

A POSTCARD COLLECTION
OF BOOKHAM

By

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Album 2

Pages 21 - 40

The Bookhams

Church Road - Sole Farm House/Pitscottie House

In 1906 Arthur Bird sold an adjoining plot to Sole Farm House to Donald Poole on condition that the property to be built on it would be of not less than £1000. The 'barn that moved' hit the headlines when it was moved on rollers next door - all 54 foot of it - without so much as a single roof tile being displaced! Americans would transport buildings in this way, but it happened rarely, if ever before, in Britain. It was rolled and winched along to where 'The Moorings' is today. The same builder and architect who directed operations were the same men who refurbished the Old Barn and it took a major reconstruction to make it into a residence. The house was called Pitscottie and became the Moorings when it was bought by Lieutenant Commander Catto, presumably he took the name from the land next to the old pond, the original 'Sol' and of course he was in the Navy. He remained there until 1927. Over the subsequent years another house took its place and later it became Braithwaite Engineering. However, when it was demolished in 1998 no barn timbers were found! Where did they go? The whole area has now been redeveloped and is called 'The Moorings'



Pitscottie House - 'the house that was moved.' Taken in 1906.



Work on the barn that moved - back of OBH in background



Moving the barn

The Bookhams

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall

The question remains whether the main barn did or did not stand on the other saddle stones - this barn has become the present Old Barn Hall. The structure was some 70 feet in length and 24 feet wide - its height today can be seen standing high above the original ground level and could possibly be explained by having originally stood on the saddle stones, giving it an extra 2 feet. It was certainly a very large barn. It was this barn that Arthur Bird determined to make into a hall to give to the village.

Although Arthur Bird's gift to the village was generous and a most useful and successful one, there always seemed to be some 'atmosphere' or rivalry between Arthur Bird and the other philanthropist of the village, Mrs Chrystie. Mrs Chrystie's name is with us to today in such places as the Chrystie memorial recreation field in Dorking Road and she is known for her temperance work. It may be no coincidence that just prior to this time Mrs Chrystie had given land for the building of the Little Bookham Village Hall and one can only surmise whether this generosity triggered any rival feeling - perhaps!

Today the inside framework of the Barn Hall is exposed to view. Twelve oak posts, each up to a foot square and forming the frame, surmounted by large roofing timbers. The roof was tiled much as it is now and the walls would have been timber slats and there would probably have been a window higher up at each end. The artist's impression gives a good idea of the appearance of the barn as it was but perhaps the saddle stones might not be correct. When you next visit the Old Barn Hall just stand in the hall, look about you at the timbers and envisage the barn as it was all those years ago.

The postcard below is dated 1906.



The Bookhams

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall

The plan was to retain the framework but to build up the foundations and walls, to provide proper entrances and windows and to take it out of its farmyard setting. The roof could be largely retained although more was done to allow enough light into the hall. Then a pathway would have to be made from Church Road to make access easy and the surrounding ground prepared. The muddy pool would have to be filled in to provide the facility that Arthur Bird imagined.

Bookham architect, Richard Lee, was called in and a builder, Cummings of Dorking, was appointed to carry out the reconstruction. Later on Richard Lee took advantage of the many excellent plots of land made available by Arthur Bird in Bookham by selecting one in the new Sole Farm Road and building his house there. The wooden side slats round the sides of the barn were removed, foundations laid and the sides were bricked in with doors and windows set into the walls. A porch was placed at the front. The roof was partly opened out and dormer windows placed in the tiles at the sides and the front to allow more light into the hall. At the back of the barn a building was retained which had been a cowman's cottage and a door at the rear of the hall led into it. This attached building was developed to form a storeroom, cloakroom and toilets.

The inside was plastered and panelled so that only the tops of the supporting beams were visible, different from the hall today with its exposed beams. The present stage is a later addition, but a moveable stage was provided at that time. In the early 1900's there was no mains electricity but mains gas existed and this offered lighting with incandescent mantle gaslights. The hall was fitted out with three gas fires, ten tables, six of which were made of walnut wood, 150 bentwood chairs and eight armchairs. The furniture was supplied by Maples of London. The hall was furnished to seat 300 people and had three large exits.

The postcard below is early 1900s.



The Bookhams

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall

The reconstructed building was a magical transformation from its origins as a barn and provided a magnificent hall for the village. The area was landscaped and sectioned off from Sole Farm farmhouse - the postcard shows a view of the hall in all its glory after all the work had been completed.

Arthur Bird conveyed the hall to the village together with the sum of £50 on 24th of May, Empire Day, 1906, just one hundred years ago. Empire Day in those days was celebrated as a national holiday; the British Empire was still at its peak, ruling around a quarter of the world. The hall was legally 'conveyed' into the care of an appointed body of Trustees and was handed over 'to be of some benefit and help to the inhabitants, both rich and poor'. He added, 'there is one point on which I have a strong opinion, and that is that there should be some pecuniary subscriptions from members of any of the Clubs that may use the Hall.'

