

# Leatherhead & District Local History Society

Potted Histories No 72

## The Days of the Coach & Horses, Leatherhead



The Swan Hotel c: 1905



The Duke's Head Hotel c: 1908

Frequent horse-drawn coach services passed through Leatherhead to and from London and neighbouring towns, continuing what had been started in Stuart times. Later in the century, there was a regular service leaving Epsom, Croydon, Dorking, Guildford and Horsham. With the exception of Sunday, the Brighton coach left Leatherhead at 2pm and the post, arriving at 3pm daily, left by mail coach for London at 10pm nightly. By 1838 there were daily coaches to Arundel, Bognor, and Worthing.

Driving a coach could be hazardous and there was often an armed guard alongside the driver. In July 1827 The Times reported the waylaying of a mail wagon by two men as it travelled from Dorking to Kingston, just opposite Givons Grove, the home of Captain Boulton. There was a cry of 'The money or your life' and the driver, Cox, although seriously injured by bullets, attempted to return fire and drive on. The sound of gunfire brought Captain Boulton and his gamekeeper to the rescue. The mail got through but the assailants escaped and the GPO offered 100 guineas for information leading to a conviction.

Most stage-coaches stopped at the Swan Hotel described in the 1791 Directory as 'a very genteel house with good accommodation, most excellent stabling and good post chaises with able horses for hire'. Trout from the River Mole was one of the specialities served and Samuel Pepys recorded earlier having sampled the dish. There was another stage-coach stop at the 'Duke's Head' at the top of Great Queen Street (Later renamed the High Street)

Goff Powell

*Extracted from History of Leatherhead - A Town at the Crossroads  
- by Edwina Vardey L&DLHS*

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