



*Leatherhead & District Local History Society
covering Ashted, the Bookhams, Fetcham, Headley,
Mickleham and Leatherhead*

Newsletter December 2017



Above: John 'Jack' Saunders (1870-1942) was a champion ploughman in the Leatherhead district in the 1920s and early 30s. He is shown with two of his award-winning horses. Photo courtesy of Cathy Lewer, his great great niece.

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IN SEARCH OF ASHTEAD POTTER'S WORK

This cream jug is one of a range of teatime ware designed by Ashtead artist Frank Brangwyn R.A. for an exhibition of his work at Pollards department store, Oxford Street, in 1929. Any collectors who can help track down other examples of his designs please email John Rowley at ashtead.archive@virginmedia.com For more information on the artist go to www.frankbrangwyn.org



EDITORIAL



Welcome to our winter edition, looking back at months of busy activity and some major new developments as the Society moves into its 72nd year.

We have launched a brand new website intended to attract the additional members we need for a healthy future. Designed to provide up to the minute information on both the Society and the Museum, it is aimed at existing members and newcomers alike with our precious archives of publications and historic interviews freely available to anyone interested in learning about the heritage of our district as well as those with longer-standing experience. A members-only section continues for access to high resolution imagery and our collection of original documents.

The site address has been simplified to just www.leatherheadhistory.org so do take a regular look and keep up with all of our innovations and developments in the year ahead.

We also continue to welcome new and existing contributors to this *Newsletter* and the *Proceedings* as well as volunteers for oral history interviews. The *Proceedings* is now a digital service, publishing new research findings and project reports whenever they are available rather than waiting a year for each compilation. Printed copies will also still be produced as requested to maintain the system of annual volumes.

We are still in urgent need of a Book Sales Secretary to arrange production, sales and distribution of new works. Until the vacancy is filled, our stocks of existing books will gradually be run down to continue bringing much needed revenue to maintain the Museum.

November saw our first joint project with Leatherhead Theatre in some years with Bamber Gascoigne's talk about West Horsley Place. We are now hoping this will herald a new era of closer cooperation between Leatherhead's two cultural institutions on opposite sides of Church Street. Roll on 2018. **TONY MATTHEWS**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Once again we have positive news. The Charities Commission has approved our new status as Charitable Incorporated Organisation (registered No 1175119) as approved by members at the last AGM, and our Executive Committee members have all signed up as trustees.

The other good news is the launch of our new website and I hope you will agree it is much improved. Each of the three main pages will be updated regularly to ensure the site remains up to date and pertinent. Other pages will also change over time and additional facilities will be added.

Our recent lectures have been well attended and appreciated. Hearing about Leatherhead's Bluesette Club, for example, took many of us back to the 1960s and the music of that time. We were also able to visit Ashted Park, home of the City of London Freemens School, despite the presence of construction contractors at almost every turn and some of the year's worst weather.

Bamber Gascoigne's talk on West Horsley Place at Leatherhead Theatre presented a new challenge for us of a more expansive venue and we aim to replicate this in future.

Less satisfactory news were the environmental issues found in the basement storage area for those artefacts we cannot display at the Museum at any given time. Everything had to be moved quickly which necessitated clearing out items to recover space. This also drew attention away from the Museum itself which needs structural restoration. This must start with a new specialist building survey to ensure we deal with less obvious problems at the same time.

I am pleased to announce a bequest of £10,000 from the late Pauline Hulse for use on the maintenance of Hampton Cottage. Her executor, Martin Hulse, has also joined the Society. Sadly we also have to record the deaths of two of our important contributing members, Jack Willis and Alan Gillies, both of Ashted. See Page 35.

We are still looking to fill several important vacancies among our officers so we do hope to hear from you soon. **JOHN ROWLEY**





WELCOME TO OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS

**by JOHN WETTERN, Chairman,
Programme Committee**

Some readers may be asking why the Society has decided it needs an additional corporate membership status. Well, apart from attracting a new source of revenue through sponsorship to add to our existing income from subscriptions and donations, it is a great new opportunity to reach many more folk with an interest in local history.

Corporate members may range from small local firms to giants whose premises happen to be located here. Staff at any level might be interested in the history of the place where they work. Our district has a rich heritage, after all. For those who are interested, we can offer invitations to all of our events, especially of course the monthly lectures, and urge them to visit the Museum to learn more during their lunch hour perhaps. If convenient, they may choose to bring their friends, colleagues even their families too.

How can we make this happen? One or two suggestions. As each new corporate member joins the Society, we need properly arranged meetings to explain how the benefits apply not just to them but to all of their staff members. Notice-boards could be useful as well as other internal communications media such as staff newsletters, intranets and even just their own morning meetings. Time is money of course for any firm but a quick sell for local history need take little time before the day's main business.

I conclude with this thought. To maximise this new opportunity, the Society needs to appoint a Corporate Liaison Secretary who will arrange such contacts and meetings. A scheme along these lines was considered some years ago but fell by the wayside.

We must not make the same mistake this time round. So if you have both the right commercial background and the time to devote, do get in touch. There is so much out there just waiting.

NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM

By GWEN HOAD

As well as the usual hours, the Museum was open on the Sunday of Heritage Weekend and we were pleased to welcome plenty of visitors. Our main summer attractions were the Craft Afternoons on 11, 18 and 25 August. The weather was kind apart from a heavy shower on the second day. Attendance improved each time with a grand total of 152 visitors. Young people just outnumbered mums, dads, child-minders, nannies and au pairs.

The photo booth was busy thanks to mobile phone cameras as well as the graffiti wall. None of this would have been possible without the help of a great team. Lin Hampson, Debby Humphreys and Diana Rogers delivered flyers to two schools and handed out leaflets in the town centre prior to the event. Zen George advertised the event in the *Ashtead & Leatherhead Local* and Cathy Brett designed posters and flyers and gave valuable advice.

Dorothy Stapleton, Monica Farnell, Jane Tickner and Robin Christian worked hard to make the events a success. Three of Robin's friends from Horsham - Suzanne Page, Craig Bunce and Debra Thurley - performed the roles of Frank and Hilda Hollis and a maid. They said they thoroughly enjoyed the experience and looked forward to returning next year. Thanks to everyone, including the stewards on duty.

Pearl Kew who recently died and was well known to many of you, left us her father's WW1 medals. Her god-daughter, Pamela Drew, came to the Museum on 22 September with Pearl's neighbour, Eileen Palmer, to hand them over. Pam also brought many very interesting old photos and other mementos to be featured in an exhibition next year.

