greyhounds tend to run in a straight line.

Martin Warwick



Two views of the 'inn' near the bottom of Trodd Lane and on the Guildford Road (A246/A25). Originally it was called the 'Horse & Hounds' but is t now he Horse & Groom'



News from The Friends Of Leatherhead Museum

One of key roles of The Friends is to provide two stewards to be in the museum during the opening hours to welcome visitors and we are pleased to say that we started this season with an almost full Stewards Rota. Thanks to all our new volunteers! This makes life easier for Debby Humphreys, our newly appointed Rota official. We still have to fill two Saturday mornings that fall on the 5th Saturday morning of the month in August and November.



Most of our current news will be contained within our August Bulletin which will go out alongside this History Society Newsletter, but I will just provide an outline of our events here for those readers who do not receive the Friends Bulletin.

19th July - Publicity Barrow in the Swan Centre

1st, 8th and 15th August 1-4pm - Friday Afternoon Craft events in the museum garden

10th August - museum opening alongside the Cycle race

12th – 14th September - supporting Heritage weekend

A final plea to anyone reading this is that like most voluntary organisations we are in need of Committee members. We are short of a Chairman and someone to do publicity as well as general members. We only meet 4 times a year so it is not an onerous task and we are a friendly bunch whose objective is to keep Leatherhead Museum open to the public and to liaise with schools and local groups to create an awareness of our local history.

Julia Lack

Name Corrections for the last Newsletter

Dear Martin

In the LDLHS Newsletter for May you refer to a letter from Stephen Fortescue mentioning events and people connected with Leatherhead Theatre. I believe that two of the names are mis-spelt. I have a Leatherhead Theatre Club programme from 1969 which lists the Managing Director as HAZEL VINCENT WALLACE and the Chairman as GREVILLE POKE. Perhaps these corrections can be noted in the next Newsletter.

With best wishes,

Margaret Tarplee

Friends of the Leatherhead Museum Secretary (Chairman - Vacant)

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Librarian (Letherhead Institute):

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The Library is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10.00am to 12.30pm. Exceptionally, arrangements may be made to use it at other times by applying to the Librarian.

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Fred Meynen (Trustee), Doug Hollingsworth

Archival Material

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

Ashtead	John Rowley
Bookham	Roy Mellick
Fetcham Documents	Alan Pooley
Fetcham Photographs and Maps	Ed Tims
Leatherhead Documents	Vacant
Leatherhead Photographs	Vacant
Leatherhead Maps	Alan Pooley

Historical Enquiry Service

Coordinator - Vacant

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

Meetings and Lectures

Monthly Lectures

The monthly lectures recommence in September after the Summer break. They are then held on the third Friday of each month. Location: The Letherhead Institute, Time: 8.00pm, Coffee served from 7.30pm. Admission : £2. Non-members are welcome.

September 19th Extra General Meeting (see page 12), followed by Gordon Knowles, ‘Surrey Roads- from Turnpike to Motorway’

Gordon (our immediate Past President), has been interested in industrial history for many years, researching various aspects, including transport. He has been Chairman of the Surrey Industrial History Group who will be publishing his new book with the same title as this talk.

October 1st David Bird, ‘The Roman Villa in Ashted Woods - a century of research’

Dr Bird, the former County Archaeologist, is the author of the standard book on Roman Surrey and has directed the excavations of the villa complex in Ashted Woods for seven years. He is now writing a comprehensive report, reviewing also the excavations by our first chairman, Capt AWG Lowther, and others.

November 21st Judith Witter, ‘Researching Mary Chrystie of Bookham and her family’

Judith is the author of the well-received biography of the Edwardian benefactress, recently published by the Society. She will tell us how she came to write it, and what sources she explored