A grand opening ceremony took place on Saturday 23rd of June with a band and vast decorations of flowers. The local paper reported 'the picturesque features of the building have been happily retained and, while no village hall could be more up to date in its arrangements, there is not that air of newness about it which is so repulsive to artistic sense and detracts so much from many of our otherwise excellent modern buildings'.

So the Old Barn Hall started its history and the dozen or so societies (compared with the hundred or so of today) made full use of its facilities including as a rifle range, which takes some imagination and would certainly be discouraged today!

On Empire Day 1907 the Trustees presented Arthur Bird with an oak block made of part of one of the beams, polished and suitably inscribed. This was handed back to the BCA by Canon Bird at a ceremony on Empire Day 1981, the Hall's 75th Anniversary.



This postcard is dated 1906. The hall was furnished to seat 300 people and had three large exits. A moveable stage was erected at the end opposite the porch entrance, and Mrs Bird gave a piano. Behind the stage were dressing rooms, toilets, a kitchen and a store-house. The floral decorations may be those which were provided for the Opening Ceremony on Empire Day, 1906.

Activities At The Old Barn Hall

A postcard from Mrs Amey, dated 24th October 1906, says that the Hall is taking up all her time with three entertainments there that week. It cost one guinea (105p) to hire the Hall for 6 months' use as a drill hall, one and a half guineas per concert, lecture or recitation session and five guineas for a dance lasting from 8pm - 2am.

At first it was used for concerts, social events, bazaars, exercise classes for women and the wealthier people hired it for grand dances. Miss M Keswick, the MP's daughter, used it for a meeting of the Anti Women Suffragettes in 1909 but in 1911, owing to the prohibition of meetings 'hostile to the Church of England' the Bookham and District Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Society was not permitted to use the Hall!

The Working Men's Club proved so popular at the Hall that money was raised by subscription from the likes of Mrs Greville of Polesden Lacey. Richard Lee converted an annexe for its use in 1911. Later this annexe served as the canteen store-room. The Scouts met in their own hut but held concerts in the Hall in the 1930s. The room at the back of the Hall was used as a Boys' Club. It had a huge Union Jack and a full sized billiard table.

The Bookhams

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall

A committee of trustees was appointed - Rev George Shephard Bird chaired the Trustees who included William Keswick MP, the Lord of the Manor of Eastwick, W.J Proctor, R.H Lindman (the first Secretary), T Pickering Pick, S.C Bristowe and Miss Hilda M. Bird. The Management of the hall worked very well until around 1912 when members of the Trust became increasingly unavailable and the Reverend Bird was left to run things by himself until he moved from the district. In 1906 Mrs Amey of Victoria Cottage, was appointed to be caretaker, cleaner and hirer of the hall at 4/6d per week. She kept the hall clean and tidy until her retirement at the age of 85.

When Mr Bird departed at the age of 85 he was obliged to hand over management of the hall to the Parish Council who became Trustees by default. They elected Admiral Yelverton, Rear Admiral Pudsey Dawson and Mr W. Leavis to the Hall's Committee of Management. However, under the Surrey Review Order of 1933, Great Bookham Parish Council was itself replaced by Leatherhead UDC - meaning technically that the Hall no longer belonged to the village. With all the changes, the Hall might have descended into chaos had it not been for the redoubtable Mrs Amey.



This is a BCA postcard printed by Judges in Hastings.

The Bookhams

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall

In 1939, Mrs Bowen supervised the seventy Women's Voluntary Service members who served hot meals to between 400 and 500 London evacuees. Meals were served in three shifts and each child received a ration of a pennyworth of meat. Miss Amey, the daughter of the former caretaker was the appointed cook in charge. They kept going despite all the difficulties - even when the main services were cut off because of bomb damage. Educational time was rationed; the evacuated children alternated with the local children by having their lessons in the mornings and did their homework in the Barn Hall in the afternoons.

A wartime clinic, operated by Surrey County Council, was held in the cowman's cottage at the rear of the hall until it transferred to Church House in Lower Road.

As the Canadian Army came to Bookham in increasing numbers, social evenings were held at the Barn Hall to entertain them several times a week for the remainder of the war. Henry Griffiths, the blind son-in-law of Mrs Amey, organist at St Nicolas Church, led a dance band in the late 1920s and continued to perform at dances in the Barn Hall throughout the war years and until a few years before his death in 1946. On New Year's Eve in 1944 - pre-extensions - was packed with 185 people, including many Canadians. You could hardly see across the room for smoke and the dancers were packed solid. Admission was 2/6d (12½p) a head.

At the end of the war the evacuees returned and the Surrey County Council took over the running of the school meals service at the Barn Hall for the pupils of Bookham School (situated in what is now the library) and for Poplar Road School in Leatherhead. After the war the Forces had a Welcome Home dinner in the Barn Hall - a proper sit down meal with entertainment and everyone was given a book.



