Chapter 1 - The Prologue

Neolithic age -1765 What was around before the house was built

In which we learn about why Great Bookham is where it is; Viking skeletons in the garden; the hate inspired by dovecotes; what was on the site of Bookham Grove before the current house; how and why it was developed; an ancient route which passes straight through the front door; and a 17th century parchment map showing every house in the village

Geographically the historic centre of Great Bookham (ie the High Street and Church Street) lies in a gently undulating landscape which rises gradually to the south (towards Ranmore Common). To the north of the village the historic parish extends onto the heavy London Clays and into the valley of the River Mole. Between the clay lands to the north and the chalk hills to the south lies a narrow strip of Thanet Sand. Well drained gravel beds occur at intervals along the Thanet Sand. The village was built on one of these because the land was dry [1].

> The place name Bookham is derived from the Old English Bocheham meaning 'the hamlet of the beech trees' [1].

Up to 1700 BCE. The locality of Great Bookham has been occupied since Neolithic times (flints from this period have been found in the southern part of the parish) [1].

> BCE stands for 'Before Common Era' and is equivalent to the term BC

> The Neolithic period is the final division of the Stone Age, which ended in Northern Europe about 1700 BCE, marking the transition towards metallurgy (Bronze and Iron Ages). The Neolithic era was characterised by fixed human settlements and the invention of agriculture [2].

55 BCE - 410 CE. The Romans occupied Britain for 465 years.There is, however, no evidence of a Roman settlement in the vicinity of Great Bookham, although a hoard of Roman coins was found in the 18th century at Bagden Farm near the North Downs [1].

> CE stands for 'Common Era' and is equivalent to the term AD

> The charter of 675 granted 20 dwellings in Bookham and Effingham to Chertsey Abbey [1].

410 - 1066. Anglo-Saxon settlements developed along the narrow strip of Thanet Sand (described above). The first documentary reference to the area appears in a charter of 675CE indicating that the settlement at Great Bookham was part of the estates of Chertsey Abbey [1].

1066 - 1485. The Middle Ages or Late Medieval Period. The Domesday Book of 1086 recorded a relatively large estate at Great Bookham, valued at £16 with an estimated population of c.150 people, a church and a mill [1].

Later in the medieval period there were 3 manors:

1. Great Bookham (It is thought that the Manor House of Great Bookham was situated behind the church, although it is also considered that Nos. 14-18 High Street may also have functioned as the Manor House [1,3])
2. Eastwick
3. Slyfield (at the north end of the parish)

The medieval manor was an agricultural estate. A manor was usually comprised of tracts of agricultural land, a village whose inhabitants worked that land, and a manor house where the lord who owned or controlled the estate lived [4].

By the 12th century Chertsey Abbey no longer farmed Great Bookham with labouring peasants in the way described in most books on the manorial system, but granted tenancies for money payments. So even those of theoretically servile condition held their lands by a title almost as indefeasible as freehold. Though this tenure remained at the 'will of the Lord'. This high status of the 'villein' at Bookham was somewhat exceptional [5].

On the 15th June 1243 King Henry III granted to Abbot Alan of Chertsey the right to hold a market at their manor of 'Bocham' every week on Tuesday, and a fair for 2 days every year on the eve and day of Michaelmas. The annual fair had dwindled to one of a single day on Michaelmas by 1548, and died out soon after 1792; the weekly market also soon fell out of use. Despite these attempts to stimulate trade in Great Bookham, the village remained predominantly an agricultural community perhaps due to the presence of nearby markets at Leatherhead and Dorking. But the fact that the right was ever granted proves that Bookham, under the rule of the abbots, had made great advances in prosperity. This is confirmed by Bookham's network of roads which were certainly in full use at the time [1,5].

The Lower Road was originally the principal route running between two of the most important settlements in medieval Surrey: Guildford to the west and Leatherhead to the east. Although Lower Road was the main road, the main core of the settlement seems to have developed along the High Street, and, to a lesser extent, along Church Street [1].

'The upper main road between Leatherhead and Guildford' (now known as Lower Shott) 'is of great antiquity. It is mentioned in documents as early as 1279; but it certainly existed in Saxon times, for burials of that period have been found beside it [6].

