

# SURREY HISTORY



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# SURREY LOCAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

## SURREY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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The Surrey Local History Committee, which is a committee of the Surrey Archaeological Society, exists to foster an interest in the history of Surrey. It does this by encouraging local history societies within the county, by the organisation of meetings, by publication and also by co-operation with other bodies, to discover the past and to maintain the heritage of Surrey, in history, architecture, landscape and archaeology.

The meetings organised by the Committee include a one-day Symposium on a local history theme and a half-day meeting on a more specialised subject. The Committee produces *Surrey History* annually and other booklets from time to time. See below for publication enquires.

Membership of the Surrey Archaeological Society, our parent body, by local history societies, will help the Committee to express with authority the importance of local history in the county. Member societies may exhibit at the symposium and sell their publications there.

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# SURREY HISTORY VOLUME 20 (2021)

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Surrey Local History Committee desires it to be known that it does not necessarily concur with the statements or opinions expressed herein.

Front cover illustration: Map of Magnus Deo farm, Lingfield, early 18th cent (see page 24)

Back cover illustration: Isaac Braithwaite (1810-1890), a London stockbroker who came from a Westmoreland family and in 1868 purchased Hookfield Grove, near Epsom (see page 6)

## About the Authors

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# Bankers, Brewers & Builders: The County Gentry & Squires of Victorian Surrey

*Peter Shipley*

In 1815, the 64-year-old owner of a Southwark brewery purchased Bury Hill near Dorking, an eighteenth-century mansion with an estate of just under 1,000 acres, which he had leased for the previous ten years. A Quaker of Scottish descent, Robert Barclay came from an already successful business family, the more famous branch of which had entered banking. In the remaining fifteen years of his life he improved the house and its gardens and devoted himself to philanthropy, the pursuit of science and collecting works of art.<sup>1</sup>

Barclay's eldest son, Charles (1780-1855), continued to run the brewery while further developing the estate and extending his public and charitable work, although he abandoned his Quaker roots. He served as a Conservative MP for Southwark, Dundalk and West Surrey, was a magistrate and a Deputy Lieutenant and High Sheriff for the county as well as president of the governors of Guy's Hospital. A younger son, David (1784-1861), lived at Eastwick Park, a 560-acre estate at Great Bookham, and was a director of the Bank of England and a Liberal MP. Bury Hill passed to Charles' son, Robert Barclay (1837-1913), a senior partner in the brewery, who by 1873 owned 1,927 acres in Surrey with a gross annual value of £2,141. The family lived at Bury Hill into the twentieth century, before it was requisitioned during the second world war. Shortly after it was partially destroyed by fire and finally sold in 1952.



**Fig. 1. Bury Hill, near Dorking, bought by Robert Barclay (1751-1830) in 1815, in an engraving from a watercolour of c. 1838 by James Harding.**

Within a generation, the Barclay family became a leading example of the county's landed gentry, a class without any formal or legal definition, but whose members were part of its social and economic elite. They enjoyed sufficient income from the rental on their land to enable them to lead the lives of country gentlemen, though not all had the added business wealth of the Barclays. They lived in fine mansions and were recognised in their localities as the 'squire' and in many cases as the lord of the manor, but often with an influence which extended through their public roles to county and higher levels.

## **The 'County Gentry' in the Landed Hierarchy**

In the hierarchy of landed society - the gradations of which are well described, for example, in novels from Jane Austen to Anthony Trollope – the greater part of the gentry stood below the 'great landowners,' magnates who held many thousands of acres in several counties with incomes to match and lived in even grander houses. A previous article discussed this top level of landed society and how its role and composition changed in the Victorian period. It found that in 1873 there were 23 such owners in Surrey, each with more than 2,000 acres in the county, all but four with some land elsewhere and in three cases with estates in Ireland. Nine of them were peers and fourteen made up the county's greater gentry.<sup>2</sup>

These richer, aristocratic, sometimes more exotic figures, often performed on a national stage and their lives are more fully recorded. Fewer families of the landed gentry at its lesser to middling levels have left collections of papers which are available to the modern historian and as a result, they – and their role in county affairs - have often been overlooked.<sup>3</sup>

This article focuses in particular on gentry landowners with estates in Surrey of between 1,000 and 2,000 acres in the non-metropolitan county, excluding the parliamentary divisions of Lambeth and Southwark and other areas such as Wandsworth, which were incorporated into the London County Council in 1888. It considers the extent to which the character and make-up of this group, which contained what is described here as the 'county gentry', changed during the Victorian period through the infusion of new money, and seeks to identify the sources of that wealth. It also looks briefly at how the gentry's public and political roles evolved as society moved towards an industrially-driven, urban mass democracy.

These questions have been much discussed by historians of the landed classes.<sup>4</sup> Some recent research by Dr. David Brown has thrown fresh light on new purchasers of land: he found that between 1780 and 1879 at least 2,566 estates of more than 1,000 acres and worth £1,000 a year or more, were bought in the United Kingdom by men of new wealth, 1,127 of them in the range 1,000 to

2,000 acres, representing overall a 38 per cent turnover in the ownership of landed estates.<sup>5</sup> Among many sources, Brown consulted the *Return of Owners of Land*, the government-commissioned survey published in 1874, which provides what he considers the ‘single most useful source for the historian,’ but is a mere snapshot with many imperfections. This document was also the starting point for this and the previous article on Surrey’s major landowners.<sup>6</sup>

The *Return* showed that in 1873, some 50 people owned estates of between 1,000 and 2,000 acres in Surrey. Fourteen of them featured ten years later in Bateman’s *Great Landowners*, as owners of more than 2,000 acres in total across the country. Eight, including two peers, held most of their land in other counties, while the properties of the other six were located mainly in Surrey. Among the others, one belonged to a royal duke, George, the Duke of Cambridge (1819-1904), Queen Victoria’s cousin, at Kew, two to peerage families, through younger sons who did not succeed to their father’s title, and two estates belonged to the church – one, Addington Place, was until 1896 the summer residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury (when it was sold to Frederick English (1845-1909), a South African diamond merchant), and the other, Farnham Castle, belonged to the bishopric of Winchester. The remaining 31 owners were untitled, possessed little or no land outside Surrey and represented the core of the county gentry.

Between them, these 31 owned 41,597 acres in Surrey in 1873, with a total estimated gross rental of £60,857 per year, though for seven of them the rental was estimated at less than £1,000 a year. The other 19 with between 1,000 and 2,000 acres in the county - great landowners, other aristocrats, royalty and the church - owned a total of 28,620 acres, with an annual rental value of £35,737. These figures compare with the 23 principal great landowners, who held 92,130 acres worth £111,249 a year. The difference in wealth between those at the very top and the lesser gentry is clear: the average annual income in land for the 23 former was £4,837, and for the 31 in the latter group £1,963, which still placed them in the top 0.3 per cent of income earners in the mid-1860s.<sup>7</sup>

The ranks of the lesser gentry extended further, however. In the *Return* of 1873, 83 people were listed as the owners of between 500 and 1,000 acres each in Surrey, including seven who, by virtue of their property in other parts of the country, were classified by Bateman among the ‘great landowners.’ And as will be seen, a number of others at this level had every claim to be regarded as part of the landed gentry. Beyond them, the link between property and social standing is illustrated in a postal directory of 1891, which listed 401 ‘Principal Seats in Surrey’ and their occupants. Not all of these houses came with large estates but would have been the homes of the county’s upper and upper middle classes. The residents – not necessarily the freehold owners as properties were sometimes leased – included 26 peers, 19 people from peerage families (usually sons of

peers), 44 baronets and knights, 70 women, of whom 17 were titled, 48 army or naval officers (including six sons of peers and 10 of the baronets and knights), nine clergy (including one from a peerage family) and one judge. Almost exactly half, 201 people, were untitled males, including many of the landed gentry but not confined to them.

As a guide to the county elite and its subtly delineated structure, such listings offer some useful indicators but are not definitive. The boundaries between categories were blurred and as families rose and fell their composition was ever changing. Ten years after the *Return*, Bateman's 1883 edition of his *Great Landowners* already pointed to changes: five of the 50 owners of between 1,00 and 2,000 acres in Surrey in 1873 had estates in the county of more than 2,000 acres a decade later: Viscount Middleton of Peper Harrow, Lord Monson of Gatton Park, James Watney of Haling Park and Joseph Godman of Park Hatch, while the Howard's property at Ashted Park had been sold in 1880 (see below). Some of these adjustments to the amount of land owned may have been the result of corrections to the *Return*, or may have denoted further acquisitions.

## **The Continuity of Ownership**

Examination of the full range of sources makes it possible to trace changes of ownership over a longer period. Of the 50 owners identified in the *Return*, a total of 20 came from families who had held some property in Surrey since the eighteenth century or earlier. Ten of them were among in the 31 untitled gentry with land only in Surrey. Among these were the Bray family of Shere, where they had lived since the fifteenth century and included William Bray, the celebrated antiquarian whose history of Surrey was published at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Weston family of West Horsley Place and the banking family of Hankey of Fetcham Park. A further twelve of the 50 acquired their property in the early part of the nineteenth century before the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837. Eight of these were in the main group of 31 and besides the Barclays, they included four other families with political associations: the Combe family, who had lived at Cobham Park since 1807, when it was purchased by Harvey Combe (1752-1818), a Whig MP for London from 1796-1817; the Smiths of Selsdon Park, which was bought in around 1810 by George Smith (1765-1836), a banker, the brother of the first Lord Carrington and a Whig MP for nearly 40 years; Thomas Alcock (1801-1866), who bought the manor of Kingswood around 1830 and served as a Liberal member for East Surrey from 1847-1865, among other constituencies, and the Goulburns of Betchworth House near Dorking, purchased in 1817 by Henry Goulburn (1784-1856), a Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer and Home Secretary under Wellington and Peel.



## New Purchasers in the early Victorian Era

In the 36 years between 1837 and the compilation of the *Return*, a further 18 properties came under new ownership, 13 in the group of 31 and five among the miscellaneous aristocracy and great landowners. Three of the former estates were acquired not by purchase but by inheritance, ultimately passing to a male relative at a time (before a change in the law in 1882) when married women were not permitted to own property in their own right: in 1853, Witley Park, south of Godalming, passed to a barrister, Allen Chandler (1817-1886), from his widowed mother, who had inherited it from her uncle in 1838 to hold during her life. And in 1857 Sutton Place near Guildford descended to Francis Salvin, the younger son of a wealthy Durham landowner, from his mother's family, the Webbe-Westons, when its male line became extinct.<sup>8</sup> Sometimes property passed to a more remote relation: in 1870 John Ivatt Briscoe, a former Surrey MP, left the Fox Hills estate near Chertsey to Henry Blackburn, an attorney and formerly a proctor in Doctors' Commons. His wife was a cousin of John Briscoe, descended from his aunt, Hannah Briscoe.<sup>9</sup> Blackburn died in 1872 and bequeathed the estate to his nephew, a young naval officer, Charles Vernon Strange, Hannah Briscoe's great-grandson. Strange died six years' later at the age of 29, when his ship, the HMS Eurydice, sank off the isle of Wight in March 1878 with the loss of more than 300 lives; the property went to his brother, James Strange (1847-1908).

