

# MALDENS AND COOMBE HERITAGE SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 1<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2016

AT NEW MALDEN BAPTIST CHURCH

Mary, greeted all members (41)

There were apologies for absence from Annchi Bellamy, Dick Riches, Chris Coke, Ann Robinson, Pat Farr, Cathy Reed, Lynne Finnerty, Audrey Paine, Liz and Don Bavington and Beryl Bizodis.

There was one potential new member: Patrick Browne

The minutes of the last meeting were taken as read and signed, and will appear on the website at a later date.

Mary thanked the church for the use of their meeting place, and for their catering facilities.

We were then entertained with a talk on "Surrey Roads from Turnpike to Motorway" given by Gordon Knowles. Gordon is a member of the Surrey Industrial History Group and he related how the Packhorse trails, the first roads rather than footpaths, made a visible impact on the natural landscape. Roman roads were very well built; the major one in our area was that from London to Chichester via Ewell and Dorking, running north-south rather than east-west. When a road fell into disrepair, local landowners became responsible. In 1386, Chertsey Abbey was fined for seizing the goods of a tenant who had drowned in a pothole! Vehicle improvements in the 17th century made it possible to move heavy goods like food, timber and iron cannon to London, except in winter when the roads became impassable. Samuel Pepys lost his way twice near Cobham on his way to Portsmouth.

The solution was the creation of turnpike trusts, charging tolls spent on repairing a road, often only 20-30 miles [there were three trusts along the Portsmouth road]. The name 'turnpike' came from the pole, topped with military pikes, which formed the mobile barrier across the road. The earliest trust in Surrey (1696) controlled the road south of Reigate, the latest one (1836) was a link from Godalming to Dunsfold. The roads from Leatherhead to Dorking, Epsom and Guildford were each 'turnpiked' in 1755-58. The 'turnpike mania' lasted from 1751-72, followed by those for canals and railways, competitors to the roads.

27 toll collectors' cottages survive in Surrey, all as private houses. Most early signposts have gone, but many milestones have survived road-widening and collisions (the 'White Lady' at Sandown Park, Esher, still directs people to the Duke of Newcastle's Claremont House). A General Highways Act of 1835 began the take-over of major roads by central authority, culminating in the creation of Surrey County Council in 1889. The 'Macadam' system was to cover the road surface with loose stones, to be broken up by traffic: Gordon showed a picture of a notice requesting drivers to go slowly, so that crops were not dust-covered. In 1905, Tarmacadam was introduced: Dorking had its own tar-works.

Both the RAC and the AA originated in the county, in response to the Chief Constable (Capt. Sant)'s campaign against 'furious driving'. Ripley was notorious for police speed traps. John Henry Knight was prosecuted for driving a very early British car at 10mph in Farnham, and the annual 'Emancipation Run' to Brighton celebrates the repeal of the 1865 Act which

required a man carrying a red flag to walk in front of any mechanically-propelled vehicle to warn cyclists and horse riders of its approach.

A number of town by-passes were built, often against local wishes, to cope with increasing traffic and incidentally to reduce unemployment after the First World War, creating unfocussed 'ribbon development'. Leatherhead's by-pass (Young Street) was built during WW2 by units of the Canadian army. The 1944 Abercrombie Plan envisaged several ring roads around London, one of which became the M25, completed in 1985. The last Surrey bottleneck was removed in 2011 by driving a tunnel next to the Devil's Punchbowl on the A3 at Hindhead.

Gordon very kindly made numerous references to the Kingston By Pass and other local roads and brought along copies of his book of the same name as his talk to sell.

Robin then gave a potted history of the various sporting teams and individuals who had been active during the last 150 years in our local area. From famous ones such Malden Wanderers CC and Malden Town to lesser known Malden Harriers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Mention was made of Sydney Wooderson mile record at Motspur Park in 1937, the bowls club in Lime Grove and the three Golf Clubs in the locality.

Julian then tested the members' powers of observation by showing pictures of the High Street and the surrounding area and asked members to identify where they were. Who will now forget the owl on top of Coral's Bookmakers or the ornate carvings above some of the other shops. The members thoroughly enjoyed this item and it is amazing what you discover when you look up!

Members were reminded of the two summer fairs coming up on 25<sup>th</sup> June at Kingston Vale and Plough Green, and that the society would have stalls at both events. We were also taking part in the Parade on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July as part of Malden Fortnight.

The meeting closed with the next one planned for Tuesday 5th July 2016