

# Lamorbey and Sidcup Local History Society



Newsletter  
Autumn 1992



# Lamorbey & Sidcup

LOCAL  
HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NO: 8

## EDITORIAL

Reading through the newsletter on this occasion you will probably feel that between us we have produced a travelogue. It is indicative of the fact that due to the 40th Anniversary Celebrations we have had many more outings than usual which I think have been enjoyed by everybody. Most members have been either on the coach outings, evening walks or perhaps Sunday afternoon tours. I have only missed one - Lesnes Abbey - as I was on holiday. For myself it has been an exciting time, hoping that the arrangements that Norma and I had made would be successful. We had a hiccup or so on the Tower Bridge and Pageant afternoon but on the other hand our Hythe, Rye and Winchelsea coach outing arrangements exceeded even our wildest hopes.

Further in the newsletter, Norma (Huntley) has written a farewell article on her leaving Sidcup for Winchelsea. Norma has been a kingpin of the Society doing many services quietly so she has almost been taken for granted. She has typed and copied our Autumn programmes, typed and copied the Newsletters (now quite a task), typed and had printed the Blackfen book. To cap it all she then became the Outings Secretary when Mrs. Nash stepped down with the proviso that she had help. I became the other half taking on board the leading of the groups and the driving on the reconnaissances. The Society is greatly in Norma's debt for all the work she has done on our behalf and we thank her for that and for giving the Society a more professional look.

Dorothy Connelly has already helped out with copying for the Brighton Outing and Janet Woods and Val Allen have offered their secretarial skills. Please don't hesitate to come forward if you can help in any way. We really must spread out our jobs more as has been proved by Norma's departure.

Eric Percival's article on happenings in 1952 was compiled by his wading through microfiche held at Hall Place of the Local Paper for that year. I am sure some of the facts he brings out will trigger off memories of your own. A thank you to everybody who contributed to this edition of the newsletter and especially to Margaret White for her local history article on the Hatherley Road area and her drawing of "The Old Ladies".

Our very special front row at Society evenings is sadly no more - Mrs. Booker having passed away, Mr. Hayward is now resident in Baugh House and Mr. Liverton is suffering from arthritis in his feet and feels he can no longer attend the meetings. At our 40th Anniversary Dinner in October we shall certainly remember our "absent friends" with great affection.

So welcome to you all once again to perhaps a quieter but happy 1992/93 year.

Frances Oxley  
Hon. Sec. & Editor



"1952"

The year in which our Society was founded started sadly with the death in February of King George VI. There can be few Society members who do not remember the photograph of the new Queen descending from her aircraft to be greeted by her Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden and the Opposition Leader, Clement Attlee.

Other national events: "The Mousetrap" began its run and is still running!, the great "Smog" (more of this later) and the United Kingdom exploded its first atom bomb.

To more local events. Sidcup was still part of the Chislehurst and Sidcup Urban District Council, a sub-committee was formed to investigate the possibility of achieving borough status, but nothing came of this and we eventually became part of the London Borough of Bexley. There were two cinemas, among films being shown were "The African Queen", "The River" and "The Las Vegas Story". It was a celebratory time for schools also. Both Chislehurst and Sidcup and Days Lane notched up twenty-one years - Days Lane produced a five tier cake weighing 110lbs and Chislehurst and Sidcup Air Training Corps was inspected by the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff. Miss Davis, the founding headmistress of Blackfen Girls School, retired.

Shopping looked good, a bedroom suite for £63.13.4 (£63.66), 1/6d (7 1/2p) to dry clean a skirt, television sets ranged between 49 and 89 guineas (£51.45-£93.45) and you could hire a car for £1 per day. However, pay was in keeping with prices - a male cleaner working for the Post Office received £5.16.6 (£5.83) for a 48 hour week, domestic help 2/6d (12 1/2p) an hour and the state retirement pension was 50/- (£2.50). An experienced mens outfitters assistant's job was advertised at £430 per annum. Housing was relatively expensive - a chalet style house would have sold for £2,800.

The law frowned heavily on road users. The police declared that "motor cycles were the worst road menace". A Miss Florence was fined £1 for riding her bicycle on the pavement whilst Albert Clark paid £2 for speeding and £1 for having faulty brakes on his car.

In June, The Duchess of Kent (later Princess Marina) formally opened the gardens of Hall Place as a public park and fifty-nine names were added to the War Memorial.

The year ended with the great "smog". This lasted for four nights and three days, stranding workers at their place of work whilst some motorists slept in their cars in the Odeon cinema car park. There were many road accidents and buses had to be led by torches - cleaning up took weeks and led to the introduction of the Clean Air Act.

Of the local buildings in use in 1952, many have now disappeared or have been renamed. The Odeon Cinema (now Lamorbey Baths), Station Hotel (now The Iron Horse) and the water tower in Chislehurst has been demolished. How many more can you remember?

Eric Percival

VISIT TO THE GEFFRYE MUSEUM AND THE BETHNAL GREEN MUSEUM OF CHILDHOOD  
23rd NOVEMBER 1991

The Geffrye Museum takes its name from Sir Robert Geffrye, 1613-1703, who



bequeathed the residue of his estate to the Ironmonger's Company. In 1712 a site was acquired in Shoreditch for £200 and the present buildings were completed in 1715. The almshouses were converted to a museum in 1914, which appeared in its present form in 1935.

Having negotiated unfamiliar London streets, with the aid of a guide map supplied by Frances, our party eventually arrived at Hackney, where furniture used to be the major industry. Each almshouse has been converted into a room to give a range of furnished settings dating from 1600 to 1936, with others upstairs continuing to the 1950s. The furnishings came mainly from areas of London outside the almshouses. Passing through the Georgian street, with its 18th century woodworker's shop and open hearth kitchen, we came to the Elizabethan room with oak panelling from 1500 to 1620. This was followed by the Stuart room of 1670 and the William and Mary room of 1700 with its Closet of Curiosities of 1702.

The Chapel of 1715 was in the centre of the range, in its original state complete with pews and the Creed, Commandments and Lord's Prayer on the wall. Since the cafeteria (1991) was nearby this made an excellent excuse for a welcome break! The sequence continued with the Early and Late Georgian rooms, 1760 and 1780, the Regency and Mid-Victorian rooms, 1830 and 1865 and finally the Voysey room of 1910, in the Art Nouveau style. Upstairs were rooms from the 1930s in the Art Nouveau style and from the 1940s and 50s, all well within the memories of several members.

Walking through time in this way allowed one to see not only the progress made in decoration and furniture design, but also in musical instruments from spinets to upright pianos, floor cleaning with early vacuum cleaners, looking almost as hard to use as a brush and electric fires.

More was yet to come, following the short drive to Bethnal Green and the Museum of Childhood. This is a branch of the Victoria and Albert Museum concerned with what has been made for children, of all ages be it said! We started with another collection of rooms which first required going through the looking glass, not with Alice, but with Joan Seymour, who gave an able presentation of fourteen houses in the doll's house collection. We learnt that they were not originally made for children, but were status symbols, being a miniature representation of the house in which the family lived and so were known as baby houses until Victorian times. Also that the doll's house kitchens were originally used to teach the daughters of the house how the cooking should be organised.

