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CENTENARY OF AN EPIC BICYCLING FEAT

As noted in Newsletter 43, it was in 1882 that Herbert Liddell Cortis (the "Long Wanderer") of the Wanderers Bicycle Club of South London became the first person to pedal 20 miles in one hour when he won a paced race at the Crystal Palace Track on a 60" Keen's Eclipse. After his death in 1885 his many admirers subscribed for a stained glass memorial window and a brass plaque in the East end of the South Aisle of St Mary's Church, Ripley.

The Ripley Section of the Southern Veteran-Cycle Club felt that the centenary of this epic performance (the nearest modern equivalent, perhaps, being the beating of the four minute mile at running) should not pass unnoticed. Arrangements were accordingly made for a commemorative ride on Sunday, 26th September last. The Rev. A. W. Jones, Vicar of Ripley, very kindly agreed to conduct a special short service in the church before the start, much as the Rev. Henry Hooper, the "Cyclists' Vicar", used to in the 1880's. The service, attended by some 30 to 40 cyclists, was based on Cortis's example of courtesy, bonhomie and service to mankind through his profession of medicine. In addition to drawing attention to the Cortis memorial, the Vicar pointed out the Dibble window on the South wall contributed to likewise by cyclists after the deaths in the 1890's of the two sisters, Harriet and Annie, who had continued the tradition of hospitality to cyclists at the nearby Anchor Inn begun by their mother, also Harriet, in the middle 1870's. Mrs Harriet Dibble had died in 1887 and in the churchyard outside the Dibble window is the tombstone marking her grave and that of her husband, George, who died in 1876 before the arrival of the bicyclists. Before leaving the church, the party was invited into the vestry a few at a time to look at the framed photographs of previous incumbents including that of Henry Hooper.

Since Cortis's ride had been on an Ordinary or high bicycle, participants had been invited to ride machines of this kind if possible. Accordingly nine of these elegant machines, the oldest of which was the writer's 50" Ariel-type of about 1876, set forth from the church accompanied by a wide range of later machines ranging from a solid-tyred Singer Safety of 1890 to a magnificent modern tandem tricycle.

Lunch was taken at Thames Ditton followed by the return ride starting traditionally from the Angel. The thought occurred, seated up there behind four other pairs, that it might well be 90 years since such a formation set off down the Ripley Road. The Fairmile at Cobham was used for bicycle racing as early as January 1870, the road was a favourite for touring by 1873, and it was used for clubruns by 1876. By 1879 there was at least one race from the Angel to the Anchor at Ripley. Many of these early activities, and later in the '80's and '90's when the road became unbelievably popular, would have involved riding into the face of a near gale force South Westerly wind such as was blowing on this occasion and the advantage of taking pace would soon have been learnt. Reflecting thus, the writer endeavoured to adhere closely to the 52" Rudge ridden by Mr Bob French, whom many members met at the bicycle talk given to the Society a year ago, and was thus able to complete the journey successfully back to Ripley. It must oft have been like this a century ago as Cortis himself, or some other such star, paced a weaker rider down to Ripley at the time when the bicycle was the fastest way of travelling apart from the railway. Road widening over the years, and dual carriageway and motorway construction, have detracted much from the spectacular beauty of the scenery, which the early bicyclists appreciated so much as they spun down the narrow road through the pinewoods and past Lake Boldermere where the successor hotel to the original Hut stood until less than ten years ago.

The day concluded with tea at the writer's house at Send Marsh.

X of Ordinaries

Les Bowerman

NATURAL HISTORY OPEN MEETING - 21st OCTOBER 1982

about 35 people braved the rain on Thursday evening, 21st October 1982, when Ken Dawson showed slides and spoke about the wide variety of flowers which grow "down his Wey" as he put it.