In 1953 when foundations were being dug at the Bookham Grove housing estate, human remains were found beside the former line of the Guildford road where it crosses the estate, and Captain AWG Lowther, FSA, deduced from the bone formation of the skulls that they were those of Danes, quite possibly stragglers trying to make their way back towards the Thames after the rout of the Danish army at the battle of Aclea in 851$_{CE}$' [6].

This image was too expensive to purchase but is a photograph of the relevant page in the excavation notebook, with a hand drawing of the skeletons and notes of their position. It can be viewed at the Society for Antiquaries in London - see reference:
https://collections.sal.org.uk/low.002

The notebooks dated 12th March 1953 detailing the archaeological dig [7]

In this period of history the village comprised modest timber framed and thatched cottages [1].

> The earliest timber framed houses surviving today have been dated to 1490-1500 [1].

On the upper main road, at the corner of where Bookham Grove is now sited 'There existed from early medieval times a double crossing of roads or tacks running in a southerly direction' [6]:

1. 'Dorking road (that towards Bagden) was described as a King's Highway soon after 1200; so that this crossing or junction must have had some importance from the first' [6].

2. 'Not far further westwards a lane, now represented on the northern side by Townshott Close', crossed the Guildford road and proceeded in a southerly direction, just by the porch of the present Bookham Grove House, and then parallel with the Dorking Road 'first between two inhabited strips and then across the great open common fields into Connicut Lane at Polesden Lacey and up to Dunley Hill on Ranmore' [6].

> 'This lane, mentioned in the 12th century as the way to Dunley, was probably used principally as a drove road, and constant driving of flocks and herds along it, no doubt, in time wore away the loam surface and revealed the chalk, for it became known as the White Way' [6].

1485 - 1603 CE The Tudor Era.

Chertsey Abbey was suppressed in 1537 during the Dissolution of the monasteries. The manor of Great Bookham was granted to Lord William Howard (Lord Effingham) in 1550 [1].

The old road system, described above, can be clearly seen in Thomas Clay's survey of 1614-17 [8]. This was the first comprehensive survey of Great Bookham:
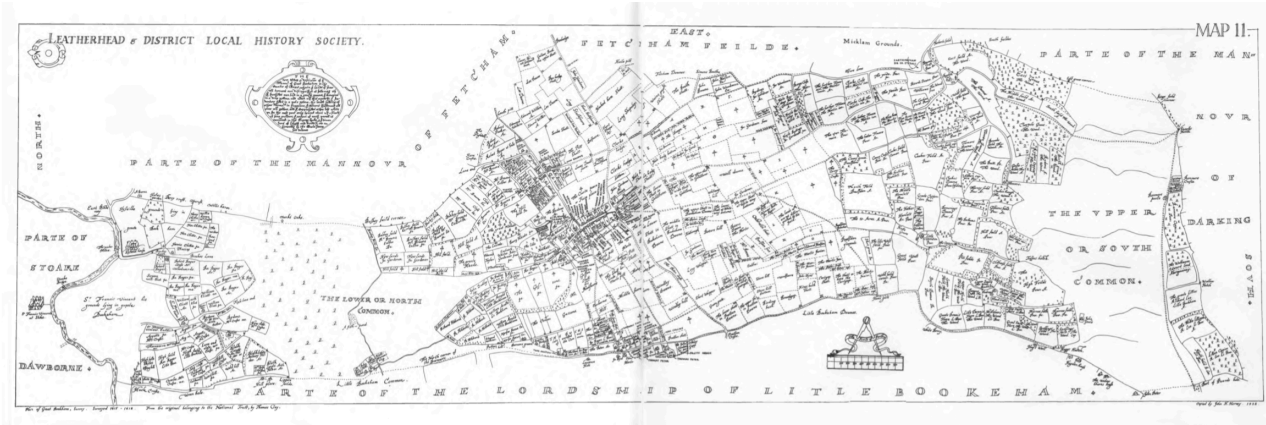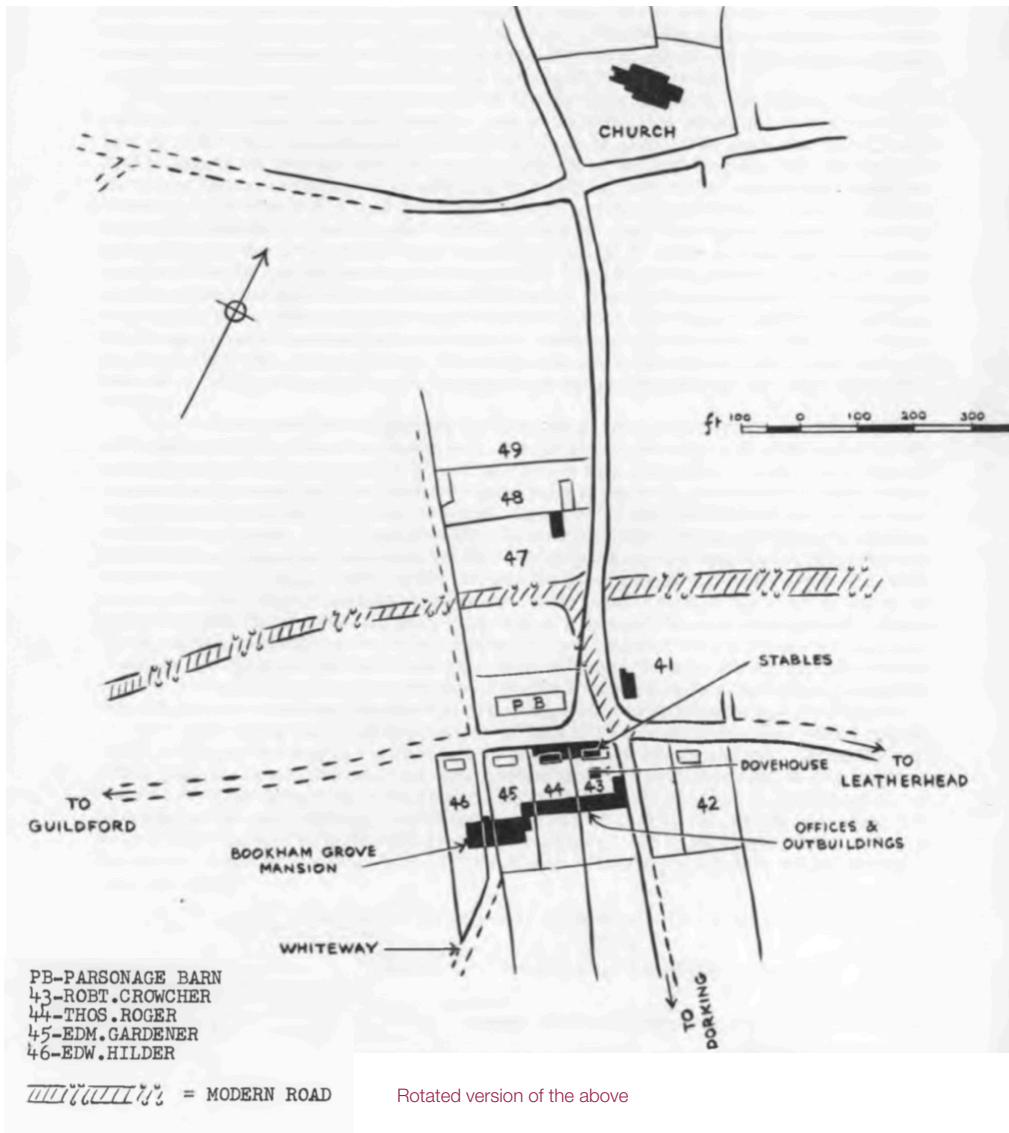

Thomas Clay's survey of 1614-17 [8].

East Street is shown, pencilled in, east of the High Street. perhaps it formalised a path that gave access to the rear of the plots on the east side of High Street [1].