The earliest example we could find was the Tate Baby House of 1760, which had an architecturally accurate exterior based on a house in Dorset and was fully furnished in 18th and early 19th century styles. The Denton Welsh Baby House of 1783 and the Thornton Smith Baby House of 1800 followed. Caroline Cottage from Abergeldie of 1831 was one played with by Queen Victoria's children. Other outstanding houses were Mrs. Bryant's Pleasure of 1860, representing contemporary interior decoration and the Drew Doll's house of 1860-65, effectively an illustrated social history of the 1860s.

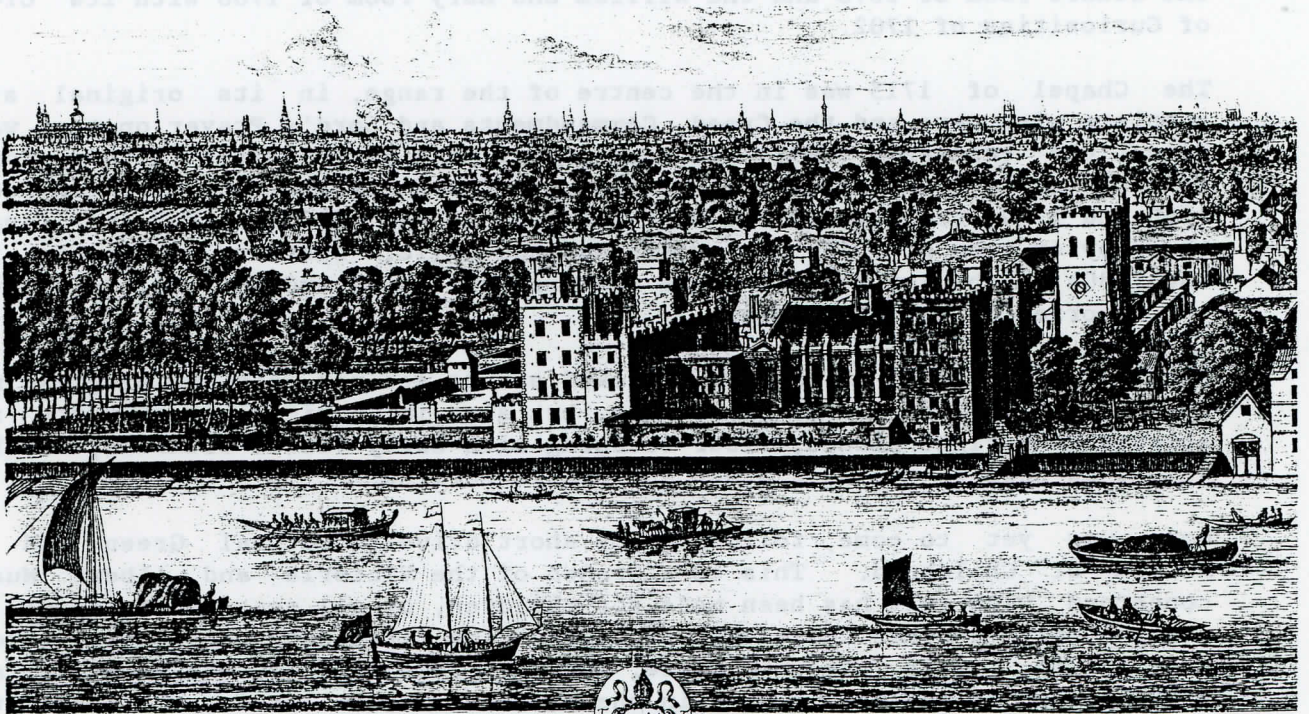
Queen Mary, who was a very keen collector, had given miniatures for some of these houses. Dingley Hall of 1874, with its Venetian glass chandelier, Miss Miles' house of the 1890s, complete with bathchair in the lumber room and No.3 Devonshire Villas of the 1900s, a replica of a family house in Kilburn High Road complete with five babies and a cat, were also memorable. There is no doubt that without a knowledgeable guide like Joan we should have missed many of these interesting features.



The party then split up to wander round the rest of the museum, where there was much else to see, including puppets, children's dress, toys and childhood collections. Joan even tracked down the Nuremberg Doll's House of 1673, which should have started her tour, but had been moved to an unexpected place. Dolls were found too, with several fine ones from Queen Mary's collection, lead soldiers, Dinky toys, Hornby trains and model railway layouts. Here was something for everyone!

John Seymour

#### OUR VISIT TO LAMBETH PALACE



*Lambeth, His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury's Pallace.*

On 23rd January 1992 a group of twenty-five members visited Lambeth Palace and were given an interesting guided tour.

Although the Bishopric of Canterbury had many properties in Kent it was necessary that the Archbishop had a London base in order to attend the King's Court at Whitehall and so Lambeth Palace has been the home to successive Archbishops from 1197 to this day.

The section of the Palace where the Archbishop lives and works was restored in 1830 being faced with bath stone. Other parts are still in their medieval state. Here is a brief description of them:

Morton's Tower and Gate which has become one of London's landmarks was built in 1486 by Cardinal Morton, who was one of Henry VII's chief advisers. He lived in the Tower and people of great learning met with him here. His page was the young Sir Thomas More, who also had a room in the Tower.



Lollards Tower with Laud's Tower. Archbishop Chichele built the Lollards Tower in 1434/5 from Kentish Ragstone which was brought up by barge at the cost of £278.2s.11 1/4d. This tower stood close to the quay at Lambeth steps and for that reason was called the Water Tower. The wall facing the river had a niche where a statue of Thomas a Becket was placed so people using the river doffed their caps in respect. A prison was on the top floor of the Tower where the iron rings that the prisoners were chained to can still be seen today. It was said to be a prison for the Lollards, followers of John Wycliff. Laud's Tower was built in the C17th to provide better access to rooms above.

At the bottom of the Lollards Tower is a fine room used by Archbishop Chichele. Today it is used as the post room where the mail is collected by the Post Office.

The Chapel. A chapel has been in existence since the early C13th. Archbishop Morton had some fine windows put in and Archbishop Laud spent much money on altar rails and a fine oak screen. In the time of the commonwealth, soldiers used it as a drinking room. When a Bishop comes from another country, he knows where to sit as each stall has the Bishop's country depicted on it. Mr. Leonard Rosoman repainted the ceiling in the 1960's with scenes from biblical history.

The Crypt. The crypt consists of four double bays with a central row of low Purbeck Marble and was designed by a former Bishop of Salisbury, who copied some of Salisbury's designs in 1197. The crypt has seen historical occasions, one being the annulment of Anne Boleyn's marriage. The walls show evidence of ancient wall paintings and there is a silt mark where the crypt was flooded. It is now used for private prayer.

The Great Hall. Many grand banquets were held here, one of them being the Special Commission, presided over by Thomas Cranmer in 1543 in which London Clergy came to take the Oath of Supremacy. Sir Thomas More refused, along with the Bishop of Rochester, thereby sealing their grisly fate. The hall is gothic and was restored in 1830 with a hammer beam roof and lantern.