Last year, whilst Ken Bourne and other members of the Natural History Group were recording more formally the botanic delights of the area, comparing present day finds with Dorothy Challen's 1925 survey, Ken was off along other stretches of the river and backwaters with his camera, capturing in close-up some of the common and less common waterside flowers. There were also slides he has taken in earlier years which gave a comprehensive collection of the plants which grow in our local habitat. Some are tall and impossible to miss like the hogweed and giant hogweed (fairly easy to distinguish between the two) and some tiny and easily overlooked like the Persian speedwell, which is in fact a native of Persia.

To bring the show to a close, Ken produced a few slides of fungi which appear in the autumn, including one interesting inverted variety alleged to be an Australian species - but this may have had more to do with gremlins in the projector rather than nature's handiwork.

Thanks to Ken's sharp eyes and photographic skills it was a very pleasant evening, well worth making the effort to venture out on a wet night.

M. Truphet

BIRD REPORT - SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1982

Autumn passage was almost a non-event at Papercourt in September. Most of the waders had passed through in July and August and there was little of note in the way of passerines. An unusual record, though, was of about ten sandwich terns over Send village on the 16th. Most of the "birding" time was spent at Staines where the reservoir had been drained, and some interesting birds, including osprey, peregrine falcons and two American waders, attracted almost national attention. But back to Papercourt: on October 3rd a green sandpiper was located at Ripley Sewage Farm. It was joined by a second on the 10th. Also present were a sparrowhawk and a flock of snipe, the latter seemingly more numerous this year than formerly with up to 50 on what we call, for want of an established name, Manor Lake (grid reference O35563). Canada goose numbers varied between 80 and 280. Lapwings reached 60, and lesser black backed gulls about 100. Pochard reached 45 by the end of the month and tufted ducks were up to 15. One great crested grebe also seemed to be in residence.

A dusk visit to Ripley Sewage Farm on the 24th revealed roosts of the following: starling, goldfinch, wood pigeon. I have not seen any fieldfare or redwings in the locality, but they are present in other areas.

A few observations follow from around the village: ring-necked parakeets seem to have taken up residence in what is now called Croxteth Hall Wood, perhaps offspring from the pairs on Send Hill or by the church. Little owls are reasonably numerous, with one pair at Fell Hill and one in a farm building by Send Church.

David Nurney

OAKRIDE, TITHE BARNS LANE, RIPLEY. TQ 052543

Oakride proved to be a challenge and posed much confusion when surveyed on 22nd May 1982 by a small working party from the Buildings Group.

A 17th century end frame can be seen from the road, but this is the only evidence of timber framing to be seen from the outside. Inside shows much evidence of the introduction of re-used timbers for non-functional purposes. The main living area has a lot of charm enhanced by being on two levels. The survey group suggest the former house on this site was probably of two periods. This would account for the difference in floor levels.

Timbers have been tastefully re-used and the existing staircase is probably still in its original position, although the staircase of the second cottage left us no clues.

A few timbers have been carried on up to the first floor, although they do not tie up structurally with the ground floor. Original timber framing would have been of one build.

The roof is quite new with modern timbers.

With all this information put together we decided that this house was not as old as we had first thought. We have been very fortunate in ascertaining from Mr R. Whapshott the knowledge that the remaining timber framing, other than the end frame, was pulled down in 1912. The end frame was left so that the rating could remain unaltered.

This proved our findings that this is a fairly modern rebuild, possibly using original timbers. The window frames add to this evidence with their wooden lintels; this was a kind of trademark that the Lovelace family adopted and was known as Lovelace built homes.

Gloria Henson

OAKRIDE - DOCUMENTARY REFERENCES

The first known reference to the above name is in the Papeworth Manorial Court Roll for 5th July 1518 where John Beldam is presented as holding a parcel of land called Okryde among other property. In 1546 he sought a licence to lease to Geoffrey Symondes all that parcel of land called Okeryde, containing two closes of arable land with a parcel of meadow there, containing in all, by estimation, 20 acres of arable land and meadow. The property was relicensed in 1548, by which time it comprised 30 acres of meadow and woodland in all, consisting of two closes of land and half an acre of meadow and pasture and an acre of wood. In 1554 it was presented "that in and upon the said lands there have been uprooted and pulled out three trees called appull trees aged three years from planting", but the homage "do not know whether Simon Beldam or Geoffrey Symondes pulled them up or not" and an inquiry was ordered to ascertain the truth.

