



# NEWSLETTER

2022, ISSUE 3

July 2022

## Secretary's Notes

As you will see from the contents of this newsletter we have a contribution from a young man who, with his father, has cleared the area around a WWII anti-tank defence site on the edge of Epsom at Manor Park. George took on this project as part of his Duke of Edinburgh volunteering challenge and EEHAS was happy to support him with advice and referral to relevant resources. We are pleased that George has written a report that can be shared with you about this example of WWII defences in the Borough. You may be surprised to know that Epsom and Ewell has other anti-tank defences, pill boxes, anti-tank ditches and anti-aircraft platforms. These defences were part of the Outer London Defence Ring Line A, the Epsom section running through Epsom to the Drift Bridge. You can learn more at Bourne Hall Museum or at <https://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/>. You may have seen in the press recently about the replica construction of a 4th century Roman villa, Villa Ventorum (villa of the winds). The Saturday Times (4th June) did an article on this build in Somerset, which you can access from the link below. Whilst not an archaeological paper you may find it of interest.

(Continued under Membership Matters)

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### Lecture Diary

July 6th	Nonsuch Park : John Phillips
August 3rd	The Calico People of the Wandle : Mick Taylor
September 7th	The Portable Antiquities Scheme : Dr. Simon Maslin

Meetings are normally held on the first Wednesday of each month at St. Mary's Church Hall, London Road, Ewell, KT17 2AY.

Doors open 7.45 for 8pm start. Members free, visitors £4, includes refreshments.

## The Springs & Waterways of Carshalton : a talk by Peter Wakeham

**David Hartley**

Our speaker provided us with an interesting illustrated talk on the springs and waterways of Carshalton. Peter is a keen naturalist and is chairman of the Downlands Trust.

Carshalton is a parish on the north side of the Chalk Downs. It contains 2,926 acres of land and 22 acres of water, and it extends from the chalk downs, across the Woolwich and Thanet Beds, onto the London Clay. Spring line settlements were often located at the base of a hill or escarpment where the underlying geology is permeable. There are several strong springs rising in the parish which form one branch of the Wandle's river system, the other larger branch of the Wandle joins the stream from Croydon and forms the eastern boundary of the parish for some distance.

Carshalton is now a charming town in south London and has retained much of its historic centre in the valley of the River Wandle, and comprises a number of neighbourhoods.



Originally a village, it is both scenic and picturesque, and at its centre it has two adjoining ponds fed from natural springs, which are overlooked by the Grade II listed All Saints Church on the south side and the Victorian Grove Park on the north side. The Grade II Honeywood Museum is on the west side of the ponds. There are also a number of other listed buildings and three designated conservation areas in Carshalton.

Our speaker described the natural geology of the chalk aquifers and that Carshalton was one of several early historic village settlements on spring lines in Surrey.

The springs are the focus of Carshalton's history and archaeology. To the south, evidence dating from the Prehistoric, Neolithic and Iron Age Periods suggest that the ample sources of natural spring water and the Wandle acted as a magnet for the movement of wildlife, fish, water fowl and human activity leading to occupation in this area.

The Manors of Carshalton were held in the time of King Edward the Confessor by five freedmen as five Manors. The village lay within the Anglo Saxon administrative division of Wallington Hundred.

In the Domesday Book Carshalton was known as Aultone, there was a church and a watermill recorded with a number of small hamlets around, not a single compact village.

In 1086 it was held as one Manor by Geoffrey de Mandeville who gave 6 hides from it as a marriage portion of his daughter, the wife of Geoffrey son of Eustace Count of Boulogne. At

the time of the Domesday Survey the land was held of Geoffrey Fitz Eustace, then by a certain Wesman.

The greater part of this estate formed the manor of Carshalton, of which the overlordship descended to the Mandevilles Earls of Essex and the Bohuns Earls of Hereford and Essex.

Eleanor, daughter and co-heir of Humphrey de Bohun, married Thomas, son of Edward III. Their son Humphrey died without issue in 1399, after which the overlordship lapsed to the Crown.

The land was cultivated in the Middle Ages for arable farming in open fields divided into strips, and the river Wandle was put to use powering a water mill for grinding corn mentioned in Domesday.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was recorded that there were several mills for the production of paper and parchment, leather, snuff, log wood and seed oil. There were also bleaching grounds for calico.

