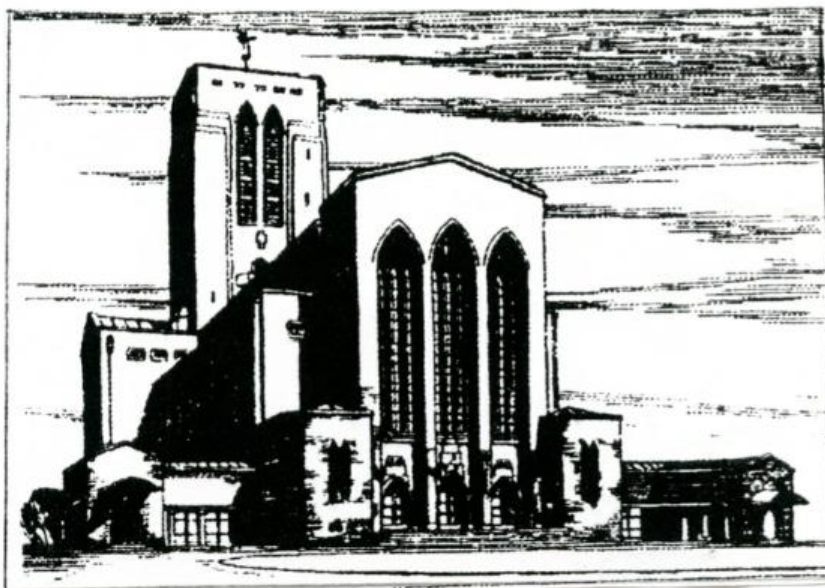


Harefield History Society

Newsletter No 34
Autumn 1997

Committee:	I Liddell	Chairman
	M Marjoram	Treasurer
	M Evans	Secretary
	R Goodchild	Programme Sec
	V Woodward	Conservation Rep
	T Hillier	
	K Davey	



Guildford Cathedral

Programme;	22 September	John Lugg "Development of the Permanent Way"
	27 October	Iain Liddell "Five Viking Ships"
	24 November	Hugh Grainger "Origins of Manners and Customs"
	26 Jan 1998	Geoff Saul "The Story of Ruislip Reservoir from 1800"
	23 February	Local Studies Evening - Harefield
	23 March	Betty Dungey "Swakeleys"
	27 April	AGM Dante Vanoli "The Restoration of Hampton Court"

Secretary's Note:

We are glad they did not build a theme park in Uxbridge, as are all the people who live near the site. And now, sadly the Old Vicarage has vanished. We hope the ten new houses will have some style.

Everyone enjoyed the two outings planned by Robert. On the way to the Weald and Downland Museum we stopped to look at Guildford Cathedral, rather severe on its' hilltop; some beautiful glass engravings on its doors and windows, but a little colourless. I was putting some coins into the collecting box in the entrance when an official rushed up and said "Oh we don't make a charge to come into this Cathedral!" However he admitted that he didn't mind if I made a small contribution!

The Weald and Downland Museum had grown considerably since our last visit some years ago. We had a tour guide who explained all the buildings. The finale was a typical farmhouse with a central fire on the stone floor, the smoke going up through a hole in the roof. Outside was a garden full of the plants that were grown in the distant past.

We welcome new members to our committee, also the three new society members who joined us at the Church Fete, but we regret the retirement of Reg Neil who leaves a big gap! We had a good day on the Green - though all my papers kept blowing away in spite of clips, fastenings and weights.

M Evans

The Denham Walk

It was a pleasant June evening when about 15 of us met at Denham Church to be guided around the village by Barry Watson of Groundwork Colne Valley.

Denham started as a Saxon village, the Saxons originally invading via the river Misbourne to settle there. It is now a picturesque village with many old and interesting houses. Part of Denham Court dates from 500 AD. It was visited in the late 1600's by John Dryden, the poet and dramatist and he was said to be particularly fond of the lovely garden and has written of it in one of his works.

The Church, built mainly of flint was constructed over three centuries, the tower being Norman. The vestry was added by Martin Bakers' with a lot of the work being carried out by their apprentices. The panelling inside came from Sandringham. A mass grave in the churchyard holds the remains of seven members of one family in the village, all murdered on a Sunday morning in 1870. The murderer was the last person to be hanged at Aylesbury jail.

Many of the houses are older than they appear, the facades having been built of brick hiding the older timber frames. The Falcon Public House is one such building. The old bakery which has a 14th Century hall is said to be the oldest cottage in the village. Yet another very old building is the Blacksmith's cottage, which was originally three, now made into one. The timber framework is still to be seen.

When some of the villagers decided they would like a Chapel, the church objected strongly, so services were held in the wheelwright's cottage in Cheapside Lane. It was converted to a Chapel in the early 1800's and this tiny building is still in use today.

At the end of our walk we were warmly welcomed by Dorothy and Walter Winton at their home, for a much appreciated coffee. It was a delightful ending to a very pleasant evening which even the rain, towards the end, did not spoil.

Joan Thirkettle

Flag Fen and Peterborough 14th June

For those embarking on the coach the day turned out to be something of a triumph of hope over adversity. Miles of roadworks and an overturned lorry resulted in an hours delay. A video of the site helped us to understand what it was all about: fencing from the Bronze age, a Roman road, the different levels of the water from BC to AD. We saw a Bronze Age round house and an Iron Age house. The water iris and bogbean by the dyke were the same as grew thousands of years ago and gave food for thought on the passage of time.

We set off for the city's 12th century Norman Cathedral only to find that evensong was about to begin, and today was choral evensong lasting twice as long as usual. We adjourned to the nearby City Museum, returning in time to see the choirboys filing out. Among many ancient tombs was that of Katherine of Aragon, and the site of the original tomb of Mary, Queen of Scots. A unique painted wooden ceiling dating from 1220 is one of the glories of the Nave and there is an exhibition showing the history of the site which had been an abbey for 900 years prior to its inauguration as a Cathedral by Henry VIII in 1541.

The Cathedral stands in the oldest part of the city adjoining Market Square with its handsome Guildhall, but there is also much that is now in Peterborough which has expanded a great deal in recent years.

These visits are really "appetisers" making us aware of the depth of our history and we have Robert Goodchild and Iain Liddell to thank for Flag Fen and Peterborough.

B Dungey and M Marjoram

A Bit of Botanical History (for a change)

In 1737 Mr Blackstone, a well known botanist, published "Plantarium circa Harefield Nascentium". In it was a list of the most rare wild flowers then growing around Harefield. It would be interesting to find out how many of these plants still grow here. How about taking a few strolls along our field paths and having a look for some of them? The list is on a separate paper so that you can take it in your pocket.

I must admit that I have found only one of them - Toothwort, which is a rather colourless thing growing on the roots of other plants, in this case hazel, in the bank at the side of Springwell Lane's steeper part, and this was a while ago, about 1972.

Snakeshead Fritillary I found in a Council dump beside a park in Ruislip. Actually a few years ago the Natural History people tried to grow this in a field next to the entrance to Bayhurst Woods. The steep side of Tarleton Reserve used to be covered with spotted orchid but I don't know of any Bee or Fly orchid. Do let me know if you find anything.

M Evans

The following article continues from newsletter no 33.

CHINA

The Forbidden City

The Forbidden City now known as the Imperial Palace Museum adjoins Tiannamen Square, it covers a space of 72 hectares - 180 acres - and is surrounded by a 10m high wall and a moat over 50 m wide. The soil from the moat was used to create the five peaked Prospect Hill from which the Emperor could survey his domains but which is now known as Coal Hill because of the large coal depot beneath it!

From its foundation in 1406 until the revolution in 1911 the Forbidden City was used as the ceremonial centre of rule by the 24 Emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties - it was indeed a separate city housing up to 10,000 eunuchs and 9,000 ladies - in - waiting who served the needs of the Imperial family, foreign ambassadors and palace officials.

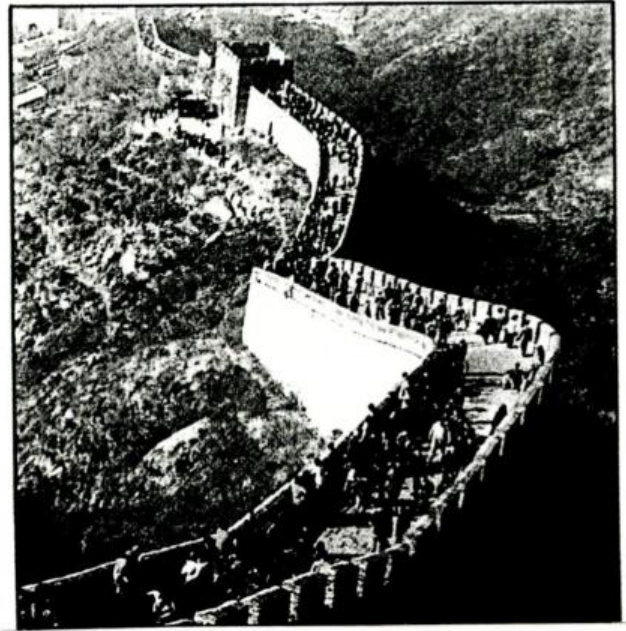
Magnificent halls used on formal occasions of state are set behind elegantly carved marble balustrades and approached by impressive dragon stairs. The Gate of Supreme Harmony leads successively to the Hall of Supreme Harmony and then to the Hall of Complete Harmony and finally to the Hall of Preserving Harmony (the Banqueting rooms!) . The other palaces and halls bear equally charming names such as the Palace of Heavenly Purity, the Palace of Earthly Tranquillity (where the Imperial couple slept for a few days after their nuptials) and the Halls of Heroic Splendour and of Literary Glory. The buildings are truly splendid, and are all kept in excellent repair. The roof tiles are coloured to signify the building's status, while fabulous beasts of glazed pottery are placed on their ridges, to ward off evil spirits. The interiors of the buildings are of wood - richly carved and painted while the external walls often display pictorial tiles. In front of the buildings are gilded bronze animals, to bring fortune or ward off evil, as well as large decorative bronze incense burners and equally important bronze water tanks for use during the fires which were a serious danger to these wooden buildings.

The Summer Palace is in a magnificent park by a lake all constructed a few miles from Beijing by the Dowager Empress Cixi in 1888. The Long Corridor stretches 700m along the lake shore to provide shelter and permit wonderful vistas over the lake. The corridor is decorated with hundreds of paintings illustrating historical events and leads to a number of buildings including the Marble Boat (now a restaurant) at the edge of the lake constructed of marble to represent, as a full scale

model, a "state of the art" paddle steamer of the 1880's. It was built, so we were told, regardless of expense by funds the Empress should have used to modernise the Chinese Navy!

The Great Wall

Before leaving Beijing we were taken to see the Great Wall, a further token of China's imperial past, a few miles from Beijing, in the hills at Badaling. On our way to this area we saw from the bus a great deal of work on the repair and rebuilding - some might think it the creation - of forts and defences near the Wall. The Wall at this site has been extensively restored because repairs were essential to permit people safely to walk on the high ramparts which themselves overlook dangerous heights. At Badaling numerous car parks, restaurants, souvenir shops and other facilities have been built in the fort and its approaches.



Our coach was parked about 400 yards away so we had to walk to this area up a steep hill on a busy road with no pavement. While walking we saw, to our annoyance, several coach parks much nearer to the Wall! At the tourist complex we found that the Great Wall itself could be approached by climbing over 100 yards of a very steep slope lined by dozens of stalls with keepers vociferously offering tourist memorabilia at grossly exaggerated prices. We knew that over one thousand million people live in China - and that tourism is becoming increasingly popular, but we were astonished at the number of Chinese we saw with their families tackling the many steps and steep slopes of the path at the top of the Wall. The Wall follows the ridges between the tops of the hills from one guard house to another so that the direction of the path is continually changing - not only in direction but also in slope, often exceedingly steep and frequently with high but narrow steps to follow the changing inclinations of the hilly ground. On both sides of the Badaling Gate several thousand people could be seen going up and down the first mile or so of the Wall past three or four watch towers to the tops of the first ridges. In the bright sunshine and the holiday mood it was hard to imagine the forced labour and slavery, the difficult and dangerous manual work needed to build this structure every foot of which is said to have cost a life. One cannot help but admire the engineering and organisational ability needed to build this structure which was initiated in 221 BC and now after numerous modifications and extensions, stretches for over 6,000 kilometers - almost 4,000 miles with an average height of 27 feet and width of 30 feet.

The Yangtze Gorges

After the few days in Beijing we flew to Wuhan and then by coach from the airport to the river to join the MV "Splendid China" which is a cruise ship with excellent hotel accommodation for about 100 tourists. Our boat was moored some way out in the stream. The intrepid tourists had to carry their hand luggage over the fast running waters on a series of makeshift gangways, these were strong but narrow and wobbly wooden planks leading to broader pontoons and narrow steel mesh paths but none had handrails or duckboards. This gangway led to the deck of a ship from which we were eventually able to step over a gap to reach the "Splendid China". Fortunately all survived this ordeal which turned out to be merely a practice run!

We were told that two lifebelts could be found in our cabins but there was no further detailing of safety precautions - there was no mention of safety drills, muster stations, or the location of life boats or rafts. No emergency equipment or fire extinguishers were to be seen - no notices to muster stations, there was a notice directing attention to an emergency exit, but this door was often locked! After a meal we were given an account of the Yangtze valley the cradle of Chinese civilisation, and particulars of the gorges and towns which we would pass. A printed map in Chinese and English was given with this talk but unfortunately because of the variations in spelling

and transliteration of the Chinese place names it proved very difficult to find on our maps (from the UK or China) any of the places described in the Chinese itineraries!

Though there are numerous splendid views and sites of interest in the Yangtze gorges our guides rarely took the time to tell us where we were or what to see except on one occasion when we were informed that we should not miss the views at a major dam when we would go through its locks - at 2.30am on a moonless night! We passed numerous industrial sites but had to infer their nature from the different types of effluent discharged into the river or the atmosphere.

At Wuhan where we joined, the Yangtze is wide and the banks gently sloping. Overnight we travelled to Jing Sha where we disembarked to visit the museum and walk on its ancient walls. From our bus we were able to see something of the intensively farmed landscape of gently rolling countryside characteristic of this district but our guides were able to tell us little about the crops and villages we could see.

At dawn the next day we entered the scenic region of several hundred kilometers in which the great Yangtze becomes confined to narrow channels between the towering heights of the Xiling, Wu and Qutang gorges. These will disappear within the next few years as construction of the great dam will transform these spectacular gorges into a lake 600 km long. This reservoir will provide 10% of China's electricity supply and, equally important, will offer means to control the disastrous floods which can afflict the Yangtze river basin. Though the weather was poor the gorges did provide in many places spectacular views of beetling cliffs towering over the rushing river confined at times to a course narrower than that of the Thames at Westminster bridge.

Surprisingly we found many parts of these gorges were hazy from industrial smog arising from the many coal mines, factories, iron smelters, steel works and paper mills which poured smoke and steam into the atmosphere and multi coloured effluents into the river! The numerous factories and habitation sites were of grey and black brick (we saw no red brick buildings in China). Many of the structures resembled the Potala in Lhasa in that they adhered to the steep cliffs and slopes against which they stood.

Numerous barges were to be seen, especially notable were those carrying a thousand or more tons of coal and which were shepherded, often up to six at a time, by powerful tugs. From the coal mines on the cliffs or steep banks of the gorges coal fell through broad pipes to large stacks from which it was delivered, again by pipeline, down the steep slopes to the waiting barges. At places the coal could be seen being off loaded or handled at coal depots by dozens of men each bearing two baskets of coal suspended from a pole over his shoulder. Bull dozers and other mechanical handling equipment appeared not often to be used.

At this time of year (April) the river was very low and pedestrian access from the river to the town was normally by wide steep flights of steps, often 200 or more, up and down which could be seen a continuous stream of men (and women too) each carrying large and heavy packages over their backs or in two baskets from their shoulders. In some places newly made narrow roads provided zig zag paths for lorries and buses from the river to the town. Narrow, steep and winding streets were typical of these places built on the hilly ground of the river banks so labourers were frequently seen to carry goods in baskets rather than in the pedicabs or bicycle trailers so commonly employed on the level streets of Beijing.

