

# EPSOM & EWELL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY



## THE FIRST 50 YEARS: 1960-2010

### Archaeology



Left-  
excavation in  
High Street  
Epsom 1980

The formation of the Society came about because of archaeology, the large scale excavation of Nonsuch Palace in 1959, and since then members have organised or taken part in many archaeological excavations in the area. In the first 40 years of the Society 56 excavations were noted, covering a wide variety of sites and archaeological material. Many of them were opportunistic excavations; others were 'rescue' digs carried out in advance of development work. A few were investigations of sites not threatened by development where there were high expectations of increasing knowledge of the area.

The artefacts and building materials that have been found have been representative of most periods of history including Mesolithic, Roman, Saxon, medieval, Tudor, Stuart, Georgian and Victorian. As might be expected, in Ewell there has been a preponderance of Roman material, whereas in Epsom finds from Stuart and later times have been more abundant.



Digging at Bourne Hall in 1960s

Below- diggers  
on King  
William IV site



Right-  
excavation  
of one of  
the graves  
in Tadworth  
in 1986

#### Bourne Hall

Extensive excavations took place in the grounds of Bourne Hall in 1962-65 following demolition of the Georgian house. Digging took place for about 40 weekends in each year under a number of directors including Cedric Yardley, David Cousins, Tex Baxter and Norman Nail. The area investigated was a rectangle of about three quarters of an acre to the south of the house where the stables had been, now under Bourne Hall car park. The large quantities of flintwork found, which included waste flakes and cores, suggested that it could have been a Mesolithic camp site. The situation above the springs would be a natural one for a camp site. Roman remains included two V-shaped ditches, lots of coarse pottery and a cremation burial of a middle-aged man. Medieval and Tudor finds included foundations of a house from each period. Several filled-in wells were found, and a Georgian rubbish pit that yielded a good array of broken pottery and glass.



#### King William IV

The most extensive excavations ever to take place in Epsom and Ewell were over the period 1967-79, largely in the garden behind the King William IV public house (now an Italian restaurant) in Ewell High Street, under a succession of directors. The work involved 26 trenches and brought to light Romano-British material from throughout the period AD 70 to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. There were fragments of buildings, and many wells and pits. There was a wide range of pottery, glass, metal and bone artefacts as well as 30 coins, a large proportion of which date from the period AD 69-275, plus a hoard of 3<sup>rd</sup> century coins in a bronze flagon.

Non-Romano-British finds included material from the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages and also Saxon, medieval, Tudor, early post-medieval and modern periods.

The King William IV site was on the presumed line of Stane Street but no evidence of the road was found. There was evidence of prehistoric use of the site and Clive Orton has suggested that it had such religious significance that the Romans took Stane Street round it, rather than risking upsetting the natives.

#### Headley Drive, Tadworth

When graves were found during development work in 1986, Stephen Nelson, then Chairman of NAS, and Sean Khan of Bourne Hall Museum, directed excavations. In all more than 40 Saxon burials were unearthed with grave goods of the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century including knives, bronze belt fittings and an amulet of rock crystal with bronze fittings.



Above- Romano-British  
pottery finds from King  
William IV



Left- Peggy  
Bedwell  
excavating in  
St. Mary's  
Churchyard

Right-  
Cracknell's,  
5 Cheam  
Road, Ewell



#### St. Mary's No.4 Churchyard

Excavations in 1971 in the new churchyard of St. Mary's Ewell under the direction of Frank Pemberton located Stane Street and other Roman remains that included the foundations of two buildings, together with pottery and metal objects.