



March 2025

Chairman's Update

We've made a good start to the year with a series of well-attended Zoom talks, Guy Bartlett's "Concorde: Icon of the Skies" being particularly well attended & received. We have some more Zoom talks to come, but we have also scheduled several Leatherhead talks and days out; please see www.sihg.org.uk for a complete list.

Several people have asked why we don't do more live talks at Leatherhead, or why we aren't doing any in January & February. The answer is simple: live talks take a lot more organising and setting up than Zoom talks, and we have very few people who actively participate in doing this, some of whom are vulnerable to winter illnesses. So, if you'd like more live talks, offer to stand for the SIHG Committee, or at least volunteer to help!

Garry Brooks, SIHG Chairman

Annual Journal: Articles sought

As per our last newsletter, we are still looking for articles for our journal, to be published Summer/Autumn 2025. If you have an idea for an article, please email a one-paragraph outline of what you can offer to publications@sihg.org.uk for Stuart's consideration.

Days and Half Days Out

We now have 3 full or half days out planned: (1) Sunday 27th April at 14:30: '**Brunel, Engineers & Railways: a Tour of Kensal Green Cemetery**'. Tour: £12 pp, £10 over-65s/students. To book, please email meetings@sihg.org.uk

(2) Thursday 5th June at 10:00: **Visit the Rural Life Museum near Farnham**; see www.sihg.org.uk for more details.

(3) Thursday 3rd July at 10:00: **Farnham Industry (and more!) Walking Tour**; see www.sihg.org.uk for more details.

Back to Leatherhead!

We are returning to the Leatherhead Oddfellows Hall on Thursday 20th March for a very topical talk on the Panama Canal by SIHG member John How; on 3rd April we have "The Ashted Pottery: An Alliance of Art and Industry" by Anne Anderson; and on 1st May we have Chris Green's "The Origins of the London Underground". Talks start 14:00, doors open at 13:30. Please come along and support these talks, and socialize with other SIHG members.

We also have an evening Zoom talk on 10th April: "It's All a Bit Heath Robinson - Re-inventing the First World War" by Lucinda Gosling. This will be very different to any talks we've held before. Luci, who has published over a dozen books, is an accomplished and entertaining speaker. Please join in!

Industrial Archaeology

At one of our recent Zoom meetings, we held a Zoom poll in which attendees were asked to choose the industrial history subjects they were most interested in. To the surprise of many of us, industrial archaeology topped the poll, with over 90% of respondents choosing it among their top five. So you may think it's time for a bit more industrial archaeology on the programme – and we are providing it!

In the second half of 2025, Richard Shenton will be leading a walk around Farnham's Industrial History in July, one of the members' talks on 9th October is "Industrial Archaeology along Bow Creek, East London" by Michael Herbert, then we have two IA-themed Zoom talks late October/early November, i.e. "Fore & Aft: The Purton Ships Graveyard¹" by Paul Barnett and "Salt of the Earth: the salt industry of the Adur valley²" by Janet Pennington.

¹ The Purton Ships Graveyard, formally known as Purton Hulks, consists of many abandoned boats and ships, deliberately beached beside the River Severn

near Purton in Gloucestershire, England, to reinforce the river banks. A great place to visit, we are told.

² The Adur Valley is in Sussex

Introducing: Spelthorne Museum

Spelthorne Museum in Staines³ was founded by volunteers in 1980, initially to display the many objects which were being found during archaeological digs from the 1970s onwards, as the town of Staines was being redeveloped. The collections have considerably expanded since, to cover the archaeology and social history of the Borough of Spelthorne. Staines itself was an important Roman town, named Pontes ("Bridges" in Latin) after the bridges which carried the London to Silchester Road over the River Thames here; the museum has a large collection of artefacts from Roman times (and earlier – like these coins).



Other highlights of the collection include the original London Stone, dating from 1285, which marked the upstream limit of the jurisdiction of the City of London over the River Thames, and a 1738 hand pumped fire engine, manufactured by Hadley of Longacre, London, for the Parish of Staines.



Industrial history enthusiasts will be interested to learn about the Staines Linoleum Co, which was founded in 1864, and was the first place in the world in which the floor covering was manufactured. The museum has a collection of pattern books, photos and documents saved from the old factory when it closed after a century, during which it was the largest employer in the town. (Curator Nick Pollard can offer talks on Staines Linoleum Co – and many other aspects of Spelthorne's varied history) The museum education team holds regular family activity days, themed on different periods of history, and do outreach work with local schools. A regular talks programme covers subjects of local archaeological and historical interest.

In May 2025, the museum will move to the new Staines Library Hub in the Elmsleigh Shopping Centre. Until then, it is accessed via the current Staines library, and most of it is open during library opening hours. A further room is open when the museum is staffed (Wednesday & Friday 2-4pm, Saturday 1.30-4.30pm).



Admission to the museum and events is free. Further details via Facebook, Twitter and the Museum website

www.spelthornemuseum.org.uk

Nick Pollard

Curator, Spelthorne Museum (and regular SIHG speaker)

³ Staines was historically part of Middlesex but transferred to Surrey in 1965; it was officially renamed Staines-upon-Thames in 2012.

SIHG Museum Links?

One SIHG Committee member has recently suggested that SIHG should consider developing formal long-term relationships with specific museums. Some local history societies already do this, e.g. Dorking Local History Group and Dorking Museum are both part of the Dorking Society, and East Surrey Museum has a long relationship with the Bourne Society. But would this be a feasible and useful step for SIHG? If so, which museum(s) should we link to? If you have any thoughts on this, please email them to chairman@sihg.org.uk

Later this Year and Next?

We've already got talks booked for September to December 2025, starting with three talks live at Leatherhead, including a Members' Talks session on 9th October, then we revert to Zooms for the winter and plan to have a pub lunch get-together before Christmas - see our website for the latest listings.

We haven't made any arrangements for the January-April 2026 programme as yet, and are looking for a volunteer (or two) to organise it. Anyone interested?

Down Memory Lane

Who is awarding the 2010 SIHG Conservation Award to whom, and for what, anyone? Answer will be in the next newsletter.



Next SIHG Events

- 20th March at 14:00: "The Panama Canal" by John How (Leatherhead)
- 3rd April at 14:00: "The Ashted Pottery: an Alliance of Art and Industry" by Anne Anderson (Leatherhead)
- 10th April at 19:15: "It's All a Bit Heath Robinson - Re-inventing the First World War" by Lucinda Gosling (Zoom)
- 27th April at 14:15: "Brunel, Engineers & Railways: a Tour of Kensal Green Cemetery"
- 1st May at 14:15: "The Origins of the London Underground" by Chris Green (Leatherhead)

Membership

Membership of SIHG will be *free* until April 2026. All members will enjoy free entrance to our talks, both Zoom and live at Leatherhead, and will receive newsletters and emails on SIHG news and events.

If you are not already a member, please email membership@sihg.org.uk and we will email you a (very short) membership form.

Oddfellow or SYAS Member?

If you are, you can enjoy *free* entry to our Zoom and Leatherhead Oddfellows Hall talks. Please come along and give us a try!

Lastly...

We hope you like this newsletter. If you have any comments on it, please email

chairman@sihg.org.uk

Our next newsletter will be published in May or June.