Carshalton Park and the rising of the Wandle. The park now occupies an area of 9.28 hectares, which is about one tenth of its original size as it began to be sold off for housing in 1892. The northern boundary originally extended as far as the High street with an Orangery situated within The Square once being located within the park. There were plans to build a new mansion in the park in the early 18th century involving Giacomo Leoni, a Venetian architect who was commissioned to design the building and carry out the landscaping design.

Hog Pit pond. This landscape feature is located in front of the north entrance into Carshalton Park in the form of substantial earthworks, the origin of which is unknown but there is a reference to Hoggpytte which can be found for the year 1444. It is also recorded that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that Hog Pit was used as a water reservoir for mill power for the potential use of the Carshalton High Street Mill.

The Grotto is situated in the south east corner of the park and was built circa 1724 as one of the first garden features of an ambitious landscape design for the park's owner Thomas Scawen c.1702-1774. The Grotto was a forerunner of later grottos such as Painshill in Surrey.

The remains of grotto and canal are in a state of disrepair, the grotto originally had an ornamental gate and a marble pavement and roof covered in shell decoration. A branch of the River Wandle used to rise in a subterranean chalk chamber beneath the Shell Grotto and flowed into a manmade canal which flowed through the centre of the park past the mansion house.

The talk was concluded following a number of questions from our members, followed by a vote of thanks to our speaker Peter Wakeham.



## The WW2 Manor Park Anti-Tank Defences

*Reclaiming The Past, Maintaining For The Future*

**George Cowlin**

### Introduction

For the volunteering aspect of my 12-month, Gold Duke Of Edinburgh Award, I decided to return the World War 2 anti-tank defences located in Manor Park, Epsom, back to a state where they can be seen, learned from and enjoyed once again.

Hidden from the road and neglected for many years, these defences are believed to have once been part of the Outer London Defence Line built at the start of the Second World War and part of the larger 'Stop Lines', designed to slow down the Nazis had they invaded.



View of the Western 'pimples', January 2022

As the threat of invasion passed, these defence sites around the country were either abandoned, destroyed or in some cases, re-purposed. (For example, in later years some local pillboxes have been utilised to encourage bats to roost).

At the beginning of January 2022, the Manor Park Defences were almost completely overgrown, with thorn bushes, weeds and ivy camouflaging even the larger blocks. Vandals had spray-painted their 'tags' on some of the pimples, the area was being used for drug-taking, litter was in abundance and there was evidence to suggest that the Defences had long been the target of bottle-throwing jobs over the decades.

With the help of my father, we have uncovered not only the defences themselves, but also a few 20th Century artefacts. We now have a greater understanding of how the defences were made too.

### Progress And Information

Beginning on January 29th 2022 and working for at least an hour per week, progress has been at a steady pace. Once we had cut back the 2 metre high (in some places) thorns and weeds, we were able to measure the area we were dealing with. We estimate that the obstacles themselves are spread over an area of approximately 165 m<sup>2</sup>, the length of the obstacles in total being 33 metres and the approximate width at the widest point being 5 metres.

After further cutting back we were able to reveal every obstacle and measure them. There are 37 smaller obstacles, or 'pimples', and 4 trapezoid-shaped larger ones. The pimples are divided by an old metal fence and ditch or old stream, with 15 to the Western side of it and 22 on the Eastern nearest the trapezoids. The pimples measure about 92 cm by 92 cm around their bases (or 3 feet by 3 feet at the time), and rise to a flat area of about 30.5 cm by 30.5 cm (or 1 foot). The trapezoid obstacles measure approximately 165 cm in height (or about 5 feet 5 inches), 165 cm in length (again, about 5 feet 5 inches) and 92 cm wide (about 3 feet).

Research conducted within a copy of the War Office 'Field Engineering (All Arms) Military Training Pamphlet No. 30 Part III: Obstacles' dated 1943, provides that the 'reinforced concrete pimples' appear to have been made exactly to the required specifications, although they were supposed to be spaced at '7 ft 6 ins centres in five staggered rows 7 ft 6 ins apart'. The Training Pamphlet describes these as 'Not a very effective obstacle because of vulnerability. Its use should be confined to closing detours or gaps where a more massive obstacle would interfere with the field of fire.'



Interestingly, the pamphlet does not show instructions on the building of the trapezoid obstacles and Internet research has so far only produced similar examples as having been in place at Epsom College. Elsewhere, cube-shaped blocks were preferred.