The name next appears in the View of Frank Pledge for Ripley in 1562 where John Symon is ordered to scour his ditch between Haselherst and Oke Ride. In the View of Frank Pledge for Ripley and Sende for 1573 a day was given to the tenants and occupants of land called Okeridethat they should remove the entrance leading to Okeride from Burden Comon (Burnt Common), which they use unlawfully and that they should make and repair ditches and fencing there.

*'he' should read Simon Beldam & his Wife.

We turn now to cartographical evidence. On John Rocque's map of 1770, and again on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map of 1816, the name Oride Farm appears for what is now Sussex Farm nearby. Bryant's map of 1823 shows both Oakride Farm and Sussex Farm where we know them to be. The Tithe Map of 1843 shows an unnamed homestead surrounded by three fields totalling 20 acres plus two acres of woodland all named Oakride, owned by the Earl of Lovelace and occupied by John Daws. Sussex House, owned and occupied also by John Daws, is similarly marked. Occupation in this context does not necessarily mean residence - property could be sublet. The 6" O.S. of 1883 and the 25" O.S. of 1914 both show the property in question as Oakride Cottage.

The 1851 Census gives Philip Bradley, agricultural labourer, and his family as the occupants of Oak Ryde. In 1861 Oak Ryde is divided into two tenements occupied by Charlotte Furlonger, widow, with an agricultural labourer as a lodger, and by William Worsfold, carter, and his family. In 1861 Horr Ryde Farm appears in addition. The census returns for both years mention Sussex Farm.

As to the meaning of the name, the Oke or Oak part of it is obvious. Gover et Alia, in "The Place Names of Surrey", state that "ried" or "ryd" meaning a clearing is very common in minor names in Surrey, sometimes appearing in the 16th century as "ride" or "ryde" when it is very difficult to distinguish it from "ride" denoting a woodland track and "rythe" meaning a stream, which occasionally appears as "ride".

What can we conclude? Although it is a matter of conjecture, the most likely meaning, in view of the references to land, is that it was an area cleared from the oak woodland. The name Oride appears to have been applied to what is now Sussex Farm, but is possibly a variant form of Rolride or Hoe Ryde rather than Oakride. (Holride Farm a little further to the East bears a date of 1851.) The present building bearing the name Oakride has taken its name from the land on which it was built and is referred to first as Oakride Farm (1823) and later as Oakride Cottage (1883), subsequently as Oakride Cottages and now simply as Oakride.

L. G. Bowerman

BUILDINGS GROUP VISIT TO SOUTHSEA AND PORTSMOUTH - 4/9/82

On Saturday, 4th September, 20 members of the Buildings Group journeyed to Portsmouth for a full day's visit to the Mary Rose Exhibition and a tour of Old Portsmouth.

Many of the artefacts recovered from the Mary Rose, flower of Henry VIII's infant navy, which capsized and sank before his eyes on a warm July afternoon in 1545, are now on display in a special exhibition at Southsea Castle, and it was here that the day began.

The Group was met by Mrs Marjorie Thomas, from the Mary Rose Trust, and was taken by her to the shoreside battlements of the castle, from where she set the scene of battle lines and the action that followed the arrival of the French Fleet around the Eastern end of the Isle of Wight that fateful day in 1545 when the French were attempting to wipe out, or at least seriously damage, the English Fleet based at Portsmouth. It was a known fact that the "Frenchies" were coming to attack in order to try and remove the stranglehold the English had achieved over control of the English Channel with their navy and also the conquest and holding of Calais and, more recently, Boulogne.

Henry VIII, by that time a very sick man and unable to walk about, viewed the scene from horseback, having taken lunch with his commanders aboard his flagship, Henry Grace a Dieu, being rowed ashore to the castle upon the appearance of the French Fleet.