Among the gentry estates which were sold between 1837 and 1873, was Waverley Castle, the nineteenth century history of which illustrates the varied backgrounds of new buyers. In around 1832, John Thomson, a Russia merchant who had purchased the estate about 25 years' previously, sold it to George Nicholson (1787-1858). The son of Samuel Nicholson, a radical Unitarian and a prosperous wholesale London haberdasher and banker, originally from Cumberland, Nicholson was barrister and a prominent figure in the insurance world in London. He rebuilt the house after it was damaged by fire in 1833 and soon became active in county affairs, serving as high sheriff for the county in 1834 and as a magistrate and chairman of the Quarter Sessions. But his son, Samuel (1815-), sold the estate in 1870 to a Scottish cotton merchant, Thomas Anderson (1816-1876). Anderson's son, Rupert (1859-1944), was educated at Eton and Cambridge, was a magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant for the county, and an active Conservative. He was involved for some years in fruit growing in Florida and played football for England at the age of nineteen (in a match against Wales).

Some estates were sold more than once in the opening decades of the Victorian period and show how new money made in business was deployed in the purchase of property. The Knipe family had owned Hookfield Grove, near Epsom, since 1727, when it had been bought by a Turkey merchant and Alderman of the City of London, Sir Randolph Knipe. In 1858 his descendants sold it to James Levick, a

merchant with interests in Australia and elsewhere. He held it for only ten years before selling to Isaac Braithwaite (1810-1890), a stockbroker from Westmoreland who had moved to London. On his death Braithwaite personal estate was valued at £295,000 and Hookfield passed to his son, Basil Braithwaite (1845-1918), a partner in a private bank who served as a Surrey Deputy Lieutenant and was engaged in Conservative politics as well as chairman of the Board of Guardians in Epsom, the founder of its Technical Institute and a local school manager. At Woldingham, an estate owned by the Jones family for more than thirty years was sold in the early 1860s to Joseph Kitchen, a hop and seed merchant in his mid-50s who also owned property at Sevenoaks in Kent. But Kitchen ran into financial problems and eighteen years later found a new purchaser in the Leicestershire-born William Gilford (1827-1902), a hosier and glover in London who had been acquiring property in the area since 1870. Over the next twenty years, Gilford, an amateur geologist, set about improving the area's infrastructure and sold numerous plots of land for housebuilding.<sup>10</sup>

Other purchasers using recently acquired wealth to buy land included Thomas Sidney (1805-1889), a tea importer and former Lord Mayor of London who was a Liberal MP for his native Stafford, where his father was a wool draper: in 1864 he bought Esher Place from John Spicer, whose father, also John, a London stockbroker, had purchased it in 1805.<sup>11</sup> In 1870, James Stewart Hodgson (1826-1899), a partner in Baring's Bank and well-known art collector, bought Lythe Hill, Haslemere, from the heirs of the Earl of Lonsdale, and became



**Fig. 2: Isaac Braithwaite (1810-1890), a London stockbroker who came from a Westmoreland family and in 1868 purchased Hookfield Grove, near Epsom (City of London Corporation).**

a magistrate and high sheriff in 1883.<sup>12</sup> The brewer, James Watney, acquired Haling Park on or shortly before the death of its owner, William Parker Hammond

in 1873, having leased the house for the previous twenty years – Hammond’s principal residence was at Pampisford Hall in Cambridgeshire. And Sir Richard Garth (1820-1903), a QC who from 1866-68 was the Conservative member for Guildford, and, from 1875-86, the Chief Justice of Calcutta, sold Morden Hall to a wealthy local snuff and tobacco merchant, Gilliat Hatfeild (1827-1906), whose effects were valued on his death at £1,342,197.<sup>13</sup>



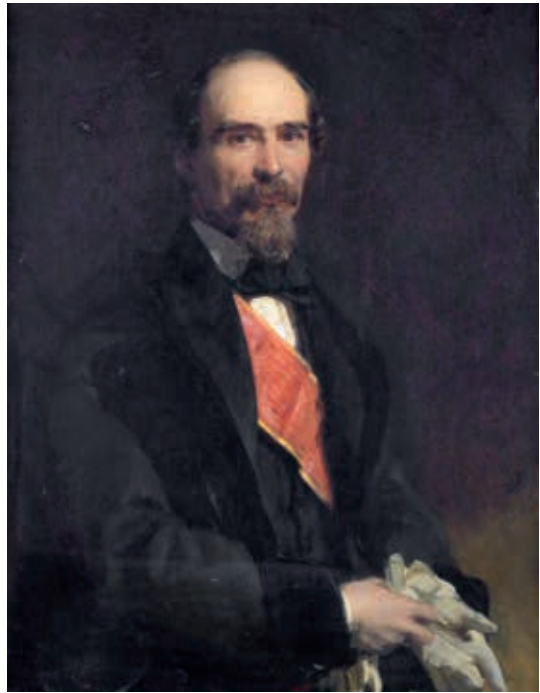
**Fig. 3: A portrait by Lord Leighton, c. 1888, of Mary and Agatha, two of the daughters of James Stewart Hodgson, who bought Lythe Hill, Haslemere in 1870, and his French-born wife, Anne-Marie (Delamain). Agatha married the 6th Marquess of Sligo. (Peter & Renate Nahum)**

Some of the Surrey estates between 1,000 and 2,000 bought during the early Victorian era by great landowners further illustrate the diversity of new purchasers. In the early 1850s an exiled Spanish

nobleman, Field-Marshal Ramón Cabrera, Count de Morella (1806-1877), who had fought on the losing Carlist side in Spain’s civil wars of the 1830s and 1840s, bought the Wentworth estate from Culling Charles Smith (c. 1775-1853), the son of a Governor of Madras and a commissioner of customs. In 1850, Morella had married Marianne Richards, the wealthy daughter of a Welsh barrister, and also bought property in Wales. After the count’s death she enlarged the Wentworth estate so that by 1883 she owned a total of 2,424 acres in Surrey and Merionethshire with a gross annual value of £3,169; she died in 1915 aged 94.<sup>14</sup> In contrast stands the Gatty family: in about 1855, a Chancery lawyer, George Gatty, bought Felbridge Park from a daughter and co-heiress of the 3rd and last Earl of Liverpool, who had died in 1851. On his death in 1864, Gatty was succeeded by his second, surviving son, Charles Henry Gatty (1836-1903), a Cambridge-educated scientist and honorary doctor of St Andrew’s University, a member of numerous learned societies engaged in the study of botany and

astronomy, as well as serving as a magistrate in Surrey and Sussex, where he also owned property, and financing the construction of a local hospital.<sup>15</sup> The unmarried, Gatty left personal effects valued at £192,945 and the Felbridge estate was sold by auction in 1911.

**Fig. 4: Field-Marshal Ramón Cabrera, Count de Morella (1806-1877), a veteran of Spain's Carlist Wars, and the purchaser in the early 1850s of an estate at Wentworth, in a portrait by John Prescott Knight.**



## **Changes in the Late Victorian Period**

In the closing decades of the Victorian age, at least eight properties changed owners, five of which belonged to the county gentry. In 1876 Allen Chandler sold his land at Witley to the Earl of Derby, one of the wealthiest landowners in the country. But he held it for only 14 years, until he sold the Lea Park estate for £250,000 to Whitaker Wright, who also bought land from the Webb family, the lords of manor of Witley since the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> His tenure was equally brief: Wright, who had made a fortune promoting mining companies, committed suicide in 1904 after being found guilty of fraud.<sup>17</sup> There were rapid successive changes of ownership elsewhere: the Kingswood estate of Thomas Alcock was sold by his executors in 1873 to a Leicestershire baronet, Sir John Cradock-Hartopp (1829-1888), whose attempt to enclose 1,300 acres on Banstead Common was opposed by local residents; after twelve years of legal wrangles they won their case in the High Court in 1889, the year after Hartopp's death.<sup>18</sup> The estate was purchased by Henry Bonsor (1848-1929), a director of the Bank of England, chairman of the brewery of Watney, Combe & Reid, and a Conservative MP for the Wimbledon division from 1885-1900, who was made a baronet in 1925. His father and grandfather had owned Polesden Lacey between 1818 and 1853, when it was sold to Sir Roderick Farquhar (1810-1900), the grandson of George IV's physician. The Smith family's house at Selsdon Park was sold, in 1890 to William Stevens,

a London publisher, and on his death in 1900 was acquired by a brewer, Wickham Noakes, who lived there until he died in 1923. Esher Place was bought by the shipbuilder, Money Wigram junior (1823-1881), who already owned property in the area, and in 1893 by Edgar Vincent, a financier and diplomat, later created Viscount d'Abernon, who remodelled the house built by the first John Spicer.<sup>19</sup>

**Fig. 5: Sir Henry Cosmo Bonsor MP (1848-1929), who bought Kingswood Warren in the 1880s.**



Among the properties owned by families with previous connections, Ashted Park had three new owners in two decades. Acquired by Colonel Fulk Greville Upton (1773-1846), the son of Baron Templetown and the MP for Castle Rising from 1808-1832 on his marriage in 1807 to Mary Howard (whose name he took), it passed on her death in 1877 to her cousin, Lt. Col. Ponsonby Bagot before he sold it in 1880 to Trevor Lucas (1822-1902), a builder and government contractor

who was made a baronet in 1887. But after eight years Lucas sold it to the Ralli family, Greek merchants who had settled in England following the Greek war of independence in the 1820s, and it became the home of Pantia Ralli (1862-1924) until his death.

Brief reference can be made to some of the owners of estates between 500 and 1,000 acres in 1873 who were in every sense country gentlemen. In addition to Sir Roderick Farquhar of Polesden, mentioned above, this group includes two clergy, the Rev. Edward Leigh Bennett, whose family had been lords of the manor of Thorpe since 1731, and the Rev. Thomas Thurlow (1788-1874) of



Baynard's Park. In 1889, the latter's son, also Thomas, sold it to Thomas Waller (c. 1834-1919), another contractor. Others at a similar level were Augustus Gadsden (1816-1901) of Ewell and Thomas Grissell (1801-1874), a railway and public works' contractor and noted art collector, who in 1850 bought Norbury in Mickleham<sup>20</sup>; the estate was sold around 1890 to Leopold Salomons (1841-1915), a City financier. The Leatherhead estate owned by the Barclay family was also sold, in 1882, to William Keswick (1834-1912), a director of the far eastern trading company, Jardine & Matheson, and a Conservative MP for Epsom from 1899 until 1912.

It has not been possible to mention every relevant family, nor recount every property transaction, and the fluctuations of the country house and land markets have not been considered in depth.<sup>21</sup> Nor have some other questions been discussed such as house building and architectural matters, estate management and social networks made through education and marriage and the gentry's engagement in local, philanthropic activity.

## **Conclusion: The Pattern of Change**

However, from the above catalogue of sales and the sometimes-complex inheritance arrangements within families, it is possible to detect some patterns. First is the persistence of landownership at this level. Among the gentry families who owned estates of between 1,000 and 2,000 acres in Surrey, 14 held land throughout the nineteenth century; nine of the county gentry and five who had land in other counties. A further six, four of them in the former group, owned property at that level for the whole of the Victorian era. Secondly, is the gentry's capacity for renewal throughout this period. A total of 18 of the 31 estates in this bracket gained new owners after 1837, fifteen by sale (including one which had earlier passed to the seller's family by inheritance) and three others switched to a different male line by inheritance. Thirdly, the varied backgrounds of new purchasers is evident, with bankers, merchants, brewers and contractors prominent. In the second half there was also a wider international and colonial flavour to these new owners, exemplified by Count de Morella, Pantia Ralli and Frederick English, among others, mainly financiers and businessmen. The early to middle years of Queen Victoria's reign, a time of economic growth, marked the most active period in the property market with 10 new gentry purchasers over the 36 years up to the compilation of the *Return*, compared with seven in first 37 years of the century. In the remaining 28 years of the period, seven estates of the county gentry were sold. Some individuals faced financial or legal difficulties, such as Kitchen and Hartopp, and James Baker (1822-1894) of Shottermill near Haslemere, who sold of much of 1,518 acres in the years before he was declared bankrupt in 1881.<sup>22</sup> Such a number does not immediately suggest that the agricultural downturn from the 1870s prompted the disposal of Surrey estates on

any great scale, and is consistent with the long-held view that the county remained ‘marginally’ (with Northamptonshire) one of two ‘islands of prosperity’ during the depression.<sup>23</sup> The county’s proximity to London guaranteed its continued appeal for newly-rich businessmen, City-based financiers and politicians looking for a country seat.