The indication of houses and farm buildings on Thomas Clay's plan leads to one important conclusion. Comparing the evidence with what is known of surviving structures, it is clear that there is no sign of the mere hovels often assumed to have been the dwellings of the landless labourers. Even the few cottages were substantial timber-framed buildings of oak with elm boarded floors. Landless labourers and the few local journeymen who were not independent, must have lived as lodgers in the houses of the manorial tenants..the truth, at least in Bookham, seems to have been that almost everyone lived in a fairly substantial house, though it might only be as a lodger. [8]
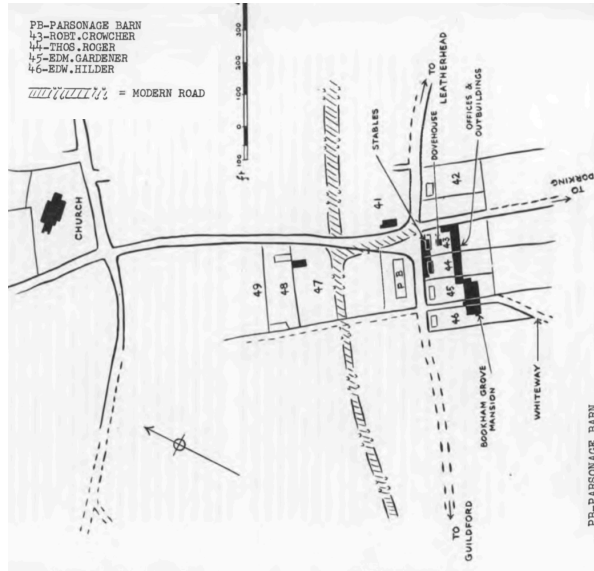
Mr John Harvey's diagram from the maps by Thomas Clay, 1614-17, and Messrs. Spurrier and Phipps, 1797-98 [5].

PB-PARSONAGE BARN
43-ROBT.CROWCHER
44-THOS.ROGER
45-EDM.GARDENER
46-EDW.HILDER

////////// = MODERN ROAD

Rotated version of the above

The village at this time consisted of the High Street, the church and a scatter of 85 houses, which remained unchanged in 1674, showing that a static condition prevailed for 2 more generations [1,8].

4 of these houses (Nos. 43-46 on the plan) stood upon the site of the current Bookham Grove House. The history of these can be traced almost continuously back to the 13th century [9]:

In the early 17th century Bookham had a flourishing yeoman peasantry, mainly copyholders, and the building up of landlords' estates (freeholds sublet to under tenants) had not gone very far. The crucial period lay later in the century when inflation had taken hold and the yeomanry lost grounds in their struggle to pay off mortgages raised on their copyholds. By 1700 large areas of the medieval Bookham shown on the plan had been emparked (closed off with a fence as part of an estate), after the purchase and demolition of many small houses [8].

No. 43 (marked as "Crowchers" on the plan) was a copyhold tenement acquired from John at Hatche by the Abbot of Chertsey in 1339 and in 1342 granted to John Godewyn. Later it passed to John Sewale; in 1433 the tenant was Hugh Taylour; towards the end of the 15th century it belonged to John at Style; later to Thomas Hull and Joan, his wife (possibly a daughter of Style). In 1538 it was acquired by Robert Crowcher, in whose family it remained until 1630. This house had been let, first to Henry Ellis in 1622, who occupied it until the 1640's, and then to Robert Strudwick for some years. In 1630 it was sold to William Gosden junior, whose heirs, in 1650, disposed of the property to John Arnold. In 1656, John Freeman was in occupation of the premises as a tenant. John Arnold's daughter, Elizabeth, died in 1690 when, no heir claiming the property, it was taken into the hands of the Lord of the Manor, Francis, 5th Baron Howard of Effingham [6].

No. 44 (marked as "Thomas Roger" on the plan) was another copyhold, held for a long period by the family of Rogers, of Sole Farm, Bookham. On the death of John Rogers in 1590 it passed to his son, Thomas, on whose death in 1600 the premises passed to his son, Thomas, aged $7_{1/2}$, and was leased to Clemencia Bithewood. Later occupiers were Nicholas Edes, who took a 21 years' lease in 1629, and members of the Rogers family. The descent of this property has not been traced beyond 1663, when it was held by Robert Rogers and his wife, Anne [6].

