

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Registered Charity No 802409

Chairman

Mrs L Heath
5 St John's Avenue
Leatherhead KT22 7HT
Lea 372603

Treasurer

C V M Latham
1 The Knoll
Leatherhead KT22 8XH
Lea 372055

Secretary

Miss J Fuller
6 Siddons House
Howard Close
Ashtead KT21 1DY
Ash 277876

NEWSLETTER 3/91

AUGUST 1991

MISS L F STAINER

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death in July of Miss L F Stainer. The History Society, of which she had been a member for many years, was only one of her many local interests and her willing help was available to them all at any time.

We shall miss her greatly, and we extend our sympathy to her sisters.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to the Society:

Ashtead
WILKINS, Miss Iris

Leatherhead
COLE, Mr & Mrs P
PICKERING, Paul

HOWARD FAMILY VAULT, GREAT BOOKHAM

The Howard family vault in the churchyard of St Nicolas Church, Great Bookham, was investigated by members of the Society in July 1990, led by Stephen Fortescue.

A report on the investigation is being published in September 1991 as an Occasional Paper. All members will receive a copy of the Occasional Paper which will be available for collection at the Dallaway Lecture on Friday, 16 October 1991.

A MONUMENT IN LEATHERHEAD PARISH CHURCH - From David Ellis
In the chancel of Leatherhead Parish Church there is an inscription which reads as follows:

"Francis Langston, Lieut-General of Her Majesty's Forces, died the 6th of March 1713/14, aged about 60 years. To whose memory Deborah Langston, his widow, erected this monument. March 25, 1720."

With the help of the National Army Museum, I have been able to discover the following information. It would be interesting to know of his connection with Leatherhead. Can any member of the Society add anything?

Langston was a Cavalry Officer and fought at the Battle of the Boyne (1690). He became Colonel of a Cavalry Regiment, "Langston's Horse", later the 4th Dragoon Guards, in 1693. In the same year he fought under William III against the French at the Battle of Landen. He was thought to have been killed in a cavalry charge at the end of the battle, but in fact was captured and returned within two months in exchange for two French officers.

He served in Ireland from 1699 as a staff officer in Dublin Castle with the rank of Brigadier-General. Despite an accusation of embezzlement of funds he became Major-General in 1703 and later Lieutenant-General. He retired in 1713.

(Please contact David Ellis with any information. His address is 23 Kingscroft Road, Leatherhead, telephone 372509.)

GOING FOR A SONG? - From Linda Heath

Some of you may have seen the photograph in the local paper of a watercolour by Turner depicting a scene by the River Mole with Leatherhead Parish Church in the background. This painting was up for auction at Sothebys in July and was estimated to fetch between £12,000 and £18,000. Realising that this was a figure somewhat above our resources, I felt I must take the opportunity to see the original, as we were never likely to possess it. So I went to Sothebys on one of the viewing days before the auction. It was a most attractive painting similar to the sketch photographed in the History of Leatherhead, but not quite the same view.

In due course Jack Stuttard, Editor of our Proceedings, went to the auction and, fortunately for the Society, managed to restrain himself from bidding for it as, in the event, it fetched £33,000. Otherwise our subscriptions would have to be increasing by rather a large amount! Readers may be interested to know that the painting was bought by a private individual and not by a museum, art gallery or a company.

THE OLD YEW TREE IN SELBORNE CHURCHYARD

The Autumn number of "The Countryman" magazine gives some information about the giant 1400-year-old yew tree that members who went on the Society's recent visit, saw in Selborne churchyard. The tree was blown down in the great gale of 25 January 1990.

Gilbert White, in the late 1700's, measured the tree as 23 feet in circumference. A few months before the 1990 storm it was measured again and found to be 27 feet round. Some six years earlier the Forestry Commission at Alice Holt Research Station surveyed it and gave its diameter as 3'3" and its height as 70'.

The hole under the root-bole was investigated by the Hampshire County Council's Museum Service who found seven complete burials and the remains of six others. They were likely all to be medieval and a sherd of a green glazed pot dated as AD 1200 was found in the filling of one grave.

In the hope of saving the tree, students from Merrist Wood Agricultural College pulled it upright again after preparing the hole to encourage regrowth. When we saw it, there were signs that the tree is still alive.

Our thanks to "The Countryman" for letting us quote their information.

HELEN MARGARET WHITFIELD

A visitor to the Museum in the middle of July (Mr Barnsby) asked if the Society had any information about a Victorian water colour artist, Helen Margaret Whitfield. The only facts about her that Mr Barnsby has are that she lived from 1860 to 1952, that she specialised in painting gardens and is believed to have painted one in the Dorking area. It is possible that she painted other gardens in "our" area.

Mr Barnsby has enquired in many places about Helen Whitfield with no success at all. If any members know anything about her, would they please get in touch with our Record Secretary, Roddie Clube - Bookham 453145 - who would like the information for our records and will pass it on to Mr Barnsby.

BRITAIN'S WORLD WAR TWO DEFENCES

A symposium on the remaining physical evidence of this country's anti-invasion preparations is to be held on 2 November 1991 at Surrey University.

It is to be hosted by the Surrey Industrial History Group, assisted by three other groups. Topics to be covered include the history, construction and armament of these defences. A field trip will take place on the following day to local sites of interest.

The cost of the symposium will be f6 (excluding lunch). Further details may be obtained from Gordon Knowles, 7 Squirrels Green, Great Bookham KT23 3LE, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

PROGRAMME

SATURDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER - "Walk" round the Bourne Hall area of Ewell.

This walk has been organised by Mr Ian West, of Nonsuch Antiquarian Society, and our thanks to him for doing so.

Apart from anything else, Mr West hopes to take us into one of the interesting private houses in the area.

Meet at Bourne Hall at 2.30pm. The charge is fl and a booking form is enclosed. Numbers limited to 30.

WINTER LECTURES

The programme of winter lectures will again be held on Friday evenings in the Dixon Hall of Leatherhead Institute at 7.30 for 8pm. Coffee available from 7.30pm. Entry fee 20p members, 50p non-members.

October 18 - Dallaway Lecture: "Ashtead: Village to Suburb" -
A talk given by Alan A Jackson, FRSA. Mr Jackson was the Editor of "Ashtead - A Village Transformed" published by the Society in 1977.

A new history of Ashtead is planned and Alan Gillies is co-ordinating the work. He needs more offers of assistance doing almost anything including research, typing, loan of material etc, etc. Please ring him on Ashtead 274616 if you can help in any way.

The Dallaway Lecture is open to the public. Come early to be sure of a seat.

November 15 - "London's Bridges"

A photographic study of the road bridges over the Thames Tideway from Tower Bridge to Teddington. The commentary covers the history and building of the bridges, from the Roman London Bridge to the most recent bridges and includes reference to some of the outstanding personalities involved.

Presented by Charles Abdy of Nonsuch Antiquarian Society.

December 13 - "Christmas Miscellany"

An evening of short contributions by members - serious and not-so-serious. Please contact Gordon Knowles on Bookham 458396 if you would like to include an item. New speakers as well as our better known ones are more than welcome: don't be put off by the date being Friday the Thirteenth!

"SITUATION VACANT - MUSEUM CURATOR"

After many years of setting up and "being" the Museum, to our regret David Bruce wishes to resign as Curator at the end of this Committee year, ie April 1992. Replacing David will be well nigh impossible, but if any member would be interested in taking over, or knows of anyone who would be interested please get in touch with Linda Heath on Leatherhead 372603, or David Bruce on Bookham 458722, and they will explain exactly what is involved.