

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 4/86

DECEMBER 1986

MEMBERSHIP

We have great pleasure in welcoming the following members who have joined since the last Newsletter was issued:

Ashtead

Miss J M Edwards
Mr & Mrs C A Gardner
Mrs D Hyde
Mr & Mrs M E Mager

Leatherhead

Mr E Hatch

They bring our total membership to 343 including 9 Honorary Members and six Junior members.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1987

This is the last Newsletter for this year, and so we must once again say that subscriptions are due on 2 January 1987. They remain at their present levels, ie £4 for ordinary members, £6 for "Husband & Wife" members and £1 for Juniors. A payment slip is enclosed with this Newsletter.

If you are - or would like to become - a "Friend of Leatherhead Museum", subscriptions of £1 are also due on 2 January 1987. This sum can be included with your Society subscription and will be forwarded by the Treasurer to the "Friends". New "Friends" are most welcome. Cheques should be made payable to Leatherhead & District Local History Society for both subscriptions.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, 15 April 1987 at 8pm in the old Council Chamber in Wesley House, Bull Hill, Leatherhead.

All papers for the meeting will be enclosed with the next Newsletter.

We are as usual badly in need of new Committee members: if you can help in any capacity whatever, please get in touch with the Chairman as soon as possible. Can we particularly appeal to some of our younger members to come forward: we have plenty of them and we need them to help with the work of running the Society.

FUTURE PROGRAMME

All meetings except the one in March will be held in the Red Cross Hall, Oaks Close, Leatherhead, starting with coffee at 7.45pm followed by the talk at 8.15pm.

FRIDAY, 16 JANUARY 1987

"Villas & Religion in Roman Surrey". A talk to be given by Dr J L Gower, who is one of the Joint Secretaries of the Surrey Archaeological Society.

FRIDAY, 20 FEBRUARY

"The City of Bristol" - a talk given by Miss Eve Myatt-Price, who is also on the Council of the Surrey Archaeological Society.

FRIDAY, 20 MARCH

A public meeting to be held in the Large Hall at the Leatherhead Institute (our first visit there) at 7.45pm for 8.15pm. There will be a talk on the forthcoming publication "The History of Leatherhead", given by the Editor, Mrs Edwina Vardey. The book is being published by this Society and the meeting, which is being advertised widely, is intended to give some publicity to it.

Mrs Vardey will no doubt be telling us, amongst other things, of the immense amount of research that has had to be done to produce the book.

Refreshments will be available from 7.45pm to 8.15pm, and on this occasion they are being organised by Mrs Joan Kirby who is responsible for taking all bookings for the hall on behalf of the Leatherhead Community Association. Many thanks to her and her helpers.

FRIDAY, 10 APRIL

A talk by Mr Leslie Bowerman on "Early Cycling in Surrey", with particular reference to the Portsmouth Road.

Mr Bowerman is Chairman of the Send & Ripley Local History Society.

SURREY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A notice has been received from the Surrey Archaeological Society Excavations Committee of their Annual Symposium to be held on 21 February 1987 in the Dorking Halls, Dorking, starting at 10.30am. The symposium includes a talk by Mr Rob Poulton on "Excavations at the Former Goblin Works Site, Leatherhead". Tickets £2 at the door, or £1-50 in advance from Mrs S Janaway at Castle Arch, Guildford GU1 3SX. Cheques payable to Surrey Archaeological Society.

NEWS OF THE MUSEUM AND ITS ACTIVITIES - From David Bruce

The Museum

On Sunday, 5 October 1986, we were visited by about 25 members of the Esher & District Local History Society. Derek Renn had met them earlier in the afternoon and taken them round Leatherhead; he then left half the party at the Museum for coffee and a chat whilst taking the other half to the Church. They then, of course, swapped over. A most interesting afternoon, they said.

Railway Exhibition at the Museum

This started with a rather modest idea to illustrate just the coming of the railway to Leatherhead. However, May Cree, who agreed to organise the exhibition, became very interested in the subject, and the Leatherhead contribution by Ralph Hume was greatly extended to deal with the history of the railways in England, the development of the railway carriage and other interesting aspects of the subject. The exhibition fills most of the wall space of the ground floor of Hampton Cottage, and will continue at least until Christmas.

Coins found in the area

Recently two visitors brought into the Museum for identification, coins that had been found in their gardens.