View of the Eastern 'pimples' and one trapezoid

Damage to the concrete top of one of the pimples suggests that they have an internal metal frame as can just be seen in the above image, where the photographer's shadow ends at a pimple. We are unsure if the obstacles were created at the site or produced elsewhere and moved into position.

Horizontal lines on the trapezoids appear to show that a wooden case was first fabricated and then the concrete poured in. It is unclear at this stage if these also have an internal metal frame or why they are this unusual shape. It is hoped that further research will provide answers.



Some of the Western pimples are on a concrete base measuring approximately 8.9m by 2.95m, and a depth (excluding hard core foundations) of approximately 23 cm. Probing of



View of the Eastern 'pimples'

the Eastern pimples and the trapezoids strongly suggests that many of these are on similar bases. This may be due to the area being particularly boggy.

### Artefacts

An unexpected boon from cutting back all the overgrown foliage has been the emergence of a couple of items that may be connected to the building of the traps. It is evident that the area, particularly the wider area, has been used by persons to discard rubbish for quite some time and amongst the 16 bags of litter and rubbish that we have removed so far, we have found the following;

Two (2) rusty shovel heads (ages unknown at present)

Four (4) thick glass milk bottles (ages unknown at present, one has Imperial measure only)

One (1) Macpherson soft drinks bottle, assessed by Britvic as being early/pre-

1940s

One (1) W.R. Butler & Sons of Dorking soft drinks bottle, assessed as being pre-1967

One (1) set of heavy metal 'tongs' or 'grabs', potentially used in the construction of the site and believed to be used in the way that Lewis pins are used to lift heavy blocks. These were unearthed adjacent to a pimple.

One (1) heavy metal bar, possibly a lever from either agricultural machinery or an old train.

Assorted soft drink bottles and jars that are pre-1990s, (one was manufactured in Czechoslovakia, so pre-1993).

Some of these items await cleaning, but in the unlikely event that they are deemed interesting enough, they can be given to the Bourne Hall Museum or other interested party.

### The Future

The bulk of the site clearing has been completed and the worst of the litter removed. Broken glass and small items continue to surface after rainfall and these are being taken away as they are discovered.

It is anticipated that the site will be in a more easy to maintain condition within a few weeks and it is hoped that grass will grow where thorns, rubbish and weeds once were. Persons with or without an interest in history will be able to visit the area and have a safer, easier experience and the work so far has already generated discussion on local Internet pages.

Many people were not aware that the Defences ever existed and we have been thanked both online and in person for our efforts. Our Facebook account, Epsom Tankdefences <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100077445830058>, specifically set up to chart our progress, now has 50 followers and offers to help clear and maintain the area have trickled in from friends and local residents. We have promoted EEHAS on our account, in gratitude for all the help and advice that has kindly been given to us so far.

We have been made aware of three surviving pillboxes and another set of anti-tank traps within a couple of miles of the Manor Park Defences and these are also overgrown to varying degrees. Were we to obtain permission from the landowners, we would very much like to help prevent these being lost to nature and the elements too. However, one pillbox is on railway property, which means it is highly unlikely that they would allow us access and the other two have been adapted for bats to roost within, so we would need to know the boundaries of what can and cannot be done, should the landowner agree to the trimming back of the foliage at those locations.

George Cowlin  
Year 12 Glyn School

N.B. The Manor Park Anti-Tank Defences can be found at What3Words location donor.leader.arrive



## Bentalls: The Kingston department store since 1867 - a talk by Carolynne Cotton

**Jeff Cousins**

Frank Bentall was from Maldon in Essex, the son of a draper. In 1867 he saw an advert for a shop in Clarence Street, Kingston and bought it as he wanted to run his own drapery store to prove his worth to the father of Laura, the girl whom he wished to marry. Clarence Street was then a backwater, with old cottages and mediaeval inns, and there were 25 other drapers in Kingston. Clarence Street had potential though as it was on the road to the bridge rebuilt in 1825-28. Frank decided to compete by offering better customer service. It worked as profit almost tripled in the first year, and the next year he married Laura.



Frank Bentall's, courtesy of Kingston Heritage Service

There were still nursery gardens at the back of the shop, between it and the station. Frank expanded the business by buying up adjacent land and shops, particularly along Wood Street. Kingston also expanded, bringing more customers. Kingston had its first tram in 1908 (driven by the first black tram driver in Britain). Bentalls evolved into a department store.

