



NEWSLETTER

2019, ISSUE 4

September 2019

Chairman's Notes

Heritage Open Days this year runs from 13 – 22 September, the 25th anniversary of the scheme and longer than usual. Although Epsom and Ewell is the smallest Borough in Surrey as far as I can see there is only Nonsuch Mansion advertised as open in our area. There are surely many more local buildings in the Borough that could be opened.

A note appears in this Newsletter on the test pitting in Bourne Hall carried out in May. Thanks are due to the Council for supporting this work and also to Nikki Cowlard who shouldered most of the organising. The day was very successful in involving local people though slightly less so in revealing hard evidence of the expected Tudor buildings. As so often in archaeology more questions are thrown up than answered. It is clear that further work on the lawn area is warranted and we would hope to follow this up. It was also useful as an introduction to the two day project, in Nonsuch Park, arranged for September. Volunteers for this are required to book in advance in order to maximise the time available.

(Continued under Membership Matters),

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Lecture Diary

October 2nd	Victorian portrait photography as a social history study : Stephen Furniss. <i>Bring along your old family portrait photos.</i>
November 6th	The Vikings and my Travels to Denmark and Stockholm : Richard Watson.
December 4th	Christmas Party
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.	

June Meeting – Merton Priory – John Hawks

Steve Nelson

John Hawks, of the Wandle Industrial Museum and a trustee of the Merton Priory Trust came to talk to us on Merton Priory and particularly of the ruins of the Chapter House. Merton is very much connected to the Ewell area as it lies on the old Roman Stane Street, the priors of Merton owned large parts of the Ewell area in the Middle Ages, and much of the stone for Nonsuch Palace came from the dissolved Priory buildings.

Merton Priory was founded in c 1117 as a major Augustinian centre in England. It was a huge building complex at the height of its power, with a nave the length of Westminster Abbey, and with all the usual monastic buildings and precinct wall, spread over a large area. This was altered and added to during its life of some 400 years until it was requisitioned by Henry VIII in April 1538 at the Dissolution. Unlike many of the better known monasteries, which were left simply to decay after their lead and other valuable items were removed, Merton was earmarked as a source of building rubble for the foundations of Henry's new Nonsuch Palace then being built only some 7km away in Ewell. Most of the principal buildings of the Priory church were completely destroyed. Some of the peripheral structures were apparently leased out by the Crown and enough remained for Parliamentary troops to be garrisoned there in the Civil War. However, most gradually disappeared, one of the last being the so-called Abbey House which was demolished in 1914. Today only a reconstructed gateway and some stretches of the precinct wall remain. The building accounts for Nonsuch record some 3,000 cartloads of stone being trundled to the Palace site. The ruins of the priory then became covered over and the site largely forgotten. In the C19 the area had become increasingly built over, particularly by the railway line and sidings and the long gone Merton Abbey Station (the area having been commonly known as Merton Abbey from the C17). The site was first investigated archaeologically by a Colonel Bidder, of a well-known local family, in 1921 and he recorded the general layout of the principal buildings, including much of the nave. Later, in the 1960s, Dennis Turner excavated a small area to the south west of the Priory. Bidder's work was published in 1929 (SyAC V 38) and Turner's in 1967 (SyAC V 64). Then in 1976-1983 Scott McCracken, of the then DGLA of the Museum of London excavated more of the rest of the nave and Chapter House. When the final proposals for large scale redevelopment of the whole area, principally by Sainsbury's, were under discussion the Museum of London undertook more extensive excavations in 1984-88. This recorded virtually all of the plans of the main buildings and included over 700 monastic burials. The results of all this work have been published in the Museum of London Monograph 34 in 2007.

The redevelopment of the Sainsbury SavaCentre and the accompanying new road was due to remove what remained of the foundations. However, significant public pressure at the time resulted in the road being raised to pass over the Chapter House remains, while much of the northern nave and transept ruins were buried under the car park area, where they remain for the future. To their credit Sainsbury's paid for much of this, although the situation remained far from satisfactory with the ruins in a dark, damp and rather dismal basement under the A24 Meratun Way.



Whole Site Photograph 1987-8
North side of church looking east



Chapter House

In 2014 the Merton Priory Trust decided to “do something about it” and they secured an HLF grant of £500k which, with a planning gain fund of £300k, has paid for the first phase of enhancement of the Chapter House, not without some legal wrangling over access to the drains and electrical supply. This phase was completed last year and opened with a grand reception with a performance of the 1570 operatic work ‘Spem in alium’ which demonstrated how well the acoustics of the new space now sound. A comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan was written for the site and the Abbey Mills buildings, and it is to this plan that the Trust works. John Hawks outlined a further phase of restoration work that is planned for the wider area. This will hopefully include a restoration of the Infirmary garden said to be one of the most important monastic healing herb gardens in the medieval period. The conservation of the various lengths of precinct wall is a continuing cause for concern, although John said the Trust has been successful recently in getting Sainsbury’s and the National Trust, who own parts, to undertake some repairs.

John concluded his talk by showing a film made by the Trust in 2018 which showed very graphically the history of and events associated with the Priory. Full information on the

Trust's work, including the explanatory film is available on their website, together with Tony Robinson and the Time Team's excavation, in 2002, of part of the C19 Liberty's and William Morris' silk and calico printing works along the Wandle.

The Chapter House is open to the public on Sundays from May to October between 11.00am and 16.00pm with parking available nearby in Sainsbury's apparently free!

Editor's Notes:

When I first lived nearby, the Merton Priory area was largely car scrap yards, with the remains of the chapter house sitting incongruously amongst them all, having previously been protected by the Merton Abbey Station building above. But previously it had been the site of Line Brothers toy factory, in 1950 the largest in the world, employing over 4000 people. It produced Tri-ang model trains, Frog plastic model aircraft and Pedigree dolls. In WW2 it had been a major manufacturer of Sten submachine guns. But in 1971, despite still being the biggest toy maker in Britain, the company collapsed. The local story was that a workman had fashioned a large triangle from bits of left over metal and hung it as a sign over the entrance, hence the name Tri-ang. The story on websites today is that the three sides of the triangle represented the three Lines Brothers.



It was also the site of Eyre Smelting works. In the first few years after WW2 it scrapped large numbers of British, American and German fighters that were no longer required, and then many early British jet fighters. It closed some time after 1968.

I was a volunteer digger at Merton Priory in 1986. Initially I worked on uncovering the north cloister walk. I was therefore rather surprised when the MoLAS report was published in 2007 and made no mention of it. Indeed it says "the western part of the main cloister ... was cleared by machine but not excavated (p4) and "only the eastern walk of the main cloister walks was excavated" (p146). For the record, as I remember it, the walk was paved with greensand blocks about 9" square, set at 45 degrees to the walls.

I also excavated one of the crossing piers, and a curious burial in the south burial area (p45) where the interior of the skull had been carefully packed with flints (but which no one else seemed to be interested in). I'm glad though that the authors agree with my suggestion that there was something significant in all the stone chips in the area to the north-east of the church (p46). Views differ as to whether they were from the construction or the destruction.

Incidentally, we received a copy of what was purported to be an 18th century map showing where the priory treasures had been buried during the reformation. The "X marks the spot" coincided exactly with where an electricity pylon now stands (by Pizza Hut), so if the treasure ever had been there then it had been disturbed long ago.

SavaCentre was originally a joint venture between Sainsbury's and BHS. BHS merged with Habitat Mothercare in 1986 to form Storehouse. The Colliers Wood SavaCentre opened in 1989, and just a few days later Sainsbury's bought out Storehouse's share of SavaCentre. A condition of the planning permission had been that sheltered accommodation and a swimming pool be provided for local people; neither happened, and Merton council failed to pursue the matter.

Bourne Hall Test Pitting - Steve Nelson and Nikki Cowlard

Five archaeological test pits (TPs 1-3, 5-6) were excavated on the lawn area in Bourne Hall, Ewell during the course of an Open Day on 25 May 2019. This work was carried out in accordance with a Project Design as part of the Surrey Archaeological Society Test Pitting Programme (funded by a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant). This coincided with a programme of Roman re-enactment displays arranged by Bourne Hall Museum and was very successful in engaging with local people, both young and older, many of whom assisted with the digging and processing. Although the work was programmed to be completed in the day, in the event a further two days were needed to complete all the TPs and fully record the results. Together with the preparation and arrangements for the day, it was recognised that a significant amount of work was involved in ensuring the success of the project.



Children digging in TP 3 in background, with Roman re-enactors in foreground

The central area of Ewell village has evidence of occupation from prehistoric to modern times. In particular it is believed that the current lawn area is the site of the C16 mansion of Nicholas Saunder. This assumption relies on the interpretation of the contemporary Survey of Ewell in 1577 and the statement by Willis that the foundations were uncovered between the C18 house and the lake in the early C20. In 2004 a chalk block foundation was discovered by the southern of the two steps from the path, in front of Bourne Hall, to the lawn. A resistivity survey carried out in April appeared to show differential areas of low and high resistance.

The TPs were sited along the northern edge of the lawn, with one to the south and one by the southern steps. In the event only the one by the steps (TP6) revealed any archaeological features. The three TPs excavated along the northern edge of the lawn and the one to the south showed the same stratigraphy - 0.1-0.2m turf and topsoil, 0.1-0.2 m of lighter loam and 0.1m of disturbed Thanet Sand natural. TP 6 showed a similar basic stratigraphy but also contained a stretch of shallow mortared flint and Reigate stone wall foundation. It was only one "course" deep and slightly askew to the path and bank and to the line of the chalk block wall found in 2004 some 4m



Test Pit 6 ,Spit 3

to the south. No sign of that wall was found continuing in TP6 so that wall, which is substantial, must stop or return between TP6 and the 2004 trench.

The lack of any other archaeological features is odd given the suspected potential for significant buildings on the site, which included the mansion, gatehouse, forecourt, hall, parlour and other edifices. It may be that these Tudor buildings lay further to the south although no indication was found in TP5.

Finds: archaeological material from all TPs was very limited and comprised mainly ceramic building material (CBM) in all TPs, particularly in TP2 which had a large amount of roof tile (12585gr) in spit 2. This material is of late medieval or post medieval date. There were no special finds of coins or other metal objects. However, at least 11 worked flint blades were recovered together with a quantity of flint debitage, suggesting flint knapping overlooking the springs.

The few pottery sherds recovered, 57 in total, comprised fragments of Prehistoric (3), Roman (28), Saxon (? 1), Medieval (15) and Post-Medieval (7) pottery.

This low level of archaeological material, other than CBM, is surprising although the total area excavated was only 6 sq m. By comparison, nearly 9000 sherds of pottery of all dates were excavated from the 1960s excavations on the BH car park site. It suggests that this zone of the Bourne Hall site has been systematically cleared between building periods, maybe because the area has been landscaped to lawn following the building of the C18 house. It is less clear now whether the Tudor complex occupied the lawn area, and this may warrant further investigation.

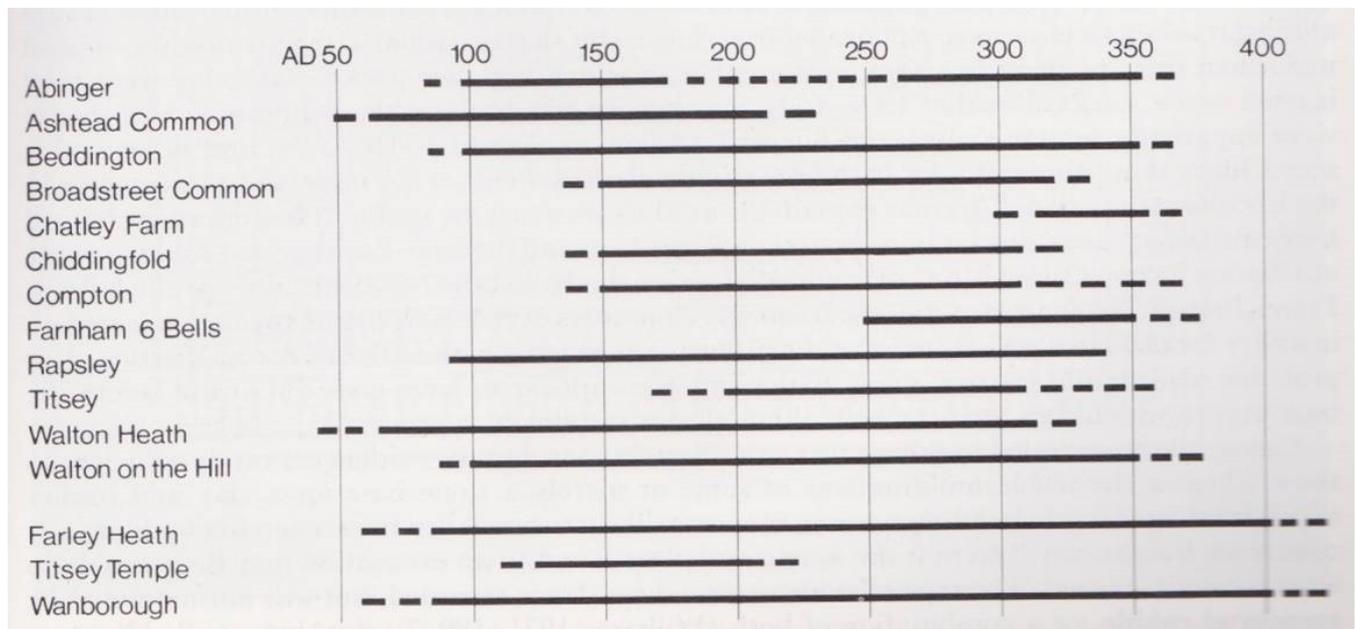
Editor's Note: See Forthcoming Events for details of more test pitting, this time in Nonsuch Park, on September 21st-22nd.