At Wushan we landed to make a tour of the Lesser Three Gorges of the Daning River, which joins the Yangtze at this point. With about thirty others we embarked on a small wooden boat driven by a powerful motor against the rapid stream. Life jackets and safety precautions were notably absent from these open boats. Two men in the bows were armed with long bamboo poles. These poles were used to guide the boat from dangerous whirlpools and to protect us from collision with the rocky river banks or the boulders in its bed! The Lesser Gorges were especially remarkable because of their height and our proximity to the precipitous sides of the river and the views of the hills and cliffs behind and ahead of us over the white water.

The next day we entered the Qutang, the narrowest of the Yangtze gorges - only 100 - 150 meters

wide in some places and with a correspondingly fast stream. At several times our boat halted, just keeping pace with the current, waiting until a string of boats and barges had passed. At night headlights from our ship flickered over the narrow river from one bank to the other presumably to assist the helmsman maintain position. Conditions such as these made it all the more surprising to us that there were no safety drills and little if any equipment visible for use in an emergency. There is much heavy traffic on this river and some control is essential. We were in fact surprised at the apparent absence of exit signs and general lack of safety precautions on our ship!

After the Qutang gorge we landed at Wanxien to visit a silk factory and see the separation of raw silk from the cocoons and its conversion into skeins of thread. We also visited the museum where there was a special display of some of the massive wood coffins like those we had seen in chambers hundreds of feet up on the precipices of the Qutang gorge. These coffins were made from tree trunks and were placed together with numerous artefacts in burial chambers hacked out of the cliffs in apparently inaccessible places along the Qutang gorge.

On the last day of this river tour we arrived at Chongqing. We were told the road from the river was blocked by repair and construction work and so we would have to walk with our hand baggage, to the place where the bus was waiting to take us to the hotel. It was a moonless night but our guides had no torches and stated that there were no alternative landing sites. From the ship we had to walk over 200 meters of makeshift gangplanks and pontoons above the fast river without guard rails, safety nets or torches to the river bank. Then we walked along the unpaved, unlit dry part of the river bed guided only with light from distant headlights on the boat, across rough gravel with occasional obstacles such as steel cables, shallow ditches and large stones to hinder our path. After about 700 meters of this rough ground we came to a flight of some 250 steep steps which ultimately led to a road in which the bus was parked. The driver spent some time driving to the wrong hotel, and we had to wait a further hour and a half before our luggage arrived - at 11.30 that night! To add to our irritation we were told by tourists on another boat which arrived at about the same time, that they had had no trouble - their guide had directed their boat to a different landing point where they had been met by a bus to take them directly to the hotel. Our experience was indeed an excellent example of incompetent management!

Chongqing, was the capital used in World War II and frequently attacked but never taken, by the Japanese. The town is at the confluence of the Jialing and Yangtze rivers. It is a busy town built on several steep hills. There is an excellent park with a building which once housed the British Ambassador and also a zoo featuring several pandas one of which is so tame that tourists are allowed to be photographed with it!

To be continued - watch this space!

W F Cuthbertson

Continuing the visit to Northumbria by three members;

Beamish Village - County Durham

Beamish is a large open air museum covering over 300 acres. All the areas can be visited on foot, by tram or by bus. We chose the tram which reminded us of our childhood and my schooldays, when I walked one way and returned by tram. The tram circuit is the longest period tramway in Britain. It operates in both directions and carries visitors to most areas of the Museum. Tram "Blackpool 31" dating from 1901 came to Beamish in 1984 and was fully restored there. "Sheffield 264" was built in 1907, withdrawn from service in 1956 and has been working at Beamish since 1989, still in its original livery. An "A class" tram of 1904, "Newcastle 114" and another built in 1900, "Sunderland 16" are in the process of restoration.

Time was limited so we decided to miss the colliery and concentrated on the Home Farm and the

Town. We were hoping also to visit Pockerly Manor and the railway station but there was so much to see in the Town that time ran out.

Most buildings at Beamish have been rescued from elsewhere in the region, but Home Farm, Pockerly Manor and the Drift Mine were already there and have been carefully restored.

Staff are dressed in period clothing and are well versed to answering questions.

The Town, Home Farm, Colliery Village and the Railway Station are set in the year immediately before the First World War.



