



NEWSLETTER

2014, Issue 3

June 2014

Welcome to New Members

Mrs S Edwards

Chairman's Notes

We are extremely pleased to announce that our Vice President Eve Myatt-Price has been elected an Emeritus Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of which Eve has been a member for many years. This honour is awarded to senior members of the Society in recognition of their academic standing.



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We are sad to report that Chris Bromage died on 16 April after a battle with cancer. Chris had been a member of EEHAS since 1974. I recall working with him on the old King William IV excavations in Ewell—when we were all much younger! He was a regular attendee of the monthly lectures and had recently been involved in Nikki Cowlard's Ewell Hinterland Project. Our condolences go to his family.

Lecture Diary

July 2nd Memorial Landscapes in Archaeology—
Stonehenge & the WWI battlefields by Scot
McCracken

August 6th Member's evening

September 3rd The History of Aviation, WWI—WWII by
Nicholas Dunnill

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

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

April Meeting – The History of Public Houses – Alan Greenwood

The earliest civilisations understood brewing. The Egyptians taught it to the Greeks who taught it to the Romans who established their tavernas in Britain. The Saxons called the product ale and called their equivalent to tavernas alehouses. Using barley, water and yeast women were often the brewers alongside their bread making.

Thereafter every king and government tried to regulate drinking alcohol and to tax it. King Edgar in 965 decreed that drinking vessels should be marked with 'pegs'. You could drink down only as far as the mark. This occasioned drinking contests. Could you drink down more than a peg or two? In Richard II's time aleconners were established to test the quality of ale and to collect taxes. They say the aleconners wore leather breeches because their method of testing quality was to pour ale onto a wooden bench and sit on it. If they stuck to it the ale was sub-standard. Every alehouse had to have a sign. There is no pub called 'Richard II' but the White Hart was his badge. The owners of alehouses stopped thinking of their signs as markers for the taxman and started using them as advertising to attract customers.



Henry VIII loved ale and was happy for people to drink, but he did not like the use of hops which were by now added to preserve and flavour ale. The brewers got round this by calling their product by the European name of beer. Henry accepted this because he could still tax it. In 1551 Parliament passed an Act which began modern licensing laws, with opening and closing times. The Puritans in Cromwell's time severely limited opening times but could not close pubs as they also served food. After the Restoration things were more relaxed and people went to a pub to eat and drink, and also for a while, in the 18th century, after a short lived domestic clock tax, to see the time on the clock. Pub clocks were always ten minutes fast to allow for drinking up time. Old pub clocks are collectable.

Beer and ale were regarded as simple, nourishing drinks. Sailors were given ale to help prevent scurvy. The Duke of Wellington's government increased the number of pubs by thousands. He and the Marquis of Granby encouraged soldiers returning from the Napoleonic Wars to earn a living by opening pubs sometimes in their own houses, so the private house became the public house. All this was a response to the new fashion for gin houses. Gin was cheap and socially disruptive, and definitely to be discouraged.

In Chaucer's time inn keeping was an honourable career. Later, Samuel Pepys described the pub as the heart of England and fundamental to its culture. In the 20th century the local pub was a place of entertainment and a meeting place, where regulars and staff knew each other. It is sadly a bit different today. Pubs are closing – think of our own Organ Inn and the King Bill. We can only hope this decline will stop.



THE ORGAN INN, London Road, EWELL, Surrey
C. W. BROMLEY, PROPRIETOR

May Meeting – The Boats of the Ancient Egyptians – Ann Musgrove

Boats were the only practical form of transport between villages along the Nile, and for use in all the other activities that took place in Ancient Egypt – among them, funerals, leisure and pleasure, fishing, rituals. We know what they were like from wall-paintings, a multitude of clay models in tombs, and sometimes the remains of actual boats.



The earliest boats were made of reeds, tied together with bundles of more reeds. You can see such even now on Lake Chad. The wooden boats made with the copper adze and chisel appeared. The basic boat had steering oars at the stern, and a sail. The current took them downstream and on the way back upstream the sail filled with the north wind. All quite easy. Boats could have several oars, cabins and awnings, and were a variety of sizes.

Funerary boats took coffins across the Nile. (People lived on the east bank and were buried on the west bank). King Khufu's tomb contained the remains of his actual boat, which was about 100 feet long, and was probably for him to make a spiritual pilgrimage to the sacred site of Abydos. There were fishing boats, though the only known model is in Cairo Museum. It is of two boats with a fishing net between them full of model fish. There were vessels to transport goods. Queen Hatshepsut moved her obelisks, which weighed about 250 tons, in huge boats, maybe 200 feet long. The Egyptians were good at enjoying themselves, and had family outings on the river. The tomb of Meketre shows him fowling and fishing, accompanied by kitchen boats to feed him and his party.

There were sea-going boats. Rameses III had warships carrying his soldiers to hold off the Sea Peoples who attacked Egypt in the 13th century BC. The Egyptians also sent trading vessels to fetch cedars of Lebanon, and Hatshepsut sent them into the Red Sea to trade. Egyptians, however, were not explorers. They never went out of sight of land, being afraid to get lost and die somewhere where they could not be buried in Egyptian soil.



The gods had rather different arrangements. They sailed across the sky in 'solar boats', and their images were carried from one temple to another, showing themselves to the people, in boats, but carried on the shoulders of priests. Ann Musgrove brought modern models of some of the boats to show us, and we had a very interesting evening.