Diary dates: The Museum closes on Saturday, 9 December and will reopen on Thursday, 5 April with the official opening on 7 April. Visits from a school and a Cub group have been booked for next year. More of that later.

A social evening for all stewards and Museum workers will be held from 7 for 7.30pm on Monday, 4 December in Room G6 at the Letherhead Institute. Many thanks to you all for your support.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

Unless stated, monthly meetings are held in the Abraham Dixon Hall of the Letherhead Institute. Coffee at 7.30pm and 8pm talk.

8 December, 7.30pm: A Christmas Miscellany of three short talks. Members and friends welcome. Master of ceremonies Brian Hennegan. Tony Matthews will speak on Turville Kille, one of the district's best remembered residents, whose life covered almost the entire 20th century. Fred Meynen will discuss Marie Stopes who lived on two large local estates and revolutionised British attitudes towards birth control. Brian himself will speak on *A Street with Colourful Characters*. **9pm:** wine, soft drinks, nibbles and mince pies

19 January, 7.30pm: Richard Hughes on *Beverley Nichols, Ashted's Forgotten Celebrity*, who lived in Merry Hall, Agates Lane. He wrote novels and magazine articles and composed musicals.

1 February, 6.30pm at Fetcham Park: Tim Knox on *Sir John Soane and Thomas Hope: Rival or Disciple?* Second of two talks at Fetcham Park on Thomas Hope and the Deepdene Trail.

16 February, 7.30pm: David Williams, head of Surrey's Portable Antiquities Scheme, on *Working with Detectorists*.

16 March, 7.30pm: Annual General Meeting and a short lecture by Professor David Hawksworth.

20 April, 7.30pm: Jane le Cluse, Archivist at Dorking Museum, on *Mediaeval Life in Surrey Villages*.

Early 2018: The Council for British Archaeology (South East) will run four one-day training workshops at Letherhead Institute. Topics include LiDAR surveying, coins from pre-Roman to post-medieval, and ceramic building materials. For full details including booking form and fees see <http://www.cbasouth-east.org/events/cbase-workshops-and-training-days/>

BAMBER GASCOIGNE TALK IS A TRIUMPH



An audience of 500 gathered at Leatherhead Theatre on 17 November to hear former TV presenter Bamber Gascoigne speaking on his inherited mansion, West Horsley Place, and how it became the new home of Grange Park Opera this summer. The talk, followed by opera singer Kate Aitchison, coincided with a special Museum exhibition at the theatre on the town's historic operatic society. More details in the March 2018 *Newsletter*.



*Top: Bamber on stage.
Far left: Opera singer
Kate Aitchison. Centre:
Leatherhead Theatre
director Tim Caffell.
Left: Museum curator
Lorraine Spindler.*



*Left: Society
chairman
John Rowley
with Bamber
and Christina
Gascoigne
and the
1969 photo
of Bamber
with Hazel
Vincent
Wallace.*

A brand new local repertory company will be launched at Leatherhead Theatre at 7pm on Monday, 11 December with free drinks, live jazz and information about its first season of three plays starting next spring. To learn more, go to www.leatherheadrep.com

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS SEPTEMBER 2017

CLIP-CLOPPING ALONG , NOW AND THEN



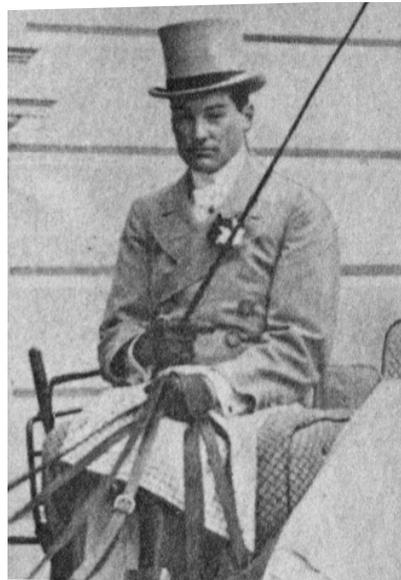
Left: The horse-drawn bus passes the Museum and heads for The Crescent. Photo by Robin Christian.

A highlight of this year's Heritage Open Days was the revival of the 1897-built horse bus that used to operate from Dorking to Holmwood. It was a brief reminder of one especially fascinating attraction for local residents just over a century ago.

Over four days this year the horse-drawn bus travelled from Faygate to Leatherhead, stopping en route in Newdigate, Leigh and Dorking before reaching Leatherhead Museum and parking outside Park House on Sunday, 10 September.

Back in 1982, Thomas Henry Lewis (1904-1996) and his wife Ruth (1908-1987) were interviewed by Edwina Vardey at their Fetcham home. Thomas's father had worked in Venthams Motor Garage, Leatherhead, when it was still a horse-drawn carriage-building firm.

Among his early memories was



Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt



Vanderbilt's coach passes through Ashted (above) and Epsom (below).



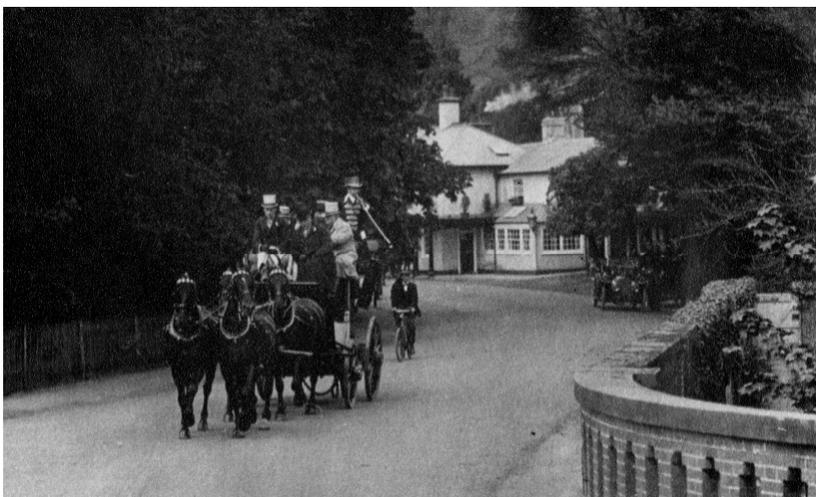
watching the American millionaire Vanderbilt's regular horse-drawn coach service which ran through the district between London and Brighton. Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt (1877-1915) died on the *RMS Lusitania* when it was sunk by a German U-boat in World War One.