The English Navy was drawn up off Spithead where it was safe enough, despite being outnumbered nearly three to one, due to the fact that there was then, as there still is today, only one deep water channel into Portsmouth Harbour, which was commanded by the guns of Southsea Castle. There was also the hope that the French, not being familiar with the area between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, would launch a frontal attack and therefore come to grief in the shallows. This, however, did not happen, and the French launched a minor attack using small rowed galleys which were armed with a bow-mounted cannon and also carried a number of archers. The Mary Rose was detached to counter this force, sailing towards them in very light breeze before manoeuvring for a broadside, possibly the first ever fired by a Royal Navy ship.

There are no accurate accounts of what actually happened after that, except that she turned turtle and sank, taking with her nearly every man of the 700 aboard, there being only 33 survivors, all of whom had been located in the Gallants or Crow's Nests or the few other upper deck areas from where they could escape when the ship went down so quickly.

The Mary Rose had recently been converted from an armed merchantman to a two-deck gunship, which had meant installing a lower gun deck in the area where cargo had previously been carried and mounting cannon there. The ports through which these guns were fired were able to be closed to the sea through hinged covers, but were, of course, all fully open and the guns run out as she cleared for action. The amazing thing, looked at in retrospect, is that this lower gun deck line of ports was only 18 inches above the water line when she was normally loaded, and that day she carried double her usual complement of 350 men, plus their arms and other impediments.

Whether a sudden gust of wind took her too far over, or a broadside was fired, causing her to tilt through the recoil action, is a matter of conjecture, but tilt she did and sank in 40 feet of water. The battle as such never developed, the French withdrawing from the scene, never to return, claiming, however, that their guns had sunk the Mary Rose.

Attempts were made soon afterwards by a group of Venetians to raise the ship, but this failed. Then in 1836 the Deane brothers, who pioneered the use of diving suits and air fed helmets, did recover some cannons and other pieces from the wreck, but it was not until 1965 that a team led by Alexander McKee, in the course of a dive and search project off the Solent, rediscovered the Mary Rose and began to recover many items from it. Through their preliminary work, the idea was germinated to attempt to raise the ship using modern methods, and as a result the Mary Rose Trust was formed in 1979 to raise the necessary money for the work and to co-ordinate all the efforts involved in such a mammoth job.

After being under the sea for so long, those artefacts that are recovered have to be very carefully cleaned and then treated with a preservative before they can be displayed publicly, but many of such items are on show in the Mary Rose Exhibition, and quite fascinating many of them are. Apart from the cannons on display in such unbelievable condition that it can never be imagined that they have been submerged for over 300 years, there are excellent displays of arrow shafts and longbows, many pieces of pottery, metalware

ships' instruments, barber surgeon tools, pieces of clothing and footwear - altogether a marvellous record of Tudor lifestyle in one concentrated unit. The job of recovering them is a masterpiece of careful finding, lifting, recording, restoring, processing and displaying. Some pieces are very small, such as the two dice tiny enough to fit both on the nail of one's little finger. All the members enjoyed the display together with a visit to the Mary Rose Shop, where many purchased books on the project together with many other mementoes of the visit.

This year, of course, the Mary Rose is due to be raised and taken to a special preservation site in Portsmouth Royal Naval Dockyard. The lifting vessel, the *Tog Mor*, a Dutch salvage barge ocean going, is already on site over the wreck, its vast derrick rising 300 feet into the air. The lift is due, at the time of writing, to take place at the end of September or early October and Portsmouth is bracing itself for about 200,000 visitors on the lift day; amongst them, no doubt, will be some of our members.

After the Southsea Castle visit, a picnic lunch was enjoyed, as the day was sunny and warm, at the edge of the old harbour, before meeting Miss Valerie Bacon, who took the Group on a tour of Old Portsmouth and the Cathedral. Many of the older properties have now gone from this area, either through bomb damage during the last war or through the clearance and rebuilding that has gone on in the past without care for preserving our heritage.