July Meeting - “Late Antique Surrey”: a new way of looking at the Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon transition - Rob Briggs

Steve Nelson

Rob Briggs has an academic background in landscape and medieval studies and is particularly interested in the early medieval or Anglo Saxon period. He grew up in Surrey and much of his research is based in the county. Rob is currently studying for a PhD at the Institute of Archaeology at UCL. He also works as an Assistant HER officer at Surrey County Planning Department.

A current theme in academic and archaeological circles is the debate over what happened at the end of formal Roman occupation in this country. The SyAS held a successful conference on this in 2018. The simple and traditional view is that the Roman military left in AD 410 and various Anglo-Saxon invaders arrived from Scandinavia and north Germany. While in a very general sense this is true, the actual picture is not so simple. Scholars are increasingly recognising a more general period of change and transition that covered a longer period, perhaps from the C3 in the Roman period through to the C8. While it is true that the main cities and buildings fell into disuse, the widespread use of coinage appears to cease and industrial pottery production declines, we can still recognise an enduring native British or Brittonic culture. David Bird published, in 1987, a table indicating the ceasing of occupation in the villas and temples across the county. But, is this true, as the Beddington villa, for example, has some Saxon looking structures in it?



Villa dates

As Rob's main interest lies with Surrey, he outlined 'Where' and 'What' was Surrey in this period of transition. The current boundaries are relatively modern in historic terms. The OE name for the area – *suthrin ge* spelt phonetically - means simply southern province, so is difficult to define. He referred in particular to a current view, that of John Hines Anglo-Saxon specialist, of a more restricted “heartland” of post Roman occupation in the north east of the county. However, there are varying opinions amongst specialists. To understand this further, Rob explored what evidence there is across Surrey in terms of objects of distinctive

late Roman and early Saxon date. Metalwork from the cemeteries and casual burials is the most distinctive and important as it shows links and origins with material from the continent which there is better dated. Two of the earliest cemeteries are Mitcham and Guildown, which began in the C5 and have specific brooches considered to be of early C5 date, the so-called great square headed brooches. David Bird has recently been reviewing the evidence of the Guildown cemetery in SyAS Bulletins.

In terms of the decline or perhaps continuity of pottery production, Rob referred to Malcolm Lyne's recent publication on late Roman wares (Archaeopress 12, 2015). There is a problem for pottery studies in that Lyne has his own classification not always compatible with others. In particular, the references in his book to some pottery from Eden Street, Kingston may not be correct. What is important for Kingston is the find, in 1849, of eight or ten gold Byzantine, C6 coins from the Thames. They may have had a direct association with Kingston, now known to have had a significant early Saxon occupation, or may simply be another example of the Thames corridor of trade.



Great square headed brooch from
Guildown grave 116



Ewell Jewell

Rob also discussed the evidence of continued long distance trade in the C5 – C7. He illustrated a great number of finds known from the county. There is the blue glass bead of c585-640 from the Fetcham Roman villa, material of blue frit from Ashtead Roman villa, and the Red Sea panther cowrie shell from the Ashtead, Ermyn Way cemetery. Rather special, in our area, is the Byzantine gold pendant of later C7 date from Stoneleigh – the “Ewell Jewell” now in the BM (the story surrounding its finding is in the Society's Newsletter 1994/2 published on line). Rob also mentioned the many recent finds from the Thames foreshore at Putney and in particular the Felsham Road site excavated by Wandsworth Historical Society a few years ago.