Thomas said: 'The coach he used to drive. He run it as a hobby, he had plenty of money. He used to spend a lot of time in England apparently. He had this four-in-hand coach as people called it and he

used to run it more or less to entertain his friends when they were over from America. But for some traffic laws he had to have a hackney carriage licence which was really brought in for motor cars. He had to take fare-paying passengers and used to charge a lot to them. It put me off anyway. He used to come through here usually once a week. Used to go through The Crescent, then coming back he would come up by the Swan Hotel and change horses there.



On through Norbury Park (above) to the Burford Bridge Hotel (below).



‘[I remember sitting] on a seat at the bottom of the garden which my father had made and hearing the horn from the coaches that used to come down the Dorking road. You could hear them stop at the top of Gimcrack Hill and put the chains on - the skid pads I should say - and come down the hill. They used to stop at the bottom of Downs Lane, take the skid pan off and go on to Dorking (pictured below).

‘[The skid pad looked] like a piece of channelling with a hook on it and a chain which they put under the wheel. It lifts the wheel off the ground and just slides along on them. One on either side of the back wheels.

‘We didn't see [the passengers] getting on. The only person who got off was the driver or the postilion who was sitting with him. There used to be some on top and some inside. [Vanderbildt would drive it himself] very often. That was really why he liked doing it. He was going from London to Brighton, then [back to] Victoria. He just had that one route you see. He had a hotel there [in Brighton].

‘All the boys knew what time he was supposed to be there. On one occasion they were about an hour late and everybody was getting bothered and worried and eventually they limped in and they found they'd got a broken pole. That's a shaft that goes between the two wheelers. They are the two horses, the leaders. One is immediately in front of the coach. They sent for my father and he come up with a spare one and they put it in. I had to run down to tell him.’



HERITAGE OPEN DAYS SEPTEMBER 2017

BOOKHAM AND THE SPANISH ARMADA

BILL WHITMAN
explained the link in
his talk at
**St Nicolas Church,
Great Bookham**



*The Spanish Armada and English ships
in August 1588.*

Many people know that Howard of Effingham had something to do with the Spanish Armada but may be vague on the details. Some background may be helpful.

The first Howard, Duke of Norfolk, was created by King Richard III and died with him at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. He led one wing of the king's army and lost it in a precipitate charge. His son, the Earl of Surrey, was captured, imprisoned in the Tower, forgiven, became a friend of King Henry VIII and, while Henry was fighting in France, led the English to victory against the Scots at Flodden Field in 1513. Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, was then restored as the second Duke of Norfolk.

Howard married twice, to cousins Elizabeth and Agnes Tylney. A great nephew, Edmund Tylney, became Master of the Revels under Elizabeth I and is still recalled by the pub in Leatherhead where his house was on the site of the Mansion. Agnes had several children. Her eldest boy, William (1510-1573), became Vice-Admiral in 1545 and in 1551, during the reign of King Edward VI, played a part in the coup against Lord Protector Somerset, for which he was rewarded with an estate in Effingham.

In 1553 he defended Calais on behalf of Mary I and the following year held Ludgate against the rebels under Thomas Wyatt. For this loyalty he was created a Baron, Lord Howard of Effingham. He became Lord Admiral and is buried at Reigate.

His eldest son, Sir Charles (1536-1624), was a soldier but in 1585 was appointed Lord High Admiral of the English Royal fleet. In 1588 this consisted of just 34 ships but expanded to 200 including hired vessels. There were fewer Spanish ships but they were generally larger, with 26,000 men, 2500 guns and much better supplied.

In the previous year Sir Francis Drake had occupied the harbour at Cadiz and destroyed or captured over 20 Spanish ships. The Spanish fleet commander had died suddenly and his successor, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, although a good soldier and loyal to the Spanish crown, lacked a strong maritime background.

The English fleet waited at Plymouth until the Armada was sighted off The Lizard, approaching with a south-westerly wind. The English sniped at their heels, unwilling to risk boarding as the Spaniards vastly outnumbered them. Moreover Spain had been part of the Christian fleet that thrashed the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

However, the Spanish ships were so heavily burdened with equipment that it was difficult to work the guns. Their normal battle technique was to ram the enemy and then board, naval gunnery being a new art. Fleets were then customarily shortened sail at night when sailing in company so that they did not become separated and vulnerable.

Vice-Admiral Drake was given the task of following the Armada closely at night with a lantern at his stern so that no other English ship overran him. One night the lantern disappeared and the two enemy fleets nearly collided. Drake had extinguished the lantern to engage in a little piracy of his own against a Spanish straggler.

The Spaniards might have landed and created a base in the Solent but they did not and six days later they anchored off Gravelines to connect with their General Parma in Flanders. Hindered by the Flemings, he was unable to organise both his troops and local barges.

It was Sir Charles Howard who ordered improvised fire-ships to create panic within the Spanish fleet. This resulted in many Spanish vessels cutting their cables and departing. Although little substantial damage was done, their morale was shaken and the proposed invasion was finished. The Armada went north, driven by a rising wind and followed by a sniping English fleet low in provisions and gunpowder. The Spaniards sailed around Scotland but turned east too soon along the Irish coast where many ships were wrecked.



The English went to Margate, suffering from typhus and starvation and receiving little help from Queen Elizabeth, then in Essex. She was furious with the fleet and gave all the credit to the winds but Armada medals were struck unofficially to celebrate the victory.

Sir Charles Howard commissioned a set of ten celebration tapestries. These were hung first in his own house but were later given to the nation and hung for years in the House of Lords. They were lost when the building was burned down.

Howard's flagship in the battle was the *Ark Raleigh*, which belonged to Sir Walter Raleigh. Later purchased by the crown, it was renamed

Ark Royal, the first ship with that name.

Eight years later, Charles Howard of Effingham was needed again. Created Earl of Nottingham, he was sent off with the Earl of Essex, Elizabeth's then favourite, to attack Cadiz once again. They occupied the city for a month, destroyed some 20 ships and burned the city.

After Elizabeth's death in 1603, Charles Howard went on to help at the coronation of James I and deal with the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. He had three sons but all died childless so the Earldom of Nottingham died out. The family continued to hold the Manor of Little Bookham until 1635, their manor house located where the clubhouse of Effingham Golf Club stands today.

The Barony of Effingham had been given to Charles' father so that passed to the descendants of his next brother, William. Their father

had also given the Manor of Great Bookham to William and his son Francis was the first Howard to live there. His second son was baptised at St Nicolas. In due course, Francis' grandson became fifth Baron of Effingham and later served as governor of Virginia.