The Archbishop lives in the main building overlooking a pleasant court yard with a statue of a Bishop Davidson. He was the longest serving primate and retired at eighty having served twenty-five years. There is also an old fig tree dedicated to Cardinal Pole.

The main house consists of state rooms, including a grand dining room for which special china in green and gold, decorated with a mitre, was ordered from the Worcester factory. In the great corridor can be seen portraits of all the Archbishops since Victorian times. The corridor is reached by an impressive stairway designed by Blore, who had a fondness for the gothic.

Altogether a good afternoon out and thanks Norma for organising it.

Elizabeth Fleet

#### TOWER BRIDGE AND THE TOWER PAGEANT

The afternoon of Sunday, 8th March was 'all go' from the moment I set off following Frances Oxley at what she refuses to admit was 45mph through the murkier parts of South London to cross London Bridge and park in Eastcheap.



We circumvented the great bastions of the Tower to rendezvous with the rest of the party by Tower Bridge ready to view the inner workings of London's unique landmark now opened as a tourist attraction. Since I was accompanied by two granddaughters eager to get on with things, I had little opportunity to study the displays showing the history and design of the workings of the bridge, but other members of the party found them interesting and informative. I was soon in the lift taking us to the walkways high above the river.

These walkways have been turned into two viewing platforms the width of the bridge, giving marvellous panoramas, on one side downstream and the other upstream and we studied the plans identifying the GPO tower, St. Paul's, the Monument, Guy's Hospital and other buildings recalling the capital's great history. The bustling atmosphere of chatty tourists and children being lifted up to see the sights contrasted greatly with the memory of my mother telling me that these walkways, originally provided for the public to cross the river while the bridge was up, were closed years ago because of the suicides committed from them. Descending, we hoped we might see the bridge open but were disappointed as so little large traffic now comes up to the Pool of London that it opens very rarely. However, we straddled the closure of the road and saw the river below through a half-inch gap.

Then it was on to the recently opened Tower Pageant on Tower Hill. It was a concept I hadn't seen before in museums and enveloped in darkness we rode on a single line in small cars seeing the development of the Port of London from AD50 to the present day and listening to a commentary as we went.

The layout was ingenious and we swooped round curves backwards and forwards to each new period. Tableaux and dioramas revealed the marshes of Anglo-Saxon England, dissolved to the Norman invasion, showed the building of the Tower, medieval life, the Great Fire of London, C18th trade, and a too realistic Blitz. All too soon we were disembarking. Perhaps the ride could have been longer and more figures would have enlivened the scenes (but the rat scampering across the deck of a ship was only too realistic). The tour ended with a display of archaeological finds well set out and described, and a visit to the inevitable tourist shop.

The final need was tea, and too tired to queue up we settled for McDonalds; then refreshed we made our way home at a more sedate speed than the journey out. It was a great afternoon, thanks for arranging it, Frances!!

Bess Dzielski

#### THE WALLACE COLLECTION

On Sunday, 26th April a group from the Society visited the Wallace Collection. The Collection is not a display of current fashion as someone I spoke to thought. (Not, I hasten to add, a member of our Society.)

If you visit Hertford House, where the Collection is housed, you will see many familiar faces even if you haven't been there before. The most famous is the Laughing Cavalier by Frans Hals. There are also many beautiful ladies painted by Gainsborough and Reynolds who have adorned birthday cards and chocolate boxes.

There is also a small exhibition of twelve paintings originally thought to have been the work of Rembrandt. Over the years the 'experts' have decided that most of them were the work of his pupils or others who shared his studio. One, a portrait of Rembrandt's son, Titus, is a true original.



The Collection also houses porcelain, including a large amount of Sevres - rather brightly coloured in blue and pink, armour, arms, furniture and chandeliers. Clocks feature prominently in all the galleries. Some are beautiful, but others quite grotesque. Most make their presence known because they are in working order and chime regularly.

The Collection was bequeathed to the Nation by Lady Wallace in 1897. She was the widow of Sir Richard Wallace, who was the illegitimate son and only child of the fourth Marquess of Hertford. Sir Richard could not inherit his father's title, but was bequeathed property including Hertford House and its contents. The bequest by Lady Wallace stipulated that the Collection had to be kept together and 'unmixed with other objects of art and shall be styled The Wallace Collection'.

The bequest did not include Hertford House, but the Government decided to purchase the lease of the house and the museum was opened by the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) on 22nd June 1900.

Gill Brown

#### OUTING TO THE CABINET WAR ROOMS AND WESTMINSTER ABBEY

On Sunday, May 3rd, the Local History Group were to visit the Cabinet Rooms used by Winston Churchill during the war, situated in Whitehall. We were also to visit the Pyx Chamber, the Undercroft and the Chapter House, all situated in or near the cloisters of Westminster Abbey. As both our children, Fiona and Ian were camping that weekend Keith and I were free to go on the outing.

About fifteen of us set off from Sidcup Station to Charing Cross Station and made our way to the Cabinet Rooms. We were all issued with individual audio cassettes, the advantage being that you were able to go at your own pace, lingering in some places to study the room and its contents. It was a fascinating experience as most exhibits were left as they were during the war. It certainly gave a vivid impression of the technology of the time and the cramped conditions they had to endure.

We were lucky with the weather too as the day was dry and warm, ideal tourist weather.

We then made our way to Westminster Abbey to the Pyx Chamber first. The Pyx Chamber, or Chapel of the Pyx, is entered through a heavy oak doorway adjacent to the Abbey. The only remaining stone Altar from the original Abbey is in this room. In this room also stood the Pyx or box containing standard pieces of gold and silver and every year a trial of the pyx took place i.e. the testing of the current gold and silver coinage. This now takes place in the Royal Mint.

The Undercroft in Monastic times was probably the Monks common room as it is quite large (110ft long x 45ft wide) with original 11th century pillars. The room consists of wax and wooden effigies of well known personalities of their time and in the dress of the age, very often their own. The effigies were mostly used in funeral processions, particularly early ones such as Edward III. There were not a great many effigies on display but those shown were displayed to their full advantage.

The Chapter House is situated in the East Cloister of the Abbey and is an enormous circular room, bright and airy with high ceilings. The floor was



tiled in 1250, and a wooden floor was removed in the 19th century revealing these lovely tiles. Needless to say they are well protected, but can still be seen. The walls were covered in murals, so old and faded it was difficult to pick out detail unless described. The stained glass Rose Window was in clear vibrant colours as were the others. The Chapter House is so large because it was used as an assembly place for Monks and the Lay public since early times. In 1257, the King's Great Council met there and from the time of King Edward I, the Chapter House was used as a Parliament House for the Commons until the end of King Henry VII's reign. King Edward VI gave them St. Stephen's Chapel in the old Palace of Westminster.

So ended a day of history; fascinating, intriguing stories of long ago. This is something we all take for granted living here, but when you come from a country younger than 200 years old (South Africa), visiting places like this has a magic all of its own. I would like to thank Frances and Norma for all their hard work on our behalf in arranging this visit and all the others I have not been able to join. Thank you both.