He drew attention to the finds of Saxon silver coins, sceattas, in Surrey with an intriguing concentration in a line from the Bookham area to Wanborough in the west. The success of the Portable Antiquities Scheme is recording more and more material, particularly these coins, that would otherwise have been unknown. It is of course difficult to make sense of all these finds and their significance in the post Roman period, but Rob's talk indicated the various ideas that are being discussed. In suggesting a name for the period, Late Antique, Rob was not saying this should be the definitive label but that it is as valid as the many other names that have been used to describe this fluid period. He provided a valuable overview of the material evidence that is available.

August Meeting - Members' Evening

Jeff Cousins

The Légion d'Honneur

Elizabeth Bennett

Elizabeth's father was born in April 1923, thus he was only 16 when WW2 started, so he first joined the Home Guard. Once he was 18 he joined the Navy, serving as a Signaller. He was based in Scotland and served in the Atlantic convoys, but when D-Day came he helped ferry troops to Normandy. In 2014 the French government decided to celebrate the 70th anniversary of D-Day by awarding the Légion d'Honneur, their highest honour, to all D-Day survivors. Elizabeth's father was eligible so her brother applied on his behalf, and the medal was awarded. Being a secular country, the medal is not overtly religious, but does look rather like a five armed version of a Maltese Cross. Sadly her father died a few years later in Sept. 2017.



Wartime in a Surrey Town

Jeremy Harte

Trevor White (1928-97) was a local (born, lived and died in Epsom) local historian. He had worked as a Savile Row tailor, but after taking early retirement became interested in local history. He produced 'Epsom Entertained' and (jointly with Jeremy) 'Epsom: A Pictorial History'. He had an extensive collection of local newspaper clippings, now donated to the museum. He wrote 'Wartime in a Surrey Town' in 1994 but it was not published in his lifetime. Jeremy has supplemented it with photos from the Bourne Hall Museum collection, and EEHAS has now published it to commemorate the centenary of the end of WW1. It is on sale for £9.50.

Tolworth Court Farm

Steve Nelson

This site was excavated in 2000-2002 by KuTAS, with the assistance of members of EEHAS and the Surrey Archaeological Society. It is in a green corridor stretching from Chessington to Old Malden, used by animals such as deer, and thus of wildlife value. An 1868 map



shows the farm still surrounded by a moat. In 1933 Kingston Road still followed its old route with a kink by the farm (now Old Kingston Road), and the farmhouse was still standing albeit in a state of some disrepair. By 1937 the road had been straightened and the farmhouse demolished. (The Victoria County History erroneously says it burnt down in 1911, but that was Tolworth Hall/Riverhill House). The large (8 bays, 2 doors) barn burnt down in 1969.

The 2000-2002 dig tried to establish whether enough remained for the site to be scheduled by English Heritage - unfortunately not, though the site has some protection due to its value to wildlife. Even its date is still uncertain, but pottery from the upcast from digging the moat was dated late 13th - 14th century, there is a documentary reference to the moat being in existence in 1326, and the 13th and 14th centuries were the age of moat digging in England, so the dates are broadly consistent.

So called "Roman" post holes

A row of post holes in the NE of the site was originally thought to be Roman as the fill included a Roman melon bead, but as they were dug into layers containing early mediaeval pottery this was soon discounted.

Scandinavian Rock Art

Brenda Allen

Brenda had been on this tour in 2017 with Andante. Scandinavian rock art is split into two traditions, the Southern produced by farmers in the south in 1800 BC - 435 AD, and the Northern produced by hunter-gatherers in the north in 4200 - 500 BC, with relatively little overlap in geography or time. The carvings are on granite so it must have been hard work chipping away to produce them. Most have been painted red in recent times to make them more visible, though this practice is sometimes frowned upon.

The most famous southern site is in Tanum, 85 miles north of Gothenburg. Its carvings are typically of boats or humans, usually warriors, with a variety of



Fossum, near Tanum

weapons such as axes, spears and bows, and sometimes on horseback. Discs are thought to represent the sun.

The premier northern site is at Alta, high above the Arctic Circle in Norway. The older carvings are characterised by animals such as reindeer, elk, bear, water birds and fish (mostly halibut). Carvings post 2700 BC were mostly of people instead. It is assumed that the carvings were originally on the shoreline, but the land rose as the glaciers melted, so dating is on the basis of distance from the modern shoreline.