Francis Howard and some 40 other family members were buried at St Nicolas Church. The first group were buried in the chancel but when the church was re-ordered in 1885, the burial markers were moved and are now scattered through the site. Some are at the rear of the south aisle near the Howard memorial window. Outside beneath turf lies a tomb containing 16 or 17 more Howards. They include the first Earl of Effingham, his countess, and her second husband, Field Marshall Sir George Howard, a cousin of the Earl and the last family member to be baptised at St Nicolas.

The Howards moved from Bookham Manor House in 1626 when they bought Eastwick Park which became essentially their country residence. They lived in London and visited Bookham for funerals and country air. A few children were baptised there but there were no Howard weddings. They sold Eastwick Park in 1801 to James Laurell, ending two centuries of local association with the Howard family.



*Charles Howard,
1st Earl of Nottingham*

OTHER HERITAGE OPEN DAYS EVENTS

AROUND ASHTEAD VILLAGE

Huw Walker's two-hour Heritage walk around Ashtead went well with virtually a full house at 24 of the 25 capacity. It involved exploring the village centre, visiting the restored parish church of St Giles and seeing many of Ashtead's oldest buildings. They also discussed hidden aspects of local life in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Huw said: 'My walk linked well with the St Giles Church opening. I took my group on a ten-minute tour and heard later that ten members had tea in the St Giles Centre afterwards.'

There were four events in all in Ashtead this year compared to none two years ago. Other events included the talk at the Leatherhead Institute by former L&DLHS President Gordon Knowles, *Early Motoring in Surrey*. He covered the roads, pioneers, vehicles and manufacturers plus the legislation that tried to keep pace.

Transport was also the theme of the Museum's Heritage Open Days exhibition with special emphasis on Venthams Motor Cars. See Page 12 for another Venthams link.

Mole Valley's Heritage Open Days organiser Rod Shaw said: 'I think our programme is one of which we can be proud. Going around some of the events I experienced a real sense of community within the towns and villages I visited throughout Mole Valley.'

'Two examples come immediately to mind. One was a demonstration of bell ringing at Leatherhead parish church. The oldest ringer was in his eighties and had rung in the same tower for over 50 years. The youngest was 14. Behind them were plaques with the names of ringers going back to the end of the 18th century. You could not but have a sense of the continuity of tradition and community.'

'The second example was in Ashtead where Richard Hughes gave a talk on the amazing Mrs Elsie Knocker, nee Shapter, a resident of Ashtead for nearly 50 years and a person with an incredible past. At the end of the talk Richard invited members of the audience who knew her to share their memories. A lady in the front row produced a bracelet that had been given to her by Elsie. It was a poignant moment. Such moments make Heritage Open Days worthwhile.'

LECTURE

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS



TONY MATTHEWS presented the Society's Oral History Service at the September meeting, explaining its origins and providing sound clips of some of Edwina Vardey's interviewees from 1979 to 2002. Edwina, left, put in a personal appearance to audience applause.

Tony thanked Roy Mellick, creator of the online archive; Jo Bund, the audio file editor; Frank Haslam for handling the evening's equipment; and Lorraine Spindler for providing imagery for the talk. Oral history brought people and their memories to life as nothing else could, he said. Long after they were gone, we could still hear them talking, remembering, describing events that were real to them but no more than records to us.

He explained that the online archive was growing with sound clips from interviews and matching texts to read. Most had been recorded long ago by Edwina but new ones were also being added and he invited volunteers to take part.

The presentation included first a 1995 compilation of clips from seven early interviews and afterwards a further selection, especially edited for that evening. First heard was Thomas Lewis whose father had worked at Venthams, building horse-drawn carriages. Thomas Locke criticised Leatherhead's modern transformation. Glazier Eric Trunkfield and grocer William Jenden remembered the town as a rural village. Kate Sayers talked about local breweries and her father, a founder of the Leatherhead Brass Band. Bert Powell and Phyllis Mansel described the contrasting shopping habits of rich and poor. Arthur and Ivy Anderson talked about the wooden hoops they played with as children. Sisters Jean and Pat Reed described upper class social life in the 1920s.

Afterwards, Walter Ekins was heard performing a piano composition. William Jenden remembered World War 1 soldiers billeted in local homes before heading for battle. Lily Browning described the bombing of her own home in World War 2.



Mrs Kate Sayers (1902-1990) remembered her father in the Leatherhead Brass Band (above) when interviewed in 1981.

Mabel Fuller talked about the Leatherhead School of Music she founded in 1926 and some of its star singers. In contrast, Kate Sayers described the harsh way her grandfather had expected the entire family to combine farm work with musical performances. His son, her father, was more fun, entertaining at dances with the brass band.

Several interviewees recalled Lord Beaverbrook, the newspaper magnate of Cherkley Court, without affection. Leonard Rogers, briefly a footman there, described the peer's indiscreet entertainment of well known actresses. Thomas Lewis spoke of the mutual contempt between the Beaverbrook family and the local community and a visit by Lloyd George among powerful people who dropped by. Thomas's wife Ruth had worked for the local upholstery firm Martin Robinsons and described meeting servants of the Henderson family of Randalls Park. The staff were meanly treated, she thought.

In 1991 Edwina had interviewed the last surviving daughter of William Keswick, Lord of the Manor of Great Bookham and the



TAKE ME BACK TO DEAR OLD BLIGHTY. (2)

Take me back to dear old Blighty, put me on the train
for London town,
Take me over there, drop me anywhere,
Birmingham, Leeds, or Manchester—well, I don't care!
I should love to see my best girl, cuddling up again—we
soon shall be;
Whoa! Tiddle-iddle-ighty, hurry me home to Blighty—
Blighty is the place for me.

local MP. Kathleen Keswick described her childhood with the opening of Parliament and meeting an American girl who had seemed 'quite strange, rather out of a zoo' with an enormous bow on the top of her head.

Bernard Hooker talked of being selected to sing in the choir at the coronation of King George V in 1910. George Dench, England's longest serving chorister, described his regular journey on foot through countryside to his grandfather's farm at Effingham.

Constance Allan's family ran The Woodman pub in Ashted. She told of a bloody fight there and the tragic death of her second husband, obsessed by the danger of burglary. Elsie Green, director of the Polesden Lacey Open Air Theatre for 36 years, described her family and career origins and the magical conditions of her first production in 1953.

The presentation ended with the voice of 103-year-old Albert 'Smiler' Marshall, Britain's last surviving cavalryman from World War 1, explaining his nickname, describing a massacre of British troops, and singing a wartime song, *Take me back to dear old Blighty*. See opposite page. It was quite an evening, all in all.