Anne Brunton

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXTRACT FROM A LETTER RECEIVED FROM MARTYN NICHOLLS OF THE DIRECTORATE OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH AND DATED 15th APRIL 1992

"Dear Miss Oxley,

Bexley Heritage Fund.

Thank you for your Society's letter of 16th March 1992 enclosing a donation of £25 to the Bexley Heritage Fund. A receipt for the donation is enclosed.

The Bexley Heritage Fund has assisted in the restoration of a number of buildings in the past year and further projects are currently at the planning stage which may be implemented in the next few years. If your members have any suggestions of works which could be undertaken or assisted by the Bexley Heritage Fund, please feel free to contact me. All suggestions will be considered.

An article on the Bexley Heritage Fund is planned to appear in the Bexley Magazine later this year, featuring some of the projects which have been initiated by the Fund or grant-aided from it. This should generate more public interest.

Please pass on my thanks to your members for their generous donation to support the Bexley Heritage Fund.

Yours sincerely  
Martyn Nicholls  
pp: Chief Planning Officer"

OUTING TO HYPHE, RYE AND WINCHELSEA - 16th MAY 1992

This is a strictly personal perspective of the May Outing. There was so much on offer that it is impossible to cover everything and, as I write this on the following day, my mind is such a jumble of impressions that it is impossible to put them into some sort of logical sequence.

Towns: We visited Hythe, Rye and Winchelsea (and passed through New Romney as we left the 'little train'). Hythe is a Cinque Port still on the



sea, although now very different from the busy port of its original Charter presented in 1278. Like other areas of what we now call Romney Marsh, the harbour very quickly silted up. We arrived at Hythe at 9.15am in time to see the town starting to come alive. We had all needed early alarm calls in order to meet the deadline of an 8am start from Lamorbey, but our early arrival in Hythe proved that it was well worth the effort. The town is set on a hillside and it was a steep but pleasant climb up to the parish church (where an ex-Bexley resident was polishing brass). Hythe appears a very peaceful little town and yet it has strong links with our military history. It has been in the front line of many threatened invasions from France, including Napoleon's, (which led to the building of the Royal Military Canal which provides a pleasant aspect of the town), and, of course, in our own lifetime there was the very real threat of invasion during the Second World War. We walked from the car park towards the town along Carrunagh Road, which led to the Sir John Moore Avenue. The Local History Centre was very influenced by the presence in the town of the Army School of Infantry. It displayed the rifle used during the Zulu Wars at Rourkes Drift as well as details of acts of gallantry by individual soldiers. The Centre also has a very good section on the development of Hythe from Roman times.

But pleasant as it was to visit Hythe, very few towns can compete with the interest of Rye, and it was an experience to be driving across Romney Marsh and see the town on the hill in front of us - rather as it would have been to those approaching it by sea in the thirteenth century. Needless to say I now regret not having joined most of our party on the visit to the town model. I lingered too long over lunch and at the appointed time I had just arrived at Lamb House and was delighted to find it open to the public. In a town described in the guidebook as having a dramatic history, it was perhaps inappropriate to spend time on a literary pilgrimage, but Henry James, the most famous owner of Lamb House, not only wrote fine novels himself, but he was interested in and wrote about the art of writing novels. Although an American by birth, his contribution to English literature was recognised by the award of the OM shortly before his death (when he also took British nationality). Chesterton, Conrad, Wells, Ford Maddox Ford, Kipling etc. etc. had visited James at the house (although if you are only interested in history I can tell you that George I spent a night at Lamb House in 1776). Like many of the smaller National Trust properties the house is actually lived in and felt more like a home than a museum. It has a small, simple garden. The Garden Room where James did so much writing had been destroyed by bombs in the Second World War and this is once again a reminder that this very beautiful area of the country was actually in the front line of Britain's many threatened invasions from Europe. The Ypres Tower in the centre of the town was built in 1250 to protect Rye (although it wasn't a great success as Rye was sacked by the French).

Rye is a Cinque Port no longer on the sea (pace our visit to Sandwich last year), but it still has an island atmosphere and as it is surrounded by three rivers it is still accessible by sea. If you fancy owning a yacht, you could sail into the centre of Rye and moor at Strand Quay. But I am sure most of us think that Rye is a town of cobbled streets and windows. 'Fenestration' is the technical word for discussing the architectural and historical interest of windows and you could certainly increase your knowledge and interest by studying the windows of Rye. There are medieval, Elizabethan and Georgian windows and facades to the houses, and I would take my hat off to any amateur who could accurately identify 10 per cent of them without looking in a guide book, but it would be an interesting exercise to 'have a go'.

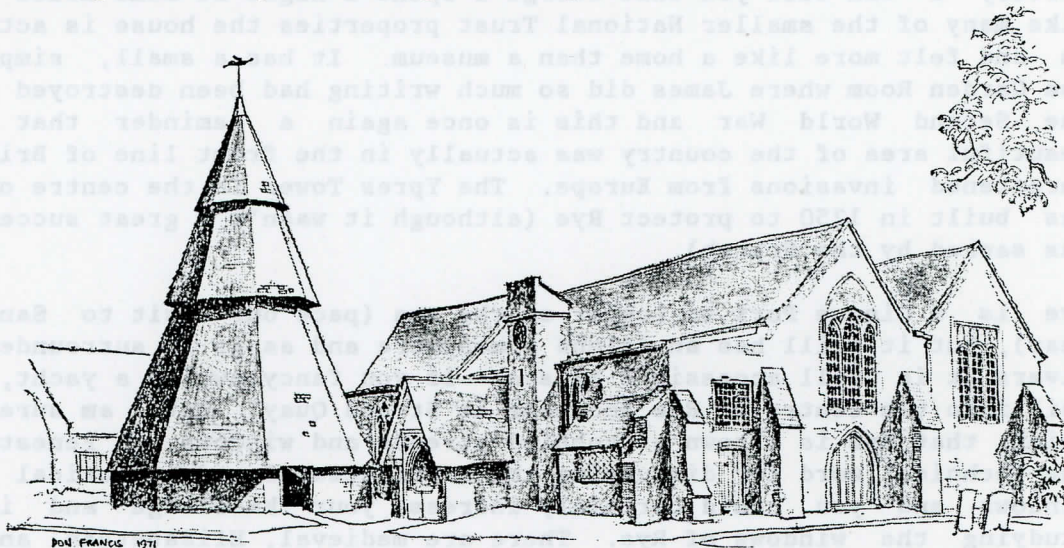
Winchelsea: Of necessity we spent a very short time in Winchelsea and most of



us lingered in the Church. What did come across, however, is that whilst Winchelsea was a very carefully planned town of the thirteenth century with its grid of straight roads, and is now very well looked after and proudly kept by its residents, somehow it doesn't gel. Just as our twentieth century new, planned towns have had difficulty getting a coherent identity, this also seemed true of Winchelsea. Although obviously now a tourist centre, Rye and Hythe seemed alive, Winchelsea didn't. This does not mean that I believe in a developers' free-for-all. I just find it food for thought!