Church Road, Great Bookham.

A postally used unknown postcard dated c1930s with the entrance to the Old Barn Hall on the right. The houses on the left were demolished to make way for Park Court/Lodge and Fife Way. The second house was Fife Lodge, the home of Mrs Chrystie which was demolished in the late 1960s to make way for Fife Way.

The Bookhams

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall

In 1946 Bookham Grove, which had become vacant, was offered to the village by the Council as a Community centre but it was turned down by the local community by 23 votes to 20 and the LUDC offered the Old Barn Hall instead. In 1948 the BCA was formed with Dr Waterfield as the first Chairman, Mrs Betty Harrison as vice-chairman, C. West was Secretary and *Stephen Fortescue as Treasurer. The Barn Hall had been partly paid for out of rates and had been running at a loss and the Leatherhead Urban District Council attempted to persuade the village to buy it. Fortunately Betty Harrison discovered that the hall was registered with the Charities Commissioners and so the council could not sell it. Later the BCA accepted responsibility for the hall from the council with the Constitution that stated:

The Association to be non-political, non-sectarian organisation based on the Village and for the Village. To provide a meeting place and facilities for physical and mental training, recreation and for social and intellectual development and to foster a community spirit for the achievement of those purposes.

By the time the BCA took over, the hall was showing its age. It was said that it had almost reverted to its state as a barn it was in such bad condition. Everything was in a state of disrepair with the interior and exterior falling into decay. The BCA set about raising funds to re-establish it as a centre of village life. In 1948 the BCA held the first Village Day, which is now an annual fund raising event, largely by the efforts of Mrs Harrison and Dr Waterfield, enabled the hall to survive

An unknown postally used postcard, dated 1906.



*Stephen Fortescue also served on the sub-committee organising the BCA's 50th Birthday Exhibition in 1998 and is the author of three books on the Bookhams:

The North End

The Story of two villages Great & Little Bookham

People & Places Great & Little Bookham

The Bookhams

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall

After all attempts by 1958 there were still signs up saying 'Save the Old Barn Hall.' In 1960 more room was needed and a plans were drawn up by local architect Bill Larkin. A sectional hut was put along the south side to serve as an additional meeting room and was named the 'Waterfield Room' after the first BCA president.

Construction then went ahead to the front and north wall (right-hand side looking at the hall) by contractor Andrew west, aided by grants from the Government and SCC and an extension to the hall itself, kitchen, cloakrooms and entrance hall were opened in 1964. It was not until the early '70s that a Hall Manager's flat was added in place of the then tumbledown cottage at the back and the 'Harrison Room' was built, the 'Waterfield Room' hut was moved to the back and the new and present 'Waterfield Room' was built together with the south extension to the Old Barn Hall itself to make it symmetrical again. In 1965 the hall had been turfed all the way round and it was not until 1982 that the necessity was seen to provide a car park and in the next year tarmac was laid at the front of the hall.

May 24, 2006: Centenary of the handover to the villagers - Beryl Warne, President of the Bookham Community Association (BCA) at that time, cuts the centenary cake at a reception for 150 invited guests of the BCA on the evening of May 24. Beryl baked the cake herself. The ceremony marked 100 years since local magistrate Arthur Bird, owner of the Sole Farm estate, bought an old barn, converted it into a hall and gave it to the villages of Great and Little Bookham. Earlier in the day the Barn Hall was open all day for locals and other visitors to see exhibits by about 40 of the dozens of local organisations who are the Hall's regular users. In the evening all the BCA-affiliated organisations were represented at the reception.

Over a hundred years have now passed and the Old Barn Hall could tell a multitude of tales but it still provides a wonderful centre for village life. It is now a Grade II listed building of architectural and historic interest. The BCA has some hundred affiliated clubs and societies and all centred about the Old Barn Hall. The village 'own' the hall and it owes its existence to the hard work put into it by the villagers. It is easy to name some of the main benefactors but much of its existence is due to all the work put in by so many in so many ways to ensure that it provides the facility we see today.



Inside OBH pre 1964



Old Barn Hall inside today

A Canon postcard c1900s with pictures below comparing the interior of today to pre 1964.

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall

There are many people that have served the BCA and prior the BCA over the years, as well as the community, whether on the committee or volunteers, who have contributed a tremendous amount of time, effort, and money - all of them are acknowledged and appreciated by the people of Bookham. We are extremely fortunate to have such people, and Bookham without their dedication would have no Old Barn Hall today, and Bookham would not be the place it is today. It is impossible to put together a list of these names so listed below are a few characters from the past that are forever linked with the Old Barn Hall.