Above: Society in the first half of the 20th century still relied on domestic service. Some interviewees had personal memories as staff members or employers in the world of 'upstairs, downstairs'.

LECTURE

RECALLING LEATHERHEAD'S HEAVY SOUNDS

In 1980 a little known rock band called The Head recorded a song entitled *Nothing to Do in a Town like Leatherhead*. It sold just 200 copies and was a candidate for comic DJ Kenny Everett's list as 'the worst record of all time'.

Today's Surrey Hills Radio presenter Chris Stagg, a resident since 1973, wouldn't go that far but explained why he disagreed with the song's sentiments when talking to a packed audience at the October meeting.

Forty years on from the road smash that killed one of Britain's most iconic rock stars, Chris explained how Leatherhead gave birth



*Left:
Andy
Ellison,
singer
and last
surviving
member
of John's
Children.,
formerly
The
Silence.*



*Surry Hills Radio Presenter
Chris Stagg (above)*

to the career of Marc Bolan, star of the band T Rex in the early 1970s. Not only that, but the town's notorious Bluesette Club off Bridge Street, as well as Surrey Sound Studio in Kingston Road, actually put Leatherhead on the map by drawing many of the country's top performers in the 1960s and 70s.

Chris and fellow rock music researcher Matt had unearthed the astonishing story of a seedy club, now vanished without trace but once standing between what is today the Black Dog Gallery and the one time Ventham's Coach Builders.

Back in 1963 pop music fans from Epsom and Dorking flocked to the Chuck Wagon Club to see stars like Jeff Beck and Ronnie Wood, later of the Rolling Stones. The Stones themselves played at nearby Epsom. In 1965 the Chuck Wagon was renamed the Bluesette Club with its coffee bar and juke box busy on Friday evenings and all day Saturday, and stars such as Cat Stevens, Alan Price and Zoot Money performing on Saturday evenings. Over time even bigger stars were attracted including Jethro Tull, Dusty Springfield and Jimi Hendrix.

In 1965 too a local group called The Silence emerged, practising in someone's Fetcham home and performing at Ashted Peace Memorial Hall. The following year they played at the Bluesette with tickets costing five shillings (25p). They were spotted by pop group manager Simon Napier-Bell playing at the Burford Bridge Hotel. He took a shine to member John Hewlett and took the group on under the new name John's Children. The other members were lead singer Andy Ellison, guitarist Geoff McLelland and drummer Chris Townson. They thrived and by March 1967 with Geoff's departure, Simon added a budding newcomer called Marc Bolan, playing electric guitar for the first time.

With security provided by leather-clad bikers and what was



Above: Site of the Bluesette Club, the middle white building behind 24 Bridge Street. It was only accessible through a narrow alleyway.

claimed to be the world's loudest sound system, they did well for two years. Napier-Bell bought the Bluesette Club specifically for them, renaming it John's Children Club. Bolan wrote songs such as *Sara*, *Crazy Child* and *Desdemona* for the band, the latter recording banned by the BBC for being too risqué. It couldn't last. In 1968 the band broke up and the club was later destroyed by a mysterious fire.

The site was used by an upholstery firm and later demolished. It is now just a car park. Bolan went on as part of the hugely successful two-man group Tyrannosaurus Rex, heavily promoted by DJ John Peel. This morphed into T Rex, one of the best known of all British bands until Bolan's death in 1977, shortly before his 30th birthday.

With the club's demise Leatherhead had lost a notorious drugs den as well as a popular rock music venue but the existence of Surrey Sound Studio in Kingston Road maintained the town's importance for a while, with The Police recording their first two albums there in 1978, including the track *Roxanne*, a smash hit which helped turn songwriter Sting into another superstar.

One of Marc Bolan's biggest hits was *Ride a White Swan* and Chris concluded his talk with a whimsical suggestion that Bolan might



Above: Marc Bolan with John's Children at Fetcham Mill Pond c1967.

have been inspired to write it while sitting beside the River Mole watching one of Leatherhead's very own birds.

As part of the Leatherhead Heritage Trail, he and Matt have been arranging the installation of a commemorative plaque at the site of the Bluesette Club. See below. He is also appealing for volunteers with further memories of the club to come forward. You can reach him by email at chris@surreyhillradio.co.uk or post to Chris

Stagg, c/o
Surrey
Hills
Radio,
32 North
Street,
Leather-
head.
KT22 7AT.
Telephone:
0777 555
5407.



THE BLUESETTE CLUB

This alleyway led to the Bluesette Club and along it walked many musicians who were important to the development of rock & pop music; not least was MARC BOLAN's first band, John's Children - Andy Ellison, John Hewlett and Chris Townson - who played here regularly in the 1960s. They once owned the club, together with their famous manager, Simon Napier-Bell. Others who performed here include Jeff Beck, Peter Frampton, Alan Price, Cat Stevens, Jethro Tull and Ronnie Wood. Jimi Hendrix once visited.

CEREMONY

LIEUTENANT HAROLD AUTEN, VC

An unveiling ceremony was held in Park Gardens, Leatherhead on 7 October, marking a commemorative plaque for Lieutenant Harold Auten, a resident of the town, who won the Victoria Cross for service during World War One. Mrs Mary Carpenter, his niece, laid a wreath and prayers were led by Rev Graham Osborne, Rector of Leatherhead & Mickleham. The event was organised by Mole Valley District Council with music provided by Reigate Sea Cadets Band. Vice-Admiral Peter Dunt CB, DL read words of dedication.

Four years ago, as part of the Government's First World War centenary campaign, it was decided to lay commemorative paving stones in the birthplace of Victoria Cross recipients. The purpose was both to honour their bravery and provide a lasting legacy of local heroes within communities. The VC is the highest award of the British honours system and is awarded for gallantry in the face of the enemy to members of the armed forces.

Harold Auten, one of the war's 627 VC recipients, was born in Leatherhead on 22 August 1891, son of a retired naval paymaster. They lived at The Shrubberies, 29 Church Street (now number 51). Harold was apprenticed to the P&O Line aged 17. In 1910, he joined the Royal Naval Reserve and was promoted to Sub-Lieutenant just before the outbreak of war in 1914.

He served in Q-ships, heavily armed merchant vessels with concealed weaponry which were designed to lure German submarines into making surface attacks. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1917 and won the Distinguished Service Cross - the third gallantry medal in order of precedence - 'for services in Vessels of the Royal Navy employed on Patrol and Escort duty'.