It is also clear that in public life the gentry continued its historic functions as magistrates, sheriffs and members of parliament, despite the many measures which curtailed the power of the landed classes. The parliamentary reform acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884, together with changes in the administration of the poor law after 1834 and in educational provision and in the establishment of county police forces, culminating in the creation of county councils in 1888, limited the scope for the exercise of power by the landed classes. But opportunities existed for those who were inclined to politics, national or local, and in the county, beyond the expanding suburbs of London, their influence remained: the fifteen representatives of Surrey county constituencies between 1885 and 1905 included members of the Hankey, Cubitt, Onslow and Brodrick families from among the great landowners and Combe, Leigh-Bennett, Bonsor and Keswick of the lesser gentry. It would take the effects of war - and heavy taxation - to bring about more fundamental change in succeeding generations.

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1 A history of the Barclay family and their properties can be found at <https://landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2019/03/368-barclay-of-bury-hill-and-eastwick.html> . Surrey History Centre holds a substantial portfolio of works he collected, mainly of paintings and drawings of the landscape, buildings and people of Surrey.

2 P. Shipley, ‘The Great Landowners of Victorian Surrey: Continuity & Change’, *Surrey History*, 15 (2016), 1-13.

3 A list of family and individual papers held by Surrey History Centre is at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/a/A13531418>

4 My previous article refers to some of the main studies and to the economic background.

5 David Brown, ‘New men of wealth and the purchase of land in Great Britain and Ireland, 1780-1879’, *Agricultural History Review*, vol. 63, II, 2105, 286-310.

6 The main sources for both articles have been much the same. They include *Land Tax Assessments 1780-1832*; *the Return of Owners of Land*, 1873; census return & electoral registers; *National Probate Calendar* from 1858; Burke’s *Peerage, Baronetage & Knightage*; Burk’s *Landed Gentry*; G. E. Cockayne’s *Complete Peerage* & his *Complete Baronetage*; Walford’s *County Families*; J. Bateman’s *The Great Landowners* (1883 edition); post office directories & gazetteers; *Gentleman’s Magazine*; national & local newspapers; Histories of Surrey by Manning & Bray and Brayley; *Victoria County History*; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; *History of Parliament – House of Commons 1790-1820 & 1820-1832*; M. Stenton (ed), *Who’s Who of British MPs – 1832-1885 & 1885-1918* (with M. Lees). Full details of these works are given in the previous article. For reasons of space individual references to them are not routinely noted here, except for some articles in the *ODNB* which have been a main source of information.

- 7 'Income recipients in England and Wales c. 1867', K. T. Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886* (The New Oxford History of England, 1998), 34. These amounts compare with yearly earnings of £700 for a successful doctor and £680 for a top barrister, from under £100 to £200 for a clerk, and £109 for a male teacher and £65 for a female. Skilled labourers had net annual earnings of £60-73 a year and unskilled and agricultural labourers £20-41.
- 8 The Roman Catholic Salvin family had owned Croxdale Hall since the beginning of the fifteenth century (*VCH Durham*, III, 1928, 165 &: <https://handedon.wordpress.com/2020/07/30/croxdale-hall-co-durham/>).
- 9 Doctors' Commons was a legal body whose practitioners specialised in church and civil law; it was abolished in 1858.
- 10 L. Dickinson, 'William Gilford, 1827-1902' in G. Fooke & R. Packham (eds), *Woldingham* (Village Histories no. 10, Bourne Society, 2012), 51-5
- 11 Sidney appears to have lived at Bowes Manor in Southgate, north London.
- 12 His brother, Kirkman Hodgson (1814-1879), was a Liberal MP and Governor of the Bank of England.
- 13 The Garth family had owned the manor since the sixteenth century. Garth's maternal great-grandfather, Richard Garth, who died in 1787, entailed it to his three daughters in turn and their sons. The second daughter, Elizabeth, married William Lowndes and on her death the property passed to their son, Richard, the rector of Farnham, who changed his name by royal licence in 1837 from Lowndes to Garth. Garth is given as the owner in the *Return* with 1,129 acres, worth £4,424, with Hatfeild as the owner of 310 acres; the estate may have been sold in stages from 1867 onward.
- 14 *The Times*, 17 Apr. 1915; papers relating to the De Morellas are held by Gwynedd Archives at Meirionnedd Record Office.
- 15 Obituaries in the Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, 64, 1904, 279-80 ([https://ras.ac.uk/obituaries/Charles\\_Henry/Gatty](https://ras.ac.uk/obituaries/Charles_Henry/Gatty)) & the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 25, 1906, 1228-1234: (<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0370164600016825> )
- 16 E. J. Foster, 'Notes on the History of the Manor of Witley', *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 18, 1903, 69-79.
- 17 'Wright (James) Whitaker (1846-1904)', *ODNB*, 60, 501-2.
- 18 *Surrey Mirror*, 9 November & 28 December 1889.
- 19 'Vincent, Edgar, Viscount D'Aberton (1857-1941)', *ODNB*, 56, 530-4.
- 20 'Grissell, Thomas (1801-1874)', *ODNB*, 24, 55-6.
- 21 Among the leading families not referred to are two branches of Lamberts, in Banstead (1,309 acres in 1873) and Bletchingley (1,214 a.); Long of Hampton Lodge, (1,119 a.) an estate inherited by Robert Mowbray Howard, whose maternal grandfather was Henry Lawes Long (1795-1868); and Master of Barrow Green Oxted (1,203 a.), who inherited the property by marriage to the Hoskins family, lords of the manor from the late sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth.
- 22 Baker's grandfather, also James, had first bought property in the area in the 1760s and over three generations the family acquired more land to raise itself from yeomen to the ranks of the gentry. G. A. Turner, *Shottermill – its Farms, Families and Mills, Part 2 - 1730 to the early twentieth century*, 2005, 61-2 & 280-85.
- 23 P. J. Perry, 'Where was the 'Great Agricultural Depression'? A Geography of Agricultural Bankruptcy in Late Victorian England and Wales', *Agricultura History Review*, 20, 1972, 30-45. Among Surrey's great landowners the estates of the Earl of Egmont were sold off in the 1890s and early twentieth century.



# ‘Grassroots Democracy in Action’: An Assessment of the First Parish Council Elections in the Kingston Union 1894

*Roger Ottewill*

## **Introduction**

On 1st December 1894, readers of the *Surrey Comet* would have seen the following comments in its editorial column:

... with memories refreshed as to the functions about to be conferred upon certain of their fellows, the parochial electors, men and women may have due regard to the importance of the trust about to be bestowed, and elect councillors who by ability, experience or general worthiness and fitness commend themselves for the position of representatives of the people ... We have every confidence that the choice about to be made of councillors will be wise, and that the voice of the people as about to be expressed will redound to the great advantage of the communities concerned.<sup>1</sup>

This was a reminder that under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1894 or Parish Councils Act, as it was colloquially known at the time, those living in seven of the civil parishes that constituted the Kingston Poor Law Union (see Table 1), who were entitled to vote, would shortly have the opportunity of electing councillors. Their responsibilities, from the appointment of overseers to the administration of charities and from ‘the protection of rights of way and management of open spaces’ to ‘the acquisition of land by agreement or compulsorily for allotments’ were also spelt out in the editorial. Other powers included the option of ‘adopting’ a number of Acts of Parliament relating to such matters as the provision of baths and washhouses, libraries, burials and public lighting. Of course, in exercising these responsibilities parish councillors would incur expenses that had to be met from the rates. They had the power to levy a rate of up to 3d in the pound or 6d with the approval of the parish meeting.

Underlying the legislation was the desire to democratise the governance of civil parishes and, in particular, facilitate the participation of members of the working class, specifically ‘agricultural labourers’. However, this experiment, in what today would be termed “grassroots democracy”, was seen as a step too far by some as evidenced by the fact that during the legislation’s passage through parliament no fewer than 617 amendments were moved.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, as the previously quoted editorial makes clear, the basic principles remained intact.

In this article it is intended to review the initial experiences of the seven parishes in the Kingston Union to which the legislation applied (see Table 1). The other parishes either had a municipal borough council (i.e. Kingston) or a newly constituted urban district council (i.e. East Molesey, Ham with Hatch, Hampton, Hampton Wick, New Malden, Surbiton, Teddington and Wimbledon).<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1: Kingston Poor Law Union – Civil Parishes with Councils**

Name	Acreage		Population	
	1891	1901	1891	1901
Coombe <sup>1</sup>	---	1337	---	875
Esher	2094	2094	2282	2423
Hook	492	492	418	578
Long Ditton <sup>2</sup>	2102	903	2953	2080
Old Malden <sup>3</sup>	---	1041	---	4850
Thames Ditton	2981	2981	3710	4986
West Molesey <sup>4</sup>	737	737	730	915

## Notes

1. Coombe was a newly created parish in 1894.
2. For the purpose of electing parish councillors Long Ditton was divided into two wards, Tolworth and West. Between 1891 and 1901, however, its the acreage and population was reduced as a result of the creation of the new parish of Tolworth in 1895.
3. Old Malden was a newly created parish in 1894.
4. Traditionally spelt Moulsey.

Particular attention is given to the inaugural parish meetings and the contests for the post of councillor. Potentially the latter was a two stage process with election by show of hands at the parish meeting followed by a poll if one was demanded by a parochial elector. In seeking to illuminate what happened in the Kingston area, for source material a heavy reliance has been placed on press reports from the *Surrey Comet* and *Surrey Advertiser*.

## Parish Meetings

To set ‘the wheels in motion’, every civil parish was required to hold a parish meeting on the due date of Tuesday 4th December 1894 which all parochial electors were invited to attend. To facilitate the attendance of members of the working class these could not begin before 6.00 p.m. Most meetings in the Kingston Union commenced at 8.00 p.m.<sup>4</sup> All of them were held in parish schoolrooms usually those of the National (i.e. Church of England) School.<sup>5</sup>

With respect to the parishes under review, there appeared to be some confusion as to who could attend the meeting. At Thames Ditton, for example, ‘care was taken that none but properly qualified electors should be admitted, a police constable being stationed at the door’.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, at Hook, as reported: ‘According to the instructions of the Local Government Board, if there were any non-voters present they could be placed in the gallery. There were five non-voters present including our reporter, and amid some laughter their presence below the gallery was assented to.’<sup>7</sup>

Of greater significance, particularly in seeking to determine the level of interest generated by this extension of the principle of representative democracy, was the number of those who attended and their backgrounds. From the surviving press reports it is difficult to obtain comprehensive information. However, it would seem that there was some variation in this respect (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Attendance at Parish Meetings**

Parish	Report*
Coombe	‘There was a very fair attendance ...’
Esher	‘largely attended, about 150 being present’
Hook	‘31 electors ... being present’
Long Ditton: Tolworth Ward	‘The attendance was small ...’
Long Ditton: West Ward	‘The schoolrooms were filled’
Old Malden	‘The meeting was well attended ...’
Thames Ditton	‘Over a hundred persons attended’
West Molesey	‘About 40 present’

Notes

\* Quotations are from the *Surrey Comet* and *Surrey Advertiser*.