Editor's note: I visited Tanum in May 2018, even more impressive than I'd hoped for, and surrounded by beautiful countryside.

Forthcoming Events

Carshalton And District History & Archaeology Society: Coach trip to Ightham Mote

Thursday 12th September 2019. Pickup at Shotfield, Wallington 12:30 Ruskin Road, Carshalton 12:45. Return around 6:30pm. CADHAS members £18, guests £19, plus NT admission.

Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society: Whitehall, Cheam

Thursday 12th September 2019, at 7:30pm for 8pm, Surbiton Library Halls, Ewell Road, Surbiton. A look at the mysterious early history of Whitehall in Cheam, and its subsequent use as a house. A talk by John Phillips, Local Historian and (retired) Sutton Heritage Manager.

Esher District Local History Society: Ships & Slavery

Saturday 14th September 2019, at 2pm at St. George's Church, Esher Park Avenue, Esher KT10 0PX. A talk by Stephen Chater.

Surrey Archaeological Society: Community Test Pitting Weekend at Nonsuch Park

Saturday 21st - Sunday 22nd September 2019 at 10am - 4pm. Participants of all ages are invited to book a slot for a full weekend of investigation of the Tudor Old Stables. All sessions must be booked in advance – for info, contact outreach@surreyarchaeology.org.uk.

Surbiton and District Historical Society: The Tale of Owen Tudor

Tuesday 1st October 2019 at 7.45pm, Surbiton Library Annex. A talk by Matthew Bowman. £2 for visitors.

Surrey Archaeological Society: Roman Studies Group: AGM and talk on animal bones in ritual deposits

Tuesday 1st October 2019 at 7.30pm, Leatherhead Institute, 67 High Street, Leatherhead. This includes a talk by Clare Rainsford, an freelance zooarchaeologist from York

Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society: Recent finds from Surrey

Thursday 10th October 2019, at 7:30pm for 8pm, Surbiton Library Halls, Ewell Road, Surbiton. A talk by Dr Simon Maslin, Surrey Finds Liaison Office, Portable Antiquities Scheme. Please also bring along your own local finds and Simon will be happy to take a look at them.

Carshalton And District History & Archaeology Society: London Mithraeum and Roman Amphitheatre

Friday 11th October 2019 at The Guildhall at 11.15am for the Amphitheatre, after lunch (time TBA) for the Mithraeum.

Esher District Local History Society: Secret Kingston upon Thames

Saturday 19th October 2019. Events normally at 2:30pm at Holy Trinity Church Hall, Church Road, Claygate KT10 0JP. A talk by Julian McCarthy. £3 for non-members.

Carshalton And District History & Archaeology Society: TBA

Saturday 2nd November 2019 at 3.00pm, Milton Hall (the Darby & Joan Club), Cooper Crescent, Carshalton, SM5 2LG.

Surbiton and District Historical Society: Christmas on the Homefront

Tuesday 5th November 2019 at 7.45pm, Surbiton Library Annex. A talk by Mike Brown. £2 for visitors.

Surrey Archaeological Society: AGM and SHERF19

Saturday 16th November 2019 at 10am - 4pm, Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall, Woodfield Lane, Ashtead, KT21 2BE. The annual Surrey Historic Environment Research Framework conference will be based on Scientific Analyses this year. It is followed by the AGM.

Surbiton and District Historical Society: The Arbiter of Taste - Lord Burlington & Chiswick House in the 18thC

Tuesday 19th November 2019 at 2pm, Surbiton Library Annex. A talk by Keith Hathaway. £2 for visitors.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**Chairman's Notes (continued):**

The current SyAS Bulletin has a short article on the results of the archaeological excavations carried out during the recent redevelopment of the Grove school in Ewell. It is a shame that we weren't able to see the work in progress, but that's the nature of "commercial" archaeology. Although the excavation appears to have been rather limited, the report does give details of two ditch features and which complements past work on the site, by Frere, just before the war and Frank Pemberton in 1970-72. We will have to think about this but the implication is that the ditches may define a rectangular enclosure, apparently of Roman date, on the site of the school buildings set back from the modern High Street.

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

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Programme Secretary: Vacant

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

Please send copy for the next newsletter to the Newsletter Editor by 12 October 2019.

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 September
www.epsomewellhistory.org.uk