Dr Noel E Waterfield - The first President of the BCA, was still involved with it in 1960 - the year he died, aged 80. The senior partner in the Church Road General Practice, he had lived in the village since 1930. After qualifying in 1902 and becoming an FRCS in 1905, he enlisted in the Sudan Medical Service. He married in 1910 and stayed in the Sudan till 1925. He arrived in Bookham a gruff, autocratic man, who affected a high starched collar. Patients revered him and called him simply 'The Doctor.' His younger partners more or less ran the practice and used modern X-rays, blood tests etc but, according to one of them, Dr Waterfield would 'put his finger on the spot, think for 15 seconds, then give the right answer.' He worked at Leatherhead Hospital as a skilled general surgeon and would take a portable operating table to patients' homes too! However he spent most of his time on numerous committee duties, mainly for the BMA. A keen supporter of the British Red Cross, he was medical officer in charge of the Leatherhead area in WWII. Awarded the OBE in 1949, he became Deputy Lieutenant of Surrey in 1953. The Old Barn Hall's Waterfield Room is named after him.



Betty Harrison - Betty, husband Arthur and their 4 children moved to Bookham shortly before WWII and remained in their large house in Eastwick Drive until Arthur's death. Mrs Elizabeth Harrison MA was an amazing woman, small and very intelligent. A socialist and a Catholic, she knew everyone and was into everything (committees, local politics, serving on the governing boards of numerous local schools) but above all she worked for the BCA. She felt that, as the village was growing so fast, people had to work hard at maintaining a real community. Though her husband would go on walking holidays with their children and grandchildren in the Lake District, Betty lived for Bookham and she stayed put. Arthur supported his wife in her endeavours and was no mean helper himself, tackling whatever practical task came to hand. He kept the Hall's grounds looking wonderful, partly because of his considerable talents as a gardener. On Betty's 80th birthday, some of the schoolchildren for whom she had worked so tirelessly threw a party for her and drank her health in milk. She died aged 92, three years after leaving Bookham where she had worked so hard for 50 years to build the community. Fittingly, the Harrison Room at the Old Barn Hall is named after both Betty and husband Arthur.



Nellie Cox - The BCA formed a Women's Committee in 1949, chaired by Nellie Cox. The committee proposed to 'develop suggestions for a weekly crèche, sitters-in service, theatre parties, old people's club and talks on practical problems.' Once a year or so they entertained old people from St Pancras. A coach brought them to Bookham, then they were taken to Polesden Lacey and given teas at the Old Barn Hall. They also set up the Over 60s Club in March 1951, meeting at the Old Barn Hall, again Nellie being in the Chair. As well as her work with the Over 60s Club and Day Centre, Nellie Cox was Secretary of the Leatherhead and District Old People's Welfare Committee and she helped many lonely, sick and troubled people privately as well. She took a party of old folks to a holiday camp in Dymchurch every year. During the war she gave her time to the Citizens Advice Bureau and was the local representative of the Soldiers, Sailors and Air Force Association, where she 'made things happen' such as getting a soldier back from Singapore when crisis struck his family at home. Nellie died in 1963 aged 58.

Mrs L. Bowen - She gave 46 years of voluntary service to the village. She continued after the War, managing the Hall in a voluntary capacity until 1948. Then she became a founder member of the BCA and of the Bookham WI (its Secretary for 10 years) and was Treasurer of the Conservative Association for 16 years. A fine pianist, she chaired the PCC Entertainment Committee. She died in 1968.

Mrs Emily Amey - Was born in Upham, Hampshire and, after her marriage to William in 1890, moved to the cottage at the top of the High Street, next to England's Dental Practice. She was engaged in 1906 as the Hall's caretaker/cleaner and worked there until she was 85. She looked after the interests of those hiring the Hall and maintained the fires and kept the whole place clean and tidy. She was also caretaker for St Nicolas Church. Mrs Amey worked as the caretaker/cleaner for 34 years at the Old Barn Hall. She died in April 1959, aged 95.



Miss Ethel Kate Amey - Was the younger daughter of Mrs Emily Amey. She returned to this country after being a children's nurse in India. In 1957 she started cooking meals for the evacuees in the Old Barn Hall from 1938. From then until 1957 she prepared school meals in the Hall, remaining patient despite the difficult conditions, the freeze-ups and floods. Continuing rationing meant lots of paperwork and she would sit up late in the Hall on Friday nights to do this. After new kitchens opened at the school in 1958 she carried on with her sister working there.

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall - The Bookhams Bulletin

Bookhams Bulletin

A Beautiful Common



Looking back on 2010, we achieved a lot of project work. Three of the five ponds have now been restored thanks to funding from The Friends of Bookham Commons and Natural England. The work involved thinning out encroaching trees and removing silt from within the ponds which are now more visible and can be enjoyed by passers-by. The recently built bird hide is being well used, this proved very popular over the summer months with photographers and bird watchers - why not bring along the children and your binoculars and cameras and enjoy an afternoon on the Common? I hope all your children can identify our National tree, the English Oak of which Bookham has plenty.

Contractors are now being used much more for the regular tree work. We have just about managed to keep on top of the litter that gets dropped around the Commons - we

hope those using this area will do more to take their litter home and not throw it down for others to remove! Unfortunately we are still getting a lot of fly tipping - the cost in time and money of removing this illegal waste is very high. If you see anyone dumping rubbish do not approach them - simply take the vehicle registration number and pass the details to the police.

We are hoping to raise money to replace old signs and remove old posts and we would like to improve the way-marking signs which are also old and worn.

Bridges and culverts have been inspected and maintenance is required on quite a few. During the coming weeks we will be planking up some of the oak trees from the recent tree thinning. The wood will be used to make benches etc for various locations.

Dog waste bins have been installed at various locations and we are now also in the process of providing bags for picking up dog waste. Dog walkers are asked to use them, we would like to reduce the amount of waste that dogs leave behind. Bookham Commons is a site of special scientific interest and it is important that we try and balance the habitat and wildlife needs of the Commons with public access by doing all we can to reduce litter and waste.

The new pay stations provided for car parking at the Tunnel car park are going well - money

generated will help to pay for further project work. This has encouraged some regular visitors to join the National Trust and enjoy free parking. The normal fee is £2.50 but the car park is free to National Trust members.

About eight volunteers join the warden each Wednesday to carry out tasks around the Commons and thanks are due to them for all their hard work carried out over the year - we are really seeing the benefits of their efforts. The Tuesday volunteers continue to meet at Merritt's Cottage for a morning's work on the second Tuesday of the month for a 10.00am start. Other local groups joined us on the pre-Christmas workday and much was achieved opening out an area on the path from Merritt's Cottage to Banks Common. The work was also helped along by mid-morning mince pies and a sumptuous barbecue at lunchtime.

At the time of writing the Christmas snow has just gone and the hawfinches have again been seen along with peregrine falcons. The lengthening daylight hours have meant the rooks are attending to their nests for a clean up prior to nesting and great spotted woodpeckers are drumming. All good signs to wear the new year with optimism.

For information regarding any issues on Bookham Commons, please contact the warden Ian Swinney on 07770 887683.

Rob Hower, Head Warden and comments by Pater Hendry

Not many people realise that the Bulletin; has been published every quarter without a break, ever since October 1933. It pre-dates the formation of the BCA by some fifteen years and was issued by the Bookham Social Service Bureau (BSSB). This had nothing to do with Social Services as we know it but was an organisation bringing together those who served the local community, especially through the 'relief of the poor.'

The Bulletin was started following discussions at Dr E. Price's house on 17th March 1932. The BSSB's mission was to 'introduce the voluntary social worker to the already existing work and to encourage new desirable schemes involving health, recreation and information.' The Bulletin's purpose was, 'making known and thereby assisting the work of all organisations which aim at improving conditions and increasing the amenities of the district.' Much of the BSSB's work had to do with child welfare and the immediate relief of poverty and distress. They had set up a milk fund for needy children and a young people's club in 1932. In January 1933 they launched a huge appeal for funds to find work for the unemployed. As the depression deepened they acted as a labour exchange for casual work locally, and themselves employed some people to construct a bowling green and children's corner.

The Bulletin had Mr Hanchard as honorary editor and Dr Price as business manager. It could be collected from the village shops, price 1p for those who could afford it - the money went into the milk fund. The front and back covers consisted entirely of advertisements. Phone numbers for local shops

were given as '6' or '73'! Early issues featured appeals for boots, clothing and domestic items for the needy, in an age where an ordinary family might earn 26 shillings (130p) a week, and pay 10 shillings (50p) of that on rent alone.

In 1937 the Bulletin featured controversy over proposed street lighting for the village, with one opponent warning, 'the High Street will become a Piccadilly or Tooting Broadway.' In 1940 the magazine shrank to a true pocket size.

During the war, with the committee dispersed, it reported endless Government regulations e.g. 'Private individuals requiring hot water bottles must first produce a Doctor's certificate,' or 'No further permits will be issued for the purchaser of alarm clocks.'

After the war and the 64th edition of this worthy paper, Bookham Social Services Bureau decided to wind up their affairs by calling a public meeting. And there, but for the newly formed BCA, the Bulletin might have ended. Dr Waterfield spoke on behalf of the newly formed BCA and said that the Bulletin would not be allowed to cease publication. With W.T Cooper as editor, the BCA produced issue 65 in December 1949 and distributed it to every house in the Bookhams. The BCA continued to produce the Bulletin four times a year aiming 'to bind the community more closely together.'

The BCA expanded the Bulletin and included a wider range of useful information and aimed to record local events for posterity. The Bulletin also went under a new design and format in August 1971 while staying true to the well established objectives, which were stated as giving news of:

- 1) BCA activities and future plans.
- 2) Bookham organisations, the interesting things they have done and propose to do.
- 3) People living in the district and those who have moved away but are still remembered.
- 4) Local events - so that the Bulletin becomes a source of material for local historians.

