

intouch

For annuitants of ExxonMobil subsidiaries in the UK and Ireland

A corner of the mantle of history lifted in building of Ermyn House

InTouch readers are being asked to take a trip down memory lane to help throw some more light on the fascinating history of the Ermyn House site at Leatherhead.

The delve into the site's history has been sparked by the discovery of a pamphlet entitled "Saxon Secrets in Surrey", published by Esso UK and written to record the area's rich historical background before the building of the company's extensive new office complex (now Ermyn House) in the 1980s.

In 1927, there had been a macabre discovery of a large pit containing mutilated and dismembered bodies during the laying of a water main just within the grounds of the then newly-built Goblin Works, at Ashtead, near its boundary with Leatherhead. It was thought that the bones might be of Saxon date and this was confirmed when, in 1974, during further work in the grounds, more human bones and an early Saxon spearhead were discovered.

When, in 1983, it became clear that the factory was likely to be redeveloped and, because archaeological interest remained high, a trial excavation a year later was undertaken, but initially proved disappointing. However, soon afterwards, preliminary works for Ermyn House revealed further burials and the discovery of a fascinating history.

Within two months in the autumn of 1985, a further 35 burials came to light and the site was officially recognised as one of prominent historical importance.

In the recently rediscovered pamphlet, author Rob Poulton – of the Surrey County Council Archaeological Section - paints a vivid picture



Author Rob Poulton pictured examining the iron spearhead.

of life for the Saxon society whose secrets had remained hidden for a thousand years and more beneath the ground on which the Ermyn House complex now stands.

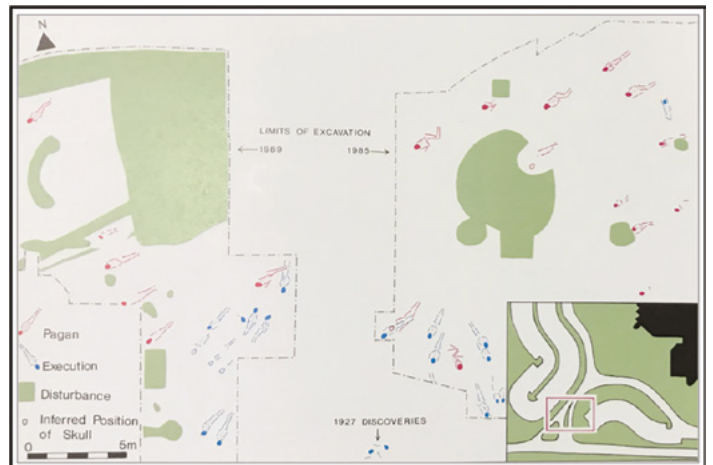
The story has been re-ignited by Gary Robertson, Mediterranean Advisor and his colleague Mike Heald, the Resident Data Operations Manager, both based in Leatherhead. Gary was aware of the existence of the pamphlet, but was unable to locate a copy. It was Mike who discovered the prize pieces of literature in the ExxonMobil archives.

InTouch is now eager to speak with annuitants who have any recollection or memories of the archaeological excavation, or who may even have taken part in the dig.

Sir Archibald Forster, chairman and chief executive of Esso UK, at the time the pamphlet was written, wrote in its foreword: "Here on the boundaries of Leatherhead and Ashtead we have built an attractive new building, which we hope will be an asset to the local community".

"As this booklet so clearly and graphically portrays, in the course of the construction work, some Saxon burial remains were found. A corner of the mantle of history was lifted by the finds at the edge our site."

If you have memories or photographs to share, please email us at InTouch.



A plan of the "Esso House" Saxon cemetery.

If you have a story you would like to share with *InTouch* magazine, email intouch@exxonmobil.com



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Helping to solve the mystery of Mobil's missing gargoyle

InTouch came up trumps in helping memorabilia collector Jo Conchola in his search for more information on what he called "the missing gargoyle".

Jo had asked in our summer issue for annuitants' help in trying to identify the production date of the Mobilfuel Diesel Product.

Jo had been shown the advertising board pictured here and asked: "I am writing to confirm the original date of the Mobilfuel Diesel Product. I collect Mobil and was shown this sign.



"I've never seen the Mobilfuel Diesel name alongside the Mobil gargoyle logo. I would think this would be an early to mid-1930s piece but I thought that Mobilfuel Diesel came out in the 1940s. Am I wrong in thinking that?

"Do you have anywhere in your archives the original production date or year of Mobilfuel Diesel," asked Jo.

We couldn't help – but InTouch reader Peter Burr could, sending us a photograph taken from a Mobil publication called "Then and Now – 1885-1985" (pictured here).

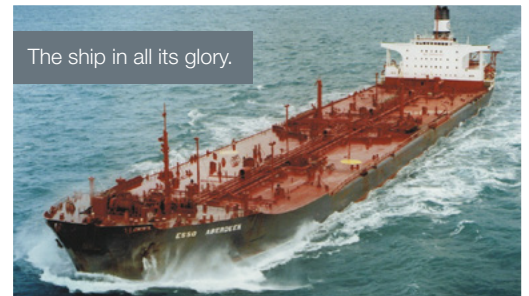
The article reported: "In the heyday of the transatlantic liner, Vacuum provided the lubricants for many famous vessels and Blue Riband holders.

"In fact, every Blue Riband holder between the 'Mauritania' in 1920 and the 'United States' in 1952 used Gargoyle Marine Oils exclusively in her main engines. VOCL had a particularly close association with the Queen Mary, and later with her sister ship, the Queen Elizabeth.

"Cargo ships, such as container vessels, are now much more significant than passenger liners for Mobil's marine lubricants business."



The ship in all its glory.



Old salts welcome as Aberdeen takes its bow

Crew members of the long retired North Sea shuttle tanker 'Esso Aberdeen' held their annual reunion at the Novotel in Southampton.

This was the first time the reunion had been held in the ship's home port, and it was good to see a number of new faces. Some of the attendees enjoyed a cruise down the Solent, courtesy of Red Funnel, to view the jetties at Fawley. Sadly, no Esso ships there these days.

"In the evening there was a dinner and several sessions of 'swinging the lamp' although as the retired crew grow older, the lamps seem to get extinguished earlier!" said reunion organiser David Pilgrim.

Although started by 'Aberdeen' crew members back in 1997 when the vessel went to the breakers yard, the reunion has been open to all ex Esso seafarers for some years now and any other 'old salts' would be welcome, said David.

Next year's get-together will be the last 'Esso Aberdeen' reunion, although it is likely that the reunions will continue simply as the 'Esso Seafarers Reunion'.

The 25th reunion will be held in York - which was where it all started back in 1997 - on May 8, 2021.

Anyone wishing to join in or wanting more details, should get in touch with David Pilgrim at EssoAberdeenReunion@yahoo.com or on 01665 571299.



Lifetime award for manager who never stands still



Award accolade - Geoff, second from the left, receiving his award.

A former Esso area manager has been presented with a lifetime achievement award for his contribution to the retail petroleum industry.

Geoff Oldham was presented with the accolade at the APEA (Association For Petroleum & Explosives Administration) annual awards evening.

Geoff, from Goosnargh near Preston, has spent almost 50 years in the fuel sector. For 24 years, he was an Esso area manager, responsible for the north west region.

On taking early retirement in 1994, Geoff decided golf wasn't for him and started his own business. Forecourt services company Suresite Group grew from a spare bedroom-based start-up to a £14.5m turnover employer of 30 people.

Initially offering H&S audits for fuel forecourts, the company later added merchant services, training and real time wetstock monitoring in to its offer.

Suresite Group chief business development officer Keith Bevan submitted the nomination. He said: "Geoff has never stood still. He continues to look for new avenues and improvement in all the products Suresite Group offers, ensuring that customers receive value, the best service, and attain the highest levels of legislation compliance."

Geoff Oldham said: "This recognition came as a wonderful surprise and was not at all something I was expecting. I am very proud to have my achievements recognised, both at Esso and now at Suresite Group, which celebrated its 25th year in business in 2019."

Your chance to help reader Mike raise a new glass

InTouch reader Mike Reed is looking to raise a glass with the help of fellow readers.

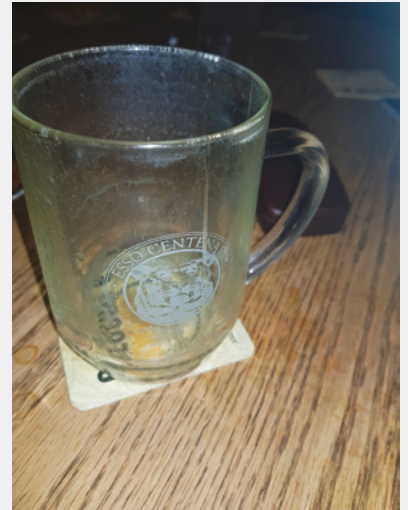
For the past 20 years, Mike has kept his much-cherished Esso Centenary mug behind the bar at his local pub, The Plough Inn at Highworth in Wiltshire, where he has enjoyed a beer or two most weekends.

He has regularly used the mug since the 1998 centenary year – but has now discovered a crack in it.

“Firstly, I would like to thank the company for such a quality item that has lasted so long in this throwaway age,” said Mike.

“Secondly, if there are any tucked away somewhere that I could get as a replacement, I would be pleasantly surprised and extremely grateful,” he added.

Anyone with knowledge of the centenary mugs is asked to make contact with Mike, via InTouch.



Looking to replace this centenary mug.

Mike at his “local” – the Plough Inn at Highworth.

A tanker driver all his days – and so proud of it

A popular and well known former West Midlands tanker driver sadly died at the end of last year.

Colin Miller travelled the roads of the UK for 22 years after joining Mobil in 1974 and was a proud and long-time member of the “Twenty Year Club”.

“He so loved his job and made many good friends and colleagues,” said Colin’s wife, Sue, from her home in Coventry. “They all kept in touch and for many years there were regular reunions.”

Colin had been poorly for almost a year before he passed away at Coventry’s Walsgrave hospital on December 4, aged 77.



Loving life on the road - Colin at the wheel of his tanker.



One of the touching wreaths at Colin’s funeral.

His first driving job had been for Suttons Bakery but having gained his HGV licence, he joined Charringtons Oil Company at the start of his long career driving tankers. From a depot at Torrington Avenue in Coventry, Colin moved to Mobil’s Kingsbury site in Tamworth.

“He loved being out on the road and he loved his garden,” said Sue. “It was his pride and joy. We loved our cruise holidays, too, and enjoyed a wonderful life together”.

Colin also leaves behind a daughter, Jane, and a son, Stephen.



Great colleagues; Colin Miller (right) at a twenty-year club reunion.