There are still some interesting places to see, however, and Miss Bacon started the tour along the 19-gun and 10-gun batteries guarding the Portsmouth Harbour actual entrance, designed and built by De Gomme during the reign of Charles II. These fortifications are the remains of the defensive wall that once encircled what we now know as Old Portsmouth, and one section of the moat is still in existence. The Group also visited the garrison church, of which the nave is roofless since the last war and left as a memorial. It was originally the hospice of *Domus Dei*, founded about 1212 by Rupibus, Bishop of Winchester. The chancel is still roofed and used for special services even today. The cathedral is very much a mixture of building styles, the earliest dating back to the 12th century; there is reason to believe it was the work of Bishop Richard Tocliffe, which would place it between 1173 and 1188. It was severely damaged during the Civil War when the people of Portsmouth, and those of Gosport, across the harbour, were on opposing sides and the cathedral was used as a lookout and in consequence was bombarded from the Gosport side. The See of Portsmouth was founded in 1927, prior to which the cathedral was the Church of St Thomas à Becket, but since that time much building has gone on and it has become very much a mix of styles that are clearly distinguishable, as are walls from the original structure at the chancel end, though the nave to the West end is bricked and awaiting further extension, with, no doubt, another style of construction, when sufficient funds are forthcoming.

Visits were also arranged to two old houses in the High Street, one to see a wattle & daub wall, uncovered during restoration work by the present owner, and also to Buckingham House, where the Duke of Buckingham was assassinated by John Felton in 1628. The house itself contains some excellent examples of Tudor panelling, one room in particular being especially interesting where removal of several layers of old paint and varnish has revealed the original hand painted and decorated panelling. It was altogether a very full day much enjoyed by all, and surely only an appetiser for further visits to this interesting and pleasing South Coast port.

Alan Tinkler

Editorial Note: Portsmouth is of particular interest to us in Send and Ripley since it is the raison d'etre of the most obvious feature of the parish, namely the London to Portsmouth Road. As everybody is aware, the Mary Rose has now been duly raised notwithstanding near disaster when she was nearly crushed by the lifting cradle, which collapsed on her as she emerged from the water. The Buildings Group is grateful to Alan Tinkler for making the arrangements for such an interesting, instructive and enjoyable day.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

New Members. We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

Mr & Mrs D. J. & S. M. Page, Furze Field Lodge, Woodlands, Send, Woking.
Mr & Mrs G. Street, 1 New Cottages, Clandon Road, West Clandon.
Dr & Mrs R. L. Gale, Tudor House, High Street, Ripley.
Mrs A. Luck, Silvermere, Broadmeads, Send.
Miss R. Onslow, 9 Rose Lane, Ripley.

Total membership consists of 108 couples and 74 single members.

Christmas Social

The annual Christmas social is due to take place on Wednesday, 15th December, starting at 7.30 p.m. at the Red Cross Hall, Sandy Lane, Send. It is hoped to have on show the Society's stand as displayed at the recent Local History Symposium, as to which see below. Tickets, priced £2 each including buffet, are available from me, or through Newsletter distributors or Committee members. This is the only meeting of the year when members can mix and talk without being distracted by a speaker.

The Ripley & Send Manorial Court Rolls - 1533-1733

Translation and transcription of this series of rolls has now been completed and a full set of 670 pages is available for members to borrow, together with an index to find what is recorded about the places which interest you most. Although it has cost the Society a substantial amount of money to have these rolls translated from the Latin, they are probably the closest one can get to the absolute nub of what local history is about. Compilation of a personal names index is under way, but will not be completed for some time as it is a much more onerous task.

"Surrey History", Volume 2, No. 4

The latest number of this annual booklet published by the Surrey Local History Council is now on sale, priced £1.25, available from the local history booksellers, Phillimore & Co. Ltd., Shopwyke Hall, Chichester, Sussex. Among other interesting articles is a more detailed account by Lyn Mileham of the appalling accident in 1873, noted briefly in Newsletter No. 39, in which three men were killed when a traction engine broke spectacularly through the old wooden Broadmead Bridge, Old Woking.