The Bookhams

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall - Village Day/Week

Village Fairs flourished in Bookham in the 17th and 18th Centuries and there was a Gigantic Fair in 1922, but modern Village Days as we know them started in 1948 with the opening of the Old Barn Hall under BCA management. Councillor Mrs Levett, Chair of LUDC, formally declared the Hall open as a community centre and congratulated the Bookhams on being the first of the wards to organise a Community Association with its own Centre. One thousand people paid for admission to this first Village Day, which was held in glorious weather in the adjoining field as well as in the Hall. The local paper reported that the Day's function was to, 'show how the villages worked and played and how they spent their leisure.' Organisations which took part included the WI, Girl Guides, Scouts, Youth Club, National Savings, Camera Club, WEA, Choral Society, Little Bookham Village Club, Poultry and Rabbit Club, Infant Welfare Centre and the County Library. Leatherhead UDC's stall displayed the history of the two villages. Leatherhead Red Cross staffed a tent and Bookham Primary School organised a fancy dress parade. The Secondary School put out on show the results of their handicrafts classes and Surrey County Police Dogs provided a display.

The 1949 Village Day took the form of an outdoor performance of 'Merrie England' at Polesden Lacey on 18th June - and so the nationally famous Open Air Theatre began.

Village Days centred around the Old Barn Hall and soon became an annual event. Some famous people attended and helped at Village Day, namely, the inventor of the bouncing bomb, Barnes Wallis who lived in Effingham and opened the Day in 1964. Jimmie Hanley, the comedian, who lived in Fetcham and ran the Plough in Effingham also came and opened Village Day in 1956 and 1957. Both of them would end up in the kitchen, helping wash the dishes.

Throughout those first decades Village Day itself was much the same as it is today, with the procession (which was introduced in the mid 1970s) and stalls and displays, though it was of course much smaller and more 'villagey,' and everyone knew each other. All the profit made was ploughed back into the community which helps to raise it, but the Day is not just another fund raising fete. Village Week and Village Day are promoted to show the village to the village.

In 1996, things came full circle when Commander David Bird - grandson of Arthur Bird, who gave the Hall - opened the Day.

Village Week

It started in 1965 - 26th June to 3rd July, with a very full programme. Following on from Village Day it began with a Sunday Parade of all the uniformed junior organisations, which met at 2.30 behind the Old Barn Hall. The idea was to process past a saluting base, up Church Road to the special service at St Nicolas Church.

The Monday saw a Youth Club Dance, the Tuesday an entertainment provided by the Gramophone Club, Choral Society and Scottish Dancers and the Wednesday an open evening of the Old Tyme Dance Club. On the Thursday the BCA ran a coffee morning, with flower arrangements on display and a whist drive in the evening. The Bookham Dramatic Society performed some one-act plays on the Friday. On the Saturday and afternoon tournament at Dorking Road Recreation Ground was followed by a Summer Dance at the Old Barn Hall.

The first Village Week proved so popular that similar events have happened ever since. As a comparison to the above first Village Week the itinerary for Village Week 2010 was, Sunday: Open day for the Gardens of Bookham and in the evening United Churches Open Air Service - St Nicolas' Churchyard. Monday: Bridge Lunch with the Bookham Afternoon Bridge Club. In the evening - A Midsummer Concert' with the Mole Valley Silver Band. Tuesday: Bookham Craft Club & The Barn Hall Crafters Open Morning and in the evening Village Week Quiz Night. Wednesday: Bridge Supper - presented by Bookham & District U3A. Friday: Dixieland jazz Night with the Brian White's Magna jazz Band.



The Circus Comes to Town was the theme for Village Day 2010. Pictures are courtesy of the Leatherhead Advertiser.
LEADING MAN: Jason Wright with his Austin 7 led the parade
MASTER OF CEREMONIES: Michael Anderson was in ringmaster mode in his top hat and tails
BOBO The CLOWN

The Bookhams

Church Road - The Old Barn Hall - Polesden Lacey Open Air Theatre

Did you know that the BCA built this at Polesden Lacey and put on the first four public performances? In 1948, the same year that it was formed, the BCA took up Betty Harrison's suggestion of closer links between the local community and the National Trust. She had been talking to the Trust's Agent at Polesden Lacey, who agreed in principle that drama and music could make such a link. Mr G. Brion, a member of the BCA's Executive Committee, had connections with Hatton Choral Operatic Society who were performing a pageant of 'Merrie England' and agreed to put it on in Polesden's grounds.

The BCA had no funds at the time, set about organising this ambitious venture, relying on the co-operation of the local press, plus a few posters - and they received magnificent support from the village. They cordoned off a gently sloping meadow and hired 2000 chairs. On the 18th June 1949 3,000 people turned up, far too many for the gentle slope, and visibility was limited to the first four rows! They made a profit of just under £1 but had established beyond doubt the popularity of Polesden Lacey as a theatrical venue.

