Chapter 16

1945-1985 Leatherhead Urban District Council; Conversion to private apartments

In which we learn about the 17th century dovecote, a rare type of water well and the brewery at Bookham Grove; photographs of the house between 1947-73; goats in the grounds; another car sale; Bookham library at the Grove; 12 flats in the house; Viking bones unearthed; plans for the house in 1985

t the end of 1945 Bookham Grove estate was purchased by Leatherhead Urban District Council under a compulsory purchase order, for the purpose of building houses ¹.

On the 3rd November 1945 it was reported that the acting clerk (Mr J Ede) told Leatherhead Urban District Council that the Minister of Health had decided to confirm the order for compulsory purchase of Bookham Grove without modification for a housing site ¹.

Leatherhead Urban District Council produced a housing confirmation order for Bookham Grove, dated 1945 ².

The electoral register of 1946 ³ has a Grove House, Guildford Road listed, which indicates 6 flats, but this is the Grove House previously owned by Anthony Diamantidi (see Ch. 15) in Effingham. There is no mention of Bookham Grove House itself. It could therefore be assumed that nobody was living at Bookham Grove at this date.

n the development of the estate 2 precious and unique monuments in Grove House were lost - a hexagonal columbarium and a well house with a horizontal well wheel 4.

The Council took no steps to preserve the columbarium or the well house which had probably been built about 1690 by the 5th Baron. In the well house was a great horizontal well wheel driven by a beam pushed around by a horse to raise water. There are few horse driven wells existing, probably the most notable being at Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight, where the pump is still operated by donkey power ⁶.



The Well House at Bookham Grove, Nov. 1947 $^5\, \mbox{\scriptsize @}$ Surrey History Centre

The Columbarium in 1947

The Columbarium (Dovecote) At Bookham Grove. November 1947 5 . © Surrey History Centre

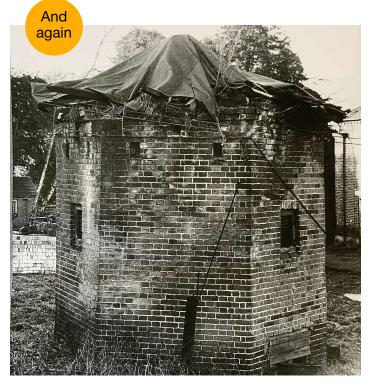
'It is unfortunate that these reminders of the social and economic past have been allowed to fall into ruin. The dovecote, in particular is a feature of houses of the eighteenth century, as indeed it had been for hundreds of years under the manorial system.' ⁷

The Columbarium in 1949, in further disrepair



The Columbarium (Dovecote) At Bookham Grove. November 1949 $^5.$ $^{\textcircled{6}}$ Surrey History Centre

Mr CE Hanscomb FRIBA, 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 lordof-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." 7



The Columbarium (Dovecote) At Bookham Grove. November 1949 ⁵. © _{Surrey History Centre}

his report on the brewery at Bookham Grove also mentions the well (presumably from which the water was drawn to make the beer), and the columbarium:

The White Hart Inn (now Grove Cottages) is thought to have obtained its ale either from its own brewery or later from the brewery at Bookham Grove, where its great copper vats supplied the area with ale. The barley and hops needed for production were all grown locally ⁸

An article written by G W Rumgary 8 when the house was owned by Madame Hayward says:

'A feature of this country house in Lord Downe's time was its brewery, with its great copper vats, and polished measures, where beer was brewed from barley and hops grown on the estate, partly for home consumption, but mainly to supply the needs of the coaching inn opposite, then belonging to the Downe family. Guildford Road (or "The King's Road," as it was generally called at that time) ran directly across the front of the mansion, coming out on their own land some distance below the present end of the property. Years later the road was diverted to its present route by taking in a portion of the old farm opposite.

Another feature of this house was its well, deep down in the chalk, worked by a series of iron dogs, which carried down an empty bucket and returned with a full one at the same time. For those that are interested a point to note is the artistic hexagon dove cote in the courtyard, a great feature of houses of that period'.