No. 45 (known as "Beales" in the 17th century) was a freehold tenement. In the reign of Elizabeth I this belonged to John Gardener, yeoman, who left it to his son, Ralf Gardener. Ralf, dying in 1604, in turn left to his brother, Edmond, "my house called Bales in Bookham". The property descended to Edward

Gardener who died in 1635, leaving it to his younger brother, John, then aged 19. As a freehold, and thus becoming more loosely attached to the manor, it is not mentioned further in the Court Rolls. The western boundary of Beales ran along the ancient track known as the White Way [6].

One of the central sites (Nos. 44-45), though it is not clear which, had, in the middle of the 13th century, formed two residences (messuages); the eastern held by Thomas de Oveton, the western by Walter le Smyth.

In 1279, Isabella, daughter of Walter, conveyed this messuage to John de Aperdele, and in the same year he sold it to Alice of Bookham, called "de Nywenham", who was already in possession of the Oveton property adjoining. As a widow, Alice (then Alice atte Putte) sold both messuages to Richard Randolf and Alice Deneman who, in 1344, disposed of them to Henry Kent, and he, in turn to the Abbot of Chertsey [6].

No. 46 (Marked as "Edward Hilder" on the plan) lay west of the White Way. It was noted originally as the easternmost strip of a section of open field known as the Lower Shott in Bookham Dean (the strips running at right angles to the Guildford road). The land had been enclosed by 1615, forming a copyhold held by Edward Hilder, who was admitted as the tenant in 1588. Just after the survey was made, Hilder disposed of the land to Robert Arnold, whose daughter Jane Thrusley, sold the cottage in 1676, to George Howard, younger son of Sir Charles Howard, knight, Lord of the Manor 1651-1672, and brother of Francis who, in 1681, became 5th Baron Howard of Effingham on the extinction of the senior line [6]. We refer to this George as 'George the elder' for clarity.

Elizabeth Arnold, the holder of No. 43, in 1680 sold land in the common field, adjacent to her tenement holding, to George the elder; and this was apparently the commencement of the gradual combination of all the properties.

It seems possible that George the elder acquired also the freehold of Beales (No. 45). He may have lived in the old house for a time, but it is probable that he did not survive long enough to undertake its rebuilding and enlargement. But as we have seen, his brother, Francis 5th Baron Howard of Effingham, became possessed of No. 43 (the tenement nearest to Dorking road) in 1690 [6].

When Bookham Grove was acquired by the local authority after the 1939-1945 war there still existed a well designed brick and tile dovecote, which may be presumed to have been built by Francis Howard when No. 43 fell into his hands [6, 9].

On 18th February, 1720/1721, the Vestry of Great Bookham consented to the Hon. Colonel Howard diverting "ye lower End of ye Whiteway from ye East side of his hous" [6].

It was George Howard the elder's son, Thomas [1684-1753], who transformed Beales (No.45) and the cottage on the other side of the White Way (No.46) into a shooting lodge and applied to divert the drove road (White Way) in order to join the two properties [6].

As part of this development in 1721 he also procured the diversion of the upper road to form an 'S' bend at the corner of No. 43 (see plan above). The section of road to the west of Grove Cottages is part of this main road [10].The intervening land was incorporated into the house to form a lawn and plantation [6].

There is no proof that Thomas acquired the remaining two tenements (Nos. 43 and 44) but it seems likely that either he or his son, Sir George Howard [1718-1796], did so [6,10]. We refer to this George Howard as 'George the younger' for clarity.