In interpreting the comments in the table, clearly some account has to be taken of the population of the parish. Thus, in the main, the best attended meetings were in parishes, such as Esher and Thames Ditton, which had the largest populations.

Given that the intention was to facilitate participation by members of the working class, not surprisingly there were some references as to how far this was achieved in practice. At one extreme was Coombe where, as reported in the *Surrey Advertiser*, ‘notwithstanding the purposes of the Act, and the fact that the meeting was specially held near to the homes of the working people, very few took sufficient interest in the matter to attend the meeting’.<sup>8</sup> This was confirmed by the *Surrey Comet*, which observed that ‘the “working man” was conspicuous not by his absence altogether but by his scarcity.’<sup>9</sup> At the other extreme, although the attendance at the meeting of the Tolworth ward of Long Ditton parish was ‘small ... [it] consisted, with one or two exceptions, of the working classes.’<sup>10</sup>

Once assembled the first task of the parochial electors was to decide on the person who would chair the meeting. Usually this did not involve a contest and it would seem that in most cases a leading figure in the parish, who was not intending to stand for membership of the parish council, had been identified beforehand (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Chairmen of Parish Meetings**

Parish	Chairman	Occupation*	Contest
Coombe	Sir Douglas Fox	engineer	No
Esher	John F. Eastwood	High Sheriff, Surrey	No
Hook	A. Barrett	not found	No
Long Ditton: Tolworth Ward	Mr Babbs	not found	Yes
Long Ditton: West Ward	Thomas W. Bischoff	solicitor	No
Old Malden	Thomas F. Millward	house agent, postmaster assistant	No
Thames Ditton	Spencer Whitehead	solicitor	No
West Molesey	Thomas Guilford	ironmonger	No

Note

\* as shown in 1891 census return, apart from Sir Douglas Fox for whom see *St James's Gazette*, 4 April 1894, 15.

The only place where there was a contest was the Tolworth Ward of Long Ditton Parish. Here Mr Babbs’ nomination was unsuccessfully opposed by Mr Kavanagh, who was nominated by Mr Storr, a rate collector.<sup>11</sup> The reasons for the contest are unknown.

Once installed the chairman then invited nominations for the post of parish councillor. As can be seen from the data in Table 4, there was considerable variation in the degree of competitiveness.

**Table 4: Competitiveness of Contests at Parish Meetings**

Parish	Seats/cllrs	Candidates	Candidates per seat	Poll
Coombe	9	9	1.0	---
Esher	9	13	1.4	Yes
Hook	5	8	1.6	No
Long Ditton: Tolworth Ward	4	8	2.0	No
Long Ditton: West Ward	5	8	1.6	No
Old Malden	7	10	1.4	No
Thames Ditton	12	25	2.1	Yes
West Molesey	7	8	1.1	No

Of the parishes considered in this article the most competitive was Thames Ditton with 2.1 candidates per seat and the least, Coombe with 1.0 candidate per seat, which meant no contest. In this respect, at least, Coombe was the exception since in all the other parishes there were more candidates than seats.

Before the voting by show of hands took place electors were invited to ask the candidates questions. In the main, however, it would seem that they were reluctant to do so. At Hook someone enquired as to whether the candidates were entitled to vote, to which the response was ‘I see nothing to prevent them’.<sup>12</sup> While at Tolworth, candidates were asked to give their views regarding the area’s future status. Some indicated a preference for it being incorporated into Surbiton, while one was opposed to this.<sup>13</sup> At the Long Ditton, West Ward, meeting one of the candidates was asked ‘if he would study the interests of the parish in every way.’ He indicated that he would and added that ‘he was in favour of keeping down the rates.’<sup>14</sup> At Thames Ditton, an elector ‘asked three of the candidates if they had time to devote to the work of the council, to which each replied in the affirmative, the questioner having reminded them that “it was not child’s play”’.<sup>15</sup> Underlying this question was the implication that candidates who had to work long hours for their living might not have the time and energy to devote to council affairs. Clearly this was a deterrent as far as potential working class candidatures were concerned.

Apart from the number of nominations another important consideration was the occupational backgrounds of the candidates (see Table 5). These have been analysed using similar, but not identical, criteria to those adopted in equivalent articles.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 5: Backgrounds of Candidates**

Parish	Occupation							
	G	C	P	F	Ma	S	Mw	n.k.
Coombe	0	1	3	4	0	1	0	0
Esher	3	1	2	0	1	3	2	1
Hook	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	3
Long Ditton: Tolworth Ward	2	0	1	1	0	2	1	1
Long Ditton: West Ward	2	1	2	0	0	2	1	0
Old Malden	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Thames Ditton	6	2	3	2	5	6	1	0
West Molesey	0	1	1	1	0	2	2	1
Totals	20	7	12	9	6	18	8	9

**\* Key**

G = gentleman, including a peer of the realm

C = clergy, including a Baptist minister

P = other professionals (e.g. lawyers)

F = farmers and those engaged in similar pursuits (e.g. nurserymen)

Ma = manufacturing, including a cocoa maker.

S = shopkeepers and tradesmen, including publicans and merchants

Mw = manual workers

n.k. = not known

Unsurprisingly, the backgrounds reflected the high socio-economic status of many of the parishes with a preponderance of ‘gentlemen’, that is those of independent means. Indeed, the majority of candidates at Old Malden were ‘gentlemen’. Other candidates of high standing included seven clergymen; four solicitors and three barristers;<sup>17</sup> and, to some extent, those engaged in agricultural and horticultural pursuits.<sup>18</sup> However, there were also a substantial number of shopkeepers and those who may be loosely described as tradesmen of various kinds.<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding the aspirations of the sponsors of the legislation, there were relatively few candidates who can be designated as working class.<sup>20</sup> Full details of the occupations of candidates in two parishes, Esher and Thames Ditton, can be found in Tables 6 and 7. One final observation is that all the candidates were men, unlike some other places where there were a small number of female candidates with a few being elected to their respective councils.<sup>21</sup>

Occupational background does not appear to have played a significant part in determining the outcome of the contests at the parish meetings. For example, the five successful candidates at Hook were a blacksmith, a farmer, the vicar, a publican and a gentleman.<sup>22</sup> While amongst the defeated candidates in the two Long Ditton wards were two gentlemen, the rector of Long Ditton, a commercial traveller and a baker.<sup>23</sup>

**Parish Polls**

In just two of the seven parishes, Esher and Thames Ditton, a poll was requested.

At Esher there was some controversy surrounding this, with an attempt to avoid a poll, on grounds of cost, being unsuccessful.<sup>24</sup> In the event, neither poll appears to have generated as much interest or excitement as might have been expected. In commenting on the proceedings at Esher, where the poll ‘took place at the National Schools’ (see Figure), *the Surrey Comet* observed that ‘there was nothing approaching excitement at any time’.



**Fig. 1. Esher schools: the location for the parish meeting and poll. [SHC 6316/9500]**

That said, ‘considerable interest was manifested in the result of the poll, [with] about 100 persons waiting outside the polling station to hear the announcement’, with there being ‘considerable cheering’ when the results were announced.<sup>25</sup> To some extent, this may have been due to the fact that the candidate who topped the poll, Henry Bates, a baker, had come last in the show of hands. By any reckoning this was a remarkable turnaround, but apart from being mentioned in the *Surrey Advertiser*, this elicited no further comment.<sup>26</sup> Bates took the place of Edmund Walker, who was the only successful candidate in the show of hands defeated in the poll – Sir R.H. Collins having withdrawn (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Results of the Esher Poll (9 seats)**

Surname	First name	Occupation	SH* position	votes	outcome
Bates	Henry W	Baker	13th	194	elected
Barker	Charles M	Solicitor	5th	187	elected
Martineau	Philip M	Gentleman	1st	187	elected
Garrod	John	Builder	10th	169	elected
Hayden	Henry H	Warehouseman	2nd	165	elected
Eastwood	William S	Gentleman	9th	141	elected
King	R.G.	Warehouseman	4th	129	elected
McRow	Thomas	Clerk	3rd	128	elected
Batchelor	George H	Gentleman	8th	100	elected
Walker	Edmund W	not known	7th	98	not elected
Masters	J	Linen draper	11th	93	not elected
Head	Theophilus	Baptist minister	12th	82	not elected
Collins	Sir R.H.	Barrister	6th	with*	---

\* SH = show of hands; with = withdrawn

At Thames Ditton, the poll was conducted with the ‘utmost decorum’ and ‘hardly any excitement’. There were two polling stations, one at the infant’s school in Thames Ditton and the other at the infant’s school in Claygate.<sup>27</sup> The only incident of particular note was the dead heat for last place with Robert Bunch, a lawyer, and Lord Foley each receiving 78 votes (see Table 7). This was decided alphabetically. Thus, Bunch secured the final place on the council.

**Table 7: Results of Thames Ditton Poll (12 seats)**

Surname	First name	Occupation	SH* position	votes	outcome
Gosset	John J.	Gentleman	1st	142	elected
Rogers	Edward H	Rev	2nd	137	elected
Hardwick	John J	Gentleman	4th	112	elected
Sandys	Edward F	Gentleman	7th	104	elected
Barratt	Alfred A	Rev	13th=	92	elected
Barmdale	Reuben W	Ironmoulder	10th	86	elected
Le Lecheur	Albert	Milk seller	8th	82	elected
Roberts	John P	Farmer	13th=	82	elected
Shopper	Gerald A	Solicitor	16th	81	elected
Baker	John	Pattern maker	11th=	80	elected
Corbett	Julian S	Barrister at law	5th	79	elected
Bunch	Robert S	Barrister at law	18th=	78	elected
Foley	Lord	Peer of the realm	20th	78	not elected
Duke	Edward	Gardener	3rd	n.k.	not elected
Greening	Edward	Manager at Cocoa Works	6th	n.k.	not elected
Hobbs	Edes D	Millers manager	23rd	n.k.	not elected
Howe	John T	Publican	20th	n.k.	not elected
Lawrence	John A	Dairyman	13th=	n.k.	not elected
Mills	Henry J	Printer	25th	n.k.	not elected
Montrose	John V	Gentleman	24th	n.k.	not elected
Rae	Robert S	Cocoa maker	18th=	n.k.	not elected
Rice	George W	Ironmonger	11th=	n.k.	not elected
Scott	Philip	Publican	22nd	n.k.	not elected
Went	Samuel A	Gentleman	9th	n.k.	not elected
Williams	Walter G	Nurseryman	17th=	n.k.	not elected

Notes

\* SH = show of hands n.k. = not known

Apart from Lord Foley the votes cast for the unsuccessful candidates were not reported, in the table they are listed in alphabetical order,

As can be seen, four of the successful candidates in the show of hands, Edward Duke, Edward Greening, George Rice and Samuel Went, were defeated in the poll. Their places were taken by Rev Alfred Barratt, John Roberts, Robert Shopper and Robert Bunch.

## Conclusion

Although the elections in the seven Kingston Union parishes went some way towards realising the aspirations of the architects of the Local Government Act 1894, overall the outcome can best be described as mixed. In some parishes there was evident enthusiasm for the reforms in others the response was somewhat lukewarm. That said, they did offer the potential for increased involvement by parochial electors in matters affecting their community. They also offered the opportunity for those from humbler backgrounds to gain experience of parish governance through serving as councillors. The best examples from the parishes considered in this paper were the previously mentioned Henry Bates, the baker, at Esher; Joseph King, a blacksmith, who topped the poll at Hook; and Richard Smith, a chimney sweep, elected at West Molesey.

Given that all of the councillors in the parish of Coombe had relatively high status occupations<sup>28</sup> and there had been no contest, it was perhaps a little presumptuous of the Chairman of the parish meeting to claim that ‘they had got a very representative Council, and he hoped ... [the] parish might set a good example to its neighbours.’<sup>29</sup> Indeed, other parishes could demonstrate a better mix of occupations and potentially a greater variety of views on issues which came before the council. However, how the councils fared in the months ahead as they sought to get to grips with parish affairs is beyond the scope of this article.

## Postscript

Some of the seven parish councils considered above had very short lives. In 1895, the parishes of Coombe and Old Malden were merged with New Malden Urban District to form The Maldens and Coombe Urban District; and West Molesey was combined with East Molesey Urban District to form East and West Molesey Urban District.

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## Notes and References

1 *Surrey Comet*, 1 December 1894, 5.

2 For a fuller discussion of the nature of the legislation and how it has been interpreted by historians, see Roger Ottewill, ‘The Establishment of Parish Councils in Hampshire’, *Southern History*, Vol 30, 2008, 43-77.

3 At the time some Poor Law Unions, including Kingston, crossed county boundaries with Hampton, Hampton Wick and Teddington being in Middlesex. Like parish councils, urban district councils, were created in 1894.

4 The only exceptions were Old Malden where the meeting began at 8.15 and West Molesey at 7.00.

5 The full title of the body responsible for establishing these schools was the ‘National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church’. In the parish of West Molesey the premises of the Board School were used.

6 *Surrey Comet*, 8 December 1894, 5.



- 7 *Surrey Comet*, 8 December 1894, 2.
- 8 *Surrey Advertiser*, 8 December 1894, 3.
- 9 *Surrey Comet*, 8 December 1894, 3.
- 10 *Surrey Advertiser* 8 December 1894, 3.
- 11 *Surrey Advertiser* 8 December 1894, 3.
- 12 *Surrey Comet*, 8 December 1894, 2.
- 13 *Surrey Advertiser* 8 December 1894, 3.
- 14 *Surrey Comet*, 8 December, 1894, 7.
- 15 *Surrey Comet*, 8 December, 1894, 5.
- 16 See, for example, I. Slocombe, 'The Establishment of Parish Councils in Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Studies* vol.98 (2005), 49-70.
- 17 Two solicitors were candidates at Coombe; one at Esher; and one at Thames Ditton. Two barristers were candidates at Thames Ditton and one at Esher.
- 18 These were five farmers, at Coombe, Hook, Long Ditton (Tolworth Ward), Thames Ditton and West Molesey respectively; a farm bailiff and a market gardener at Coombe; and a nurseryman, at Thames Ditton.
- 19 Examples of shopkeepers included a baker at Esher and another at Long Ditton (Tolworth Ward); a linen draper at Esher; a greengrocer at Old Malden; and a milk seller and an ironmonger at Thames Ditton. Amongst the tradesmen there was a builder at Esher and a number of publicans and those in similar occupations at Hook, Thames Ditton (2) and West Molesey (2) respectively.
- 20 None were designated labourers, but there was a gardener at Long Ditton (Tolworth Ward) and another at Thames Ditton; a chimney sweep and a carpenter at West Molesey; and a blacksmith at Hook.
- 21 See, for example, Ottewill, 'Parish Councils in Hampshire, 71-2 [ref. 2].
- 22 *Surrey Comet*, 8 December, 1894, 2.
- 23 *Surrey Advertiser* 8 December 1894, 3; *Surrey Comet*, 22 December 1894, 7.
- 24 *Surrey Comet*, 8 December, 1894, 5.
- 25 *Surrey Comet*, 22 December 1894, 5.
- 26 *Surrey Comet*, 22 December 1894, 5.
- 27 *Surrey Comet*, 22 December 1894, 5.
- 28 These were a clergyman, two solicitors, an underwriter, a merchant, the local agent for HRH Duke of Cambridge, a farmer, a farm bailiff and a market gardener.
- 29 *Surrey Comet*, 8 December 1894, 3.

# ACCESSIONS RECEIVED IN SURREY HISTORY CENTRE, 2019-2020

*Edited by Michael Page, County Archivist*

As this report is being written, the country is cautiously emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, with uncertainty still pervasive in many areas and the long term impact of the pandemic not yet fully visible.

For Surrey History Centre it has had a profound effect on our collecting activities. For large parts of 2020 the Centre only had a skeleton staff in place, dealing with incoming enquiries and ensuring the building was secure and the air-conditioning functioning to protect our holdings. During this period no survey visits took place and the only records taken in were those that arrived unsolicited through the post (often as a result of lockdown house tidying and attic emptying projects). Little cataloguing and less conservation could take place while most staff were working from home as records could not be removed from the Centre.

It is only now (Summer 2021) that this area of our activities is resuming. With staff back in the office and potential depositors less cautious than they were, we have recommenced site visits and are accepting deposits at the front desk. Cataloguing is underway again although not yet at pre-pandemic levels.

As a result this report will be briefer than in previous years, even though it covers two years instead of one. We remain extremely grateful to all those who have helped to secure Surrey's documentary heritage for future generations by depositing records with us. One positive that came out of the months of lockdown was that staff could work at home editing and improving finding aids. As well as describing a number of the collections deposited with us over this period, I will also touch on some of this activity which has resulted in improved access to a number of our older collections and has illuminated sources relating to the history of the county which are not held directly by the Centre.

## **Surrey Estates**

While the Centre was closed to researchers for long periods, the Surrey History Trust remained vigilant and purchased on behalf of the Centre a number of significant items which came up for sale.

Most significant was a quantity of records that had formed part of the archive of the Leigh-Bennett family of Thorpe Place and once of Addington (SHC ref 10204). The Leigh-Bennetts could trace their somewhat obscure Surrey origins back to the late 14th century, when Richard atte Leye can be found leasing, then purchasing the manor of Bures in Addington. In 1447 John atte Legh acquired the manor of Addington itself and in 1544 his grandson Nicholas Leigh completed

the set by negotiating an exchange of lands with the King, through which Leigh acquired the Addington properties that had belonged to the dissolved religious houses of Southwark Priory and the Priory and Hospital of St John Jerusalem, namely the manors of Addington Rectory and Addington Temple. The Leighs were now firmly established among Surrey's gentry and Nicholas' grandson Olliph, who inherited the manor of East Wickham in Kent through his father's marriage, was knighted. Sir Olliph's grandson Francis added by inheritance through his mother's family the manors of Thorpe and Hall Place in the same parish. Sir John Leigh of Addington died in 1737, unbalanced and with no direct heir. After protracted legal dealings, his estates were divided by an Act of Parliament of 1767, between his nieces Mary, the wife of the Rev John Bennett of Aylsham, and Anne, the wife of Henry Spencer of Thorpe. The Addington estates fell to the Spencers and they soon sold them. The Bennetts were allotted Thorpe and East Wickham, and, taking the name Leigh-Bennett, took up residence in Thorpe.

The acquired papers include deeds relating to the family's London property, genealogical writings, family letters and two fine late 19th century photograph albums. They form a fine supplement to the extensive collection of deeds and family papers that were presented to Surrey Archaeological Society by Henry W Leigh-Bennett in 1930 and 1933 and are now held in the History Centre (SHC ref 2609). These, unfortunately, had been organised into a single chronological sequence with no regard to the properties they related to, and the opportunity presented by lockdown has given us the time to rationalise and reorder the collection and relist portions of it. Its significance chiefly lies in the fine series of early deeds, dating back to the mid 12th century. Many of these document the endowment of the Priory of St Mary Overy, Southwark, by numerous landowners in Addington, following the gift of Addington church to the Priory by Bartholomew de Chesney between 1175 and 1184. Together these gifts, made for the benefit of the souls of the grantors, were amalgamated into the manor of Addington Rectory. They provide evidence of the structure of landholding and the names of numerous local people in Addington at a time when few other sources are available.

The Leigh-Bennett papers were not the only estate and family records which we acquired through the Trust's generosity. In January 2020, the Trust purchased a quitclaim by Walter son of Eilwaker de Mapeldrex to William de Mapeldrex of the lands of Mapeldrex (that is Mapledrakes in Ewhurst) which Eilwaker conveyed to William at the court of Gomesolve (Gomshall) for 20 shillings (SHC ref 10144). The quitclaim must date to the period 1220 x 1250 and again provides early evidence of place names and individuals in a poorly documented part of the county. In January 2019 we had the opportunity to purchase a court book of the manor of East Horsley for the years 1712-1743 (SHC ref 10015) which had somehow strayed from the main series of court rolls among the archives of the King family, earls of Lovelace. The courts in the volume begin when Viscountess Lanesborough was lady of the manor of East Horsley. By her will, dated 8 Dec

1719, she bequeathed all her estates in Surrey to her second grandson, James Fox, and from 1737 George Fox, James' elder brother, appears to be administering the manor. Mention might also be made of an 1816 rental of the Duke of Norfolk's Surrey estates (SHC ref 10076), purchased by the Trust in July 2019. At this time administration of the estates of Charles Howard, 11th Duke of Norfolk (1746-1815) was in the hands of his executors, including the antiquarian Henry Howard (1757-1842) of Corby Castle, Cumberland. The extensive estates lay in in Betchworth, Bletchingley, Burstow, Capel, Charlwood, Dorking, Holmwood, Horley and Leigh in Surrey, and Fletching and Worth in Sussex.

I will end this section with a document that was not purchased by the Trust but was found in the building where it once hung and came to us via the Hayward History Centre in Lingfield. It is a charmingly naive map of Magnus Deo farm, on Plaistow Street, Lingfield, probably early 18th century in date, which includes much topographical detail of the surrounding area (SHC ref 10058) and includes a fine decorative cartouche. Along with the names and houses of neighbouring landowners, marked on the map are the 'Lingfield Wells' on the Common and familiar buildings appearing under unfamiliar names (for example Star Inn appears as Jenkins Hall and the Guest House appears as Church Stile House).



Fig 1: Map of Magnus Deo farm, Lingfield, early 18th cent (SHC ref 10058/1)

## Government in Surrey

2020 was a momentous year in the history of Surrey's local government in that it saw the closure of County Hall in Kingston, the seat of the County Council since its inauguration in 1889. Over 130 years the building had developed into a warren of offices and storage areas and the History Centre was much involved in the huge task of clearing the contents, identifying records and artefacts of historical value and finding a good home for them. That work is ongoing in some respects, but we have taken in a significant quantity of records for long term preservation.

Amongst what one would imagine to be a rather dry collection of records of the Finance Department were some Surrey midwives returns and registers of cases, 1920-1939 (SHC ref CC1280). The Midwives Act, 1936, made provision for the employment of certified midwives by, or on behalf of, local supervising authorities. The files were created to administer the fees and costs associated with midwives' attendance at home births throughout the county and are an invaluable resource for family historians. They include registers of cases for each midwife recording date of confinement; name, address and age of patient/mother; number of previous labours and miscarriages; date and hour of midwife's arrival; presentation; date and hour of child's birth; sex of infant; full-time or premature; name of doctor; complications during or after labour; date of midwife's last visit; condition of mother; condition of child and remarks.

The imminent closure of County Hall inspired Historic Buildings Officer, Chris Reynolds, to create a series of films celebrating the architecture and history of the building (SHC ref CC1284). During February 2020 Chris filmed at various locations around County Hall as well as at Surrey History Centre. Areas covered include the courts and cells, the early history of Surrey County Council and the design of County Hall, the Grand Hall with its World War I and II memorials, the Council Chamber, the various extensions to County Hall, the Ashcombe Suite and artefacts such as the dining room table from Dorking Union workhouse and the historic Quarter Sessions weights and measures. The films provide a fascinating behind the scenes guide to County Hall and its history as well as featuring documents relating to County Hall held at Surrey History Centre.

One accession taken in during 2019 is reflective of the administration of the county before the establishment of an elected County Council. Until the Prisons Act of 1877, which nationalised prisons across the country, the Surrey Court of Quarter Sessions was responsible for the construction, maintenance and administration of the network of gaols and houses of correction within the county. In the mid 19th century the Quarter Sessions embarked on a radical overhaul of Surrey's prisons: a new house of correction for the county of Surrey was built by the justices in Wandsworth in 1849-51, to designs by D R Hill of Birmingham, and opened in 1852 to hold 708 prisoners, at which point the three existing houses of correction in Guildford, Kingston and Brixton were closed. The building still stands as HM Prison Wandsworth. The builders were George Locke and Thomas Nesham,

who formed a prolific building firm with offices at 68 Theobalds Road, Holborn, London; they also built Aylesbury prison, Winchester prison and Lewes prison. The state-of-the-art new structure was on the panopticon model, with wings leading off a central hub, from which the warders had an unimpeded 360 degree view of the doors of all the cells. It also operated the 'separate system' which prevented communication between prisoners, who wore masks when engaged in activities where they had to associate with each other. The elevation of the forbidding entrance is depicted on a large plan (SHC ref 10125), signed by Locke and Thomas Nesham, and inscribed 'For the Magistrates', which was discovered in the Ministry of Justice Records Centre in Staffordshire.

Elected Parish Councils serving rural communities were established five years after the formation of the County Council. Many of the Surrey Councils have lodged their records with us over the years, but we were very pleased to add to our holdings minute books for three Councils stretching all the way back to their inauguration in 1894: Ash (SHC ref 10060), Hambledon (SHC ref 10033) and Puttenham (SHC ref 10126). The volumes which allow us to understand the concerns of these communities at the most local level.

Almost all the surviving records relating to the period from the 16th to the 19th centuries when parish vestries and annually elected overseers and churchwardens were the mainstay of local administration have long been deposited, particularly since the Parochial Registers and Records Measure of 1978 established a formal mechanism for such deposits. However, occasionally we do still take in records of this earlier period and in 2020 we were very pleased to receive from the parish of St Mary the Virgin, East Molesey, a set of overseers' and churchwardens' accounts for 1735-1805 and a vestry minute book, 1803-1832 (SHC ref 10147). The overseers' accounts are very detailed allowing us to see the names of those receiving regular out-relief in the form of pensions, but also all those recipients of occasional relief or assistance with clothing, medical expenses and burial costs: for example payments to 'Mrs Burekit for her trouble about ye foundling child'; Mr Gumbrell 'for 8 parrish coffens' and 'John Comfort bit by a mad dog'. The 1792 accounts provide a glimpse of the impact of an outbreak of smallpox on East Molesey. The churchwardens' accounts are also fascinating, not only because they document repairs to the church and other buildings, but also because they reveal the extent of the ongoing war against 'vermin'. A bounty was placed on the heads of several unfortunate species, deemed enemies to the harvest or to local livestock. Thus, in the 1790s, a dozen sparrow heads brought the slayer 2d, a dead weasel, stoat or hedgehog was worth 4d, a polecat brought you 8d and an otter, sad to relate, brought the princely sum of 1s.

## **Surrey and the Great War**

The First World War left few aspects of life unchanged in Surrey. An anonymous diary of 1914-1917 we acquired with the assistance of Surrey History Trust (SHC ref 10181), wrongly attributed by the auction house, turned out to be written



(almost certainly) by Mary R Lennard of Clare Lodge, Rowledge, aged about 34 in 1914 and living with family members generally indicated only by initials 'F' (Father, William R Lennard), 'K' (twin sister Katherine), 'G' (Grace, her younger sister) and 'M' (Mother, Catherine S Lennard). The family were evidently comfortably well-to-do and for extended periods were absent from Rowledge, staying in hotels and the houses of friends around the country. The diary was perhaps begun principally to record gardening at Clare Lodge and weather and wildlife memoranda, while noting social visits and church attendance including at the local church of St James Rowledge. The outbreak of war broadened its scope, with eye-witnessed events, scenes and conversations recorded, as well as comments on the impact of the conflict locally ('spy scares, working parties and horse requisition are objects of conversation'), the discomfort of 'Germanophiles', a passing cavalry regiment and the 'heart-stirring sight' of a train full of recruits, 'only a few in khaki' (September 1914). Participation in war work is referred to, such as provisions for the local hospital, a nursing association and 'munitioning' work by the diarist's sisters (1917).

Two establishments temporarily changed the face of the extremities of Surrey's countryside. At Frith Hill in Frimley a camp for enemy aliens was erected, recorded in a fine series of photographs (SHC ref 10162). It opened in September 1914 and very soon it was also being used to house German prisoners of war, a cutting of 23 September 1914 recording that 'A steady stream of German prisoners is flowing through England and the captured enemy are becoming 'common objects of the country'. At that point there were over 2000 German soldiers and sailors detained in the camp. Locals flocked to see the prisoners, Vera Brittain recording just such a visit in her diary for 24 September 1914: 'In the afternoon Cora [Stoop] and I motored to Frimley Common, a large plateau much higher than Byfleet. At Frimley there is a camp of German prisoners, and though one feels almost mean in going to look at them as if one were going to the zoo, yet, since it is a sight that has never been seen in England before and probably never will be again after this war, it was of too great interest to be missed. Although there is a board standing by the entrance to the camp saying that this thoroughfare is forbidden to the public, the day we were there the public were so numerous that one could hardly see the thoroughfare'. The camp appears to have closed in December that year and reopened in April 1915 when 300-400 German prisoners of war arrived by train at Frimley. It closed again some 6 months later and reopened in July 1916 as a working camp for men brought from the prisoner of war camp at Eastcote, Pattishall, Northants. They were to build a light railway connecting Pirbright Camp to Blackdown and Deepcut, a task that was completed by March 1917. By 1918 the tented camp was equipped for some 5000 prisoners of war.

On the other side of the county, the normally tranquil downland landscape between Marden Park and Rooks Nest in Godstone was transformed into the Eastern Command School of Bombing established in 1915/16 under the command of Major J S Egerton. There soldiers were taught the use of hand grenades and rifle grenades in assaulting enemy trenches and dugouts. To take their training out of the classroom a mock trench system, with barbed wire, pill boxes, and a

no man's land between the lines was constructed and regularly modified to take into account new tactics and weaponry. Little trace of the school remains and the site has slipped back into its customary slumber but for a few years shouts and explosions would have filled the air as detachments of infantrymen were given a taste of warfare on the Western Front. Sergeant Albert Olney of the King's Royal Rifle Corps was one of those who passed through the school in 1918 and the Surrey History Trust bought at auction his meticulously kept notebook, detailing all he had learnt (SHC ref 10214). The notebook is crammed with descriptions and pasted-in diagrams of all the different types of grenade in use by the British and German armies as well as notes on the employment of grenades to clear trenches and pill boxes, the use of smoke grenades and tactical formations. Inserted in the notebook is a map of the School as it was in November 1917, when a 'ruined village' had been added to the complex.



**Fig 2: Map of Godstone School of Bombing, 1917 (SHC ref 10214/2/1)**

Surrey also developed into one of the leading centres of aircraft manufacture and supporting engineering concerns. Lang Propeller Ltd of Riverside Works, Weybridge, and Addlestone, were founded by Arthur Alexander Dashwood Lang who, in 1909, began designing propellers, patenting processes for sheathing the tips of blades with copper and fabric to make them more durable and efficient. He set up in partnership with David Garnett at the Riverside Works Weybridge, as Lang, Garnett & Co and in 1913 Lang bought Garnett's interest out and established Lang Propeller Ltd with himself, Donald Wright

Monteith, engineer, and Jack Hugh Stewart Sprot, as the first directors. Throughout the First World War it was a leading manufacturer of propellers for the aeroplanes of the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force and, to cope with the ever-growing demand, built a new factory in Addlestone. In 1917, the company was acquired by Thomas Sopwith. Copies of the photographs from an album containing 50 images depicting the factories, staff and manufacturing processes, 1913-1918 (SHC ref SGW/22) provide a fine pictorial record of this unique Surrey industry.



A moving testimony to the demands placed by the war on one small community is provided by the contents of a wooden pencil box, in the music room, in Sunnyside house, now St Mary's Reigate Preparatory and Choir School, in Reigate: letters sent by members of the choir to their choir master and benefactor Godfrey Searle, and preserved by him in the house which he bequeathed as a choir school on his death in 1958 (SHC ref 10165). Godfrey Searle came from a well-established Reigate family of stockbrokers and under his tutelage as choir superintendant to St Mary's parish choir the choir boys developed a strong camaraderie, which continued after they were called up to service. During the war Godfrey worked to ensure that friends remained in contact, and in the latter years of the war he arranged for their letters to be published as an insert to the St Mary's parish magazine, which he assiduously forwarded to the training camps and the trenches. Many letters combine honest yet accepting descriptions of the daily and routine hardships of the soldier's life ('as it were a prison') with a hopeful enthusiasm for a chance to 'get at Fritz' and 'share in the next Big Push' to break 'the deep-cutting ennui of this life'. They share their mentor's high musical standards, George Garton reporting on a concert for the troops observing that 'the more or less vulgar humourists made a much bigger appeal to them than the better class of songs'. The devastating loss of life of friends and acquaintance inevitably enters the conversation of daily existence. The telling of Harry Verrell's death is the hardest read, relayed to Godfrey by his Harry's girlfriend Milly. Harry received a brain injury when his billet was shelled, and struggled with speech although never music during his final days, until he was often unconscious, but sometimes showing 'amazing signs of vitality as when he would burst out singing'. Despite illness and perhaps depression during the period, Godfrey appears to have visited France with the object of supporting concerts for the troops, and to assist in Red Cross work for the Wounded and Missing Department. In 1923 a part of Churchfield which he had earlier purchased was dedicated to the memory of his Old Boys, with the placing of a sundial. He moved to Sunnyside, adjoining Churchfield, in around 1928: it is now a short procession from the school every Remembrance Day, for the choir to mark the memory of their musical forerunners.



**Fig 3: Reigate parish church choir cricket club, 1901 (SHC ref 10165/2/3/2)**

Pressure on young men to volunteer in the first months of the war was intense and those deemed to be shirking their duty often faced sneers and abuse. To counter the stigma, the High Sheriff of Surrey John St Loe Strachey of Newlands Corner, launched a scheme to identify men who had offered their services but who had been rejected on medical grounds. One such 'Willing' Badge was discovered by a metal detectorist and we were delighted that he agreed to deposit it with the Centre (SHC ref SGW/18). The badge complements a copy of a letter from Strachey which was already in our collection, in which he writes that for those rejected on the grounds of such criteria as chest measurement, 'the Badge must be considered as a pledge of honour that the recipient will again offer himself should the standard be lowered' and that at all costs it should be kept out of the hands of those who hadn't tried to volunteer. Designed by Strachey's brother Henry, around 4500 were issued between autumn 1914 and December 1915, when the scheme ended.

A disgruntled volunteer who was passed fit for military service was Sergeant Henry Ernest Jolly of 1/4th Battalion, the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment. He joined up dreaming of glory and adventure but his unit was sent to India where the greatest threat came from the heat and humidity of the Indian summer. His letters home to his sister (SHC ref QRWS/30/JOLL) are expressive of the indignities of army life. Frustrated that his battalion was far from the action, in a letter of March 1916, he revealed the bitterness of the volunteer towards those who had refused to serve until forced to do so: 'the old country should never have had to mention conscription, every man should have joined long before that was necessary. Still they didn't and so anything can call itself a soldier now and we who volunteered and done our bit have simply wasted our time, and still we keep smiling'. On another occasion, laid low by disease he was sent to convalesce in a hospital in the hills away from the suffocating heat. He was stunned by the natural beauty and spectacular fauna around him, but still hankered for a 'decent meat pudding with plenty of hot gravy'. Whatever he felt about vaccinations and blood tests he had no choice but to endure them: 'one lot they took out of the end of my finger by sticking a red hot needle in and letting the blood drip out, another time by sticking a pointed piece of glass in on the back of the finger just by the first knuckle. It's a glorious army what with vaccination, inoculation and other little digs in the arms and fingers. I shouldn't be very much surprised if a chap came along with a chopper and said he was to cut me up to see if I was made right, but keep smiling'.

## **Surrey as a Place of Refuge**

Surrey has a long history of receiving and welcoming refugees, from Huguenots escaping persecution in the 16th century to displaced persons fleeing more recent conflicts. In 2019 and 2020 we received some interesting records relating to refugees helped by schools and organisations in the county.

In the 1930s, a 'German school' at Stootley Rough, Haslemere, was founded by

Dr Hilde Lion, a Jewish academic who had left Germany following Hitler's rise to power. Initially the school catered mainly for Jewish children escaping Nazi persecution. The separation of brothers from sisters was considered detrimental and so the school operated as a co-educational establishment with a full age range. Siblings Eva and Albert Ludwig Liebermann were sent to stay at Stootley Rough School during the summer holidays of 1942 and 1943, and we were delighted to be presented with Eva's family correspondence from this time (SHC ref 10172).

The Liebermanns, of Jewish descent, had come to England from Germany in 1937 and were interned in 1940 but returned to their home in Wembley on their release. The Liebermann parents' letters show a loving concern for their children: they are anxious to know all about school life and very much depend on news from Eva as her brother Albert is too young (and unwilling) to write. The letters from Eva give a vivid description of daily life at Stootley Rough School, with forthright descriptions of meals, chores, excursions and fellow pupils and staff.

Several books have been written about Stootley Rough School by former pupils, including *Hans's story* by Hans Loeser. In 2020, we purchased a 1971 compilation by Hans' wife, Herta Loeser, entitled *Since Then ... Letters from former Stootley Roughians*, which gives a valuable and varied insight into life at the school (SHC ref Z/560/8). On its closure in 1960, Stootley Rough was leased to the Ockenden Venture (of which more below) and subsequently renamed Quartermaine after Ockenden founder Joyce Pearce's grandfather, Henry Quartermaine.



**Fig 4: Exterior view of Quartermaine (formerly Stootley Rough School), Farnham Lane, Haslemere, 4 Jan 1965 (SHC ref CC1101/3/75/74)**

A donation in 2020 of a small bundle of Second World War school magazines produced by Mitcham County School for Girls includes an article, 'Our pen friends - What became of them?', by pupil, Florrie Toft (SHC ref 10136/3). This describes how in early 1939, Florrie's Jewish pen friend in Austria, Elly Löwinger, wrote to her begging for help. Fortunately, it appears that Elly was brought to Britain by the Kindertransport through the intervention of Miss E F Dunn, headmistress of the school.

Mitcham County School for Girls continued its support for the plight of the refugee in post-war years. Two of its teachers, Joyce Pearce and Margaret Dixon, encouraged their sixth formers to discuss current affairs, leading to the opening of a residential weekend sixth form centre at the Pearce family home, Ockenden House, in Woking. The showing of a film, 'Answer for Anne,' about an American schoolgirl's discovery of the plight of displaced people in Europe led to the suggestion of a holiday for some of the children in DP camps. As part of Woking's Festival of Britain in 1951 celebrations, a group of 17 teenagers from the camps came to stay at Ockenden House and this, significantly, was the catalyst for the founding of the refugee charity, the Ockenden Venture.

One of the 'first five' girls to be brought to Britain by the Ockenden Venture for a better life and education in the 1950s was Sarmite Ērenpreiss Janovskis whose family originated from Latvia. Today, Sarmite is a book illustrator and very kindly presented us with a copy of Kārlis Skalbe's Latvian language children's book, 'Milzis', which she illustrated, along with an English translation. The book is inscribed by Ms Janovskis in memory of her daughter Kathrine who tragically died in 2019 and who was very much part of the Ockenden community (SHC ref 9668)



**Fig 5: The 'first five girls' Ockenden's tenth anniversary celebrations, 1965 (SHC ref 7155/4/7/6)**

We have also received a small bundle of correspondence from the family of a woman who employed a refugee who had been helped by Ockenden (SHC ref 9668). The papers include a transcript of the individual's family circumstances which, like so many others in similar situations, makes for sobering reading.

The sizeable archive of the Ockenden Venture (now Ockenden International) is held at Surrey History Centre and we continue to receive additions to the collection. In 2019, we were presented with the collected papers of Denise Moll who was secretary to Ockenden founder, Joyce Pearce, from 1980 to Miss Pearce's death in 1985 (SHC ref 10042). Ms Moll remained at Ockenden until 1993, helping the charity's chairman, David Ennals, with secretarial duties. After the closure of Ockenden's offices in Woking, Ms Moll and others formed the Ockenden Venture Reunion Group, and its activities are recorded among the papers. These include the commissioning of a 'Protecting the Child' sculpture and seat in the Rose Garden, Woking, in 2005, to commemorate the founding of the Ockenden Venture.

## **Sport in Surrey**

Our holdings of records of the county's sporting organisations and events were significantly enhanced during 2019-2020.

In January 2019, we were delighted to receive the archive of Woking Golf Club (SHC ref 9993), the oldest of the Surrey heathland courses. The Club was established in 1893 by a group of London barristers who were members of the Inner and Middle Temple, the course having been built on heathland at Hook Heath leased from the London Necropolis Company and initially designed by Tom Dunn. Alterations to the course took place in the first two decades of the 20th century, mostly under the guidance of two prominent members and past captains, John Low and Stuart Paton. Because of this, Woking's course has long been regarded as being of great architectural significance and as an essential place to study for aspiring and existing golf architects, the legacy of Low and Paton continuing to have a profound effect on the design of the golf course.

Notable golfers who have been associated with the club include Bernard Darwin, Gerald Micklem, Doug Sewell and Roger Wethered. The 1925 handbook shows that HRH the Prince of Wales and HRH the Duke of York were both honorary members and the annual report for 1939 indicates that HRH King George VI was patron at that time. Dame Ethel Smythe, the composer and suffragette, who resided at Hook Heath, Woking, was also a long-standing member of the Club.

The Club is the home of the prestigious Senior Golfers' Society of Great Britain whose archive we are also very fortunate to be custodians of (SHC ref 9627) and the Society hold their Spring Meeting at Woking in May each year.

The deposited records include minute books, 1902-2002; rules; annual reports and accounts 1921-1970; registers of members and candidate books, 1897-2016; lists





**Fig 6: Oxford University vs Woking Golf Club, 1935 (SHC ref 9993/2/8/1/4)**

of members, 1967-1991; fixture cards; competition results; papers relating to the club's property; press cuttings, photographs and other illustrations.

In March 2020 we were approached by Sandra Brown, a member and former president of the Surrey Walking Club, Centurion member C735 and member of the Long Distance Walkers Association (LDWA), about the possibility of the LDWA archive (SHC ref 10205) being deposited with us to complement the already-held archives of the Surrey Walking Club (SWC) and Centurions 1911 (SHC refs 8671 and 8923 respectively). The LDWA is an association of people with the common interest of walking long distances in rural, mountainous or moorland areas. It had its origins in Surrey where, in 1972, the Association was founded by Chris Steer and Alan and Barbara Blatchford. Many of its early members included those who were already members of the SWC and the Centurions, both of which promoted long distance walking.

Membership in 1972 was 255 and in 2019 stood at nearly 10,000. The Association is volunteer-run and, at a local level, comprises (in 2020) 44 Local Groups across the UK. The groups arrange led walks, organise Challenge Walks and run checkpoints on the Annual 'Hundred', an event that entails walking 100 miles in 48 hours. In 1985 the LDWA was given Sports Council Governing Body status for Long Distance Walking and became a Company Limited by Guarantee in 1999.

The LDWA collection comprises an accruing archive set of the LDWA's newsletters and the later *Strider* magazine. The Newsletter, containing details of challenge walks throughout the country, was started in 1972 as hand-typed and printed A4 sheets. It became *Strider* in 1977 and is now a full-colour 100-page journal, published in April, August and December each year. A special edition was

published in 2012, the 40th anniversary year of the foundation of the Association, which includes timelines of its history and descriptions and photographs of events and challenges.



Fig 7: LDWA Newsletter Nos 12, Aug 1975, and 18, Aug 1977 (SHC ref 10205/1/2)

Another small but fascinating sport-related collection donated to us in July 2020, in what should have been Olympics year, comprises papers of Albert Dennis Brown of Oxted relating to the 1948 Olympic torch relay (SHC ref 10176), which the donor acquired when he purchased at auction Mr Brown’s 1948 Olympic torch. Albert (Bert) Brown was the second torchbearer on the Surrey section of the Olympic torch relay on 29 July 1948. The route ran from the Kent/Surrey border at Westerham to Bagshot Park. Mr Brown, a member of Oxted, Limpsfield and Tandridge Sports Club, carried the torch from Limpsfield to Crowhurst Cross Road, Oxted. The papers include a schedule of the Surrey section of the Olympic torch relay with stages, times and assembly points; and a list of the Surrey torch bearers, along with photographs, cuttings and Albert Brown’s silver souvenir medal, 1948.

## Recording the Pandemic

We have been actively collecting and creating a largely digital archive to capture Surrey’s response to the Covid 19 pandemic. We have asked for contributions of diaries and photographs recording people’s responses to the events that have unfolded since March 2020 and collection of these is ongoing.

The County Council's own activities have been documented by capturing the published cases statistics for the Surrey Districts, receiving digital files from the Council's emergency planning team, and taking news stories from news.surreycc.gov.uk and email and blog updates from the Chief Executive. We have also stored the Covid and Me videos compiled by the Council's external communications team, in which Surrey residents talked about their personal experiences.

Much of the archive has been created by searching websites and social media for material that can be downloaded or printed usually to PDF format. The Borough and District Councils have issued service updates and regular newsletters for residents and Parish and Town Councils have been similarly active, especially with publicising local community initiatives to provide practical help and support to those in need. Hambledon village website ran a photo competition in June 2020, which captured some humorous and touching images of how people were feeling at the time, and the website ran a Sunday Reflections series written by a wide range of residents.

Surrey businesses, leisure and entertainment venues have all experienced a difficult time and this is reflected in the newsletters of Haslemere and Mole Valley Chambers of Commerce and Surrey Chamber of Commerce, or in the multiple re-arrangements of shows listed on the website of the Dorking Halls.

News stories, usually with photographs, have been collected from local news outlets including the Farnham Herald, Woking News and Mail, Eagle Radio, and the podcasts of Jon Andrews' show on Radio Woking, and it is now rather shocking to look back at the early news coverage and to see how suddenly the crisis developed. The news websites also highlight the enforced socially distanced changes to annual rituals such as Remembrance Sunday, or, in 2020, the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

The impact on schools and education has been huge. Schools have had to rapidly develop policies and procedures for home learning, and operating schools in a Covid secure way and much of this is documented on school websites via publication of policy documents and newsletters. These have been collected for a range of primary schools in places including Brookwood, Charlwood, Clandon, Oxted and Woodmansterne, as well as secondary schools such as Tomlinscote at Frimley, Fullbrook at Addlestone, Guildford County School, Woking High School and Reigate Grammar School.