"A History of Woking", by Alan Crosby

Although not everybody will rush out immediately to pay £9.95 for this recently published book, it would make an excellent Christmas present for anybody interested in the history of the area. The writer is only halfway through his copy, but it is clear from what has already been read that

it is particularly strong on the origins of the modern town of Woking and on why and how it has developed in the way it has. The author, a young man born in Woking, has manifestly done a great deal of research and quotes many sources. There are about ten mentions each of Send and Ripley and it may be that in a later issue of the Newsletter some of these references can be commented upon. In the meantime, an initial criticism is that the impression is gained that perhaps the author, whose own memory cannot go back beyond about 1960, has not mixed with enough people with deep roots in the area. He repeatedly mentions, for instance, "the Hoe Stream", whereas anybody with long connections knows that the stream running through Mayford and Kingfield to join the Wey at Newark was always called the Bourne. It may be unfortunate for an author who has to distinguish it from the Horsell Bourne, the Chobham Bourne or Bourne Brook, not to mention the Tilling Bourne and the Bourne at Chertsey, but that is the fact of the matter. The name "Hoe Stream", unless anyone can produce evidence to the contrary, was given for the first time on the Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1934. This blind spot leads the author to the apparent anachronism of writing about fields beside Hoe Stream in 1800 and of including the name on a sketch map showing Woking Town Fields in the early 19th century. It also leads him to invent a place name, "the Hoe valley". The Hoe is basically a projecting ridge of land which has given its name to Hoe Place and Hoe Bridge, which lie below it.

The S.L.H.C. Symposium - Saturday, 13th November

Twenty-five tickets were bought in the Society's name for this symposium, which this year, for the first time, was held at Soudes Place School in Dorking. The theme, as members already know, was "Surrey People". Our exhibit featured Sir Anthony Browne (1488-1548), Henry VIII's Master of the Horse, who in 1544 was granted the property owned by Newark Priory at the Dissolution and his son of the same name, 1st Viscount Montague, 1526-92, statesmen, courtiers and Catholic Lords of the Manor of Send & Ripley. They were the son and grandson of another Sir Anthony Browne of Betchworth Castle. Anthony Browne II gathered vast possessions, including the Manor of Send & Ripley at the Dissolution. He was the equivalent to a modern entrepreneur and marriage connected him with other powerful families of the Tudor and Elizabethan Age. A synopsis of their activities, in booklet form, was on sale, priced 15p, at our stand. The sub-committee which undertook the vast amount of work necessary to produce the very professional looking exhibit consisted of Peggy Aldridge, Ken Bourne and Jim Oliver, to whom the Society expresses its thanks. The sub-committee, on behalf of the Society, in turn acknowledge gratefully the assistance afforded by Viscount Knebworth, May, Duchess of Roxburghe, Dr. R. A. Christophers and Mr M. Maclagan, F.S.A., Richmond Herald.

The morning speaker was Mr R. Schueller on "Royalty and Commoners in Chobham". He summarised the history of Chobham and spoke amusingly about some of its residents in the 17th to early 19th centuries. Chobham was remarkable for its absence of any Lord of the Manor or big family and sometimes of any Vicar. With very little fertile land, at times upwards of half the families were on poor relief, and what was especially remarkable was that they were supported by the generosity of the small farmers, who could not themselves have been very prosperous. The discussion afterwards brought out some of the strange stories which are told about the larger than life Chobhamers.

The afternoon speaker was Dr R. C. W. Cox on "Rich Man, Poor Man, Beggar Man Some Surrey Victorians". Dr Cox was very entertaining on low life in Old Croydon and on the rivalry existing between Reigate and Redhill.

Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at the Red Cross Hall, Sandy Lane, Send, on Tuesday, 15th February 1983, commencing at 8 p.m. Will members please take this as official notice of the meeting as required by paragraph 4 of the Constitution. Items for inclusion on the Agenda should be in writing and in my hands by 18th January.