In 1909 Frank retired and his son Leonard (1875-1942) took over, renaming the shop simply Bentalls. He continued to buy up adjacent properties, but the Clarence Arms pub remained as an island within the block of properties until Hodgson's brewery were finally persuaded to sell in 1919.

Bentalls were known for their care of their staff. They had boat trips on the Thames.

A delivery service was begun by 1914, originally using horse-drawn carts, but by 1930 there was a huge fleet of vans. A same day delivery service was offered within a 35 mile radius. Bentalls were the main supplier to the East Surrey Regiment, also based in Kingston, and could be asked to supply a thousand of an article on the same day.

During WW1 many men were away at war, so women ran departments. In 1917 there was a potato shortage and greengrocers were charging way over the official price. Bentalls negotiated directly with farmers in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire to obtain vast quantities of

potatoes at the official price - this made them very popular with the public – but not greengrocers!

After WW1 women who had previously built aircraft at the Sopwith factory in Kingston were redeployed making wooden toys for Bentalls to sell.

In 1925 Bentalls became a private limited company, though all the shareholders were members of the family.

After a dispute with the local lighting company, who wouldn't give them a discount for bulk purchase, Bentalls built their own generating station, producing electricity at half the price previously paid.

In 1928 Bentalls became one of the first department stores with a car park, which also offered a petrol station and its own restaurant.



The frontages of the shops had been harmonised in the 1910s, the gradual take over of Wood Street had continued after WW1, e.g. the vicarage becoming the staff dining room, and by 1929 all of Wood Street had been bought. This gave the opportunity to replace the shops by one big building, designed by architect Maurice Webb. As the ground was boggy, the new building had to be built on a raft. The foundations of the new building were constructed in the basement whilst people were still shopping on the floors above. The new building was finished in 1935. The frontage was inspired by the William & Mary wing of Hampton Court Palace. It featured sculpture by Eric Gill. The Coldstream Guards played for the opening. The inside was very modern, with an atrium, galleries, three floors and escalators (then still



rare - these were the first made in Britain). There were 150 departments, including a barbers, restaurants and a café. Events were held in the atrium, such as a circus.

The furniture depository opened the next year near Cromwell Road. It was criticised at the time for being over-large, but it was the height of modernity and efficiency. Vans could drive into large lifts which would take them straight to the correct floor to load or unload.

Frank's grandson Rowan (1911-93) began work at the store in 1930. After Leonard died in 1942 death duties led to Bentalls being floated on the London Stock Exchange in 1946, though the family still retained a controlling interest.

In 1938 Bentalls formed its own platoon of the Territorial Army. In WW2 this became an Anti-Aircraft company operating searchlights. It served in Algeria, Tunisia, Italy then Austria. Rowan served in the army and was at D-Day; whilst he was away his younger brother Gerald ran the company.

After WW2 was over, returning men were asked if they wished to return to working at Bentalls, and in what capacity. Bentalls still took good care of its staff. It provided a clinic (pre-NHS), a crèche (still rare in those days), a subsidised canteen, and a pension and bonus scheme (though just for the men). In 1946 a sports and social club was formed at West Molesey. 4000 staff and their families attended 'Family Days'.

Bentalls was the first store in Britain to recognise that there was a teenage market, opening its 'Junior Miss' department in 1947, ahead of the West End stores. That year it also opened the first of seven other branches in southern England. Bentalls was still very much the place to shop in the 1970s and 80s. In 1989 Clarence Street was closed to traffic. Norwich Union (now Aviva) collaborated with Bentalls to redevelop the Kingston site. The 1935 façade was kept, behind it the Bentalls Centre was built, and behind that a new Bentalls opened in 1992. A pedestrian bridge provides access from a multi-storey car park on the other side of the relief road. The Bentalls Centre atrium is claimed to be higher than the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, and one of the escalators is said to be the longest single truss one in the world.

Rowan had become Chairman in 1968, President in 1978, but died not long after the opening of the new store in 1993. He had made many charitable donations. He was succeeded by Frank's great-grandson Edward.

In 2001 Bentalls was taken over by Fenwicks, the Newcastle department store. Most of the branches were closed, the last surviving Bentalls outside of Kingston (in Bracknell) being replaced by a new Fenwicks in 2017. The Bentalls Centre is said to now be owned by a Dutch real estate investment company.