Copious documentation providing guidance for clergy has been issued by the Diocese of Guildford and a subscription to their email parish briefing, which in the earlier part of 2020, was being produced daily, has created a detailed picture of how they coped with the challenges of taking services online, as well as all the other issues they confronted. News stories published by Woking mosque and a video from Camberley mosque demonstrating how to use the building in a Covid secure way help to capture the impact on the Muslim community in Surrey.



Surrey Heartlands NHS Trust's news items and information on the vaccination programme highlight the work of the NHS, as do photographs of the NHS rainbows from 2020. We have also obtained a copy of the video 'Give Covid the jab' produced by Romany journalist and film maker Jake Bowers, backed by the NHS in Surrey, to encourage Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showmen to give Covid the jab and get vaccinated.

Subscribing to the weekly emails from South West Surrey MP and former Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, has given a detailed political perspective on events, while from the other end of the spectrum Extinction Rebellion Guildford highlighted climate action in lockdown.

Collection of webpages is an ongoing activity and further contributions of diaries, photographs or paper ephemera are welcome.

## **Surrey Hobbies and Receptions**

We have noticed in recent years that we are being offered increasing quantities of records of clubs and societies that have been wound up, perhaps reflecting the gradual demise (or move online) of traditional hobbies.

For example, Walton and Weybridge Philatelic Society (SHC ref 10007) had a membership of 150 in 1971 but by 2010 this was down to 56 and average attendance at meetings was 7. The Society was founded in December 1946, meeting in a room at the 'Builders' Arms' in Walton. From 1955 meetings were held at the Plough Inn, Walton, from 1968 at St James' Church Hall, Weybridge, and from 1973 at Weybridge Library. The society's Bulletin began in 1968 and in the same year a special 21st anniversary public stamp exhibition was held, at which the Post Office installed a counter where specially designed covers could be cancelled with a special handstamp depicting a VC 10 aeroplane flying over Walton Bridge. A pictorial cover with commemorative postmark was again produced for the 25th anniversary of the society in October 1971. Under the leadership of Denis Geach the society became one of the foremost in Surrey, members regularly achieving national and international honours, and an annual stamp fair with displays and auctions was established, the first being held in March 1971. In 2010, a decision was taken to start a new club in Ripley, to be run more as a fair than a traditional Philatelic Society and the Walton and Weybridge Philatelic Society ceased to meet under its own name. The deposited records include minutes, programme cards, newsletters and material relating to exhibitions and competitions.

The Reigate and Redhill Film Society (SHC ref 10082) was formed in 1956 through the sponsorship of the Surrey Visual Aids Association (SVAA) 'to encourage interest in the film as an art and as a medium of information and education by means of films of scientific, educational, cultural and artistic character ... and to

promote the study and appreciation of films by means of lectures, discussions, exhibitions and visits'. Its founder and first chairman was A D 'Paddy' Whannel, a teacher at Albury Manor Secondary School, Merstham, and secretary of the SVAA. At the first meeting at the Colman Institute Hall, Redhill, attended by over 230 people, an Italian film, 'Umberto D', was shown along with an extract from 'Battleship Potemkin'. Subsequently, a meeting was held at Cromwell School, Redhill, on 18 April 1956, to elect a committee. Members were invited to make choices from the committee's selection for each main feature in the season of eight programmes. A mixture of British, Hollywood and foreign films was shown and discussed. The society experienced mixed fortunes, with fluctuating membership numbers, and problems with equipment, quality of film copy and venues, but continued until the 1990s. Surviving records include minutes, annual reports, programmes and newsletters.



**Fig 8: Christmas party at Ewhurst Green Youth Hostel, 1938 (SHC ref 10048/1)**

We have also taken in a photograph album recording the early years of Ewhurst Green Youth Hostel (SHC ref 10048). The Youth Hostel Association was formed in 1930, with the aim 'to help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside, and appreciation of the cultural values of towns and cities, particularly by providing youth hostels or other accommodation for them in their travels, and thus to promote their

health, recreation and education'. The Ewhurst Green Hostel, the first built under the appeal launched by the Prince of Wales for the George V Jubilee Trust, was designed by architect Howard Lobb for 32 hostellers and was officially opened on 30 May 1936 by Sir John Jarvis, MP for Guildford, on land donated by journalist and author, Sir Philip Gibbs and his wife, Lady Agnes. A large fundraising effort was also undertaken by staff and students of Imperial College of Science and Technology in London. Gibbs, at the opening ceremony, eulogized the prospective users of the hostel: 'Young hikers are not like ordinary trippers, who surge out of the town and leave their litter of broken bottles and dirty bits of paper. They are out to preserve beauty and not to spoil it'. With the move to modernize

hostels and introduce less Spartan accommodation, the simple hostel at Ewhurst Green was closed in 1983 and has since been demolished.

## **PCC Wills-a new resource**

A new wonderful resource for wills of Surrey people proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury from the late 1400s to the 1800s is now accessible on Surrey History Centre's Collections Catalogue. This is thanks to the monumental undertaking of Cliff Webb in identifying and calendaring the details of each will, and his generosity in allowing us to use his work on our website. In-house, Teresa Gray has done a tremendous job of editing nearly 8000 descriptions on to our system, while our volunteer Edgar is working on the 15th and early 16th century wills written in Latin. The project is ongoing at the time of writing though the bulk of the county has been completed.

The Prerogative Court of Canterbury was the court in which the wills of most of the wealthiest and highest in the land were proved (in particular when they owned land in more than one county). In practice, we find a range of Surrey testators in the probate registers, from the Earl of Onslow to a thriving variety of artisans and tradespeople, such as William Kelshull, fishmonger of Bermondsey (d.1432), Lawrence Freeland, carpenter of West Horsley (d.1651), Robert Byers, bargeman of Walton on Thames (d.1521), and John Tucker, weaver of Godalming (d.1617).

These testators had the most to leave behind, and in their bequests they provide details of their worldly circumstances, a map of their emotional connections in life, and a glimpse of the community with which they interacted. The will of Mrs Anne Hobson of Bridley Manor, Woking (PCC/WOK/7, describing TNA PROB 11/97/166), proved in 1600, lists 26 relatives, including married sisters, eight grandchildren, cousins, nieces and nephews. These detailed interrelationships of family are a delight for the genealogist, of course, but often we also discover who provided the true bonds of family support, companionship and amity. Nuncupative wills (from the Latin 'nunc cupo' or 'now I wish') record the sometimes bitter spoken wishes of the deceased who died before a will could be drafted: so Elizabeth Fisher of Barnes, dying in 1570, would leave 'to my father in law all my goods as my own kinfolk never did me any good and he has treated me as one of his own child' (PCC/BAR/1 describing TNA PROB 11/52/532). Thomas Cocke of Wisley in 1671, fearing his children's ill-conduct, left £5 to each, 'except if any abuse their mother', when they would receive only a shilling (PCC/WIS/2 describing TNA PROB 11/336/513).

A picture of business connections, places owned, and the very physical, material existence of these ancestors is often vividly supplied. Among countless bequests of clothing, John Wynter of Lambeth in May 1445 bequeaths 'to Harry Perryng a new russet gown furred with black lamb that I had new at Christmas' (PCC/LAM/2 describing TNA PROB 11/3/540 – he had died by July; in 1543; William Berkwith of Bermondsey treated his wife to 'half the glass windows and half the

wainscot ceiling in my house' or the money equivalent (she also received a house and great garden in Bell Alley: PCC/BER/17 describing PROB 11/29/354).

Unsurprisingly, many testators were eager to demonstrate their piety and charity. Before the religious upheavals of the time of Henry VIII and after, much money was committed to the saying of prayers and singing of dirges: Richard Lusser, gentleman of Witley in 1502 scheduled 1200 masses within a month by priests with no livelihood, with 12 different types of masses specified, for himself and the souls of his wives, 8s 4d for every 100 masses (PCC/WIT/1 describing TNA PROB 11/14/29). Robert Ode of Egham, Surrey, vowed to go on a pilgrimage. Perhaps Ode's vow was made in hope during what proved to be his final illness, or perhaps he realised on this deathbed that he had never quite got round to the trip he had promised earlier. Whatever the case, his will, proved in October 1464, only weeks after it was written, provided for the expenses of a villager of Egham to undertake a pilgrimage on his behalf. Ode details the holy stopovers on a considerable journey for his pilgrim proxy: St Mary's, Walsingham, in north Norfolk; the shrine of St Thomas in Canterbury; the well of Master John Schorne in North Marston, Buckinghamshire; St Mary's shrine at Southwick Priory, Hampshire; and St Mary's chapel, Cleeve Abbey, Somerset (PCC/EGH/3, describing TNA PROB 11/5/98).

After the spiritual came the practical gifts. Although the poor certainly feature as recipients, the state of roads tried one and all in worldly life, so local streets are among the commonest beneficiaries for repair (along with the parish church). John Lee alias Spicer of Kingston bequeathed the building of a new market hall (PCC/KING/14, describing PROB 11/13/256), while William Tyrell of Croydon in 1569 more unusually left to the great almshouse of Croydon the 'house of office' (lavatory) he had built there (PCC/CROY/21 describing PROB 11/51/411).

While some were reconciled to passing from secular concerns – 'I forgive Lady Thomasine Lee all the injuries and wrongs in an infamous suit in Chancery', stated Robert Mellish of Sanderstead in 1626 (PCC/SAN/4, describing TNA PROB 11/151/372) – more were ill at ease. Beatrice Hayton of Merton willed in 1434 'that my executors shall, out of my goods, settle my late husband Thomas' debts, and make reasonable restitution as they think necessary to all those whom he had wronged during his life' (PCC/MERT/1 describing TNA PROB 11/3/347). Valedictory revenge, moreover, prompts some of the most startling passages in the registers, from those determined that theirs would be the last word.

The wills have been identified from among the chronological registers of wills granted probate by the Archbishop of Canterbury's court, held at the National Archives, and digitised on their website <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858/> Cliff's selection includes all the parishes of the ancient county of Surrey including the area now south London, as well as a few close neighbours.

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## PUBLICATIONS

The former Surrey Local History Council produced *Surrey History* for many years and the majority of the back numbers are still available. In addition the following extra publications are in print:

*Views of Surrey Churches*  
by C.T. Cracklow  
(reprint of 1826 volume)  
1979 £7.50 (hardback)

*Pastors, Parishes and People in Surrey*  
by David Robinson  
1989 £2.95

*Old Surrey Receipts and Food for Thought*  
compiled by Daphne Grimm  
1991 £3.95

*The Sheriffs of Surrey*  
by David Burns  
1992 £4.95  
(published jointly with the Under Sheriff of Surrey)

*Two Hundred Years of Aeronautical & Aviation in Surrey 1785-1985*  
by Sir Peter Masefield  
1993 £3.95

*The Churches of Surrey*  
by Mervyn Blatch  
1997 £30.00 (hardback)

These books were published for Surrey Local History Council by Phillimore & Co. Ltd. They are available from the Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, GU21 1ND. Tel: 01483 518740. Members of the Society are invited to obtain their copies from the Hon. Secretary, Surrey Archaeological Society, Hackhurst Lane, Abinger Hammer, RH5 6SE. Tel/fax: 01483 532454. A Registered Charity No 272098.



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