The BCA decided to build a stage and present it to the National Trust to mark the Festival of Britain. LUDC gave a bulldozer (plus its operator) for a day to dig a big hole for the orchestra pit and throw up a mound of earth. Then volunteers (nearly all Bookham people) shaped the stage and built a ramp. The stage, known as the 'Festival Stage,' was completed and the auditorium laid out before the deadline of 30th June 1951, when the Leatherhead Amateur Dramatic Company presented Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' produced Phyllis Newman. The Surrey Philharmonic Orchestra played Mendelssohn's music. The auditorium was packed for both performances. The sun shone and the event made a profit of £400.

The next year there were no performances as no producer came forward, but for 1953 Betty Harrison found Elsie Green, who was to continue until 1988, recruiting outstanding actors from a wide area. Some time in the early years the London Symphony Orchestra gave a concert on the terrace at Polesden Lacey, to raise money for the theatre. The BCA organised three more annual Shakespeare productions - 'As You Like It,' 'The Tempest,' (complete with violent thunderstorm, supplied by nature!) and, finally, 'Hamlet,' which made a loss. Though this was met by the guarantors, the BCA felt they should no longer shoulder responsibility and the future of the theatre hung in the balance. Ivor Hills, the local Agent for the National Trust, suggested that, if the BCA would continue their support on the administrative and business side, the Trust would set up an advisory committee to manage the Open Air Theatre. The first production under the NT was 'Twelfth Night.' in July 1956. Not only before but during the NT era, well into the 1970s, most voluntary help at Polesden's theatre, including business administration, press publicity and stewards, came from the BCA. Tom Oldershaw, the BCA's Secretary, and his wife Barbara, were prime movers - she ran the Box Office for decades.

Today the event comprises several plays, a concert etc and is a huge affair. Local volunteers are still involved though and a representative from the BCA is entitled to sit on the committee.



BCA volunteers building the 'Festival Stage' at Polesden Lacey in 1951.

The Bookhams

Church Road - Park Corner, Norbury Park Dairy Farm Shop

Across the road from the Old Barn Hall is Lincoln Joyce, which used to be the Norbury Park Dairy Farm shop as seen in the postcard below from R & A.

The property was built by Oliver Higby in the same style as the Newsagents on the other corner of The Parks in the 1930s. After Norbury Park Dairies, it became Curtis Home Dairy and in the 1950s Home Counties Dairies. When they closed in the 1970s Frank Walker opened a sports shop here. It is now the Lincoln Joyce Fine Art Gallery.

The second postcard is of The Parks, date unknown.



The Bookhams

Church Road - Park Corner, Newsagents & Telephone Exchange

On the other corner of The Parks is the newsagents. This building was also built by Oliver Higby in the 1930s. Next door to the Newsagents is the Telephone Exchange (the tall building) as seen in this R & R of London postcard. The second repro Frith postcard is dated 1965 and is looking at the Newsagents from the corner of Church Road and The Parks.

The newsagents was managed in the 1950s by Mrs Hayter, a widow in her seventies, who was seen each morning at 7am, rain or shine, wrapped in a shawl and a pixie hood, at the station to sell papers to the commuters.

The Telephone Exchange was built in 1932 to replace the exchange at no 118 in the High Street for The National Telephone Co. Mrs Sarah Harris, a widow of WWI lived at 118 with her young family of five children and operated the switchboard. She continued in the new exchange until 1940.

Beyond the telephone exchange are three shops also built in the 1930s by Oliver Higby. Worsted House was occupied by Higby as a builder's merchants until the 1960s. Then it was Hall's Maintenance Service (electrical engineers) and since the mid 1970s it has been Shelia's Hair Fashions. Next door is Rothwell House where Fred Bellows had a hardware shop from the early 1930s until at least the mid 1950s. By the 1960s it was occupied by a veterinary surgeon.

Cochrane House was Ranger's fish and game shop until the 1950s, then Shelia had her first salon here until she moved to Worstead House. It was then used by the beauty salon until they moved to the High Street.



The Bookhams

Church Road - Flourmill

Between Cochrane House and Rothwell House, about where Millside Court is, was a house called Millside where Miss Davis lived until at least 1939. Mr Goodhew, who had the neighbouring coach building business, used the house as a tea room just before WWII. It was called Millside Tea Rooms. The house was demolished in 1970-71 and flats replaced it.

Behind where Millside Court is now was Classic Foundations Ltd which manufactured corsets here in the 1950s and 1960s. A cluster of wooden buildings that were set well back from the road was originally part of the corn and timber business of the Davis family. These had recently been used as garages, stores and small workshops. They were demolished at the beginning of 1997 before the building of Cochrane Court. Also adjacent to the mill there used to be a small brick building which at one time had been a forge. The Sweet Pea shop was built in the 1930s as a coal office until it opened as an estate agency before they moved to 1 Church Road.

