

Lockdown News: April 2021

Hello. This time last year, if you were like me, we were blissfully ignorant of how our lives would be changed in the coming months. The History society has continued in some form with the support of its members, the committee and our Zoom speakers. We now look forward to a time when we can all meet together again. St Lawrences Hall is booked for society meetings in May (perhaps that is optimistic), June and July. We also plan to have a meeting in August this year. The committee intend to meet at the earliest opportunity and we hope to see you all soon. Denise Baldwin

The next Society Meeting will be held on Tuesday 6th April at 7.30p.m. on Zoom

James Dickinson will be talking about “The In-Laws”



Joan of Kent, ‘the most beautiful woman in all the realm of England’, was born in 1328. She was the granddaughter of King Edward I and a royal princess. In 1340 Joan married a commoner, Thomas Holland. After his death Joan then had a whirlwind romance with the heir to the throne, Edward the Black Prince, and they married in 1361. Joan became the first Princess of Wales. The couple had two sons one of whom, Richard of Bordeaux, became king in 1377.

John of Gaunt was the Black Prince’s younger brother and Joan’s brother in law. He became a great statesman in the reign of his nephew, Richard of Bordeaux, but all the ills of the realm were laid at Gaunt’s door and he became known as ‘the most hated man in England’.

He was married three times. By his first marriage he had a son and heir Henry Bolingbroke. It was Bolingbroke who seized the throne from his cousin Richard of Bordeaux in 1399. After his wife died Gaunt remarried, but also took a long-term mistress called Katherine Swynford. Katherine bore Gaunt four children known as the Beauforts. On his second wife’s death Gaunt married Katherine. It is from one of their children that today’s royal family are all descended.

As usual, please would you let us know if you wish to join us on Zoom by emailing Jennifer [REDACTED]

Under the Bridge at Sidcup Station

Sidcup Station on the Dartford Loop Line opened in 1866 but the bridge over the road remained quite low (13ft clearance) for almost 100 years. This meant that the bus routes that ran underneath were restricted to single-deckers. In 1938, new route 241 was created which ran from Sidcup Garage to Welling Station, a mere 23 minute journey. Double deck buses on other routes would turn in the station entrance as they could not go under the bridge.

In 1937, with work to install railings on the walkway on the station side of the road. Looking towards Avery Hill. (Alamy)



This is what happened when a 14ft 6in bus tried to go under the bridge in August 1949. This was RTL32 on route 51. As both the 51 and 241 were operated from Sidcup Garage it must be assumed that the driver forgot which route he was on. He should have turned around at the station. (Getty images)



There was always pressure to make the road more usable and the scheme to lower the road was carried out in 1958.

The newly lowered road was opened in November 1958 and this was the first bus through, carrying officials and dignitaries. As can be seen, the new height restriction has not yet been applied (compare with next photo taken the following year).



Of course, lowering the road without installing adequate drainage was asking for trouble, as here. In this view we are looking north towards Avery Hill in 1959.

Route 241 continued to operate for a while, but now using double-deckers during the week. At weekends it was replaced by variation of route 51 including 51B and 51C, but the changes are way too confusing (and boring!) to go into here.

It was quite a few years before the flooding issues were finally sorted out but now the problem seems to be a thing of the past. The one remaining issue is the occasional bridge strike by over height or extremely long correct height vehicles.