He described the old coaching house called the Saracen and Ring as follows:

'Here the coaches from London to Guildford used to stop to rest their horses after the hard pull over the ford at Leatherhead and up Hawk's Hill, for the roads were mere cart tracks in those days. One can imagine how the travellers on a bleak winter's day would welcome the old inn, with its hospitality and the warmth of the great log fire in the chimney corner, and how "mine host" would get the latest news from London Town, for the Great Fire of London was seen from these hills and the Plague was still fresh in their memories'

In view of the projected development of the estate, Leatherhead and District Local History Society, which had been formed in 1947, endeavoured to secure photographic records of the 'most interesting features of Bookham Grove' ⁹. This included the photographs above of the well house and the columbarium and also the external aspects of the house ⁵:





Rear of the house, December 1950 $^5\,{}^{\textcircled{6}}$ Surrey History Centre



Side of the house, November 1947 $^5\,{}^{\bigodot}$ Surrey History Centre



Outbuildings, 19th January 1949 $^5\,{}^{\bigodot}$ Surrey History Centre



Yard Gate, at the corner of Lower Shott and Dorking Road ⁶



Rear door (where the fire escape is currently) 10

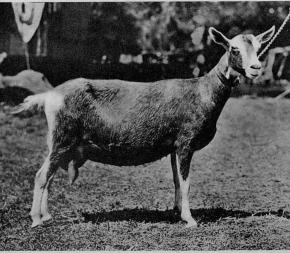


The 'slightly oriental' Summer House, probably built after 1909, boasting a bay window and stained glass doors and windows 10



Surrey Goat Club

THE Surrey Goat Club's Annual Show was held at the Grove, Bookham, on Saturday, July 26. There were over 360 entries, including goats from Devon, Kent, Hampshire and Bucks. The show was the largest ever held by the Surrey Club, and with the exception of the Anglo-Nubian goat class, the classes were well supported. There were thirty entries in one of the kid classes and only one was absent. The show was held with the recognition of the British Goat Society, and their Bronze Medal for the best Goat in the Show was won by Mrs. E. D. Clarkson's much-admired Sandhurst Marion.

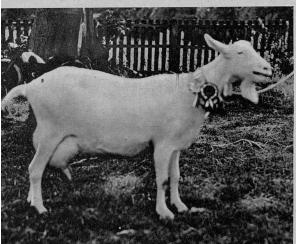


A GENERAL VIEW of the show. Mr. H. E. Jeffery (with stick) judges ing the open classes in the near ring. Mr. H. H. Mylius (white coat and cap) judged the Novice class in the far ring.

SANDHURST MARION shown by Mrs. E. D. Clarkson, won the Bronze Medal for best Exhibit and the Challenge Certificate for the best Goat in Milk. She was also Reserve Champion at the Royal Show and a winner at Hertford. She stands well, has a long straight back, and udder well tucked up under her wedgeshaped body. She has been milking for over the year—422 days since last kidding, and is still giving over a gallon a day. She is a British goat of the Toggenburg type and was bred by her owner.



THE FAMILY CLASS WINNERS: Mr. Pa and Weylea Ophelia. Centre, Mrs. E. D. Clar-Sandhurst Pods won the Quantity Milking Competiof 16:75 points. Mrs. N. Buss (ri



WEYLEA OLIVE, shown by Miss Garrod, was the winner of the Forteviot Cup, presented by the British Society; the Garrod Cup, and a Challenge Certificate for the best British Saanen Goat. She is a young goat of great promise, being only a first kidder. She gave 11 lb. 14 oz. of milk in the 24 hours and gained 12-77 points in the Quality Milking Competition.

Sport & Country, 15.8.47



WINNER of one of the many well-supported kid classes: Mrs. C. Smith's Glenfyne Eileen, a fine British Alpine.

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Image © Illustrated London News Group

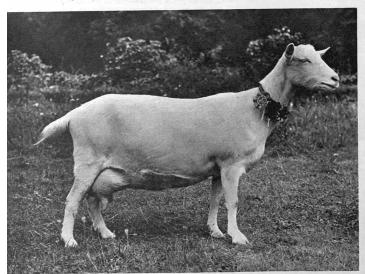
Then again in August 1948 when the 'largest number of goats ever entered for a show in Britain was recorded at the Surrey Goat Club event at the Grove, Bookham ¹²:



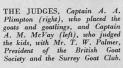
DUAL-PURPOSE CLASS prise-winners in the ring. The fourth animal from the left. Mrs. Goymer's Outdowns Prudence, gave 10½ lbs. of milk and was second in the Quantity Milking Competition with 17.7 points.



AWAITING THEIR TURN for the judges' examination. The winner of the Quantity Milking Competition, Mrs. Ledger's Erisseell Jennifer, sixth from left, gave 18 lbs. 13 oxs. of milk in the twenty-four hours and was awarded 20



BEST IN THE SHOW: Mr. A. W. C. Butler's Skeete Prunella, a pure Saanen goat, achieved distinction by winning the British Goat Society's Bronze Medal for the best exhibit, the Challenge Certificate for the best female in milk, the Class for Saanen goats and the Saanen Breed Challenge Certificate.



Surrey Goat Club

THE largest number of goats ever entered for a show in Britain was recorded at the Surrey Goat Club event at the Grove, Bookham, where 37 individual animals represented 591 entries in the catalogue. There were 57 goats in the ring for the dual-purpose class parade and 51 entries in the class for kids of any other variety. The latter event was divided into three sections.





THE TOGGENBURG CLASS in the ring with the winner, Mrs. Clarkson's Sandhurst Pride, on the left of the picture. The size of the main marquee, part of which is in the background, and the number of trade stands this year were an indication of the increasing popularity of the event. Sport & Country, 25.8.48



BRITISH ALPINE CLASS: In order of proximity to the camera are the winner, Miss Rochford's Berkham Alice, Mrs. Clarkson's Sandhurst Bridget (second) and Mrs. K. J. Hodge's Didgemere Deemus (third and winner of the Woodhouse Cup).

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Image © Illustrated London News Group

In June 1950 The Bookham's Bulletin advertises the Surrey Goat Club Show 7: 'This event will be held at Bookham Grove on Friday and Saturday 21st and 22nd July. Few Bookham residents are aware that the Surrey Show, which has been held at Bookham for the past 3 years, attracts the largest entry of any goat show in the British Isles... a film star of first magnitude will be presenting the prizes this year' The Council development of Bookham Grove House was completed after the summer of 1948: A report in June 1948 in Bookhams Bulletin states that the 8 flats at Bookham Grove are nearing completion ¹³

In the summer of 1950 Bookham Rifle Club requested a site should be allocated for the provision of a full small bore rifle range at Bookham Grove. Consideration of this was deferred to 'enable the Engineer and Surveyor to investigate the possibility of making land available at Bookham Grove without detriment to the Council's housing proposals' 15.

On the 20th
January 1950 it is
reported that
'proposals will be
put forward for 2
additional flats at
Bookham Grove' 14

The Bookham Summer Fete was held at Bookham Grove on June 24th 1950 - advertised as 'Surrey's number 1 fete' ¹⁶. However the weather was unkind with rain during the later afternoon, although 3000 people still attended ¹⁷.

On the 6th October 1950 the resident of Flat 4 Bookham Grove House, named Pittam, advertised a Standard Eight dh 1947 Coupe, 'one engineer owner, 19500 miles; extras include heater, defroster, loose covers, lights; exceptional car; £495' 18.

The Standard Eight is a small car produced by the British Standard Motor Company from 1938 to 1959. The Drophead Coupe was the top of the Standard 8 model range 19.



Standard Eight Drophead Coupe 20

On the 13th October 1950 it is reported that the County Library Centre has now been moved from the Barn Hall to Bookham Grove, with 2200 books available. This new centre was open twice a week on Tuesday mornings and Friday afternoons ²¹.

The Bookhams Bulletin published in September 1951 has an article about the development of the Grove by the Council, as the editorial states, talking about the building of the Council estate ²²:

'Another link with Bookham's past is being severed by the developments now in progress at The Grove. Our sorrow at the passing of old landmarks is here offset by the satisfaction of knowing that some 300 families, now living in cramped and difficult quarters are to be rehoused in surroundings more conducive to a healthy way of life'.

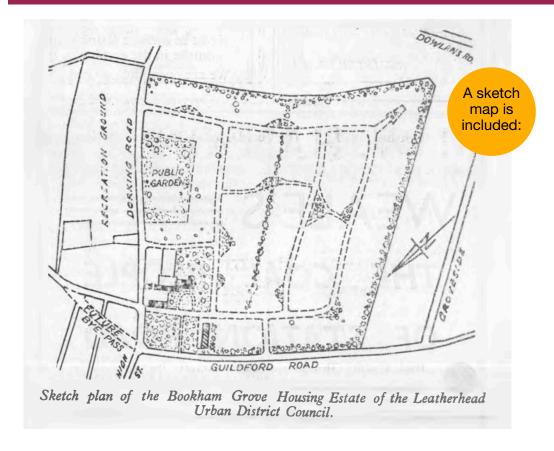
Mr John Davies was the Engineer and Surveyor to the Leatherhead Urban District Council, at this time and wrote in the Bulletin ²²:

'The total area of the estate is about 40 acres, much of it being wooded. The old house has been converted into 12 flats, and it is intended that the existing garden and the drives around it shall be preserved, including the belt of trees along the Guildford Road. In addition a wooded section on the Dorking Road frontage will be reserved for a public garden as an extension of the existing recreation ground.....

...the process of clearing up the surroundings to the old house has been delayed pending the development of the estate as a whole, but a new access is now planned entering from the dip in the Guildford Road; and a new road running parallel to the latter road will serve the estate. This road will terminate by the large stable building just short of the Guildford Road, and will be linked up with the latter only when the proposed short bypass from the Victoria Corner to Fairfield Cottage is completed.

This new access will dispense with the existing carriage entrance on the corner, which will be closed, and only a pedestrian access will be permitted through the trees in front of the old house. This belt of trees will be tidied up, old and dead wood removed and a very few trees and shrubs cleared to open up the view from the Guildford Road to the house....

The remainder of the estate is being laid out with roads and sewers to serve approximately 303 houses....concreting of the roads is about to begin and it is anticipated that the first houses will be started in September 1951, and the whole estate completed by the end of 1953 at the latest.'

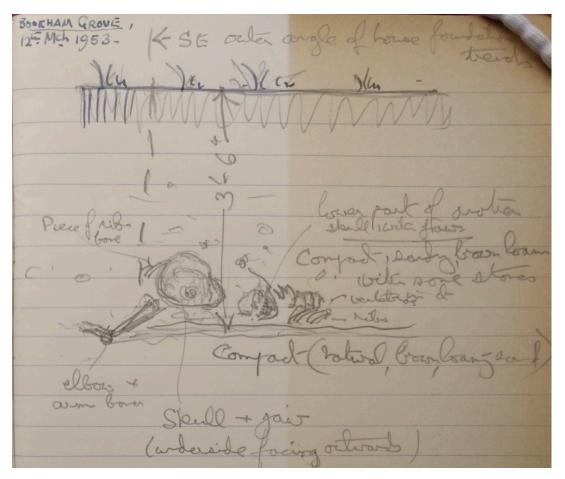


Things to note from this report:

- 12 flats had been created in the old house this would have included the original extension area
- The estate was very wooded lots of trees
- There was an entrance at the corner of the current Lower Shott and Dorking Road for carriages to enter the estate
- The semi circular driveway to the house
- The plan looks like it marks out the walled kitchen garden to the south of the house

'Skeletons (dismembered portions of two) found, during building work, in the grounds of Bookham Grove in 1953, alongside the line of the original main road. The circumstances of the burials (of which some portions were excavated and examined by the writer) and the unusually elongated type of jawbone possessed by both, similar to those of early Danish burials figured by Professor Bronsted in Danmarks Oldtid, imply that they may have belonged to the Danish armies ravaging the country in later Saxon times. The marks of sword-slashes severing the jaw and cutting into the back of the skull, evidently given from the rear and with a Saxon type of broad bladed sword, may imply execution after capture or blows delivered by a pursuer while they were in flight. Lying in a hollow, and with only a shallow depth of soil covering them, the bodies were dismembered at the date of burial as the portions excavated established. Map reference - Surrey 6", XXV N.E., 15725542-15885580.' ²³

In 1953 there was an archeological dig at Bookham Grove House building estate ^{24, 25}. On the 12th March a drawing was made of 2 skeletal remains found. The notes state they were found at the South East outer angle of the house foundations trench at a depth of 3 foot 6 inches. The following bones were found: a piece of rib bone, an elbow and arm bone, a skull and jaw with the underside facing outwards, lower part of another skull with jaw, vertebras and ribs. They were buried in compact, sandy, brown loam with some stones, and lay on a compact surface consisting of natural, brown, loamy sand. There were no signs of any dug pit, or grave sides, but the portions of bodies lie apparently in a shallow silt filled pit or depression. The person who wrote these notes, think the remains are about 9th century or earlier. There were no fragments of pottery or anything else to confirm this though.



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 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 AD 851 ²⁶.

Aclea in Olde English means Oak Field. This should survive as Oakley and there are many examples of that name in England, but none survive in Surrey. However, there is an Ockley. This could be the place?

The Battle of Aclea occurred in 851 between the West Saxons led by Æthelwulf, King of Wessex and the Danish Vikings at an unknown location in Surrey - but quite possibly at Ockley between Dorking and Horsham, butting up to Leith Hill. It resulted in a West Saxon victory.

Little is known about the battle and the most important source of information comes from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which recorded that:

'three and a half hundred ships came into the mouth of the Thames and stormed Canterbury and London and put to flight Beorhtwulf, King of Mercia with his army, and then went south over the Thames into Surrey and King Æthelwulf and his son Æthelbald with the West Saxon army fought against them at Aclea, and there made the greatest slaughter of a heathen raiding-army that we have heard tell of up to the present day, and there took the victory." ²⁷



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High Street c.1955 looking up to Bookham Grove House - note the trees 28



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 $\label{eq:continuous} The \ Victoria \ Hotel \ c.1955$ Bookham Grove House wall and garden to left 28



C.1955 White Way looking towards Bookham Grove House - note the Cedar tree at centre

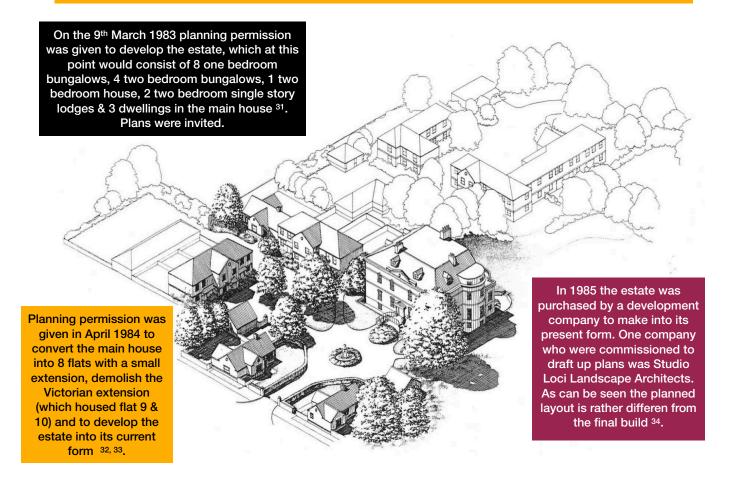


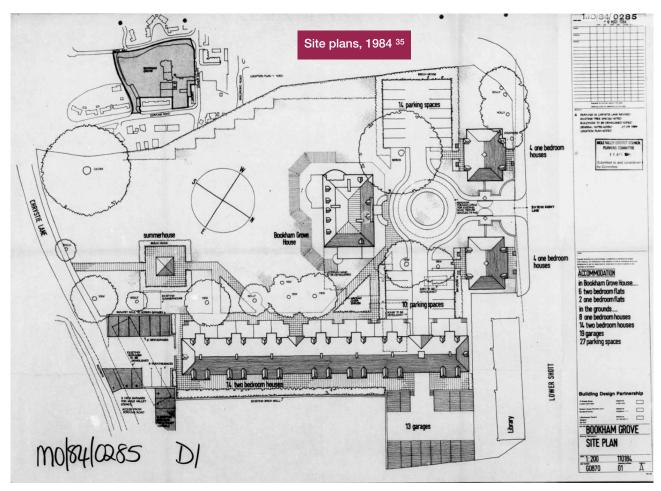
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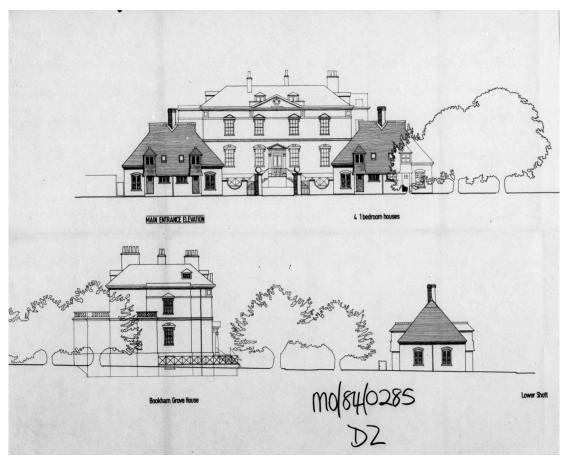


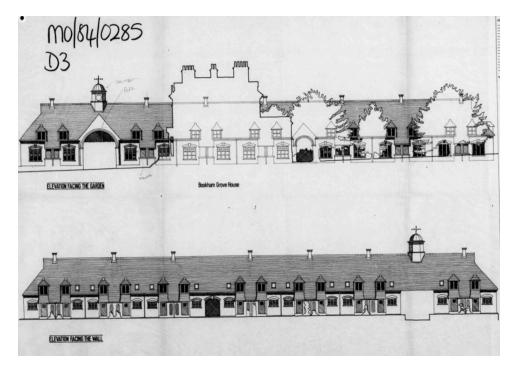
Bookham Grove 1973 30

Note that the extension to the left of the main house still exists, but the grounds have dramatically reduced with the building of the council estate. Also note the driveway to the main house