One of the great attractions at the Home Farm was its kitchen where the range was roaring away exuding warmth, and the farmer's wife and daughter were toasting their toes.

Soon after leaving we were caught in a shower and contemplated going back to dry off, but soon the sun shone and dried those parts, umbrellas, packa - macs and brogues couldn't protect. A tram came along so we jumped on to visit the Town.

There, Ravensworth Terrace, a fine row of Georgian houses from Gateshead, dating originally from 1830 - 1845 has been rebuilt. These fashionable houses were designed for professional people and tradesmen.

The solicitor's office in one of these houses was piled high with legal tomes and ledgers and had a Dickensian appearance, one could imagine Bob Cratchit perched on one of the high stools.

Next door to the solicitor's house lived the dentist and further on the music teacher.

Many of the goods displayed in the shops in the Town brought back memories. Likewise the overhead pulley money machine which flew backwards and forwards always fascinated me as a child and there they were toing and froing in the Draper's shop. I have found out recently that it is called the Lawson - Paragon Cash System.

Advertisements for Frys Chocolate were displayed in the window of the sweet shop. The loose sweets were kept in the same type of glass jar and weighed in the same type of brass scales my maternal grandmother used in her general stores where I used to love to "help" as a child.

We ate our lunch in the empty bandstand, set in a small park on the edge of the Town. This too brought back memories of childhood, of walks on a Sunday evening to listen to the Band in the local park. It often ended up with my elder brother chasing me round the bandstand and both being admonished, one - because it was Sunday and two - because we were dressed in our Sunday best.

Beamish station shows a typical branch line country station of the early twentieth century. John Betjeman said he " would like to have been a station master on a small country branch line . . . a single track of course".

The brochure recommends a morning at least to be spent at Beamish. We had longer than that and saw plenty of interest but there was lots more to see.

Report on Harefield Village Conservation Area Advisory Panel

Harefield House Car Park

Since our last meeting three members of the panel arranged to meet Councillor Tony Burles regarding the car park. They will report to the Panel at the next meeting. The Panel also expressed the view, by letter, that firstly free parking would encourage motorists to use the car park and save the expense of installing machines etc. Secondly, as a further encouragement, some car parking restrictions in the High Street should be introduced.

Rear of 14 - 16 High Street

This is the area behind the trophy shop, the butcher and the video shop.

No decision has yet been made but the Panel claimed that historically there were three cottages on the site and that 4 cottages would amount to overcrowding.

Vicarage Site

Application approved by the Council.

Breakspear Road North

The Council has rejected the application to build four houses to the rear of "El Solano, Cheyham, and Inveresk". However no doubt that won't be the end of the matter!! The Panel is strongly against any more infilling in this particular area as indeed are the residents.

Breakspear House

Plans to be discussed at the next Panel meeting.

Little Hammonds, Breakspear Road

Berkley Homes have withdrawn from the scene, but a new developer has taken up the plan to demolish Little Hammonds and build ten houses on the site. Although preservation orders exist covering most of the trees permission can be sought to move them, as happened to the rear of 14 Northwood Road. The brick wall, built some 250 years ago, as part of Harefield House estate would be demolished. Harefield Cricket Club has been approached and offered cash to sell off part of their land to provide better access. The developer was politely asked to leave at once - in any case the ground is owned by the National Playing Fields Association and they are horrified at losing the lovely backdrop to the Cricket Club. There is also the possibility of the construction of a pavement from the site to Pond Close, thus narrowing the road.

None of these plans have, to date, been submitted to the Council, but after a long talk to the developer when I waylaid him outside my house I have no doubt it is just a matter of time. I would emphasise that all the neighbours are hostile to the proposals.

In similar cases the argument is posed as to whether it is preferable to infill or build on the green belt. In our opinion Harefield has had about as much infilling and development as is reasonable if we are not to lose our village setting.

Finally, the idea has been mooted by the planning Department to split the present Conservation Area into two parts. The main reason being that there are two distinct types of development, village and rural, and it would be a useful mechanism for dealing with the two areas. The two areas would stay under the one existing Panel with meetings covering both areas. However, no prior consultation was made for discussion of the idea with the Panel and the Chairman decided to seek an interview with the Council. He will report at the next meeting.

Val Woodward.