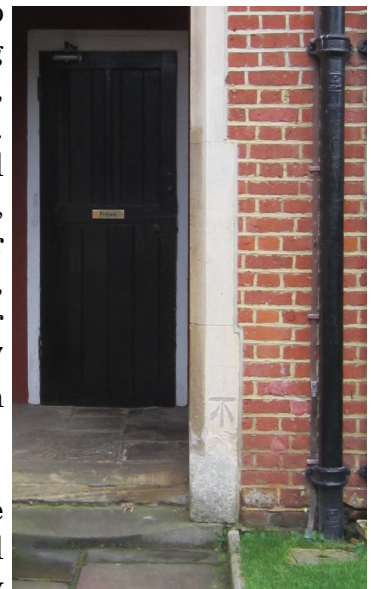
Isobel Cross

Benchmarks

Jeremy Harte

While looking at old buildings, you may have noticed a mark cut into their stonework, usually a few feet above ground level and near a doorway or other prominent position. These are benchmarks. They were cut by the Ordnance Survey where there was a monument which seemed likely to endure in the landscape, and where surveyors needed a permanent record of altitude.. The mark consists of a horizontal line cut into the stone, with an arrow chiselled underneath to indicate it. Each one represents a known height above Ordnance Datum, or mean sea level, which is fixed at Newlyn by reference to key markers. Over 500,000 benchmarks were cut by the Ordnance Survey, although they are no longer used as reference points and are not maintained.

You might expect that there would be several of these marks in our area, but if so, they don't seem to have been recorded. The Ordnance Survey don't keep a register themselves, and an amateur interest group, who have their site at <http://www.benchmarks.org.uk/>, have none in their database. They do note two instances of flush brackets, which are metal plaques fixed along to lines which ran from one town to another across the country, so that their heights could be collated to give profiles of the route. There's one, G3553, at 2 Worcester Park Road, where it was fixed for the third geodetic levelling of 1950–68. Another one, 2759, was fixed to the north-east corner of St. Mary's Cuddington for the second geodetic levelling of 1912–21, and may still be there, although it's hard to tell as the new church hall was built over that part of the wall. There's also a stray, S3971 at 127 Chessington Road, which really belongs to Huish Champflower in Somerset.



But what of the ordinary benchmarks? The only one that I've seen is in West Street, on the left hand entrance way into the old West Street school. But there must surely be others. Can any more observant reader supply examples?

Lane House 33 Epsom Road Ewell

We have recently undertaken a watching brief on the building works underway at Lane House, on the corner of Mongers Lane. The existing house there has been demolished and a new one is being erected. The site is directly opposite Purberry Shot, the significant site of known Roman and earlier occupation. Also opposite is Cedar Keys, where Roman pottery was found some years ago when that house was extended.

We wondered whether the Roman occupation on this area of rising ground above Ewell extended across the road. The site was open ground until the 1960s. In the event despite a number of trenches across the site nothing was found, only 2 or 3 small possible Roman sherds and one medieval. A layer of garden soil rested very evenly on the natural Reading Beds/Thanet Sands with no features evident.



From “The New State of England” by Guy Miede 1702

“Near Cheam stood another Palace called Nonsuch, so delightfully seated amongst Parks, built with so much magnificence and such rare workmanship by King Henry VIII, and set out with fine Gardens, Orchards and Groves, that (as Speed says) no County had none such as Nonsuch itself. But such is the viciffitude of things, that we may say now, there is no such Thing as Nonsuch in Surrey.”

Ian West has supplied this brief reference to Nonsuch Palace in a lesser known travel diary published in 1702. It does not add much about the Palace, to that which is already known from other sources, other than that it was no more. However, one of the things that is still uncertain about Nonsuch is how much remained visible after it was demolished by George Berkeley in 1688-90. A distant view from Epsom Downs painted by John Talman in 1702 seems to show a gatehouse tower and adjacent range still standing. The estate plan of 1731 shows no building in Nonsuch Field whereas in 1754 Richard Pococke was able to trace the foundations. And, surprisingly, in Martin Biddle's excavation report on the finds, the fill of garderobe 1 (under the Outer Gatehouse tower) contained glass bottle fragments of post c1760 date suggesting that this shaft at least was still open in the second half of the C18.

Church Meadow Ewell 2014

Preparations are underway for the third season of excavation in Church Meadow, Ewell Village. Volunteers have been signing up, the digging and finds equipment, portaloes and security fencing are organised and the hiring of a JCB has been arranged to open the large 60 X 10 m trench. We have signed up again to the CBA's Festival of Archaeology for the Open Day which will be held on Saturday 12 July, in conjunction with the Ewell Village Fair. David Brooks from Bourne Hall Museum is busy organising school trips to the site, so local children can learn something of life in Roman Ewell. We are expecting children from BH Museum Club to spend a day on site, trying out trowelling, sieving and pot washing.

We have not been idle since the end of last year's dig. A group meets weekly to identify the numerous boxes of Roman pottery – we are just celebrating the completion of CME 12's pottery! Frank Pemberton, the Society's Archaeology Officer and CME's Finds Director, is working on cataloguing the special finds, such as broaches and items of personal adornment. Norman Clarkson has kindly been identifying the Roman coins and that information, together with the pottery, features and overall activity on the site. The environmental samples have been painstakingly processed and may, if we are lucky, give us evidence of what flora and fauna were present in the settlement.

If you are not volunteering do come along to the Open Day to see what we have found. The weather last summer was perhaps rather hotter than we would have liked, with temperatures up to 30 degrees but rain or shine we will be in Church Meadow for the first three weeks in July.

Nikki Cowlard, Site Director

Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society

Founded 1960 Registered Charity No.259221

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Newsletter Editor: **VACANT**

If you are interested in this post please contact the Secretary.

Please send copy for the next newsletter to the Secretary by 12th August 2014

Visit our website

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-June
www.epsomewellhistory.org.uk