The first visitor had two coins; one was a very worn coin which they had identified already by a major museum as being a sestertius of Commodus (177 - 192 AD); the other we identified as a George III halfpenny dated 1799. These were found in Ottways Lane, Ashted.

The other visitor had a very nice specimen of a copper coin (an As) of the Roman Emperor Gallienus (253 - 268 AD) found in a garden in Worple Road, Leatherhead.

It is hoped that more people will bring in coins and other finds, in order that they may be recorded. A concentration of such finds in a fairly limited area might indicate the location of, for instance, a hitherto unknown Roman villa or settlement.

Museum Open Day

As announced in the last Newsletter, Hampton Cottage held an Open Day on Sunday, 21 September. A fine sunny day was spoiled by an almost total lack of support - only twelve people attended, a large proportion of whom were the organisers of the event. In the afternoon, the Curator and Norma White sat forlornly awaiting Society members, "Friends" etc, and in desperation in the last hour or so opened the doors to the public and had nearly as many of them visit us as we had "members" for the rest of the day.

It is strange that when something is organised that several people had suggested would be a good idea, so few people take advantage of it. We will try again next year, with perhaps a better response.

"Friends" of the Leatherhead Museum

The "Bygone Oxshott & Leatherhead" evening in October, organised by Ernest Crossland, was a great success and resulted in a profit of approximately £140. Thanks are due to the speakers: Mrs Freda Crawford, Ernest Crossland and Stephen Fortescue; to David Bruce for a small display of museum items; and to the Rice-Oxleys for a lively Book Shop.

There are two or three further talks on a variety of topics "in the pipeline".

St Nicolas Church, Great Bookham

The church in Great Bookham celebrated the 900 years since its first historical mention in Domesday Book with a magnificent Festival of Flowers staged from 26 to 29 September. The Society was asked to provide a small historical display, and David Bruce decorated a table with beech leaves (Bocheham - the hamlet of the Beeches), plus extracts from Domesday Book and translations and explanations (largely culled from Ernest Crossland's exhibition in the museum).

The Rector, the Reverend Andrew Warner, wrote a letter of thanks in which he said that the secondary aim of the Festival - the raising of £800 needed to restore the medieval wall painting in the church - had been achieved.

The Mole Valley Show 1987

The Museum has booked space at the show, which will be held at the Leisure Centre in Leatherhead on Monday, 4 May 1987. Nearer the time, the Curator will be pleased to hear from members who will be able to spare a few hours to man (or woman) the Museum's stand.

Museum Store Rooms

Members may be aware that the Museum uses two outside store rooms. One is high up under the roof of the Letherhead Institute, shared with a tenant (not a very satisfactory arrangement) and containing most of the Leatherhead UDC rate books given to the Society. The other is at the Woodville School off the Kingston Road, a nice room in which many bulky items are stored; but these are not readily accessible at week-ends or during school holidays and a fair distance from the museum.

A further store fairly close to the museum would be most useful so that items in frequent use in the museum, or in outside displays, would be easily available. It could also be very useful for the storage of the Society's publications - the forthcoming "Leatherhead History" will take up a great deal of space.

It would be greatly appreciated if members would keep their eyes open, and report to the Secretary details of any property they come across, whether it is for rent or purchase. Any suggestions in this connection would be welcome.

HELPERS AT MONTHLY MEETINGS

The responsibility for the coffee at our monthly meetings has now been taken over by Mrs Eileen Smith. Her assistants will no longer be "the coffee ladies" but - in modern jargon - "the coffee persons", as Messrs Seear and Smewing (both of whom admit to wielding a good tea towel) have offered to help: our grateful thanks to them, and also to Mr Sutherland-Waite who has taken over from Mrs Smith the job of signing in members and non-members attending the meetings.

LEATHERHEAD COURT

In the last Newsletter, we published some notes by Mr David Ellis on the Woodlands Park Estate and Leatherhead Court. Mr J A Farmer, one of our Honorary Members, has sent us some notes regarding Leatherhead Court:

"I went to see our old retired gardner, Frank Gale, now 92, as his father was gardner to Mr Bryant and later for a short time to Mr Benson Gale says he remembers Leatherhead Court, then called The Kennels and a pack of hounds and horses were kept there. The Hunt was not foxhounds but stag hounds and the stag was boxed and released somewhere and generally ended up in the large pond at the back of Woodlands Park House. His father - and where Gale was born - was in the lodge which was beside the main entrance, but because the drive went round close to the house (on the left facing it from the road) and there were often many guests in the house and all the coming and going to the stables at the back meant traffic was constantly passing the front windows, Mr Bryant decided to make a fresh drive across the side garden of the lodge and to demolish the lodge and this was done and Gale's father had to move into a cottage a few yards further down the road towards Stoke D'Abernon. I queried the drive that used to come out almost opposite the back entrance to what is now Leatherhead Court, but Gale said he did not remember it nor the cottage which I believe stands there now. He only remembered one drive, the one I have described which was opposite the brick farm buildings. I remember the last drive being blocked off with a close boarded fence by the cottage and expect it is now quite grown over, and if Gale is correct must have been made by a later owner about 1925."

Mr Farmer also quotes a story told him by Mr Gale about Mr Bryant.

"Apparently he had a well matched pair of cobs which he used to take him to Chobham Station each morning, and the grooms called them Bryant & Mays. Mr Bryant heard of this and was rather annoyed and asked his coachman why they called the horses by that name, to which the coachman tactfully replied - "Because they are a perfect match, Sir", which no doubt mollified Mr Bryant."

THE HAWKS HILL ICE-HOUSE - From H M Burkill

An ice-house used to exist in the quarry situate at grid reference 162555 on sheet TQ15 of the Ordnance Survey, ie lying between Dead Woman's Lane (a name seemingly forgotten for the lane between Thorncroft and Hawks Hill) and the railway. I first came to know it in 1926 when, during the school holidays I and my friend Alwyne Coleridge, elder son of the then Vicar of Leatherhead, used to beat over the Mole Valley countryside. Though not in use then, it was in reasonable order and could well have been easily refurbished. It consisted of a large cell cut into the base of the quarry face. It was lined with planks and there was a pit in the middle of the floor. The quarry itself was completely overgrown with trees and undergrowth rendering the ice-house as cool and protected from the sun and wind as possible. During the slump of the early '30s it was often used by tramps for lodging if they

were not making the official day's March from Epsom to Guildford. The Surrey County Council should have protected it, but unfortunately the East Surrey Water Company got their hands on it when they built the sedimentation tanks on Hawks Hill and used the quarry as a tip for the flocculum produced in treating (and utterly ruining!) the delightful sparkling artesian water we used to have in prewar days.

I do not know the history of the ice-house. Thorncroft was the nearest house. Nor do I know the history of the quarry. There were chalk quarries opened along the North Downs after the Fire of London to produce lime for rebuilding. That on Hawks Hill is said to have contributed to Wren's work on St Paul's Cathedral. Since I first knew it in 1926 there has never been any extraction of chalk. In the 1914-18 war a short rifle range was set up there for training recruits, presumably using .22" calibre, for full-bore .303" would hardly have been safe in such a confined space. A distant kinsman of mine called Down who lived in the last house in Great Bookham, Guildford Road, then called 'Penang' and now 'Little Hayes', had something to do with this exercise. In 1926 the hut serving as firing point was still in fair condition.

LEATHERHEAD AND FETCHAM C.1712 - From Derek Renn

Celia Fiennes (1662-1741), the daughter of a Roundhead Colonel, travelled extensively in England and left a manuscript account of her journeys which has recently been published in full by Christopher Morris (Crescent Press 1945, reprinted with illustrations McDonald 1982). The last part of the manuscript includes the following:

"(Leatherhead) is a little town where they make much leather and other little trades, many butchers which supply Epsam and a great river half a mile off, over which a long bridge of 14 great arches of stone by their height shows sometimes the water to be very deep....."

"(Fetcham Park) built of brick and stone coyned and the windows stone, nine sashes to the garden"(long description of exterior of house and its garden) "a long canall as broad as the walk, at the farther end is a Triton gilt with a horn which can blow the water 20 yards... all the water is brought from Leatherhead up the hill which was a vast expence."

And finally -

The Committee wish all members a very happy Christmas and a peaceful and contented New Year.

Joyce Fuller



LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

To: Miss J Fuller, 6 Siddons House, Howard Close, Ashted KT21 1DY

I/We enclose my/our subscription(s) of £4 / £6 / £1 for the year 1987.

I/We also enclose my/our subscription of £1 each to the "Friends of Leatherhead Museum. "

(Delete if not applicable)

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

CHEQUES FOR ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO "LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY"