



*Leatherhead & District Local History
Society covering Ashted, the Bookhams,
Fetcham, Headley, Mickleham and Leatherhead*

Newsletter

June 2019



The Burn family of Yarm Court, Leatherhead, with their carriage (above) and Lanchester car (below) in 1902. See Page 18 for the story.



Corporate Member:

**MICHAEL
EVERETT**

58 The Street, Ashted

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**EDITORIAL**

It is going on for 40 years since Hampton Cottage opened officially as Leatherhead's only historical museum thanks to the Society's Stephen Fortescue and colleagues.

Since then it has been welcoming visitors every year to learn about the area's past and enjoy an atmosphere of nostalgia for some, discovery for others.

This year we have finally seen a long overdue refurbishment which also follows the recent upgrading of the collection's storage facilities in The Priory basement nearby. All should now be set for a more secure basis for expansion.

Most important, however, is to find a new Museum curator who can build on the excellent work already carried out by Lorraine Spindler. The current joint museum managers are filling the gap temporarily so we know that Hampton Cottage is in safe hands. But once the post is filled, the Museum should be able to look ahead with confidence to a long and successful future.

The Society continues its very long tradition of internal change as the inevitable passing of time brings demands for fresh blood to ensure continuation of longstanding services and introduction of new ones. From book sales to Programme Committee members and corporate membership promoters, we need newcomers. This is true too of the Friends of the Museum which will need both a chairman and treasurer from next year.

Local organisations throughout the country find themselves in a similar position so we are far from alone. But we do know that the Leatherhead area contains some pretty impressive residents, some of whom may have time on their hands for voluntary work of the sort needed. Let's just find them.

This *Newsletter* edition also contains the usual reports on recent Society lectures, follows up on earlier features about the Yarm Court area and the parish church, and much more. Plenty to enjoy.

TONY MATTHEWS

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



It is a real pleasure to welcome Nicole Courtney-Leaver to the trustees and Executive Committee after her election at the AGM in March. A journalist by background and former war correspondent, she lives in a cottage in Ashted claimed by visiting relatives to be haunted. Whether or not this is so, she is currently helping out with new initiatives rather than taking up any of our formal officer roles.

The refurbishment schedule for Hampton Cottage was extended due to negotiating occupation of the footway alongside the eastern frontage. Scaffolding was erected and a temporary traffic light system installed. Among necessary east façade tasks was replacement of the first floor window and this was soon achieved. Eventually the project was completed and the Museum re-opened for 2019.

Reading a weekly newspaper recently I came across a name that also appears fleetingly in our local history. The modern article was about various Prime Ministers who had become unseated by popular acclaim. Among these was Frederick, Lord North, son of the first Earl of Guilford (sic), who had been handed the (family) parliamentary seat of Banbury at the age of 22 but with only limited wealth.

That was in 1754. In 1758 he wrote to his father about failure to lease his estate at Ashted House. A few days later, he wrote again, discussing whether he could afford to be in London for the opening of Parliament. In November 1764 and May 1765 he sent more letters from Ashted. He may have had a considerable tenure in the village but we have nowhere near the detail on this that is available on other occupiers of Ashted House.

He became Prime Minister in 1770, four years after his last known connection with the building. Lord North was responsible for the five-year long American War of Independence which culminated in British surrender at Yorktown in October 1781. Supported by King George III, his government survived for several months but suffered six defeats in Parliament, bringing about his resignation on 22 March 1783. (The local material for this piece has been extracted from *Proceedings* reports written by Geoffrey Gollin.)

JOHN ROWLEY

NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM

By Peter Humphreys and Duncan Macfarlane, Museum Managers

Renovation of Hampton Cottage neared conclusion at time of writing, focussing mainly on external timber framing and rendered wall panels.

Work began on 11 February and the contractor had completed 90% of it by mid-March. The final stage was repair and refurbishment to the eastern façade, alongside the road. This included a new window to the Hollis Room and required further scaffolding. The delay from mid-March until late April was due to problems obtaining a traffic slot and licences from Surrey County Council. However work recommenced on Monday, 29 April and was soon completed. Some internal redecoration was undertaken by our volunteers.

Re-opening for the 2019 season had to be slightly delayed but took place on Thursday, 9 May and this year's two scheduled craft days for children



Above: Museum managers Peter Humphreys and Duncan MacFarlane look up as L&DLHS president Alan Pooley and David Williams inspect refurbishment work from the rear of the building and treasurer Carl Leyshon peers at the timber work.



were due 30 and 31 May.

We were delighted that the Friends had recruited and retained over 40 stewards which meant there would be no problems in ensuring all the scheduled openings were covered.

Plans are in hand to use the upstairs office for additional exhibition

space. We hope to display paintings by Anthony Hill, the well known Leatherhead artist, later this summer.

Interim arrangements are also in place while a new curator for Leatherhead Museum is sought following Lorraine Spindler's departure. We are especially grateful to those four volunteers who have agreed to help with the Museum displays in the meantime.



Top: Volunteers on the first open Saturday. Above left : The 2019 look. Above right: Current display and new basement storage facilities for the Museum collection at The Priory nearby.

OBITUARY: SHEILA BETTY WARNER (1925-2019)

One of Leatherhead's most active residents, Sheila Warner died in January and is sadly missed. Resident since 1972 in her late parents' Fetcham home, she worked for 43 years at London's Geological Museum where she would organise exhibitions.

At the height of her career after a visit to Africa, she assisted the design and construction of the Koobi Fora Museum at Lake Turkana in Kenya at the request of Dr Richard Leakey, the legendary conservationist.

From London she designed and built a scale model on her dining room table and wrote scripts for the panels. In 1981 she spent six weeks on site achieving the museum launch and later made three further trips to the site on the shore of the lake in the area known as 'the cradle of mankind'.

After retiring in 1985 she became really active in the Leatherhead district. She was a volunteer helper at Polesden Lacey for 16 years and a founder member of the Friends of Polesden Lacey Shakespeare. She won a Leatherhead Community Margary Award for the restoration of the Leatherhead Swan, organised the Kirby Art Lectures, had a splendid collection of art and pottery, and wrote copious notes on designs and planting plans for her garden.

She also contributed to the Arts Society, Leatherhead Community Association, History and Art, Fairtrade, the U3A and her church. She recorded and photographed all of her activities and was extremely popular, with strongly held and widely respected views on life. Active still at the age of 93, she died in Epsom Hospital.



PROGRAMME OF FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Friday, 7 June, 8pm, De Vere Hotel, Horsley Estate:
Talk by Colin Cobb on historic speed champion Donald Campbell and his Leatherhead home of Priors Ford, now the site of Campbell Court.

Saturday, 8 June, 7.30pm, St Lawrence Church, Effingham:
Dr Robert Owen, official historian of the RAF's famous wartime 617 squadron, on the 75th anniversary of the sinking of the Tirpitz.

Friday, 20 September, 2pm, Room G6, Letherhead Institute:
Heritage Open Days Weekend repeat of Tony Matthews' talk *The Story of Cherkley Court*, covering Leatherhead's contrasting experiences of the Dixon and Beaverbrook periods and consideration of what has happened since then.

Friday, 25 October, 7.30pm, St Lawrence Church, Effingham:
Dr Robert Owen on 40th anniversary of Sir Barnes Wallis's death.

Monthly meetings/talks, Abraham Dixon Hall, Letherhead Institute.
Coffee at 7.30pm and 8pm talk. Visitors welcome.

Friday, 20 September: Ian Betts, Museum of London Archaeology, on *Georgian Baths and Bathing Practices*.

Friday, 18 October: Professor Pat Wiltshire on *The British Hedgerow - Past and Present*.

Friday, 15 November: Jane Lewis of Surrey History Centre on *Fashion and Folly*. The bizarre lengths that people have gone to in order to enhance their beauty and appear fashionable.

December, date to be confirmed:

Christmas Miscellany. Seasonal celebratory wine, accompanied by talks on local history topics.

LECTURE REPORT

MEMORIES OF ASHTEAD IN WORLD WAR 2



Above: Devastation in Gaywood Road which suffered Ashtead's worst bombing in 1940. Right: Canadian Signals Corps members used carrier pigeons.



Chairman John Rowley and Ashtead school archivist Patricia Jenkins gave a presentation after this year's Annual General Meeting on the story of their book *Memories of Ashtead in World War 2*, published in December.

They explained how it gradually took shape as a result of research and interviews over several years beginning in May 2012. At that time John contacted Meredith Worsfold, son of a well-known builder of homes in Ashtead before and after the war. The initial enquiry was specifically about flat concrete Edwardian house roofs in Albert Road but from August 2013 he and Patricia began framing ideas for the book.

They began collecting available local resources such as the Ashtead Residents Association's own on-line record *A Village*; school logs and memoirs, and wartime marriages from the St Giles Church Marriage Register. They investigated the Ashtead War Memorial page on the L&DLHS website, the L&DLHS map of

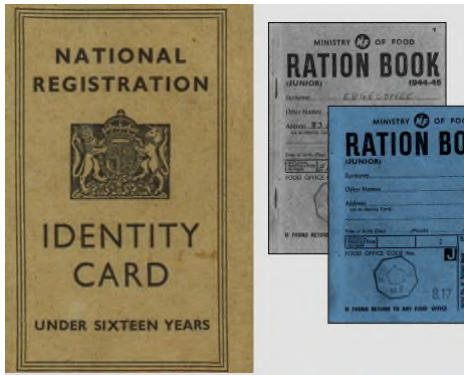


*Above: Air Raid Precaution wardens worked to protect Ashted.
Below right: Queues would gather with ration cards for the family
at the local fishmonger.*

bombings, other contemporary maps and aerial photographs, and official war diaries of the Royal Norfolk Regiment and the Canadian Signals Corps, the two primary military units billeted in Ashted during World War 2.

In November 2013 they contacted Ann Williams, née Astridge, daughter of a well-known Ashted family, in Calgary, Canada, and she helped with extensive research and interviews of veterans and the British girls who had married them and emigrated after the war. From July 2014, John was busy transcribing details of some 40 such weddings of local women and





the following year he and Patricia hit the jackpot when they secured typed records of the Canadian War Diaries.

From then on it was a matter of continuous interviews and contacts with anyone and everyone with a story to tell about wartime in Ashted. Eventually the book emerged from this long process at the end of 2018 and went on sale just in time for Christmas. Copies available from local bookshops and Leatherhead Museum.

Above left: Everyone had these.

Above: At St Giles Church many local women married Canadian servicemen stationed in Ashted. Eileen 'Bubbles' Bailey was among them on 22 November 1941. She emigrated to Vancouver later with husband Jack Blackburn.



Left: This contemporary photo of Irene Heaton, May Queen at Cunliffe's Field, was copied by Ashted artist Imogen Hartridge for the cover of the book. The site was used for air raid shelters and is now the Peace Memorial Hall car park.

LECTURE REPORT

WORMS, ASHES AND BONES: FROM DARWIN TO TODAY AT ABINGER

EMMA CORKE, former president of the Surrey Archaeological Society, gave the April talk about discoveries on the Iron Age and Roman site at Cocks Farm, Abinger.



Emma Corke

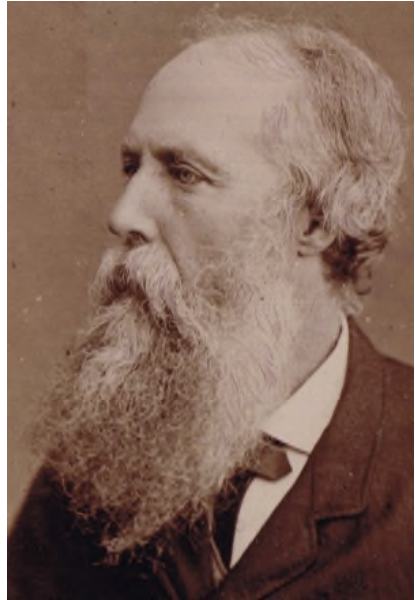
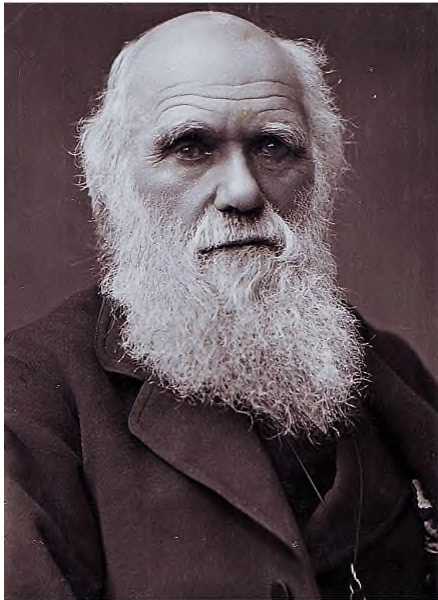
Emma's great great grandfather, Thomas Henry Farrer, bought Abinger Hall at Cocks Farm in 1875. His gardeners soon discovered the remains of a Roman building on the site and archaeological excavations in the following year uncovered six rooms, including one with a coarse-tessellated floor from Roman times.

Farrer was friends with Charles Darwin, the founder of modern understanding about evolution of species, and Darwin's son Horace married Farrer's daughter Ida. In 1880 Horace produced a plan of the Cocks Farm site. Darwin himself was interested in investigating the role of earthworms in movement of ancient stone structures.

Nothing more was done until a tree uprooted in the great storm of October 1987 was seen to have the corner of a stone-built room in its roots, together with painted wall-plaster and fine tesserae.

Three years of excavation in 1995-97 by Surrey Archaeological Society found a large late-Roman building, which led to the site being declared a Scheduled Ancient Monument. So many questions remained that in 2009 English Heritage gave permission for five more years of excavation on the buildings, which has found a multi-phase, probably courtyard, villa.

Meanwhile, geophysics in the surroundings led to the discovery of a Roman lime kiln (with a uniquely surviving entrance), a Roman field system, and an area of high disturbance on the top of the knoll above the villa. This is where archaeological efforts have concentrated



Above left: Charles Darwin (1809-1882) whose historic work 'On the Origin of Species' transformed modern understanding of animal and human evolution. Above right: Thomas Henry Farrer, owner of Cocks Farm, whose daughter married Darwin's son.

for the last five years. Several phases of Iron Age enclosures have been discovered, with storage pits and cremation deposits. Overlying them are many Roman features including farm buildings.

The work has revealed artefacts from the Mesolithic period from 12,000 to 3000 BC onwards and provides evidence that the site was occupied and farmed continuously from the Neolithic through to the 19th century. Thirty Iron Age grain storage pits, one of them 3.4m in diameter, indicate that the site was the centre of a thriving network of farms in that era.

It is clear that the owners in the Roman period were rich but we can only speculate who they were, how they made their money or how they used the villa. Were they pre-Roman British owners taking on the Roman style, foreigners who replaced them or what? Did they make their money from farming or maybe from business in Londinium? Was this their permanent home or a country retreat?

Right: Work under way on site at Abinger.

We do know that they made several attempts to establish a vineyard on the site. In Roman society, anybody who was anybody produced their own wine. The Abinger vineyard probably never worked very well because the soil is green-sand, not chalk, and not therefore ideal for grapes.

The excavations have uncovered several smaller buildings, a lime kiln with some of the last load of lime still in place, and in the main villa the tessellated pavement, part of a bath house and an unheated summer dining room with a fine mosaic floor, sadly damaged when later occupants lit a fire on it.

Over the years the team has found the remains of sacrificed animals and many human cremation burials, including one that used a Deverel-Rimbury Bronze Age pot, already centuries old, to hold remains. Other ritual deposits include complete and deliberately broken quern stones, some made from German lava stone. Quern stones were valuable items so these were substantial offerings.

Roman pots discovered include ceramic beehives, imported storage jars and some of a style not seen before now called OXSU (oxidised pottery from Surrey).

Things are not always as they seem. The 2016 excavation revealed five complete cattle skeletons, young animals and not butchered. The first guess was that they were an ancient sacrifice but carbon dating shows they were buried around the Tudor or Stuart periods. Possibly they died of rinderpest and were buried to protect the rest of the herd. We may never know but can always speculate.





Left: This Iron Age grain storage pit had a closing deposit of a deliberately broken quern stone.

Left below: View across the villa's 4th century wing, showing part of the tessellated flooring at the bottom of the picture.

Below: A number of bovine skeletons were found on the site, thought to have followed deaths by disease. There were five calf burials in all, aged up to nine months. This one was dated to 1666 at the earliest.



LECTURE REPORT

LONDON - THE WORLD'S GREENEST CAPITAL



Above: The Garden Museum at Lambeth.

Colin Jones (right), former BBC film editor and current chairman of Sanderstead Horticultural Society, told a packed audience at the February lecture about London's 600 public parks and gardens, flower markets, the botanic collection at Kew, and the superb flower shows.



Covering 67 square miles, London was the world's greenest capital, he said. Ranging from the oldest garden behind Westminster Abbey - over 900 years old - to one of the newest, the Sky Garden at the top of the 'Walkie-Talkie' skyscraper in the City, London offered public access to some truly remarkable green spaces, many of them totally free of charge for visitors. Some he described as 'secret gardens'.



The view from the Sky Garden included that of St Dunstan's Church in the East, a Wren-designed church with its own garden, shown above. The talk was illustrated of course with fabulous imagery of these wonderful places. At that time of year, snowdrops, orchids and crocuses at Kew and a million daffodils at Hampton Court were obvious attractions. Less well known was the private collection at Caterham of the head of the Ann Summers retail chain.

Lambeth Palace had the Garden Museum and the Tradescants, the capital's second largest garden after the Queen's at Buckingham Palace. Third biggest was that of the new US Ambassador's residence.

Petticoat Lane's flower market was a fantastic sight in the East End while the Royal Parks nursery near the Serpentine provided 12,000 geraniums for Buckingham Palace alone.

Further out of the centre were Ham House with the country's oldest orangery, the extraordinary Temperate House at Kew and the 'palace of palaces' at Osterley. At Purley, Colin himself and two friends produced auriculas which had won a gold medal at the Chelsea Flower Show.

Others covered included Chelsea Physic Garden, the new roof garden at Crossrail Place by Canary Wharf, and the gardens of Queen Mary and Lord Bute at Regents Park. The mature plane trees of Berkeley Square were among the gardens of 100 private squares open to the public on Open Squares Weekend in June. A string of other less well known sites were shown from the City to Chiswick. He concluded with imagery of some of the fabulous Christmas trees in the capital at the end of every year.

FEATURE

THE STORY OF YARM COURT

The March 2019 *Newsletter* had a feature on the Self-Build Trojans, a group of civil servants and part-timers who built their own houses in the early 1950s on the former estate of Yarm Court, just south of Leatherhead town. Yarm Court is recalled today in two street names only but it had its own history.

Originally called Flint House it was originally built around 1875 for a barrister, Clement Tudway Swanston QC, who came from Holly House, Twickenham, and died in Paris on 22 September 1879 aged just 48. His daughter first let and then in 1899 sold the estate to solicitor Matthew James Burn, who renamed it Yarm Court after the north-eastern town near Stockton. He is shown with his family on the cover of this edition with their two modes of transport.

Matthew Burn expanded the house considerably and bought 61 acres of adjacent farmland in 1902. Some was sold off again in 1906 for the new Blind School, some for other development, and some restored to farmland in 1912. Burn died at the house on 28 April 1906 aged 51 after an operation for appendicitis.

In 1910 Yarm Court was let once again. It was described as ‘a prepossessing house on a hillcrest, with entrance lodge, 14 bedrooms and dressing rooms, lounge, halls, billiard and reception rooms’. There was stabling for five horses, a coachman’s cottage and 21 acres of winter and pleasure gardens. Located at one of Leatherhead’s highest points, it was often the site of bonfire and firework celebrations and there was a notable display in July 1919 to celebrate the Armistice. After an afternoon of sports and dancing at Randalls Park, the Leatherhead Silver Band led a procession up Highlands Road to round the evening off at Yarm Court.

Burn’s widow Helen died in 1924 and the family lie together in plot 192 of Leatherhead churchyard. The lessee of Yarm Court from 1922 was Sir Alfred Donald Pickford (1872-1947), a major figure in the boy scouting movement alongside Sir Robert Baden-Powell. His sister and brother-in-law, the Kirklands, leased the house briefly before him. A towering figure at 6 feet 4 inches and wearing a



Above: The 1st Leatherhead Scout Group at Yarm Court. Pickie is seen centre.

monocle (the result of a childhood accident on Kensington High Street which left him with a glass eye), Pickford - also known as 'Pickie' - was a larger-than-life character.

Together with Herbert Kempson Reeves, who lived at The Mansion, Leatherhead, he founded the original 1st Leatherhead Scout Group and established a semi-permanent scout camp in the grounds of Yarm Court which was operational throughout the first half of the 1930s. Details about its scouting activities can be found in the book *Looking Back with Love and Laughter Vol 2* by Kitchener Haskins, available both at Leatherhead Library and in the L&DLHS collection at the Letherhead Institute.

Born 20 May 1872, son of Charles and Isabella Pickford, Pickie was educated at George Watson's College and Fettes College, Edinburgh. He had spent 29 years as a tea broker in India before returning to live in Leatherhead, 20 of them in Calcutta where he was senior partner in the firm Begg, Dunlop & Co. He was awarded



Above: Aerial view of the former Yarm Court area of Leatherhead showing the School for the Blind and the housing estate in place.

the Kaisar-i-Hind Medal for his services during World War One, having served for three years in the Bengal Legislative Council, and was appointed Sheriff of Calcutta in 1920, receiving the customary knighthood at the end of his year in office. The following year he was elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly. He also served as a major with the Calcutta Light Horse.

On the scouting side he was chief commissioner for India from 1919-1921 and toured the country with Baden-Powell. After returning to England he was the headquarters commissioner for overseas scouts from 1922-1929, and commissioner for development from 1930-1932.

He had bought the Yarm Court freehold in 1930 but in 1935 he moved out after suffering financial difficulties. He sold the property, saying he objected to the new by-pass which ran close to the house but was not visible from it. The truth might be that he could no longer afford its upkeep as in 1939 he was living with his sister and brother-in-law. However, he eventually moved back to London and

later left a substantial sum at his death.

In January 1940 he was appointed commissioner for publicity for the scouts and it was for this role that he received an OBE in the 1946 New Year's Honours List. He was living at The Oriental Club, Hanover Square, Westminster when he died in hospital at 31 Queens's Gate, Kensington, 7 October 1947. He was unmarried.

Yarm Court was demolished in 1935 after Pickie's departure and the land sold for development. By 1938 Fir Tree Road and Yarm Way had been laid out and eight houses built. Development continued after the war and the Self-Build Trojans, many of them civil servants from the Ministries of Supply and Defence, arrived in 1953.

(With thanks to ALUN ROBERTS, BRIAN BOUCHARD and JOHN MORRIS for their assistance.)

FEATURE

MEDIAEVAL FETCHAM LIVES ON

So many of our precious buildings are now only memories, demolished and perhaps forgotten. Not so The Rising Sun in Fetcham, writes JOHN WETTERN.

As you drive down Hawks Hill towards Leatherhead, there it still is on the left at the corner of Cobham Road. No longer the pub of that name but still a place of refreshment – and thriving. And quite a history it has too.

A pub of that name was built anew on a neighbouring site. It too has now gone. But the old building, so well illustrated in its former years, still stands but has taken on a different guise. First it became a French restaurant, named Le Pelerin; then it turned Italian and took the name Il Pelegrino. Still later it turned Chinese and was called Pangs Villa.

So, what now? Happily it still survives and continues in the Chinese tradition. The name though changed once again. It now flourishes as The Zen Garden, still with its magnificent oak-beamed interior and surely set to last for many a future year. So a little of Fetcham's heritage still lives on.

FEATURE

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A number of streets and buildings in Bookham have been named after local residents. Before these associations are forgotten it may be useful to make a note of some of them, writes BILL WHITMAN.

Three Royal Navy admirals are known to have been resident in the village - Admiral Thomas Broderick (died 1769) and Admiral of the Fleet Sir Francis Geary (1705-1796) in the 18th century and more recently Admiral Bentinck Yelverton (1862-1959).

Admiral Yelverton lived in retirement at Mead House where Yelverton Court now stands. He was the Port Admiral at Folkestone during much of World War One, responsible for all the ships carrying thousands of servicemen and wounded to and from the port.

Broderick Grove remembers Admiral Broderick who bought Bookham Grove and about 80 acres of land from the Howard family in 1765. He made a name for himself in the Caribbean in 1738 and was later at the court marshal of Admiral Byng. In 1759 he was second in command to Admiral Boscawen at the Battle of Lagos Bay. (*Newsletter* June 2018). Returning to England, he converted Bookham Grove into a gentleman's residence but died in 1769. The house was later sold to the Dawnay family who lived there until 1903 and are remembered by the road and the school.



Top: Admiral Thomas Broderick

Above: Admiral Sir Francis Geary

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Francis Geary, who served during the War of the Austrian Succession, the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence, has no memorial in the village himself but is the only one actually buried in Bookham together with his wife, Mary. He bought Polesden in 1748 and became a baronet in 1782. St Nicolas Church has a magnificent memorial to his son, Cornet Francis Geary, born in 1752, christened at Bookham and killed in America in 1776.

It reads: To the memory of CORNET FRANCIS GEARY (Eldest Son of Admiral GEARY) who fell in America December 13th 1776. By his affability and benevolence he gained the love of the soldiers and by his constant attention to his duty, the esteem of his superior officers. At the age of 24 he was entrusted with a Command which he executed with singular spirit, but on his return from that duty he was attacked by a large body of rebels who lay in wait for him in a wood and was killed at the head of his little troop bravely fighting in support of the rights and authority of his country. In testimony of their sincere affection for a dutiful and much lamented son, this monument was erected by his most afflicted parents.

Howard Road honours the Howard family, resident in the village for 200 years until they moved away after 1800. On the 'poets estate' we have Barrett and Browning Roads because Elizabeth Barrett's parents came to the village after she married Robert Browning and went to live in Italy. On that estate there are also Milton and Burney Closes. Fanny Burney lived in the village and her son was christened at St Nicolas Church.

The other close on that estate is Barrington Close. Kenneth Frank Barrington (1930-1981) was an England and Surrey cricketer who later owned Barrington's Motors, now White's. He lived in Browning Road. The Keswicks, recalled in Keswick Road, were the last traditional Lords of the Manor of Bookham, living as the Howards had done, in Eastwick Park.

In 1967 Leatherhead Council compulsorily purchased the Edenside Nursery at which the Douglas family had grown prize-winning auriculas and carnations for many years. On the Edenside estate are now three roads named after long-serving employees of the nursery: Beattie Close, Elmswood and Greathurst End, as well as Douglas House.

Local authorities have a penchant for naming new roads after their chairman or a committee member. They are soon forgotten but one exception must be our postman/councillor Turville Kille who served the community for many years and guided the preservation of the Eastwick allotments. His name is remembered in Turville and Kille Courts in Proctor Gardens.

Also remembered is the swimming pool owned by Gilbert and Maisy White, which gives us the current road name Gilmais. The Blackburn flats in Little Bookham are on the site of the Blackburn engineering factory, manufacturers of motor-cycles and other vehicles. Nearby is Fox Close where once was the Fox ale house, bought up and closed by Mrs Chrystie, who has her own road, not to mention the recreation ground. Her house and garden, Fife Lodge, became Fife Way. Bookham Cottage on Leatherhead Road became Allen Road named after the builder who developed the site.

Many road names remember aspects of Bookham's agricultural past. Townshott and Lower Shott identified strips in the Common Fields which dominated the cultivated land in Bookham before the 1800 Enclosure Act. Whiteway recalls the old chalk track from Bookham on to the North Downs which ran from the end of Townshott Close to Connicut Lane, east of Polesden Lacey. We also have Twelve Acre, Barn Meadow, Bennett's Farm, Chilmans Lea, The Glebe and Sole Farm.

Halepit and other local names recall chalk (not of course coal) pits. The excavated chalk was burned to make quick-lime and mortar for building as well as fertiliser for use on clay fields. Any flints and some chalk blocks were used in building. Greville Court, named for Mrs Greville of Polesden Lacey, was once a chalk pit.

I am particularly grateful to Bill Culley's book *Bookham in the Twentieth Century* and many friends for background information.

PROVIDENCE CHAPEL, CHARLWOOD

Listed Grade 2*, the non-Conformist chapel in Charlwood operated on site from the early 1800s until 2012 when it fell into disrepair. It was bought by a new local trust and re-opened in April following renovation. The public can now explore its unusual architecture and see a new exhibition of its history. More information at www.providencechapelcharlwood.org.

ORAL HISTORY FEATURE

**EDWARD ARTHUR GRIFFIN (1907-2001)
and GRACE BEATRICE GRIFFIN (1904-1993)**

Former Leatherhead councillor Edward Griffin and his wife Grace had lived virtually their entire lives in the district when they were interviewed in November 1991 by Edwina Vardey at Griffin Court, Ashted, the four-year-old sheltered accommodation complex named in his honour. They had celebrated their Diamond Wedding there the previous year.

Edward Griffin served on the council for 26 years from 1950 as an Independent. He stood down because of the increased party political approach he felt dominated affairs after Mole Valley was created in 1972. A founder of Leatherhead Football Club, he also fought a successful one-man campaign to have the Indoor Bowling Club given its current facility when the Leatherhead Leisure Centre was built.

Born locally, Edward had lived in Leatherhead from 1915 until 1922 and ever since then in Ashted, starting in his parents' newly-built cottage in Links Road on a plot since redeveloped and incorporated into Warwick Gardens. When he and Grace married in 1930, they moved to a flat over the family shop in Kingston Road for a few years, then returned to Ashted where Grace had been born with the maiden name Longhurst in Skinners Lane, one of six children. Her father was a gardener for a Mr Peake at a big local house.

Grace went to St Giles School where she was quite happy but also remembered her family's poverty with one open fire for all their heating and an outside toilet in the shed. Her brothers were Henry - killed in World War One aged 21 - William and Charles. William had gone off to be a gardener at a big estate elsewhere but Charles never left Ashted. Their sisters Edith and Elsie, like Grace, had gone into service when old enough.

Grace herself had worked for Dr Max Balzar Reichwald, the family doctor, and for Mrs Nichols at Street Farm which later became the Esso garage. Living on the premises, she was allowed one afternoon a week off and every other Sunday. She had had to get up at six o'clock every morning to light the fires and get everything ready for

her employers. She was paid £25 a year plus board and lodging and had to provide her own uniform.

She remembered Derby Day as a child when they were not allowed to go home to dinner because there was 'too much traffic'. They took sandwiches and would stand on the school railings to watch the carriages go by. She also recalled the Vanderbilt carriage with a horn-blower on the rear which would come down to Dorking from London before World War One and stop at Leatherhead's Swan Hotel to change horses. She would watch the carriage go through Ashted village. Edward recalled the Armistice peace celebrations of 1918 with a big bonfire and hog roasting in front of the old hotel.

Every Sunday, Grace had gone to St Giles Church and there she and Edward were married when she was 26 and he was 23. They had met at a dance five years earlier in the Peace Memorial Hall where he was a regular, sometimes there as often as five nights a week. They were engaged for three years, waiting to marry until they had enough money.

After the wedding they lived above Edward's father's shoe-repair shop in Kingston Road, Leatherhead. This was very poor and the shop was on the corner of Gloucester Road at the bottom of the railway bridge. The family also had a branch in Bridge Street.

Edward's parents had come from Sussex but married at Woking where his father got a job. In 1911 they returned to Sussex to run a poultry farm but had to close down when World War One broke out as there was no food stuff for the birds. His father had to return to his old trade and bought the premises at Leatherhead in 1915.

He was conscripted into the Volunteers. A short man, his medical examiner had said it was no good taking him into the army as his pack would have been heavier than him. So he was conscripted into the Volunteers. Shoe repairing was a reserved occupation in wartime.

An only child, Edward started school in Poplar Road and aged 11 switched to what was then the Central School. He left on his 14th birthday and went to learn the shoemaking trade with an uncle in Lewes before returning to Leatherhead to work at the Bridge Street premises. This lasted from 1925 to 1930 when the shop closed and he switched to the Kingston Road business.

The Bridge Street shop had been 300 years old with 44 panes of

glass in the windows. There had also been endless corners to clean but the shop lacked a water supply and he had had to go to the butchers next door, open the window and turn the tap on to do the job.

The family were not the only local shoe-repairers. There were two more in Leatherhead at the time, another in Bridge Street and a man with a single room near the parish church. The Griffins' shop was No 9 at the top of Bridge Street. The road was ruined when another shop nearby was blown up in a civil defence exercise.

Edward's parents would go every week to see films at Leatherhead's Victoria Hall. Living in a basic cottage in Kingston Road they decided they wanted something better so they bought a plot of ground in Links Road, Ashtead, where half an acre cost £150 and then built a bungalow for £600. In 1922, Links Road was just a track with three big houses. Theirs was the fifth bungalow built.

In winter the track was impassable, even for a horse and cart. In order to reach Leatherhead they would take their bicycles out of the shed and carry them on their shoulders through the mud to the Green Lane level crossing. Once over the railway they would get on their bikes and carry on into the town.

It took several years to develop the area. By 1925 Surrey's first concrete road had been laid there by hand, the concrete carried by wheelbarrow. Edward's parents both lived to ripe old ages and were buried at Randalls Park Crematorium. Grace's parents were buried in Ashtead churchyard.

Edward and Grace had a son, Alan, born three years after they were married. She never went back to work. They would travel about on a motor bike, closing the shop on Wednesday afternoons and heading down to Sussex along the country lanes. At one point they did this for 14 consecutive Wednesdays. Alan later went on to work in local government, marrying the daughter of a local railway porter and giving Edward and Grace a grandson.

Grace ran the catering department for the Horticultural Society for about 20 years, exhibiting vegetables at the Peace Memorial Hall. It was a lifelong interest. In her schooldays she had always attended the annual Ashtead Flower Show and exhibited wildflowers, competing with friends for the best displays.

They both remembered some of Leatherhead's best known

wealthy families. Grace recalled Mrs Ralli who would visit the poor of Ashtead in her car, then a rarity. Edward remembered Reeves of The Mansion who gave the Leatherhead Football Club its ground.

Edward was himself a founder and treasurer of the football club. It was an amalgamation in 1946 of two local clubs, Leatherhead Rose from the Kingston Road end, and Leatherhead United in the town. He was treasurer for five years. Back in 1926 he had also been a founder of the Leatherhead Motor Club, becoming its treasurer for about six years. Despite the name, it was all motor bikes as any car owners at that time were too posh to belong to it.

They recalled a time when the whole district was much quieter. Every Sunday evening as a boy Edward and two pals would go for a walk from Kingston Road into the town, along the main road to Ashtead, down Woodfield Lane and back along Barnett Wood Lane. There were no streetlights then.

The signal box at Ashtead Station was at the other end of the platform away from the gates. Before electrification local people would just open the gates themselves to go through. There was only one steam train an hour and you could see it in the distance.

There was little crime. Young people would get into mischief doing silly little things for fun but there was no vandalism or violence and it was all quite innocent.

After World War 2 Edward went to the first peace-time meeting of Leatherhead Council. He sat in the public gallery for five years before deciding to stand for election but succeeded at his first attempt and remained in office for the next 26 years, representing Ashtead. In those days it had a single ward but was later divided up.

His greatest success was getting the indoor bowling rink included in the new leisure centre building. There were 24 Leatherhead councillors and Edward was the only bowler among them. He had to fight hard because the first appraisal was a six-rink indoor bowling green which turned out to be far more costly than expected and was axed. He fought hard and got a four-rink one in its place. He was the first secretary of the Leatherhead Indoor Bowling Club and held that position for 14 years, treasurer for three of them. He had joined the Outdoor Bowling Club too some years earlier. The Indoor Bowling Club was formed in 1974 before the centre was even built.

He was still serving on the council when Mole Valley District was created and they moved to Dorking. He felt it had got too big and remote from the public. It also became party political and he was always an Independent. Good ideas were being ignored simply because they were



Above: Petrina Barnes of the Indoor Bowling Club continues a link with the L&DLHS in 2017. The bowls club members still have Edward Griffin to thank for their fine Leatherhead premises over 40 years later.

being put forward by opposition parties, he felt. While Leatherhead Council had had four very good Labour councillors among 24 members whose views were listened to, all opposition people were always ignored under the new Mole Valley authority.

Edward's only reward for long service was the honour of having Griffin Court named after him. At the time he had not imagined that he and Grace would come to live there themselves. When it was being built he had received an invitation to name it. After some thought he had settled on 'Griffin Court' and opened it personally in 1987.

At the time, he and Grace were living in Stag Leys by Ashted Common where they had moved from Links Road. There they had a small bungalow but he had lost a leg to diabetes and become unable to handle the garden. A fellow councillor had suggested they put their name down for Lime Tree Court, a new building for the frail elderly in the village. So they had applied either for there or Griffin Court. In 1989 they were told they could move into the latter. They brought their own garden seat with them. It faced southeast so they got all the sun until late in the afternoon.

Grace lived for another 18 months or so after this interview, dying in 1993 aged 89. Edward lived for a full decade after the meeting, dying age 94 in 2001.

INTERVIEW FEATURE

LEATHERHEAD'S PRICELESS CHURCH

In this final part of Edwina Vardey's 1981 interview with Edwin Taylor (1893-1983), clerk to the vestry of Leatherhead Parish Church, he continues his fascinating account of the structure and history of the church, reading from wardens' accounts over the centuries.

Edwina Vardey: There have been burglaries at the church.

Edwin Taylor: We have two great chests which were stolen. The oldest thing in the church as regards furniture is a chest of the 13th century. It originally held the *Opus Anglicorum* and is long, made of simple planks. Now divided into two, in those days it had three great padlocks of a most intricate design. Not only was it used for vestments but also for the valuables of the local people. Theft from a church was a heinous crime for which you could be flayed alive.

There is also the Slyfield Chest which came from the Elizabethan manor of Slyfield on the road to Stoke d'Abernon. It was originally covered with skin which has been worn over the centuries so that it is absolutely smooth. Studded with '1663', it was originally owned and probably manufactured for Robert Shiers who owned Slyfield manor before Dr Shortright and it came into the vicarage - no-one quite knows how - but then into the church.

It held all the manorial documents of Slyfield and their properties, wills and all sorts of material and also a very valuable charter with a great seal of Charles I on his throne. The charter was some sort of implementation of a grant of land by Charles. It is now in the records office at Kingston and our church wardens' books are in Guildford. So when we have an exhibition we have to go to various places.

Edwina Vardey: The Slyfield Chest was taken wasn't it?

Edwin Taylor: One Saturday afternoon, I should say four years ago perhaps, a van was seen outside the gate of the church. Two men were seen dragging these two chests down the pathway. We didn't think they could be moved because they were so terribly heavy. A resident offered to help them, thinking they were being taken away to be repaired. They said no thanks, that was all right. They got them



into the van but he was brilliant enough to take the number of the van. The police rang me up that night and said they knew where the van came from. It had been hired by one of the men and they were staking the house out. About a week later they rang again, asking me to come to the police station and collect the chests.

So I got the most polyglot members of the parish - City gents and labouring gents - we had never seen such a motley crowd. We went down and collected these enormous chests. The police were very pleased to get rid of them. The thieves had done a lot of damage to the Slyfield Chest. They had wrenched it but there was nothing in it of any value to them, only locks and stones. They had broken the beautiful padlocks on the other chest and opened it thinking the church silver was in there but it was full of candles that were no longer of any use. I would have loved to have seen their faces when they got them.

Edwina Vardey: So they were unaware of the chests' actual value?

Edwin Taylor: I think they were. Some petty criminals are naive. They are our most treasured possessions. To me they are because the wooden chest is a relic from the very earliest days of the church. The Slyfield Chest is only 17th century but its metalwork on the locks is intricate and beautiful. Unfortunately it was broken but we have had them all repaired by a local iron founder.

Edwina Vardey: What about the building of the tower?

Edwin Taylor: Originally there was no tower. The idea for the original building was to have a central tower but it was only half

built. The four walls were never finished. Years ago we climbed above the chancel arch and found the top, where the crucifix stands, was an open trench with stones thrown in by the villagers. They had thrown the liquid cement in on top but then suddenly it stopped in 1066.

Edwina Vardey: Was it the Normans who stopped them?

Edwin Taylor. It was. There was no pestilence or anything like that at the time. The only possible consideration is that it may have been the local fyrd or home guard. Every able man went to Hastings and for 40 years after the conquest there was practically no building in England. So it was most unusual that the tower was never finished.

In the following centuries eventually the walls were taken down. Then in 1480 they decided to have a new tower built at the west end of the church. It is slightly on a slant and many people query this. The reason is not that it represents Our Lord's head on the cross as some people seem to think. It is the fact that there was a right of way through the churchyard and there had to be room for external processions on consecrated ground. So the axis of the tower had to be slightly out of line with the nave.

It was quite an engineering feat for those days. In 1480 they started to build the tower bit by bit and it is interesting that they built a little alcove on the north side above the door. This alcove is practically unique in this part of the country.

It was the custom in those days for seven choir boys to sing the anthem *Glory Lord and Honour* on this little platform while the great processions came in the west door. We tried it a few years ago but unfortunately the organist is now in a different position and could not see them so we had to discard it. This is the only alcove in this part of the country although there are some in the West Country built into the wall at the same time. The church wardens usually built out a wooden balcony with a cover for the boys which was taken down after the service. But in our case it remained. It now houses the clock mechanism.

Edwina Vardey: How old is the clock?

Edwin Taylor: No-one seems to know. I have tried to get at this for a long time. It is a very old clock. We had the face completely

repainted and done up two or three years ago. A very effective clock. A gentleman who is now retired in Leatherhead was apprenticed to a local clockmaker when he was 14. It was his job to wind up this great thing like a mangle weekly and he did it for the whole of his life until he was 65.

Edwina Vardey: What is his name?

Edwin Taylor: Waterhouse. It is now done by the choir. They take it on and wind the clock every week

Edwina Vardey: You have effective spotlighting at night.

Edwin Taylor: For the tower. We made an urgent appeal to Leatherhead Urban District Council for money towards floodlighting but they turned it down flat. We were despairing when they suddenly changed their minds and gave us £200 for the mechanism. We provided electricity and they provided the lights.

The tower originally had a tall spire which was blown down in the great storm on 27 November 1703. In London many spires were brought down, many people killed and we lost our spire at that time. It was never replaced.

The tower has fallen into dilapidation on many occasions. In 1775 the vestry decided it should be repaired with stucco. That is how it remained until 1895 when there was complete restoration in memory of Mr A Ricards, a local landowner and wealthy member of the congregation. His inscription in Latin is over the west door which he had widened. It also had to be widened in 1795 to enable entrance by the parish fire engine which was kept in the tower.

The inside of the tower was evidently used by the parish clerk as a schoolroom to increase his very small emolument. This is exemplified in the 17th and 18th centuries by initials and other chalk marks cut in the stonework. The year 1683, for example, and many others all round the Tudor doorway to the tower. The doorway is a beautiful example of Tudor stonework. So are the steps going up, a circular staircase going up to the ringing chamber and above that the ten bells, then further on up to the roof so that we can put the flag up.

Edwina Vardey: You still have a flag.

Edwin Taylor: Oh yes. It will be up for the royal wedding [of the Prince and Princess of Wales one month after this interview]. It is usually the St George's Cross on a white background, of course. The Friends of the Parish Church kindly paid for a new flag and I managed to get them to increase their payment to put the diocesan arms in one quarter.

Edwina Vardey: Do you have bell-ringing now?

Edwin Taylor: Yes. The bell-ringers practise every Friday night, We have a very good band of ringers under Alan Smith, captain of the tower. They ring for weddings on Saturdays, for the morning service at 10 am on Sundays, for Evensong at 6.30 pm, and on special occasions. I had a grand-daughter christened at Cleeve Prior in Worcestershire. I couldn't get there but persuaded the bell-ringers to ring a quarter peal. They gave me a written notice and I wrote to the vicar at Cleeve Prior asking him to announce that when the child was being christened the bells were ringing out over Mole Valley.

Edwina Vardey: How many bells are there?

Edwin Taylor: Ten. Little is known of their early history. In 1549 the valuation of the church furniture included four bells but three of these were subsequently seized by the commissioners. The remaining bell, which was inscribed *Sancta Maria Ora Pro Nobis*, was later included in the ring of six. No further reference to the bells is known until 1694 when Mr Hall was paid 1s/6d for ringing the bells of Queen Mary.

Wardens' accounts for the next two years contain several items including 'Towards a bell, £5'; 'The bell foundered two times, £10'; 'For curing the broken bell, boy £1/10s', and 'For the bell ropes, 12s.' These entries suggest that one or more of the bells was recast and possibly a new one added.