In 1950 it is noted that 'in the midst of the stables and outbuildings are 2 interesting features, a horse wheel and a hexagonal building which is a well designed brick and tile dovecote. It is unfortunate that these reminders of the social and economic past have been allowed to fall into ruin. The dovecote in particular is a feature of houses of the 18th century, as indeed it had been for hundreds of years under the manorial system. Mr C E Hanscomb in a talk in 1947 to the Society made the following apt comments on the dovecote in question':

'The dovecote had a social significance out of all proportion to its size. The sight of an old pigeon house may nowadays stir our imaginations, and the soft cooing of the doves, mingling with other pleasant country sounds, may recall old country scenes and conjure up pictures of the peasant happy and contented while enjoying long sunny days with time almost standing still. But the sight of the lord-of-the-manor's pigeon house stirred the peasant in a very different way and must have roused feelings akin to hatred in his heart: for no one but the lord was privileged to keep pigeons. The peasants were under severe penalties not to touch the birds and powerless to prevent it, had to watch them feed off the corn in the common fields. This was no light matter, as such pigeon houses frequently housed hundreds of birds, and there were few, if any, manors without at least one. So the lords of the manors supplied their tables at the expense of their serfs and tenants.' [9].

The dovecote can be seen marked on the plan made by John Harvey (see above)

In 1729 the Bishop of Winchester granted permission for Thomas to pull down 2 of the cottages and to build another residence in their place. His son, George, acquired 2 more adjoining cottages, but when he sold the property on 21st June to Admiral Brodrick he only sold a building site which was described as 'the site of the property of George Howard since pulled down' (this relates to the first two cottages) 'the site of Beales afterwards called Shepard's since pulled down and the site of a house called Arnolds since pulled down and formerly belonging to John Wood' [10].

'The 18th century witnessed in England, revolutionary changes even deeper than the obvious transformations of the economic and political scene wrought by the Industrial and French Revolutions. For it was between 1700 and 1800 that an age old relationship between man and man gave way before the pressure of social changes due to the impact of a new economy upon a country formerly depended upon agriculture in one form or another [11].

….Weaving, which had for long been an important home industry in Bookham, was probably almost extinct by 1750, while by the end of the century the annual fair had died out, though the domestic accounts of the Howards of Ashtead show that cheese and hops were still being bought at 'Buckom Faier' in 1711-18 [11].'

Under the old system, rich and poor had had a fundamental identity of interests, and there had seldom been (apart from a few crises due to pestilence or famine) an atmosphere of class warfare. Class had been a matter of blood; the aristocrat knew himself to be different from the peasant, with whose offspring marriage was unthinkable. Secure in this confidence and with the backing of a chivalrous code he was able to treat his social inferiors as human beings equal before God and with, more often than not, personal consideration....

In England, ever since the 14th century when personal services became generally commuted for money payments, and the wars with France had to be financed by heavy taxation and borrowing at interest by the Crown, a change had been in progress. Very slowly at first, more rapidly after the immense redistribution of landed estates in the sixteenth century, social class became less and less a matter of blood, more and more of ability to acquire cash and credit. A chivalrous code of honourable behaviour was being undermined by a purely material system of 'Caveat emptor'.

The newly arrived class, by monied power and lack of scruple, invaded the privileges of the aristocracy and intermarried into its ranks. By the 18th century the result was a squirearchy of very mixed origins. The landed proprietor, no longer internally sure of himself, began to fence himself and his family off from his social inferiors by the creation of a new set of 'snob' values, and to treat 'the poor' with a callous disregard only relieved by occasional acts of ostentatious condescension [11].

It is against this background of fundamental changes that the history of Bookham must be viewed. Still largely a rural community of yeomen and cottagers at the end of the 17th century, a hundred years later it had become a group of game preserving, largely non productive estates, interspersed with several very large farms, some of them artificially formed by a complicated system of sub letting the individual strips in the medieval open field, which still survived un-enclosed. Beneath the squires and the wealthy farmers was a population of servants, minor tradesmen, labourers, and (steadily growing in proportion) paupers [11].

...A new estate, Bookham Grove, was being formed on the hill at the southern end of the village, by the gradual agglomeration of small properties, which had started around 1680 [11].

Sir George Howard the younger sold the property to Vice Admiral Thomas Brodrick, and it was the latter who built the greater part of the present house with its offices and outbuildings which cover the site of all the earlier tenements. The front door of the house is exactly on the line of the old White Way....it was a handsome enough dwelling in Brodrick's time, surrounded by the great open fields on its southern and western sides [6].

References and Notes

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