The interior of Winchelsea Church was a riot of colour and on such a sunny day we were able to see the full beauty of the windows. Although the church itself was first built in the thirteenth century, the windows were not particularly old - a commemorative window to the courageous Rye lifeboatmen who lost their lives in a storm dedicated in 1928 and the war memorial windows of the Lady Chapel dated 1933. Before you can decipher the detail of the church, you are drawn to decipher the ripple of colour from the windows.

Yet there is so much else to see. The guidebook says that 'competent authorities assure us that the workmanship of the stonemasons stands unsurpassed in gothic architecture', and as so often in gothic churches it was good to see the moulded faces of unknown men and women looking down on us - perhaps the stonemasons or their friends and relatives. The church has seen a great deal of change over the centuries. Following the original building commissioned by Edward I, the church had been attacked by the French in the fourteenth century; had its income severely restricted when the silting up of the harbour saw the decline of Winchelsea as a rich trading port; and suffered under the turbulent years of the 16th and 17th century. The south and north transepts of the original building are still in ruins - albeit well cared for and incorporated in the surrounding gardens. Although the guidebook is quick to point out that the church is not a museum anyone interested in history is made fully aware in this church of the constant force of change during the centuries. Just one final mention - the tombs of the Knights with the crossed legs resting on carved lions. The tombs were very beautiful in themselves with their feathered tracery, and they gave many of us the task of unsuccessfully searching our memories for the significance of the crossed legs - indicating that they were Knights' Templar.



ST. AUGUSTINE'S CHURCH, BROOKLAND

This awareness of the passing centuries had been even more evident at Brooklands Church which we visited on our way to Rye. It is built on a mound to keep it above water level and looks particularly imposing against the very



flat countryside that surrounds it. It also has the distinctive feature of having a belfry separate from the church (a wooden conical structure) and this may well be because of unstable foundations of the church which would not support a belfry. The poor foundations are also responsible for the angle of the pillars in the aisle arcades in the nave. These are of interest because they are not symmetrical - six bays on the north and seven on the south - but one's interest is tempered by the unease at looking at these huge pillars leaning outwards instead of standing upright. Like Winchelsea Church, Brooklands was also built in the middle of the thirteenth century. It is dedicated to St. Augustine - a sharp reminder that these were originally catholic churches. On entering the church the first thing of notice is the Georgian box pews installed in 1738. There was some discussion about whether the congregation could see the Vicar from the pews - but probably of more importance was, could the Vicar see the congregation. Unlike Winchelsea Church, Brooklands has no coloured glass and seems light and airy in the way of a modern church. A great deal of damage was caused to the church during the Second World War and in the mid-1950s almost every window was taken out, stripped, cleaned and entirely remade - at a cost of £289.10s.6d. However, a fragment of wall painting depicting the martyrdom of Thomas Beckett is perhaps a reminder that this church would possibly also have been a riot of colour in the early centuries of its life. Pride of place in the church went to the circular lead font - one of only thirty lead fonts in the country. It was made by Norman or Flemish craftsmen and strangely it is decorated with signs of the zodiac as well as with the occupations of the monks. Perhaps the most moving thing for many of us in this church was to read the seventeenth and eighteenth century tombstones set in the wall with their long lists of the dead within a short space of time within the same family - often leaving only one member surviving into adulthood, or leaving a lone parent to have experienced the death of wife and children. It did not take much imagination to realise the central role of the church and faith at times when life was so fragile and existence was a struggle.

Countryside 'Sheep shall safely graze'. They were safely grazing. It was a beautiful, warm, sunny day. The grass was green and obviously having been deserted by the sea it was of a flavour to please the sheep. The breed is called 'Romney' and obviously the Romney Marsh is their natural environment (although apparently they are also the predominant breed in New Zealand). They were fat and woolly and their young looked very healthy - plenty of twins.

Transport I am sure none of us ever go on a coach trip without thinking how lovely it is not to have to worry about where to park. Coach travel also has the advantage that you see over hedges and appreciate the countryside so much more than in a car. We were very well chauffeured by Charlie, the coach driver, but the coach couldn't match the excitement of the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway. It was lovely to see children on the platform at New Romney looking at the engines as if driving one must be the very pinnacle of anyone's ambition, and it is a reminder of when we were young and much more capable of being excited and thrilled by the power of a steam train. It was also a very good way of seeing the Romney Marshes. The train cuts right across them and you wouldn't have had a better view in such a short time unless you had been on horseback. Frances amused us as we left New Romney en route for Brookland by reading of the little railway's 'war effort'. It started the war by crossing backwards and forwards ready to repulse the enemy with a Lewis gun. However, later it did play a more vital role in transporting sections of pipe which were used in the construction of oil pipelines to carry fuel to the Normandy beachheads.



I haven't got a sub-heading for paying tribute to Frances and Norma, but they offered us so much in one day. The timing was critical. We had just the right amount of time in each place. We are so lucky to have this area virtually on our doorstep. Yet how often do we go there? It is thanks to people who will give the time to organising such an outing that we are pulled from our normal round of chores. Frances and Norma know we appreciated it because they know we enjoyed ourselves.

Janet Woods

(Several of us climbed the tower of Rye parish church and our efforts were rewarded with the sight of Rye below us and the expanse of Romney Marsh of sheep and smuggling fame. Editor)

#### A PERAMBULATION OF GREENWICH

Familiarity doesn't necessarily breed contempt, but it very often breeds forgetfulness.

Greenwich Park has been known to me almost all my life. As a child I walked through the foot-tunnel from the north shore of the Thames to visit the Observatory and gaze on the sight of the Thames snaking down from London. For eleven years I worked in Greenwich Library and played tennis there on my afternoons off, and more recently its been a regular jaunt with my granddaughters to feed nuts to the squirrels and bread to the ducks.

Yet on one Wednesday evening, together with a dozen or so members following the indomitable Frances Oxley on a tour of the park, I found myself in parts I'd almost completely forgotten because of the sheer size and variety. The flower gardens, lakes and dells and avenues, together with the magnificent architecture and the vista of London and the river make it quite one of the finest venues in London.

We assembled at the lower gate in King William Street by the statue of William IV, that most forgettable of monarchs, and walked almost the whole perimeter of the Park. By viewing the Crooms Hill houses from within the park it was possible to obtain a clearer view of the Georgian facades, and to appreciate at a distance details barely seen from the street below in what is undoubtedly one of the most delightful streets in London.

The climb here was quite evil, but viewing the remains of Bronze age barrows (although some consider them Saxon) gave a legitimate reason to pause for breath. The climb brought us up to the rear elevations of two impressive houses which literally have Greenwich Park as their back garden. First Macartney House, where lived James Wolfe with his parents, and then Chesterfield House, home of the famous letters - sophisticated and cynical, or servile and hypocritical, depending on your viewpoint.

Subsequently, the house became the official residence of the Ranger of the Park and was at one time occupied by Caroline of Brunswick, the unhappy wife of George IV when she was Ranger. It has been restored felicitously by the GLC and now is a venue for concerts and exhibitions.

