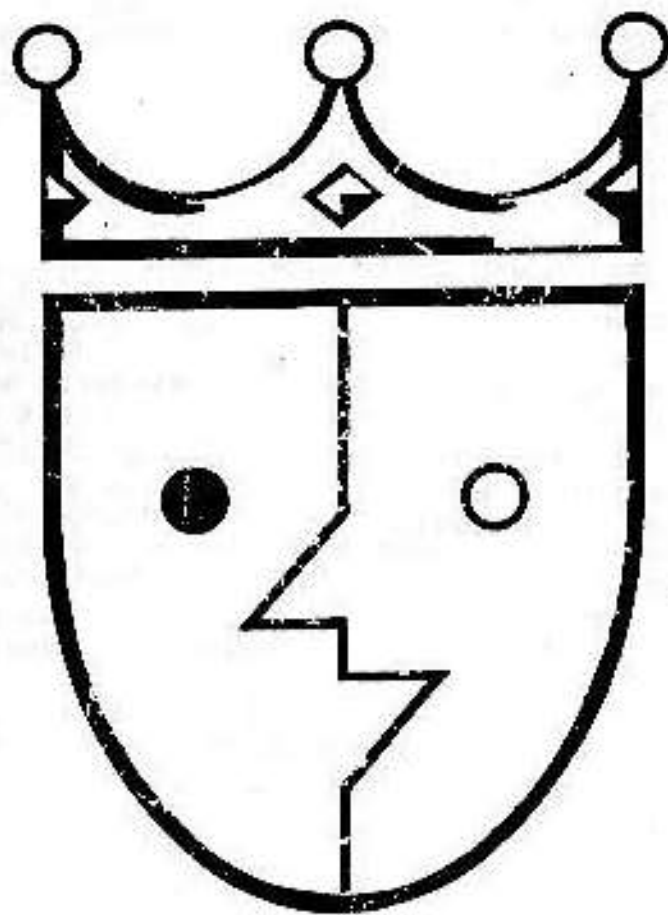


FRIENDS OF GUILDFORD MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

January 1996

Issue 1



From the Editor

I hope you enjoy our Newsletter. We aim, with the help of the Curator and his staff, to keep you informed of the wide range of Museum activities and associated events in the area. You will be aware of the Friends events for this year but as a reminder they are given in the centre fold. I would appreciate any comments or ideas you may have for future newsletters.

Eric Morgan

COMMITTEE

Chairman
Vice-Chairman
Treasurer
Secretary
Social events
Editor

Elizabeth Cobbett
Bill Bellerby
Tim Bryers
Marjorie Williams
Pat Cousins
Eric Morgan

Matthew Alexander
Brian Alexander-O'Neil
Jennifer Powell

Message from our Chairman

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our first Newsletter of the Friends of Guildford Museum, we have already had our first very successful social event for Hallow'een which entailed a Ghost Walk through the Town followed by a jolly talk from Matthew and Ginger Cake with Mulled Wine in the Undercroft - a happy time was had by all.

By now you will have seen our programme for the forth coming year, we hope you will find things in it to entertain and amuse you - please show the programme to your friends and encourage them to join us

The committee wish you all a Healthy and Joyous New Year and we look forward to seeing you all at the Social Events.

Elizabeth Cobbett

To become a member of the Friends of Guildford Museum please send a cheque with the appropriate subscription to Mr T.C. Bryers, Friends of Guildford Museum, 2 Southbury, Lawn Road, Guildford, GU2 5DD Subscription rates for 1995/96
Individual £5: Family £10: Under 18's £2:
Corporate £25: Individual Life £100

Please make cheques payable to
FRIENDS OF GUILDFORD MUSEUM

Curator's Corner

UNDERCROFT

Friends may recall the mediaeval undercroft opposite the Angel Hotel which a year ago housed the Tourist Information Centre(T.I.C.). Built in about 1300, it would have been a semi-basement shop to a timber-framed house above, which has not survived. The well-cut masonry and cheerfully grotesque corbels where the vaulted arches meet the walls have led English Heritage to describe it as the finest such undercroft in England. In April the T.I.C. having moved to Tunsgate, the undercroft was transferred to the Museum.

It is intended to open the undercroft on a limited basis during the tourist season, using volunteers. The T.I.C. fittings have been removed, the museum will install a small, permanent display on the history of mediaeval Guildford in general and the undercroft in particular. There will be models, a replica chest of the time and a figure of a Guildford Merchant in contemporary costume.



Friends will be invited to a reception in the undercroft when the display is installed in the New Year. Anyone who would like to help as a steward, on perhaps a Saturday afternoon, I would be grateful if they could get in touch with me.

Matthew Alexander.

A CHAT FROM OUR SECRETARY

We were delighted to see nearly one hundred guests at the launch of the FRIENDS at the Guildhall last May which was followed by an interesting talk on the work of the British Association of Museums given by their secretary, Sue Drought.

The constitution was approved on July 3rd and Rosie Severs, secretary of the "Friends of Godalming Museum" gave us some excellent tips for fund raising. We then adjourned to Salters for a preview of the Museums exhibition "Guildford in World War II"

On a very wet day in September many of you were brave enough to attend Gill Williams talk and were amply rewarded by her humour and knowledge of Losely House.

On October 31st an original entertainment was offered - a Halloween Celebration. After a ghost walk members descended into the seasonally decorated mediaeval Undercroft where after glasses of hot mulled wine they heard a lecture on ghoulish happenings in old Guildford given by Matthew Alexander. Needless to say this event was a sell-out.

Our main fund raising event of the year is the Mediaeval Banquet on March 2nd. Your £20 ticket will not only buy a hot meal, drinks and entertainment but will also help to replace the very unreliable video equipment in the Museum - so do come along and bring your friends.

Thank you for joining the association for its first year and I do hope you will not only renew your subscription in April but will also recruit new members. Apart from helping the Museum in so many ways we hope you will enjoy the programme we have arranged for you.

Marjorie Williams.

GUILDFORD MUSEUM'S EXCAVATION UNIT

The Unit has its origins in John Boas coming to Guildford as a volunteer. After 30 years of work in the building trade, and nearly 50 years involvement in archaeology, John is ideally suited for urban archaeology. Nearly all archaeology involves rescuing sites threatened by building work. Despite the existence of a government planning guideline, PPG 16, most building activity in Guildford is not monitored by official archaeologists. On his own initiative John began watching building sites in the town. This is where his familiarity with the building trade comes in useful. No matter what is stated in the plans for a site, the reality is nearly always different and the site needs to be watched regularly.

In the spring of 1991 John watched a site in Tunsgate and made a most spectacular discovery of a pit filled with broken pottery and glass thrown away when it was still serviceable, around the year 1700. Fortunately, Kevin Fryer, who was working at the Museum as a cataloguer, was coming to the end of his contract and could move on to deal with the Tunsgate finds. The Unit has evolved from there, finding and excavating site after site in the town centre. All of the sites have given us new information about Guildford and all have now been destroyed by the building work. As well as salvaging what we can from sites we also take the opportunity to record the standing structures. This is much easier to do when a property is empty. A particularly rewarding example of recording a building was at 81, High Street, now Clinton Cards, where we discovered a previously unknown 12th century undercroft.

It is very plain, with no vaulting or moulded stone but is a valuable addition to the growing list of mediaeval buildings in Guildford. Documentary research proved that the building above ground was once the Swan Inn. At 149, High Street lovely panelled rooms were found inside a timber-framed building which is completely hidden by an early Victorian facade. There is also an undercroft below this shop, recorded by the Guildford Group some years ago.

Less happy was the saga of the Town Wharf, where Thames Water, who do not need planning permission for their undertakings, dug a large deep hole and destroyed a mediaeval waterfront. The Unit could only salvage timbers and pottery from the spoil dumped further downstream. This was a completely unknown part of Guildford's history and makes a tremendous difference to our knowledge of the past, but if a volunteer had not been keeping a watchful eye on things we would have known nothing about it. It is very sad that there are not stricter laws to protect archaeology. At present no-one is obliged to monitor building sites for archaeological remains but that is exactly what is needed. It cannot be done by studying planning applications and weighing up the likelihood of there being archaeological remains in the area. The last few years have proved that there is more than enough work for a team of three, and yet there is no proper funding. John and Kevin have supported themselves for much of the time, supplemented sometimes by their expenses, paid from donations. Now the Borough Council is giving a small grant, but it does not amount to even the modest salary a professional archaeologist is entitled to and we have no assurance it will be paid each year. (Continued bottom of page 10).

Events February to May 1996

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1st at 7.30pm. in the GUILDHALL

TICKETS £2

"Investigating Guildford Castle"

A talk by Mary Alexander. Having worked on the mediaeval Court Rolls for her M.A. thesis, Mary is now continuing her studies for a Ph.D. Apart from her fascinating documentary discoveries, Mary has also been greatly involved in the archaeology of Guildford Castle.

SATURDAY 2nd MARCH AT 7.30pm. AT BURCHETT'S BARN

TICKETS £20

"A Mediaeval Banquet"

Don't miss the event of the year - a banquet fit for a King. Let us take you back a few centuries. Relax to the sound of minstrels while wenches serve the supper in the delightful timbered setting of Burchett's Barn suitably decorated for the occasion.

Wear "mediaeval" or normal dress as you please.

Ample car parking.

.....
: :
: : BOOKING FORM ON BACK PAGE : :
: : : :
: : : :
.....

SUNDAY 14th APRIL AT 2 pm. AT SALTERS

"A Guildford Mystery Trail"

Devised by Brian Alexander O'Neil, a committee member and commercial artist who designed our logo. This is suitable for all ages so please bring your children or grandchildren. Tea and squash will be available afterwards. Collect question sheets at Salters.

CHARGE 50P ON DAY - JUST TURN UP

THURSDAY 16th MAY

"A Coach Trip to Westerham and Squerries Court"

This will be a full days outing to this lovely little town filled with antique shops and little restaurants. On arrival we will visit Westerham Church for a short guided tour and then you can either eat your picnic on the green or visit one of the local eating places or hostels. After lunch we will make the short journey to Squerries Court. This beautiful manor house built in 1681 is the family home of Mr and Mrs John Warde. The family treasures on display include 18th century English and 17th century Dutch paintings, furniture, porcelain and tapestries. Lovely gardens with lake and dovecote. Cream tea in the old library included.

The Safeguard coach departs from Guildford Park Road Car Park at 10.30 a.m. or North St. opp Library 10.40 a.m.

TICKETS £12.50 (includes coach, admission to house, tea and gratuities)

OTHER MEETINGS OF INTEREST

At the Guildford Institute - Ward Street.

Jan 17th at 2-45pm. Unknown Surrey

February 7th at 2-45pm. Stuart Surrey

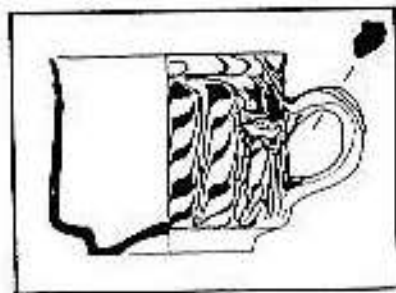
February 16th at 7-30pm. Sir Edwin Lutyens and the Surrey style

All above meetings charged £2 to non members
-further information form the Institute (562142)

GUILDFORD MUSEUM'S EXCAVATION UNIT (Cont.)

If the Friends of Guildford Museum could raise money for the Unit they would be doing a real service to the history of Guildford, and if they could raise public awareness of the problem so that official action was taken, Guildford could become a shining example of a borough which takes its history seriously.

Mary Alexander



MUSEUM EXCAVATION UNIT AGAIN

At the invitation of Equitable Life Insurance, the Museum's Excavation Unit were able to examine a building in the High Street before planned alterations took place. From a visual examination of the interior John Boas, Kevin Fryer and Mary Alexander realised there were some inexplicable height variations in the shop and an unexplainable area behind the cellar.

John Boas drilled three holes through this wall to reveal a mediaeval chalk wall, including a section of dressed chalk blocks from a doorway complete with its original hinge. Following the tedious task of removing 25 tonnes of loose rubble, which included fragments of early 13th century pottery, the team revealed a 10 foot square room which will prove a very valuable aid to understanding the Town's mediaeval life.

This is the first domestic room of the period that has been found. Other vaulted undercrofts were intended as shops. On opposite walls are pillasters from the arched recesses of a blind arcade with a chamfered stone ledge between them. On the far wall, a flight of stone steps leads up to ground level. Charred soil indicates there may have been a fire which could have destroyed a timber roof about 50 years after the room was built. It is thought that the room may have been abandoned at this time and filled in. The upper part being cut off 4 feet above the ground and the rest filled with rubble. Despite 19th century building above, the room has managed to hold on to its secrets for nearly 700 years.

English Heritage experts visited the room just before Christmas and will advise on how best to preserve the fabric.

SURREY YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGISTS CLUB

The Surrey YAC is run jointly by Guildford Museum and the Surrey Archaeological Society. It is open to young people between the ages of eight and eighteen and meets once a month at 13a Castle Street.

The Club is run by the Assistant Curator, Sue Roggero as the Museum's representative, assisted by Christine Hardman who is employed by the S.A.S. Kathleen Needham provides invaluable help in the office as membership secretary.

The meetings are generally divided into two, to cater for the needs of both junior and senior members. The majority of the membership is at junior level, but we do have a growing band of keen seniors, some of whom are hoping to go on to read archaeology at university.

The club offers a variety of experiences. Some sessions are practical or craft based. These are very popular with the younger members: mosaic making, wattle and daub, writing with quill pens and Mediaeval tile making are some of the recent activities enjoyed by members.

