



HORLEY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

SUMMER 2016 NEWSLETTER

**REGULAR ATTENDANCE AT HORLEY LIBRARY, HISTORY CENTRE ON MOST
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)

- FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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

Thursday 26th May Battle of the Somme – 100 Years ago – Doug Cox
Thursday 30th June Brief history of Haroldslea and surrounding area Peter Cox
Thursday 28th July MEMBERS ONLY Meet at Mosaic in High St, 7.30pm Town Walk
Thursday 25th August No meeting –Summer break
Thursday 8th September Note date This Meeting replaces that on 22nd September so that it can tie in with the Open Heritage Weekend. This will be about the Constables of Horley Mill, which will be separate from the walks, but will be in the Open Heritage Weekend publicity. The talk will be given by Jennifer Smith.

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

STOP PRESS : It is with great sadness that we learn of the recent death of Os Brown, one of our leading members of very many years standing. Please turn to page 2 for a full obituary.

RECENT MEETING Reports

Thursday 25th February

HLHS member Cora McLaren shared with us some of the fascinating 'History of the abandoned village of Lowfield Heath, approximately 3 miles south of Horley. It's rise and demise are closely linked with the development of transport, firstly the turnpiked road as part of the main London to Brighton road in the 17th and 18th centuries, the rise of fast horse drawn coaches, the coming of the railways, the increase in motorcars, early aero clubs and finally the government decision that Gatwick would be London's second airport. The majority of what was once a thriving Surrey village lies under the runway, leaving behind a very special church built in the 1860s and a windmill moved in the 1980s to Charlwood. Both interesting and poignant, we heard of the loss of a way of life, a community and many historic buildings as progress marched on. (CMcL)

Thursday 24th March

Alan Reid, our Chairman, entertained us to an interesting summary of the book 'Portrait of

Surrey' by Basil E Cracknell. Split into sections as set out in the various chapters of the book, he gave us an overview of some of the physical geographic features in each area covered. Unfortunately the book is silent on Horley. Thank you Alan.

As there was time to spare after Alan's presentation, your editor showed on the big screen a number of postcard images of old Horley recalling scenes of the past, some of over 100 years ago.

Thursday 28th April

Alan Barwick, a Sussex based historian gave us a very full and interesting account of the London-Brighton stagecoach operation which for a time came via Reigate and Horley, stopping for refreshments and changing horses at the sadly now closed and derelict Chequers Hotel. Illustrated with postcard views of over a hundred years ago Alan gave a fascinating account of Alfred Vanderbilt, an American with Dutch connections, who brought his own 80 horses across the Atlantic by boat when he started up a rival operation in competition with established coaches.

The Passing of a Legend ~ We say "goodbye & thank you" to Os Brown

Os passed away on the 7th of May 2016 at the grand old age of 101 years. A quiet, modest man who is believed to have remained a Member for the longest time since the Society was formed in 1952 (then called an Association). It is thought that he joined in the 1970s when others such as Colonel Macleod and Elizabeth Lane were then members.

He soon became immersed in the collection of local knowledge partly by building on that already accumulated by the two members mentioned above, as well as physically collecting and producing hand-written copies of local memorial inscriptions and the like, assisted by Jean Shelley. These documents still feature prominently in the Society's records which are held in the Library today.

It is also thought that perhaps his DNA aided his ability to find and absorb such a vast quantity of local historical knowledge as his grandfather, George Brown, occupied both the Chequers and the Albert Brewery and his father was the manager of the latter. Also, Os himself worked as an architect on several major projects in Horley in the 1930s including the building of the Regent Cinema and some of the early buildings at Gatwick aerodrome. In later years, away from Horley, he worked in the Planning Dept of Crawley Borough Council.

By the 1980s he had become THE bedrock of historical information in the Society and most new members not only sought his knowledge at every opportunity, but also contributed more information to enlarge the Society's overall understanding. The results of this activity were seen by the number of publications produced, but few if any bore Os's name as he was adamant against permitting this. We did of course recognise his extensive contribution that he always made.

Many of us were lucky enough to spend many hours in his company in Limes Avenue discussing projects and seeking his local knowledge and approval of the methods of research we were employing. This was something that Os inwardly enjoyed and appreciated. Often he would express this as the size of membership grew and this appeared to give him greater pleasure than having his name on the cover of yet another publication. He also willingly participated over many years when the Society formed the Horley History Centre 21 years ago. He frequently was at the Library for our twice weekly attendances, answering visitor's queries and generally taking great interest in Horley matters. We still miss his presence.

He preferred to use Os rather than his first Christian name. This unto itself tends to characterise the man. A true gentleman, he was a quiet, intelligent and modest person with an easy going, good humoured manner.

Horley Local History Society has lost one of our most treasured and honoured members as have

the people of Horley. We shall miss Os greatly in the months and years to come.

He leaves two sons, John and Anthony and we express our condolences to them and their families. The funeral will take place at the Surrey & Sussex Crematorium on Tuesday 31st May at 11.30 a.m.

(thank you Brian Buss - Ed)

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WEBSITE 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 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.

- - **CONTACTS FOR HORLEY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

website	www.horleyhistory.org.uk	Facebook	Horley Local History Society
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