Bentalls had been reluctant to donate their records to Kingston's archives, but rather suddenly in 2020 Fenwicks decided to clear out space and offered them to Kingston. These had to be accepted at rather short notice in the October, but couldn't be looked at until June 2021 due to the pandemic. They are now all in store in Oxfordshire.

## Forthcoming Events

### **Surrey Archaeological Society: Excavations at Cocks Farm Abinger**

Sunday 3rd - Tuesday 5th July, Friday 8th - Tuesday 12th July, Friday 15th - Tuesday 19th July, Monday 25th - Tuesday 26th July & Thursday 28th July - Tuesday 2nd August 2022.

If you are interested in taking part please contact [romanstudiesgroup@btinternet.com](mailto:romanstudiesgroup@btinternet.com)

### **Merton Priory Study Afternoon**

Saturday 23rd July 2022 at 2pm-5pm, Merton Priory Chapter House, Chapter Way, London, SW19 2RX. Including talks by Prof. Janet Burton, Dr Hugh Doherty and Dr Ian Stone. Free; e-mail Katie Hawks at [katierhawks@gmail.com](mailto:katierhawks@gmail.com) to register your interest or to request further information.

### **Surbiton and District Historical Society: The Palaces of Richmond and Kew**

Tuesday 2nd August 2022 at 7pm for 7:30pm, The cornerHOUSE Arts Centre, 116 Douglas Rd, Surbiton, KT6 7SB. A talk by Mrs Susan Rhodes. £2 for visitors.

### **Surbiton and District Historical Society: Elizabeth's Rival: Lettice Knollys**

Tuesday 6th September 2022 at 7pm for 7:30pm, The cornerHOUSE Arts Centre, 116 Douglas Rd, Surbiton, KT6 7SB. A talk by Ms Nicola Tallis. £2 for visitors.

### **Esher District Local History Society: Gertrude Jekyll and Sources for Garden History**

Saturday 10th September 2022 at 2:30pm at Holy Trinity Church Hall, Claygate, KT10 0JP. A talk by Julian Pooley. £3 for visitors.



32 High Street, Ewell



## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

### Secretary's Notes (continued):

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/how-to-build-a-roman-villa-in-the-somerset-countryside-bxkp0cnwq?shareToken=8232e41642a1587baa56b06c0fdd1a38>

Concerns have been raised again about the deteriorating condition of the Grade II listed building at 32 High Street, Ewell, formerly known as William's newsagents. It has been, in the main, unoccupied over the last few years and despite planning permission being granted no work has taken place. We understand the property is now up for sale and can only hope that it finds a sympathetic owner.

### We welcome the following new members:

Alicia Grant

### We thank for their kind donations:

Ian West

### For those paying pay standing order, our new bank details are:

Metro Bank (Epsom Branch), One Southampton Row, London, WC1B 5HA

Epsom and Ewell History and Archaeology Society

Sort code 23-05-80

Account no 44508680

### 2022 Subscriptions

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 2022 became due on 1st January. Subscriptions can be paid at the monthly meetings, or by post to the Treasurer, Jane Pedler, or the Membership Secretary, Doreen Tilbury. Subs are £15 for ordinary membership, £22 for family membership, £6 for student, or £22 for corporate and school memberships. If payment is by cash please bring along the correct money. A slip is provided below:

### 2022 Subscriptions

I (we) wish to renew membership for 2022 Amount enclosed.....

Name and address.....

.....

.....

E-mail address.....

*Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society*  
*Founded 1960 Registered Charity No. 259221*

**Useful contact details**

**To contact any of the committee please e-mail [epsomewellhistory@btinternet.com](mailto:epsomewellhistory@btinternet.com)**

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**Conservation Officer:** David Hartley

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**Newsletter Editor:** Jeff Cousins

**Programme Secretary:** Hugh Ricketts

**Please send copy for the next newsletter to the Newsletter Editor by 12 August 2022.**

**Visit our website**

**[www.epsomewellhistory.org.uk](http://www.epsomewellhistory.org.uk)**

**Gift Aid**

Just a further reminder that if you pay tax EEHAS, as a charity, can claim Gift Aid on your subscription or donations, at no cost to yourself. In order for us to do this you need to sign a Gift Aid Declaration form which is available at meetings and can also be found on the Society website on the Membership page.

You can see a colour copy of this newsletter on the Society website from mid July  
**[www.epsomewellhistory.org.uk](http://www.epsomewellhistory.org.uk)**