Turning parallel to Blackheath we passed magnificent rose-beds and a truly traditional English scene of cricketers in white and the thwack of willow upon leather. Then Le Notre's impressive avenue of Spanish Chestnuts took us down past the gaily painted bandstand and we struck across the breadth of the Park to Queen Elizabeth's Oak, now sadly lying on its side - a giant dead wreck.



Over to Maze Hill we studied the mock-medieval Vanbrugh Castle - the work of a man, courtier, architect and dramatist, famous in his day. Originally called The Bastille, the house became a boarding school for boys.

Next stop, farther down to examine a beautiful plaque recalling one Helena Mott. I felt my ignorance lessened when it transpired that no one else in the group had heard of her either.

Finally we turned westward and walked parallel with the National Maritime Museum and the graceful colonnaded Queen's House, strolling in small groups, chatting and re-grouping until once more we reached 'Sailor Bill'.

The June evening meant it was still not twilight - far too early to go home - and therefore a reasonable excuse for a visit to Ye Olde Rose and Crown.

Arriving home I pursued the name Helena Mott. She appeared not in any literary dictionary, nor in any list of eminent women. But success came at last in the Transactions of the Greenwich and Lewisham Antiquarian Society, 1983.

"A beautifully carved stone panel (after a design by Rex Whistler) on 115 Maze Hill, bearing the date February 1951 perpetuates the memory of Helena Pare Lydia Mott (1872-1951), a poet and writer, including stories for children. This tablet, on which is inscribed a quotation from one of her works which begins 'The summer breath is spent upon the hills ... was put up by the Mott family on this house in which she lived.' But I've still not found anyone else who has heard of Helena Mott.

But, all in all, a pleasurable and relaxing evening, ably led.

Bess Dzielski

#### OUTING TO LANCING COLLEGE CHAPEL AND BRIGHTON ON SATURDAY, 4th JULY 1992

On a rather dismal, slightly damp Saturday morning in July we joined the coach at Lamorbey Baths in good spirit for the day ahead. In spite of the dullness, visibility was good and we were able to enjoy the views and scenery on our way to Cowfold, for our coffee stop. We had intended a quick look at the church in the village, but sadly it was closed against vandalism; as compensation, however, the sun came out as we strolled about.

Then on to Lancing College. For many years I had wanted to visit the college chapel and at last the opportunity had come. As we drove up the hill to the chapel I felt my anticipation was fulfilled - a truly impressive building. It is not old as buildings go, the foundation stone being laid in 1868. The crypt has octagonal vaulting and was used by the school for worship from 1875 until the service of dedication of the upper chapel in 1911. Even then it was only the east end of the chapel which was used for services, while work continued to the west end. The style of the chapel is early 14th century English Gothic with 13th century French influences and was built by resident masons of the county in Sussex sandstone. It is still not complete. Plans were for a chapel and 350 foot tower at the west end. The chapel is still in the planning stage but the tower will not be built. Foundations up to 70 feet deep had to be dug to make safe the height of the chapel on its precariously eminent site.

Inside the west door is a low painted ceiling stretching from side to side.



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Stepping into the nave one is immediately struck by the vastness of the building, the height and lightness - quite breathtaking!

Either side of the nave are the north and south aisles, leading to the choir stalls and dividing the nave and the aisles are finely carved dark wooden canopies given to Lancing by Eton College.\* Beyond the choir stalls and behind the high altar hang huge tapestries, hand woven in Surrey by male weavers. To the left of the high altar is a smallish stained glass window mainly blue in colour. We were told that no matter what time of the day or year it never changes colour or intensity. Maybe it had an advantage in that it faced north east.

There are two organs, one on the north side, between the choir stalls and the high altar. This is the small and more intimate of the two and is used on most occasions. Turning our backs on the high altar and looking back down the nave are two special features. High in the west wall is the beautiful Rose Window - said to be the largest in Europe. Various colours in the design become more prominent as the sun moves round. We missed this experience as at that moment the "heavens opened" and the sun disappeared. The west organ is situated immediately below the Rose Window and is a beautiful piece of craftsmanship, with silver metal decoration on the organ pipes.

After a short visit to the crypt we left the Chapel, the rain having moved away.

The journey to Brighton had nothing to offer, it could have been London. Buildings, people, traffic and traffic queues. It was a relief to reach the sea even though it was grey. Philip and I chose to eat our packed lunch on the pier and watched the world go by with interest. People come in all shapes and sizes, some larger than others, their clothes varying from the rather drab to brightly coloured. Some people bright and cheerful, others finding things rather hard going. It was good to see the pleasure on the faces of some handicapped persons who were being wheeled along the pier enjoying everything around them.

We walked along the front and were pleased to see the old established Volkes Railway running along the top of the beach. Its destination no longer marked as "Black Rock" but the more up to date "Marina". There were a few intrepid bathers gambolling in the water, but the nudist beach was empty. Maybe the weather was somewhat unfavourable.

The next item for the day was a visit to the Royal Pavilion so we left the sea and headed towards Old Steine. It was a work of art negotiating the numerous light controlled pedestrian crossings, but we met up with the rest of the members waiting in the sunshine. But not for long. As we entered the Pavilion large drops of rain started to fall. We had dodged the rain again. Looking at the outside of the building, with its Indian flavour, it is hard to imagine it started life as little more than a modest farm house. In 1815, John Nash started enlarging and transforming it into the present Indian Style Pavilion. Inside a Chinese theme influences much of the corridors and staircases, with cast iron made to resemble bamboo. The Banqueting Room is a magnificent sight, with a large table set to represent as near as possible the scene of a banquet in King George IV's time. The silver gilt on display comes mainly from the collection of the third Marquess of Londonderry and to keep it in pristine condition a group of volunteers clean it each week. Five gasoliers (lamps) are suspended from the ceiling, decorated in Chinese style, the largest hangs immediately over the centre of the table. They are reputed to be the first in Brighton to be lit by gas.



The Great Kitchen was a revelation. The 500 plus copper utensils glistened as new. They could never have shone so brightly years ago. It was surprising to learn that none of the pieces on display belonged originally to the Pavilion, but are in fact on loan, some from the Duke of Wellington's London residence, some from the kitchens at Syon House and 461 given by the Trustees of the College of Domestic Subjects in London, when it closed in 1962. The fireplace is entirely original.

The Music Room is of the Regency period. The rich red and gold wall paintings were returned from Buckingham Palace in the 1860's, but the chimneypiece, mirror frame, curtains and carpet are all recent recreations of the originals. Twice the room has suffered disaster. An arson attack in 1975 damaged the curtains etc. in the area nearest to the large window and in 1987 the hurricane sent a piece of masonry from the roof crashing through the ceiling. It is, however, now restored to its former glory, a fine example of today's craftsmanship. It seemed sacrilege to tread on the lush new blue carpet. My only disappointment was the lack of musical instruments. My memory tells me that instruments of the period stood about the room. The organ remains, replacing the original one which was transferred by order of Queen Victoria in 1847 to Osborne House; it was destroyed by fire.

