



# HORLEY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

SPRING 2016 NEWSLETTER

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**REGULAR ATTENDANCE AT HORLEY LIBRARY, HISTORY CENTRE**

**ON TUESDAY AFTERNOONS 3.00pm ~ 5.00pm SATURDAY MORNINGS 11.00am ~ 1.00pm**  
(If travelling a distance and you particularly would like to see someone, suggest you check by phone beforehand)

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## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

Horley Methodist Church, 145 Victoria Rd Horley in the Meeting Room at rear of building; there is also car parking adjacent.

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March

Portrait of Surrey – Alan Reid

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April

Not yet finalised

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May

Battle of the Somme – Doug Cox

**It is now our policy to send reminder's of forthcoming meetings to all members for whom we hold an email address. Do we have yours ?**

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## **RECENT MEETING Reports**

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November

Possibly for the first time ever, guests outnumbered the members who met at The Pilot Club, Redhill Aerodrome for a presentation by HLHS member Brian Buss on the 'Early History of Redhill Aerodrome'. The story goes back to the 1930s and Brian showed us many pictures showing the building of the first hangar and subsequent developments. Aviation enthusiasts enjoyed pictures of various aircraft types that had been based at or visited Redhill over the years. In thanking the Chief Executive, Ann Bartaby for hosting the meeting Brian donated, from his personal collection, a Canadian Air Force flag for future display in the hangar. That force was briefly connected with the airfield in WW2

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December

We enjoyed our Christmas Quiz, fast becoming an annual event. Excellently written, photographed and quiz mastered by

John Chisholm, the picture based questions showed many old photos of our town and local surroundings.

We saw a wonderful photo down Victoria Road, showing the existing train station being built; also the lovely little cottages that stood where Waitrose car park is now; we guessed at the old doctor's surgery where offices now stand opposite the police station. We learnt which Horley town centre shops lost their decoration as a bomb hit the St Barts Lych Gate and the shop on the Brighton Road rebuilt in 1952 following a coach crash into its frontage. (CMcL)

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January

On Thursday 28 January, we were delighted to be joined by Alex Hunter to hear about the 'Rotters of Gatton', more specifically the eight owners of the Rotten Borough of Gatton from 1449-1832 and their exploits! As many of you will be aware, a Rotten Borough, or Pocket Borough as they were also known, more formally known as a nomination borough or proprietary borough, was a parliamentary borough in existence prior to the Reform Act of 1832, which had a very small electorate and could be used by a patron to gain unrepresentative influence within the Unreformed House of Commons.

From 1450 the village of Gatton was part of the parish was the parliamentary borough of Gatton, sending two members to the House of Commons. The borough consisted of part of the parish of Gatton as set out, as well as the manor and estate of Gatton Park.

While Old Sarum was perhaps the most notorious and often quoted, the Rotten Borough of Gatton had plenty to boast of! We learnt of Gatton's importance or desirability given its proximity to Nonsuch Park during the Tudor period and, of course, London and Parliament throughout its existence.

(continued)

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January (Continued)

Famous for the first recorded female voter in 1554 when Lady Mary Copley voted in her husband as MP, the Rotten Borough's fortunes have been deeply intertwined with the political and economic events of the day. When the Pope excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I in 1570, the Catholic Lord Copley then went into exile as absentee owner. When his wife and child returned to England after his death she was soon caught harbouring a Catholic priest.

It seems that between 1584 and 1621 the humble villagers of Gatton may have genuinely elected their MPs in their own right for these reasons.

Gatton "Town Hall", on Gatton Park estate, is a folly erected in 1765: it takes the form of an open Doric temple. It was here that the parliamentary elections were held since that time as the law dictated voting must take place under a roof!

The Rotters of Gatton, the owners, have included the heads of two banks, whose bank failed resulting in their suicide. Not least of these was Thomas Turgis, described as a 'base stinking fellow' and the 'honourable' John Davies who got himself into so much debt his father refused to bail him out any further. Davies took himself off to the Bedfordshire Arms in Covent Garden, with four 'common women' and a blind fiddler, had lots of 'fun' then blew his brains out! His wardrobe of clothes sold for £21000 after his death! Then there was John Petrie who succeeded in being voted an MP for rotten Gatton after having been an MP in France, surely the only person ever to have done so.

At its height in 1830, the reported price of the Manor of Gatton was £180,000, despite the prospect of disenfranchisement; in the same year, while the ownership of the borough was under the administration of a broker, one of its seats in the new Parliament was sold for £1,200.

In 1832, when the constituency was abolished by the Great Reform Act and the Rotten Borough ceased to exist, but the stories of the Rotters live long in our memories! (Cmcl)

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February** talk by Cora McLaren on the Village of Lowfield Heath Report in next issue !

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#### **Peter Blakey (1931 – 2015)**

Peter sadly died on 30 December 2015 after being a member of the Society for some 25 years. He was an unassuming person with great passion and enthusiasm for all he undertook. After his time in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines he became a valued member of the Horley community working at the Monotype and the Post Office. His leisure time is remarkable for all that he has carried out for the Methodist Church and for the 9<sup>th</sup> Horley Scout Group based there. He was someone who had the ability to inspire others, particularly the young as is obvious from reading "75 years of Scouting in Horley 1908 – 1983".

Peter also quickly made his mark in the Society. By 2001 he was the co-author of "Great-Grandfather's Horley Book 3" and later he was instrumental in writing and producing a book entitled "Horley Methodist Church. The First Hundred Years 1909 – 2009"

**This once again demonstrated his enthusiasm and he soon became a member of the History Society's committee and its Vice Chairman. We will all miss him and on behalf of the Society's membership we offer our sincere condolences to his family.** (BB)

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#### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

This duly took place on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February. The existing Officers and Committee were duly re-elected without change. Samantha Marshall volunteered to join the 'team' and we look forward to her input to HLHS in due course. We need a volunteer to look after our books that we have in stock and to perhaps arrange with local shops in the town to sell them for us. It is an important task but not really too onerous – do YOU think you could help us – if so, do please contact the Chairman or any Committee Member. The post of Vice Chairman remains vacant.

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**SUBSCRIPTIONS** are now due. £7 single or £10 joint membership. If you haven't already paid, please forward a cheque to the Treasurer at 57 Poynes Road, Horley RH6 8LS. Thanks !

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**WEBSITE** [www.horleyhistory.org.uk](http://www.horleyhistory.org.uk) webmaster Peter Cox

Want to know what is happening in Horley or need some information - why not try looking on our site? We also have a presence on Facebook, find us on the Horley Local History Society page but DO NOT mix us up with Memories of Horley page, they are nothing to do with us at all.

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#### **CONTACTS FOR HORLEY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

website [www.horleyhistory.org.uk](http://www.horleyhistory.org.uk) **Facebook** Horley Local History Society  
**Chairman** Alan Reid 01293-782630 **Vice-Chairman** currently vacant  
**Treasurer** Doug Cox 01293-410366 **HLHS Archives** contact via Chairman  
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