At the end of July 1918 he was commanding *HMS Stock Force* when she was torpedoed by an enemy submarine at 5pm, 25 miles off Start Point in the English Channel. The ship's fore part was destroyed, including the bridge, and several of the ship's company including the First Lieutenant and the Navigating Officer were wounded.



*Clockwise: Victoria Cross;
Lt Auten; Rev Graham
Osborne, Rector;
Canon Peter Bruinvelds
of Surrey County
Council and Vice-
Admiral Peter Dunt;
Reigate Sea Cadets
Band; Harold Auten's
niece Mary Carpenter
with her son Charles
and his wife Fiona.*



A shower of planks, unexploded shells, hatches and other debris followed the explosion, and the ship settled down forward, flooding the foremost magazine and between decks to the depth of about three feet. Lt Harold Auten, two guns' crews and the engine-room staff remained at their posts.

Q-ships had what was called a 'panic party' which pretended to abandon ship in order to tempt the enemy submarine to surface. The ploy worked perfectly. As the panic party rowed away, the submarine surfaced half a mile away, remaining for 15 minutes to watch the ship for any doubtful movement. The 'panic party' started to row back towards the ship to decoy the submarine within range of the hidden guns. The submarine followed down the ship's port side some 300 yards away. Lt Auten withheld fire until she was abeam, when both of his guns could bear. Fire was opened at 5.40 pm, the first shot carrying away a periscope, the second hitting the conning tower. The next round struck the submarine on the water-line, tearing it open and blowing out some of the crew. The submarine subsided several feet into the water and her bows rose, presenting a large and immobile target for shells from the *Stock Force* which sank it.

HMS Stock Force was only 360 tons but despite the torpedo damage, was kept afloat by the crew's exertions until 9.25 pm. She then sank with her colours flying, and the officers and men were taken off by two torpedo boats and a trawler. The action was cited as one of the finest examples of coolness, discipline and good organisation in the history of Q-ships and Lt Auten was awarded the VC.

After the war he wrote about his naval wartime service in a book, *Q-Boat Adventures* and in 1922 began work in the film industry. He became an executive vice-president of the Rank Organisation in New York and lived for 30 years in Pennsylvania. However, he remained a member of the Royal Naval Reserve and in 1941 was awarded the Royal Naval Reserve Officers Decoration.

During the Second World War he was promoted Acting Captain and served on the senior staff organising transatlantic convoys. He was made an Officer of the United States Legion of Merit Legion 'for distinguished service to the Allied cause throughout the war'. He died in Pennsylvania aged 73 in October 1964, and his VC is displayed at the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth.

RECOLLECTION FEATURE

A Leatherhead Evacuation Story

Rowena Tompkins has written a novel about the real life World War 2 evacuation experiences of her late mother, Edith Tompkins (1924-2014). Under the pseudonym Alice Graysharp, the book is entitled *The Keeping of Secrets* and provides an insight into the story of a working class girl evacuated to Leatherhead. The extract below uses Edith's own words when recorded in 2011. Born in Battersea, she grew up in Brixton, was evacuated age 15, later became an art teacher and married Joseph Tompkins in 1947.



Above: Edith with her parents, Frederick and Edith Rees, in 1937.

On Saturday 2 September 1939 I got up very early and left home at 5.30am as I had to get to my school by 6am. No one knew where the evacuated children would be staying and so my parents did not know where I would be putting my head down that night. They had to wait until the postcard I was given to write on my evacuation address once I knew it had reached them days later in the post.

From school the pupils walked to the station and eventually we arrived at Leatherhead Station. I was only just opening my packed lunch as the train drew in and did not get a chance to eat it then as we were marched smartly off in a column of twos from the station to the Kingston Road evacuee distribution centre.

At the distribution centre we were each given a paper carrier bag containing a big tin of corned beef, a small tin of baked beans and a small tin of evaporated milk. I remember standing in an upstairs reception room where a couple of people sat at a table overseeing the matching of children with local homes. I waited with my half-sized case beside me. The room was initially crowded but as local people chose children to stay with them and headed off; gradually

the numbers thinned out and there was just a few of us left. I was standing in a small group with two other girls when one of the organisers came to us and said, 'I've got an address for you.' The couple who owned the property to which we were being sent had not come in person to choose evacuees but the organisers had visited various houses in the area checking what accommodation was available and decided upon this home for the three of us.

We were driven by car to [a house in] Givons Grove on the outskirts of Leatherhead. The door was opened by the housekeeper and we followed her to the kitchen; my overwhelming memory of our arrival was of feeling horrendously hot and hungry.

To my surprise we were not given a bedroom but were shown to a sitting room with easels at the end where [the husband] did his painting. We slept in this room. I was given an Ottoman divan to sleep on with no sheet and the blanket scratched my neck. My companions were given a double bed.

The next day, being a Sunday, the girls all filed into Leatherhead Parish Church. We sat, expecting to hear the introduction to the first hymn. I thought there must be something wrong with the organ as instead there erupted a dreadful wailing sound, but it turned out to be the first air raid warning I ever heard. When it died away the vicar stood up and told us that England was now at war.

The only food provided for breakfast were crusts left over from bread eaten the evening before, crusts and burnt jam. While we were at our first billet we were only fed with leftovers which we supplemented with the corned beef, baked beans and evaporated milk we had been given at the evacuation distribution centre on our first day. Even though we had a lunch provided at the emergency evacuation centre, costing 4d, we were growing girls and ravenously hungry again by late afternoon which scraps did not satisfy.

We went to school from the Monday, using the premises of St John's School. The grounds were very ample and included at the town end a separate two-storey building containing classrooms and labs. Daily assembly was held by St Martin's School on the upper floor of this building and we moved around the classrooms of this building for our various lessons. The only other part of the school we used regularly was the gym. The St John's School pupils attended



Edith in 1941

in the mornings and those from St Martin's in the afternoons.

Our mornings were spent using other buildings elsewhere in Leatherhead. I attended the Methodist Church Hall for French and Art lessons; it was also St Martin's milk distribution centre. Games and PE were held at a local sports club. There were also private houses that lent a room for smaller St Martin's classes to use, particularly sixth formers as the teaching groups were small.

Everyone was expected to do their best to help the war effort. I was sent with some fellow evacuees to the Leatherhead Blind School, which was turned into an emergency hospital, to help dig and fill canvas sandbags with earth.

After two weeks, the three of us were found other accommodation. I was taken by car to Padesham Park, to a white, double fronted house with a front garden path bordered by a low, brilliant display of asters. As the car drew up the front door opened and out stepped an attractive lady in her mid-thirties. A German Jewish refugee girl was also staying there. She and another evacuee occupied the spare bedroom which was decorated with wall fabric of a pink feather-shaped design. A third evacuee and I shared a further room on the first floor and there we slept on camp beds.

The house seemed palatial. Our hosts' bedroom had an ensuite bathroom; at the end of the landing was the entrance to a domestic's flat containing bedroom, living room, bathroom and kitchen, then downstairs was an enormous lounge/diner with dividing doors.

Our hostess was a lovely lady who fed us well. She had a big lidded glass jar full of golden syrup which she shared out. I thought I had truly landed on my feet after the hunger pangs of my first two weeks. Alas, my new-found home was not to last more than two weeks. One day she learned that her family were all moving in from London and she would no longer have room for us.

I was found another place to live. The house was a semi-detached

house in a road leading off towards Fetcham from the bottom of the hill by a pub near the millpond. I shared a bedroom with one of my hosts' daughters. One day in the early autumn of 1940, my companion and I were cycling back into Warene Road when we heard the sound of a falling bomb. We threw ourselves off our bikes on to the side of the road and it exploded in a field nearby. This became a familiar sound. When the alarm sounded at school we had to move into the corridor where we sat waiting for the all clear siren.

EXTERNAL LECTURE

THE DEEPDENE TRAIL CONTINUES



Tim Knox

Fetcham Park House hosted the first of two talks on Regency art collector Thomas Hope (1769-1831) and the Deepdene Trail on 10 November. Art consultant Philip Hewat-Jaboor told how Hope, born into one of Europe's richest banking dynasties, amassed a remarkable art collection at his country estate at Deepdene, Dorking, and his town house in Duchess Street, London. His interior decoration fostered what became the Regency style, an amalgam of decorative details, ornaments and influences from antiquity and British and continental European art, architecture and design.

On 1 February, Tim Knox, Director and Curator of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge and former Director of the Sir John Soane's Museum, will discuss *Sir John Soane and Thomas Hope: Rival or Disciple?* Tim studied history of art at the Courtauld Institute of Art and was appointed assistant curator at the Royal Institute of British Architects Drawings Collection in 1989. In 1995 he became architectural historian at the National Trust and head curator in 2002. He moved to Sir John Soane's Museum in 2005 and Cambridge in 2013.

The evening in the Great Hall at Fetcham Park House starts at 6.30pm on 1 February with drinks before the talk. It is bookable via Dorking Halls Box Office on 01306 881717 and www.dorkinghalls.co.uk Tickets priced at £12 including drinks.

RESEARCH PROJECT

POST BOXES OF THE DISTRICT

In the *Proceedings 2003 Volume 6 Page 184*, DEREK RENN reported a survey in which L&DLHS members provided details of nearly 100 red post-boxes in the district. Conducted between October 2002 and June 2003, this followed an English Heritage and Royal Mail initiative to conserve all traditional letter boxes in honour of the 150th anniversary of the familiar collection service. With email now largely replacing traditional post, Derek has asked whether the survey results need to be updated.

The continental European system of using lockable cast-iron hollow post-boxes instead of a central receiving office was first introduced to Jersey in 1852 and extended to Guernsey and England in the following year.

In 2003 our local survey discovered a total of five red letter boxes in the district dating back to Queen Victoria. Three of them were traditional cylindrical post-boxes made some time between 1887 and 1901. Two were on corners at Kingston Road/Kingslea, Leatherhead and Green Lane/Oakhill Road, Bookham. The third was at the entrance to Yehudi Menuhin School in Cobham Road. The other two were wall-boxes, possibly dating back to 1881 on the garden wall of Downside House, in Downs Lane, Leatherhead, and opposite The Star pub in Chessington Road.

All but three of the other letter boxes recorded in 2003 dated from the reigns of George V and VI or the present Queen. The three exceptions, all in Ashted, were true rarities. Two of them, marked EVIIR, were cast in Falkirk, Scotland, some time between 1904 and 1910. Unlike earlier post-boxes, the posting slot was in the door. Victorian ones had the slot above the door and letters might sometimes be trapped in the top of the box. The two Edwardian boxes were located on the corners of Skinners Lane/Oakfield Road and Barnett Wood Lane/Church Road.

The other post-box was unique in dating from the brief reign of Edward VIII in 1936. Marked EVIIIR this was located near the railway station on the corner of Overdale/Broadhurst but had formerly



Left: Unique letter box near Ashtead railway station, marking the brief reign in 1936 of King Edward VIII .

stood on the southern side of Craddocks Parade. It remains today as a unique landmark whose significance is probably little noticed by most passers-by.

Our Society's 2002-3 project was inspired by a pioneering survey of the post-boxes of Walton and

Weybridge in connection with the anniversary commemoration by English Heritage and Royal Mail.

The full list of our local boxes standing at that time can be seen in *The Proceedings* but Derek Renn, who set the ball rolling in 2002 by asking for volunteers to check their local letter boxes, is now wondering whether it should be updated.

As traditional post has been dramatically reduced with the advent of digital communications, Royal Mail has had to change with the times and, now privatised, is very different from what it once was. How much longer can we expect to see those familiar red boxes on our streets?

OBITUARIES

JACK WILLIS AND ALAN GILLIES

We lost two old friends in August, Jack Willis and Alan Gillies.

Jack, our Ashtead archivist for some 20 years, died on 4 August. In 1993 he took over a vast archive previously assembled by Geoffrey Gollin and applied a parish and type designation to it.

He was extensively engaged in correcting research records, particularly the Rye Meadows Project, producing a detailed study from historical maps and Ashtead Court Rolls. His purpose was to record the history of the hedgerows and his paper, written in 1995, can be read at <http://www.ryemeadows.org.uk/surveys/hedgerows>

Jack was born in Weybridge in 1924. He attended Woking Grammar School (now the police station), leaving in wartime and joined the Royal Navy as a wireless operator, stationed in Ceylon. After the war, he worked for Marconi in Chelmsford where he met Dorothy, his future wife for 64 years. They married in 1953 and moved to Ashtead where they brought up their two sons, David and Robert.

Most of Jack's working life was spent as a draughtsman at the BBC. His chief interest was amateur dramatics for radio. He wrote several plays and adapted and produced others. After retiring, he became interested in local and family history and countryside management. He gave up the role of Ashtead archivist in 2013.

Alan Gillies spent his last ten years in The Red House, Ashtead where he was well cared for. It must have been a rather sad day on 8 September 1928 when Hilda and Frank Gillies's only son was born with cerebral palsy. Yet he would overcome the condition to a remarkable extent.

Hilda had been nanny in London to the three children of Lord and Lady Listowel and travelled with them to India when he became



JACK WILLIS
(1924-2017)



ALAN GILLIES
(1928-2017)

Governor of Bombay. On the ship she was congratulated for her womanly prowess by no less than Mahatma Gandhi who wrote to her afterwards. Frank, a policeman, rose to become Chief Superintendent at Bow Street with chauffeur driven car and many royal responsibilities. During his early days, he and Hilda met in Hyde Park, where many nannies pushed the prams of privileged children.

The Listowels became Alan's godparents and always supported the family. Alan received books and toys when the Listowel children outgrew them. Christmas decorations too. His parents were able to send him to a private school and then to the London School of Economics where he gained a BSc(Econ) in geography in 1953, writing his examination papers using two fingers on a typewriter in a separate room.

When Frank retired the family bought a bungalow in Ashtead, Sunnymead on Epsom Road. Alan organised their many holidays all over the country, especially to the Isle of Mull and Northumberland. He was a keen photographer and digital work eventually opened a whole new world for him.

In 1973 his book *The Multi-Lingual Dictionary of Cartographic Terms* was published by the International Cartographic Society. His own copy was signed by members of the British contributory committee 'in recognition of ten years hard labour'. His name appears below that of a colleague from the Directorate of Overseas Survey at Tolworth.

The *L&DLHS Newsletter* for March 1974 records Alan collecting names for the bulk purchase of a book. Among the authors of *Ashtead a Village Transformed*, he wrote chapters on population, roads and road services and co-authored on railway services. Similar work appears in the 1995 publication of *A History of Ashtead* where he also co-authored a chapter on modern Ashtead. He went on to work on the history of Fetcham.

He may have drawn on his earlier experience of organising educational family holidays by arranging many trips for the Society. He was much respected in Ashtead and in our Society generally. Our condolences go to his family and those who knew him as a colleague.

BOOK REVIEW

50 FINDS FROM SURREY - Objects from the Portable Antiquities Scheme

David Wynn Williams, head of Surrey's Portable Antiquities Scheme, will give a talk to the Society on 16 February on *Working with Detectorists*. Will he make some reference to the award-winning TV sitcom *The Detectorists*? asks FRANK HASLAM.

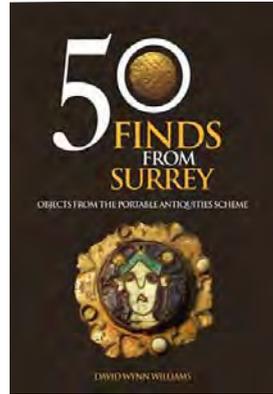
It is more likely that he will refer to the often indispensable role of metal detecting in today's archaeological activity, providing access to objects that would probably not otherwise be discovered.

Objects dropped by our ancestors can tell us a lot about the past and the landscape in which they were lost or deposited. Many finds, notably those made by metal-detector users, have been recorded throughout Surrey since 2003 by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, based at the British Museum.

In Surrey there are two prominent clubs and many individual detectorists. Sadly there are some individuals who, despite efforts to get them to take a more responsible approach, still fail to report their finds. Williams says the majority of detectorists take a great interest in the past and regularly report their finds. Local detectorists are a trusted and regular component of excavations, particularly those run by the Surrey Archaeological Society.

Surrey has revealed its past to us through finds of flint implements; through axes, hoards and ingots from the Bronze Age; through Iron Age and Roman coins and figurines, and through items lost in other historical periods, such as buckles and brooches, seals and rings, weights and harness attachments.

Using recent discoveries of archaeological objects, *50 Finds From Surrey* allows us to glimpse into a hidden past that is all around us. Each of the 50 finds is illustrated and described in a readable way.



LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No 1175119

Hampton Cottage, 64 Church Street, Leatherhead KT22 8DP

Telephone: 01372 386348 during Museum opening hours. Thursdays
and Fridays 1pm - 4pm and Saturdays 10am-4pm.

Monthly meetings at the Letherhead Institute every third Friday of the
month between September and May, 7.30pm for 8pm.

Website: www.leatherheadhistory.org

For emails see contacts below.

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Archival Material

The Society's archival material including documents, illustrations and maps, may be accessed through the following members:

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Alan Pooley

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Nigel Thompson

Historical Enquiry Service

This tries to answer questions about the histories of Leatherhead, Ashtead, Bookham and Fetcham submitted via the Museum.

Kirby Library (Leatherhead Institute)

The Library is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 10am-12.30pm. Contact Leatherhead Archivist (see above) about the Society's own collection of documents, pictures, publications etc held at the Kirby Library.

2018 L&DLHS MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS due 1 January.

Ordinary £20 Associate /Student £6 Small Corporate £125

A membership renewal form covering both the Society and the Friends of the Museum is enclosed with this *Newsletter*. An email link is provided with the digital version. Please complete the Gift Aid section if applicable.



Above: Little Dorie Arthur, born 1905, in the dark clothing, and her big brother Will (together on the right of the group) play with other children behind the Running Horse pub, Leatherhead, around 1909. Their parents had moved from Fairfield by 1907 when their little sister Violet was born. They lived at No 3, River Lane, Bridge Street. Photo courtesy of Cathy Lewer, Dorie's granddaughter.

DORKING CONCERTGOERS AT THE DORKING HALLS

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Saturday 13 January 2018 | Grand Hall 7.30pm

Mozart Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*
 Brahms Violin Concerto with **Chloe Hanslip** Violin
 Schubert Symphony No.9 Great C Major
 Jessica Cottis Conductor

STRING QUARTET SERIES (also Sunday 25 March)

Sacconi String Quartet

Sunday 4 February 2018 | Martineau Hall 3.00pm

Suk Meditation on the Old Czech Hymn 'St Wenceslas'
 Debussy String Quartet in G minor, Op.10
 Beethoven String Quartet in C sharp minor, Op.131

Sunday 25 February 2018 | Martineau Hall 3.00pm

Glass String Quartet No.2 Company; Mozart String Quartet in G major, K.387
 Dvorák String Quartet No.13 in G major, Op.106



Chloe Hanslip

Join the Dorking Concertgoers and receive a discount on your tickets

Membership costs £12.00 per year (£20.00 for 2 people at the same address) and entitles members to discounted tickets, saving up to 20%, and priority booking to all our concerts. Tickets from Dorking Concertgoers' Box Office 01306 740619 or Dorking Halls 01306 881717. Details of membership from Dorking Concertgoers on 01306 740619
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