Other items in the accounts for 1712, 1722 and 1726 all confirm that by the early 18th century there was a ring of six bells in the tower but no details are given. By 1766 the condition of the tower and the belfrey were giving cause for concern. In 1770 a new belfrey was ordered, together with repairs to the fittings and two new floors

of the tower.

This time the Leatherhead band of ringers was quite strong and records of their achievements exist at Horsham and Epsom. They undoubtedly pressed for two more bells to be installed to make a complete octave. Eventually in April 1792 it was ordered *‘that the six old bells be taken down and recast into a peal of eight bells with the additional metal as is wanting to make the completest peal and that the same be left to James Pier and Thomas Harrison, church wardens, and William Baker and Benjamin Simmons, inhabitants, to get the same completed in the best and most workmanlike manner.’*

The new bells must already have been cast before the old ones were taken out because the second tablet states: *‘Be it remembered that the late William Baker of this parish set on foot a subscription collecting the sum of £200 for improving the ring of bells in this church. Accordingly in 1792 the six old bells are recast and the peal of eight opened on 21st August in the same year. The above mentioned William Baker likewise collected the subscription for the fire engine.’*

No further work was undertaken until 1877 when it was decided to recast the three remaining 1792 bells, being cracked, and add two more to make a peal of ten. Then in 1891 the last of the galleries in the church were removed and with it went the ringing chamber. Until then this had been situated directly in front of the west windows

about the same level as the present chiming gallery. The ringers were transferred to the clock room some 30 steps higher up the tower and directly beneath the bells.



Edwina Vardey:
The stone and the steps are intriguing.
Edwin Taylor: It is a typical example of

15th century work. The worn steps are quite inspiring. One feels that every time one goes up, centuries of parishioners before have gone up to do the same job.

Edwina Vardey: Can the public go up the tower?

Edwin Taylor: Yes. You need permission from the captain of the tower or the church wardens because of the danger of falling. It is narrow but there is a hand-rail on one side and there are 76 steps to the top.

Edwina Vardey: The entry arch to the steps is beautiful.

Edwin Taylor: Yes. It is one of my favourite views of the inside of the church. Viewed from the chancel steps it soars high above the nave, almost to the roof and its proportions are very beautiful.

The font was built about the same time as the tower, 1480. It is made of the same stone as the tower and has had three covers of wood. The original cover obviously had a chain and wheel to pull it up but that was destroyed. Another cover was made in the 17th century, also destroyed. The present cover is Victorian.

The original font was probably a large tub-shaped stone with some shallow carving. It was situated in the nave at the west end of the church until replaced by the present font around 1480.

Edwina Vardey: What about the water?

Edwin Taylor: The vicar uses a small bowl in the bottom of the old font. You couldn't fill that with water. If he has as many as six baptisms - which took place a fortnight ago - he does that from the chancel steps with a portable font.

Edwina Vardey: The pulpit itself is Victorian?

Edwin Taylor: No, it is much more modern than that. About 12 years old. The old Victorian one was not considered particularly beautiful and was damaged so the new one was put in. The high altar is Victorian but behind it, affixed against the wall, is the original stone mensa from the early church with its five consecration crosses.

They sold a lot of the original church vessels at the time of the Reformation but we have two that are quite valuable. We have one very beautiful chalice given by Rev James Dallaway, a great vicar



Left: James Dallaway, Vicar from 1804 until 1834, is considered the most distinguished of all holders of that post in Leatherhead. He was also secretary to the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshall of England, and was involved in planning the coronation of King George IV in 1821.

and antiquarian. It is dated about 1660 with a Greek inscription around the top and much ornamentation. We also have a flagon dated 1661. These are the two most valuable pieces of church plate - solid silver - and they are kept in the bank. Dallaway also gave an arms plate and we have two pewter arms plates dated 1711. The wardens' accounts say they paid three shillings for the pair.

Edwina Vardey: There is a walled-up door in the nave on the south side.

Edwin Taylor: Yes. Immediately opposite the entrance to the church from the north porch is a medieval doorway which was blocked up. It is thought that medieval people believed the Devil went out that way at the time of christening.

There is very little stained glass. All really that remains of the medieval glass was collected by Rev Dallaway who had it placed in the great east window. But after he died the new east window was put in in memory of Canon Utterton. This stained glass was collected and its six roundels set into glass in the north side of the baptistry.

Parts of an ancient screen were found with glass in it. It was obviously removed at the time of the Reformation and is still above the choir vestry.

LEATHERHEAD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Monthly meetings at the Letherhead Institute every third Friday of the month between September and May, 7.30pm for 8pm.
Museum (Hampton Cottage): Open Thursdays and Fridays 1pm - 4pm and Saturdays 10am-4pm + Sunday 15 September 10am-4pm

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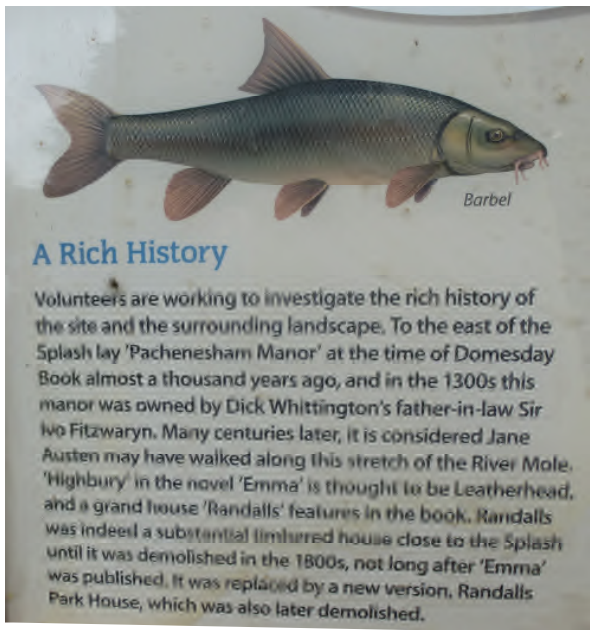
This tries to answer questions about the histories of Leatherhead, Ashtead, Bookham and Fetcham submitted via the Museum.

Kirby Library (Letherhead Institute)

The Library is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 10am-12.30pm. Exceptionally, arrangements may be made to use it at other times by applying to the Librarian.

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Above and right: A new information board at Fetcham Splash installed by Fetcham Residents Association, Mole Valley Council and the L&DLHS. It follows a similar initiative at the Mill Pond in 2017. Alan

Pooley prepared a map from Mead's Tithe Survey map, and Lucy Quinnell wrote some text. Another board shows the river walk.

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