The formal business will be followed by a discussion when Bob Whapshott hopes to have on show a collection of flat irons and an ironing stove.

Forthcoming Events

Friday, 10th December ... Buildings Group meeting at 8 p.m. at Send Court Farm.

Wednesday, 15th December ... Annual Christmas social, commencing at 7.30 p.m., in the Red Cross Hall, Sandy Lane, Send, tickets priced £2. For details see second paragraph of Secretary's Report.

Tuesday, 18th January ... Open meeting at the Red Cross Hall, Sandy Lane, Send, when Professor Alan Crocker of Surrey University will give an illustrated talk on "Paper Mills of the Lower Wey".

Thursday, 20th January ... Committee Meeting at Dedswell Manor Farm. Will Committee members please note the revised date, which was agreed at the special Committee meeting on 12th November.

Tuesday, 15th February ... A.G.M. at the Red Cross Hall, as already noted under Secretary's Report, followed by the discussion with Bob Whapshott's display.

Tuesday, 22nd March ... Open meeting at the Red Cross Hall, Sandy Lane, when Mrs Shirley Corke, archivist at the Guildford Muniment Room, will speak about her work, which includes many items connected with the parish of Send & Ripley.

Tuesday, 19th April ... Open meeting at Ripley Village Hall, possibly entitled "An Evening of Ripley History", when it is envisaged that a number of people will give short talks on aspects of the history of Ripley. It is hoped that this will encourage the interest of Ripley residents who are not yet members of the Society, in addition to existing members.

Please note the change of week day and venue for meetings.

Closing Date. Closing date for the next issue of the Newsletter will be Monday, 3rd January.

Les Bowerman

NATURAL HISTORY GROUP - FUNGI EVENING

Sixteen members of the Natural History Group spent an enjoyable evening at the home of Ken & Phyllis Bourne on 14th October viewing slides of fungi filmed by three members of the Group.

Some very interesting and revealing slides were shown by Ken Bourne, Ken Dawson and Ron Croucher, and each managed to project a different aspect

of the subject. Indeed some of the photographed specimens looked like imaginary beings from another planet whilst others were more recognisable in the normal toadstool shape.

We were informed that autumn is the best season of the year to find fungi, although some species are in growth during most months of the year. There are apparently some 10,000 species which grow in the British Isles, so that there is plenty of scope for photography! Many of the fungi are edible, some inedible and others highly poisonous. It appears that there is no known antidote should one eat a deathcap fungus in mistake for a mushroom, so take care!

We were introduced by our experts to fungi that are the shape of mushrooms, bracket fungi that grow off trees and slime fungi that move over rotting vegetation. Those that we see are the fruiting bodies of the thread-like underground growth and they produce millions of spores and then release them into the atmosphere.

Fungi have a use in that they break down dead and decaying vegetation, and most are quite specific in their requirements of particular types of vegetation to survive. As an example the death cap would be found in deciduous woods and the colourful red-spotted white fly agaric in pine and birch woods. Many fungi appear not to have common names, but those that do are quite descriptive. Among many slides shown were:

Edible Fungi

Jews ear fungus, parasol mushroom, wood blewitt, common puff ball, beefsteak fungus, honey fungus, deceiver and shaggy ink cap.

Inedible Fungi

Bracket, blusher, dead men's fingers, elf cup, razor strop and stink horn.

Poisonous Fungi

Death cap and fly agaric.

At the conclusion of the evening members were shown a collection of fungi gathered locally by Derek Bromley and Ron Croucher, which enabled the species to be identified from the information given and excellent photography demonstrated. We are indebted to our trio of experts who provided such an enjoyable evening, and to our hosts, Ken & Phyllis, for their kind hospitality.

D. Bromley

Future Articles: In the next issue we hope to include some reminiscences by one of our older members, mainly about Send School before and during World War Two. Following that we have recollections of transport and shopping at the turn of the century by one of our founder members.

Editor.