After making our way up the "bamboo" staircase we saw a notice - Restaurant - and almost fell onto our chairs, foot weary and tongues hanging out. Revived we continued our tour, finishing downstairs near the Pavilion shop. Most opportune, as at that moment the "heavens opened" once more, which gave us the opportunity to look at the attractive items on display - and to be tempted into buying. We left as the rain stopped and made our way back to the sea and coach.

Other members will have spent a more energetic day visiting the Lanes and other places of historic importance, or spending money in the many good shops in Brighton, but having experienced these in the past, Philip and I felt a leisurely day would suit us best.

The journey back was enjoyable and we arrived back at Lamorbey Baths, pleausrably tired at the end of an interesting and enjoyable day. With thanks to Norma, Frances and our driver.

Phyllis Nash

\* This really was full circle. On an outing to Eton College Chapel arranged by Phyllis herself, we were told that early wall paintings had been discovered. The canopies that backed on to these walls were removed and settled in Lancing College Chapel.

Editor

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATION AND HATHERLEY ROAD AREA

In the 1600's the area I am writing about was mostly small fields surrounded by hawthorn hedges on a mixture of cold, wet gravels and clay. There was Priestlands Wood and Birchwood, the latter still a wood at the bottom of Birchwood Avenue until recent times and part of the Foots Cray Park estate. In the early 1700's City men began settling in this part of Kent and the large houses began to be built. Sidcup House at the top of Craybrooke Road (later lived in by Dame Ethel Smythe), Sidcup Place, Hadlow House, the Black Horse and the smithy and later the Manor House on the Green. In the area we are



concerned with there was little change until 1781 when the New Cross Turnpike trustees were empowered to improve the high road and put a toll booth near what is now the Cannon cinema.

To avoid paying tolls people trod footpaths through the adjoining fields. Station Road was a very narrow lane with a ditch running down the west side. It was called Halfway Street and later Cherry Orchard Lane (perhaps because there was an orchard where Barclays Bank now stands).

At the other end Alma Road was just a track leading into Birchwood (The Railway Tavern was built about 1840 and stood alone for many years). At the foot of Hatherley Road there was a brick kiln while nearby "Romans Fields" (mentioned in the deeds of a Hatherley Road resident) indicated gypsies, of whom I remember quite clearly, camping at the bottom of Birkbeck Road in the 1930s.

In 1808 Christopher Hull bought Sidcup House and our area belonged to the Reverend T. Hull. In 1828 it passed to his nephew, Landsdown Hull, then living at Hadlow House. He then built a house on a plot called Barn Field (about where Woolworths now stands). Our area was entirely arable and farmed by James Wood from a farm now the site of Sheppards Garage. Later the farm was sold to an occupant of Foots Cray Place with the unusual name of Western Wood. Western Wood became a member of Parliament for the City of London in 1861, but died in 1863 leaving all the residue of his estate to his widow Sarah Letitia and his friend William Pye.

In September 1866 Sidcup was linked to London by the Dartford Loop railway and the prospects of development were good. Meanwhile in 1863 in the Station Road area a syndicate of three London merchants bought up the outer fringes of our area, along the High Street, down Station Road and along Alma Road.

In 1865, Hopkins, one of the syndicate, bought out his partners so that when the railway opened he was in the happy position of owning some of the surrounding areas. He sought permission to widen Station Road, suppress the corner cut off (the toll gate land had recently been abolished) to extend Alma Road and top up an old footpath across the bottom of Hatherley Road. By 1868 he had started to sell plots 66 to 80 and in 1869 plots for 60, 62 and 64 in Station Road. Mrs. Wood and Mr. Pye soon demolished the farm buildings (on the Sheppard's garage site) and split up the estate on paper, a straight line being drawn for Hatherley Road and its west side ruled off into 28 sixty foot housing plots each stretching back 200 feet towards Station Road. They also mortgaged the Birkbeck and Clarence Road area. The first plot in Hatherley Road was No.10, later numbered 21 (near the passage way to the Congregational Church). The house next to ours which was said to have been a farm at one time was interestingly called, West Wood. It was the deeds from this house that gave Mr. Nunns some useful information.

In 1870 builder Mr. George Hawkins came to Sidcup and bought up plots in Elm Road, Main Road and Longlands Road. In 1875 he bought several in Hatherley Road. Gravel was found off Birkbeck Road, while in 1876, Mr. E.J. Harland opened his brick field near Harland Avenue.

Originally to be called Station Road, Hatherley Road was a gated private road until adopted by the Council. The Public Hall and the red brick houses of St. Joseph's Convent and St. Gertrudes High School (now sadly demolished) were built at the top in between the mostly detached Victorian family houses and at the bottom a row of three storey terraced houses, which came to be known as the "Old Ladies" in later years when they fell into disrepair and were going



to be pulled down.

About 1965 Malcolm Sanderson, the housing estate developer, started buying up properties and today there are few of the original double fronted houses left. Fortunately there are still a lot of the "Old Ladies" standing. I saw only one of the original, unusual shaped roofs, but one can still see the iron work balustrades and little embellishments which make these houses so attractive. They contrast very favourably with the stark utilitarian houses built around them and seemed to have been carefully restored.

Some years ago the late Mr. Nunns gave me a copy of his notes on this area and I have based my facts on these and gratefully acknowledge the extensive work he did and the interesting history he uncovered.



*The Sidcup "Old Ladies"*

Margaret White

#### A FOND ADIEU

Some of you will already know, either from myself or via the grapevine, that I am moving down to Winchelsea with my mother to a little bungalow attached to a 14th century Ferry Farmhouse (no longer used as a farmhouse by the way, so I shan't be mucking out the pig styes or anything like that).

The bungalow, now modernised, was once the toll booth for the River Brede crossing, which runs by the side of the property, so you may catch a glimpse of me fishing on a fine summer evening!. My sister and her husband will be living in the farmhouse.

We are all very excited about this move and are really looking forward to a new beginning and a new way of life.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my years as a member of the Society and being amongst you all and shall miss your cheerful friendly faces on alternate Wednesdays, evening walks and summer outings. However, I will be keeping in



touch and if any of you find yourselves in the vicinity of 'The Ferry Farmhouse', Station Road, Winchelsea, I would be delighted to see you.

I do hope to be able to attend the 40th Anniversary Dinner so you won't have got rid of me yet!! With best wishes to you all for the future.

Norma Huntley  
10th July 1992

#### OBITUARY

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Mrs. Mildred Booker in the Autumn of 1991. She was part of our famous "front row" on lecture evenings and had the honour of being our longest serving member having joined the Society in its early years.

Three serving members attended her funeral service at Eltham Crematorium at which her brother-in-law officiated. We came away feeling uplifted and felt that we had indeed attended a thanksgiving service for a life well lived.

\*\*\*\*\*

Our member, Brian Newey, died in the Summer of 1991. Norma and myself attended the Memorial Service held at St. Andrews, Albany Park. In the Vicar's address we learned that Brian had many talents unknown to us, one of which was the writing of poetry. The following is his version of the Lord's Prayer which we thought you would like to see and enjoy.