The slated brick and stone three-story flourmill with cast-iron window frames dates from c1830 and survives complete with its brick chimney. This was originally a steam powered corn mill operated by the Davis family, but belonged to the Eastwick Estate. After about 1913 the mill was used to drive a sawmill. The single storey buildings on either side of the mill were a boiler house to the left and an office on the right.



A Frith postcard dated 1906. Below is a Real Photo postcard dated 1917, which was taken just south of Sole Farm Road - the miller's house is behind the trees on the left.



The Bookhams

Church Road - Flourmill

Davis built a house on either side of the Mill: Millside which has been described previously and Mill House, which is now on the corner of Mill Close. Both this house and the mill are now residential properties.

Arnold Davis, who died in 1909 aged 87, came from Buckinghamshire and his children, Arnold, Edmund, Priscilla and Frederick (a wheelwright) all worked at the mill. In the 1920s, by which time they were in the timber business, the mill building became derelict but it was used by Mr Allen of Bookham Cottage to store corn and seeds. In the second World War the building was used for filling palliases with straw for use by the army, later Italian prisoners of war used the building for eating and resting while working at the sawmill.

In the 1930s the sawmill produced high quality wood for furniture making but in the war they produced wood for railway wagons, railway sleepers, temporary landing strips etc.

The sawmill/timber yard closed in 1947 and Cornish Brickworks Ltd took over the site in 1950, producing brick-built fire-place surrounds until the late 1960s when it closed and Mill Close was built on the site.



A postally used postcard dated August 1956 - notice the sign on the right hand side of the postcard for Rangers Coal Office. Pictured below from left to right are, Bill Grumble, Ted Davis, Charlie Elson, George Cook (foreman), R Wales, Harry Millward and Alf Tilley working at the sawmill c1915-20.



The Bookhams

Church Road - Almshouses/Sole Farm Road

The old almshouses of the Great Bookham Manor Estate, which were built in the early 19th century are depicted in this postcard, dated early 1900s. They are situated opposite Sole Farm Road, which was no more than a cart track before the farm was sold in the early 1900s but it served to link Great and Little Bookham villages. Below left, is a picture of Sole Farm Road in 1926 before any development; the only houses in the road were two cottages built in the late 1800s.

Notice on the postcard that this part of the road was formerly called Station Road. Church Road was previously known as Church Street and before that Lower Street. As the continuation of Church Road developed it became known as New Road more or less north of the Mill. With the coming of the railway, the road was further extended past the station and joined Little Bookham Street near Weale's shop. It was then called Station Road although much later Station Road was abolished and now Church Road and Little Bookham Street meet at the station.



The Bookhams

Church Road - Almshouses

The former almshouse cottages were used as a fruiterers shop by Charles Simmons from at least 1905 for about ten years. In 1926 John C Pullen had a greengrocer shop on the left of the building and lived in the right hand cottage. He ran the shop here for thirty odd years. Mr Leaver had a veterinary surgery in the late 1960s whilst living in one of the cottages. There are now two separate bungalows again, one of which is called Pullen Cottage, the other Dawnay.

The first postcard below is of Charles Simmons shop with himself, his wife and son posing in front. On the bottom of the card it says 'our shop Charlie.' The card has been postally used and is dated 1911.

The second Canon postcard has also been postally used, dated 1908



The Bookhams

Church Road - Almshouses

Two more postcards of the Almshouses.

The first postcard is a Frith's - the road then being known as Church Street.

The other is a Photocrome Co Ltd postcard c1940/50s - the road is then known as Church Road.



The Bookhams

Church Road, west side - The Mission Hall

In the latter part of the last century a small group of people could often be seen on Sundays journeying from Dorking to Bookham by pony, donkey cart or by train to Leatherhead and then walking to Bookham. Almost all of them carried bibles and were members of the free churches of Dorking.

The Congregational Church in Dorking sponsored the setting up of the Free Church Mission on a plot of ground on the corner of Church Road and Sole Farm Road which had been bought in 1894 for £60 (just under £4,000 today.) The mission hall of corrugated iron was built on the plot and an adjoining house was erected immediately behind in 1898/9 for the lay preacher, John Ansell - John Ansell is seen standing outside the Free Church Mission in the picture below c1900. The Mission Hall was opened in 1895 by Lady Litchfield of Bookham Grove and Mrs Mary Chrystie

In 1911 the Free Church Mission became a Congregational Church which moved in 1929 to Eastwick Road, at which time the iron buildings was demolished. The adjoining house and the iron railings around the site together with the gate to the hall are still to be seen.



This Frith's Series postcard c1900s is essentially of the almshouses, but on the left hand side where you can see the roof of a house (Flushing Cottage) just before this set back from the road is where the Mission Hall was situated. You can also make out the notice board for the church just before the white gate (now black) which was the entrance to Flushing Cottage.