Trips to other museums or historical sites are another feature: Museum of Moving Image, Science Museum, Museum of the Iron Age, Bucklers Hard and Beaulieu are recent examples and next year we hope to visit the "White Cliffs Experience" in Dover.

But most of all the YAC's like to be involved with a dig. Real archaeology. Finding things from the past and processing them. They will wash pots with a gusto undreamt of by the average parent who has tried to get them to do the washing up.

They also love to label, identify and, best of all, stick the bits together, as they did in September, when finds from Farnborough Hill and other digs were made available to them.

Taking part in the Castle Dig in previous years and, in 1995, the excitement of being in at the start of excavations on the SAS dig with Steve Dyer, made a big impression. Several senior members distinguished themselves there by their aptitude in both excavation and finds processing and were given a special Club Award.

At Christmas, there is a party or other celebration: this year a trip to the theatre. As well as that, the members have the opportunity to attend the Society of Antiquaries Christmas Lecture at Burlington House in Piccadilly. Club members are thus given the chance to hear a distinguished archaeologist - last year Barry Cunliffe - speaking directly to them. They are also treated to an excellent tea.

Members come from all over Surrey - the organisers are often surprised at the distances some travel to meetings - and membership recently has averaged about eighty. Fortunately, they do not all choose to come to every session. Usually thirty to forty will attend the Saturday session.

If you would like any further information about the Club, please contact Sue or Christine at Guildford Museum, and if you have a suggestion for a session or interesting site to visit, they will receive it gratefully.

Christine Hardman.

MR and MRS PARSON

Mr and Mrs Parson were born at the beginning of the eighteenth century and had a drapery shop in the High St about where the entrance to Tunsgate Square now stands. One evening Mrs Parson was examining the cellar when she thought part of the floor sounded hollow. She sent the servants to bed and then late at night she and her husband carefully examined the cellar. They pulled up part of the floor to reveal an arched vault below. They never disclosed what they found in the vault but the Gentleman's Magazine for May 1799 reports that from that moment their circumstances considerably improved.

The Parson's had a daughter Sarah and two sons William and Henry. All worked in the shop. We know little about Sarah apart that she appears to have been the brains behind the business. After some sixteen years in the trade William and Henry retired. This suggests that they had either been very successful or alternatively perhaps their parents had found something of value under the cellar floor. When William died in 1799 at the age of seventy three, his estate was valued at £50,000. The brothers lived in the Parish of Stoke and had discussed endowing a Hospital or Home for Elderly. On Henry's death in 1792 it fell to William to carry out the project and so in 1796 the Parson's Hospital in Stoke Road was completed and six poor widows took up residence.

The widows had to be of good character, not less than sixty years in age and to have been resident in the ancient Parish of Stoke. They must also obey the rules that William Parsons had prepared. First of all he desired that they lived in a kind and affectionate manner towards one another and be referred to as sisters. They must also attend prayers at the Parish Church twice on Sundays and prayers in their own chapel on Wednesdays and Fridays otherwise they would be fined. The sisters appointed one of their own to be Matron and it was only she that was allowed to hold the key to the front or garden gate. If any of the other sisters were found in possession of the key they could be expelled. In summer the gate was opened at 7am. and closed at 8pm. (8am. and 6pm respectively in winter). Indeed it was a serious offence not to be in by closing time and for three such offences one could be expelled. Neither were the sisters allowed to entertain visitors at the Hospital.

From the outside the building looks much the same today as when it was built. It is administered by a trust and can now accommodate thirteen people with each resident having their own living room, bedroom, kitchen and bathroom.

The building will be 200 years old in 1996.

Eric Morgan.

FRIENDS SOCIAL EVENTS JAN-MAY 1996

PLEASE SEND US/ME TICKETS FOR THE FOLLOWING EVENTS

- 1).....tickets for 1st February GUILDFORD CASTLE
(No) Total (£2 each).....
- 2).....tickets for 2nd March MEDIAEVAL BANQUET
(No) Total (£20 each).....
- 3).....tickets for 26th May WESTERHAM OUTING
(No) Total (£12 50 each).....

We will board the coach at

(a) GUILDFORD PARK ROAD CAR PARK

(b) NORTH STREET opp LIBRARY

Please tick (a) or (b)

Please send this form with your cheque to
Marjorie Williams (Hon Sec)
20 Shalford Road, Guildford, GU4 8BL

Cheque payable to FRIENDS OF GUILDFORD MUSEUM
ONLY ONE CHEQUE REQUIRED TO COVER ALL EVENTS

ENCLOSED CHEQUE FOR £..... for tickets
requested above.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

Tel No.....