" Father God who art in heaven,  
Mould us, fill us with your leaven,  
Work within each lowly soul,  
Till Your Spirit makes us whole.

Hallowed be Thy wondrous Name  
Ever, always, still the same:  
May Thy Kingdom come on earth,  
Glorify Christ's lowly birth.

Jesus who with God was one  
Tells us pray, Thy will be done  
On the earth through us today,  
As it is in heaven always.

Lord we ask you, give us bread,  
Ours today is what You said;  
Safe from hunger all may fare,  
If Thy plenteous grace we share.

Lord, our every sin You know  
Free us from the debts we owe:  
When all others we forgive,  
Pardoned, then we truly live.

Shield us from the evil one,  
May the tempter fear Thy Son:  
For the Kingdom and the Throne,  
Of heaven and earth are God's alone.

Brian Newey "



## SOCIETY NEWS

I have already mentioned in the editorial that Pip Hayward is now resident in Baugh House, Footscray - if anybody has a few spare moments he would love to see you. Whilst I visited Pip in hospital at the New Year I was amazed to find Leonard Pile in the same ward - he had suffered a heart attack so it was good to see him later in the year back at Society meetings and we wish him well.

Our member, Norman Storer, has missed several society meetings due to ill health - again our good wishes to him.

The outing to Hythe, Rye and Winchelsea was made even more delightful by the presence of Philip Nash who has for the last year or so been very ill - it was so pleasing that throughout the day members were chatting to him and I think he in turn was pleased to be back amongst us.

It was good to learn that Philip (together with Phyllis) has several dates lined up when he will be speaking on Sidcup. Philip has the distinction of being an original Sedcopian and therefore can speak with great authority on his subject.

On the 20th May we said goodbye with great reluctance to Marian and Cyril Salisbury who have gone to live in Suffolk. We were very pleased when they married a few years back and send them all our good wishes for the future.

Our "girls" (Kathy Harding and Denise Baldwin who say they still quite like the title) have been flying the banner again for us this year by giving a talk at the Eltham Society on Footscray, Eric Percival and I being in the audience (and at other venues). The name Footscray we know has spread to Australia and when travelling on a bus in Malta this year, Pam and I spotted a building named "Footscray House".

Only yesterday evening about ten Society members joined with forty other people in the Local Studies walk around Sidcup, which was ably led by John Mercer. At the end of last year the Society was represented at the Local History Fair at Brampton Road. We used a front projector showing slides of Sidcup with a beautiful commentary by Louise Beaver, which was obviously appreciated as many visitors watched and listened for the complete show. We had on sale John Mercer's Sidcup Book and the notelets produced from our Chairman, Iris Morris', drawings for the Blackfen Book.

The gamble on the selling of the Blackfen book came off as we sold over 550 copies - some of which were bought to be sent overseas. Here's hoping that our next venture into Sidcup territory does as well.

I think you will agree we have had a good society year and we are all now looking forward to the climax of it which will be the dinner on 3rd October.

Frances Oxley  
Editor  
16th July 1992



## HISTORIC WEEKEND IN NORFOLK

Hill Crest Field Centre in Barton Turf has been booked for the Society for the weekend June 4th - 6th 1993. It is a centre used by Hertfordshire Schools and can accommodate twenty people. However, since we will be adults, I suggest a party of twelve so that no one will have to sleep on a top bunk, but rooms will have to be shared between two or three. The washing and toilet facilities are well provided and there is a large kitchen with fridge/freezer and two electric cookers.



The provisional programme is as follows:

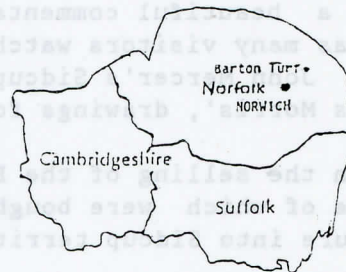
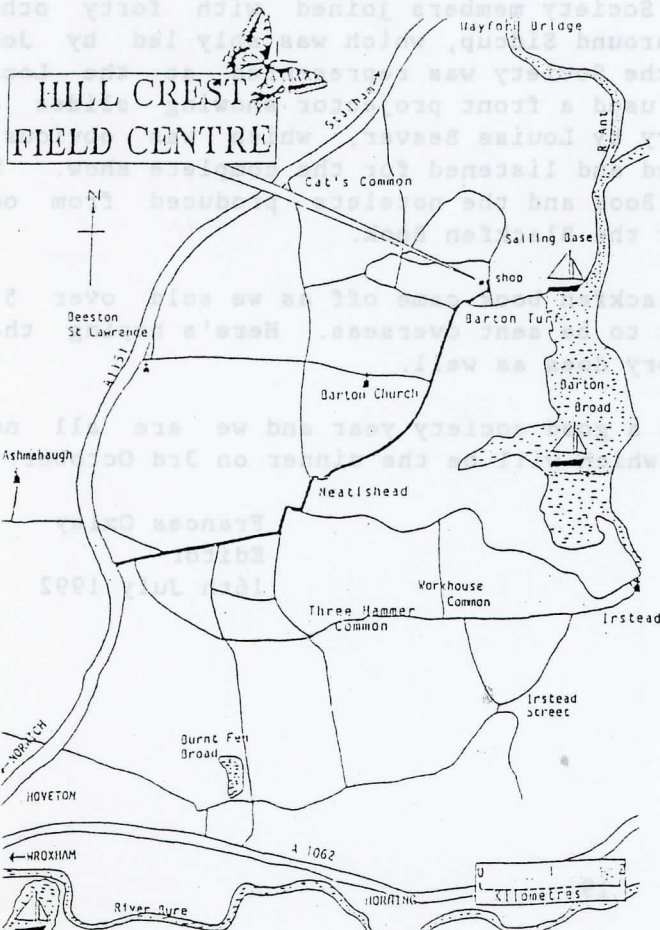
Three or four cars to bring the party arriving together at 5pm on Friday, June 4th. Evening meal at The Crown, Smallburgh. Short talk on history of the area. Saturday, June 5th visit Norwich. Tour guide - one and a half hours - followed by free time. Lunch in cafe of own choice. Drive to Blickling Hall (one of the finest Jacobean houses in Britain) in the afternoon. Light evening meal in the centre. Sunday, June 6th trip on the Broads in the morning from Wroxham. Either eat at the centre or in Wroxham. Visit Wroxham Barns, a craft centre, after lunch. Depart for Sidcup 5pm.

Cost per peron (excluding meals out) £24. (This includes centre charges, meals at centre, Norwich guide, Broads trip and entry to Blickling Hall.) Allow yourself a further £15-£20 for meals out.

Will those interested please let Frances know so that a meeting can be arranged in the Spring to finalise the arrangements.

John Mercer

O.S. Map Ref: TG 355225



### How to find Hill Crest:

Approach Norwich on the A11 and leave on the A1151. Two miles north east of Wroxham take a right turn to Barton Turf. Follow the sign posts through Neatishead to Barton Turf village. Take the left fork on approaching the village. The Field Centre is on the left just past the village shop.