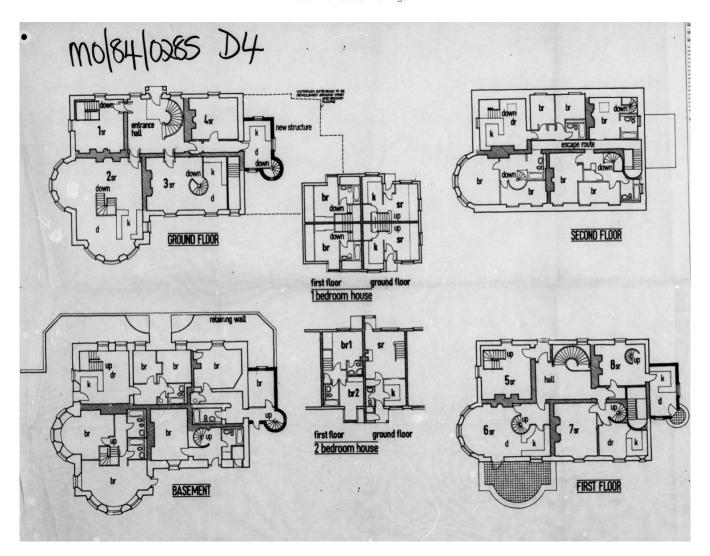




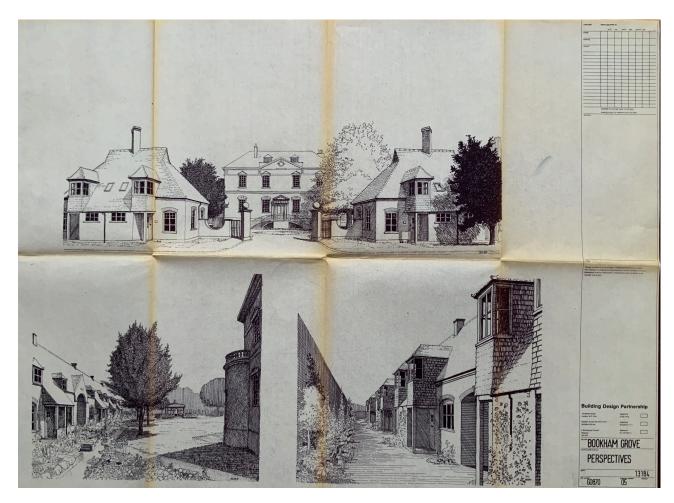




1984 Architectural Drawings 35



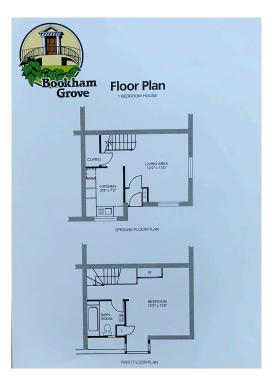
Note that the planned layout of the 8 flats is different to what was finally built, for instance with inclusion of spiral staircases used in the plans but not in the build



1985 Architectural Drawings 35



1985 Floor Plan 2 bedroom house 36



1985 Floor Plan 1 bedroom house $^{\rm 36}$



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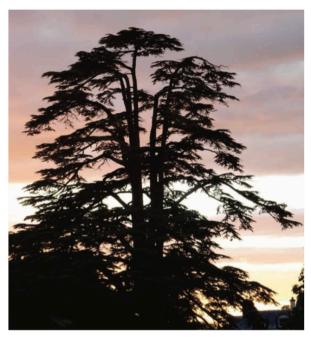
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1985 Sale prices 36

Farewell to the Bookham Grove cedar





At the end of June, Great Bookham sadly lost one of its most magnificent trees, a huge Cedar of Lebanon in the grounds of Bookham Grove. The tree was almost 120 feet (37 metres) in height, and at its most spectacular when seen silhouetted against the sky at sunset.

Bookham Grove Management Company expressed huge regret and deep sadness that this beautiful old tree had to be felled. The life of the tree had been prolonged by the addition of bracing ties to support the upper limbs about eight years ago. Unfortunately, during Storm Katie earlier this year, and despite the bracing, one huge limb measuring over 90 feet (27 metres) in length broke off and crashed to the ground, but fortunately did little damage. On further assessment by a specialist, the tree

was deemed no longer viable due to the weakened structure and the extent of decay, and also its position close to the road.

The Cedar of Lebanon was introduced to Britain in 1638. The oldest one still living today was planted in 1646 by Dr. Edward Pocock in the grounds of his rectory near Wantage in Oxfordshire. The species subsequently became popular with landscape gardeners and many were planted in parks and private estates in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Readers may remember the majestic cedar in the grounds of Highclere castle used in the title scenes of Downton Abbev.

The Bookham Grove cedar was probably planted more than 300 years ago, before the house itself was built in the early 1700s. The main trunk had reached a girth of 20.5 feet (6.25 metres), making it the twelfth largest known specimen in the country, and the largest in Surrey according to the website www.monumentaltrees.com. It was also bigger than the two cedars mentioned by Thomas Packenham in his book Meeting with Remarkable Trees.

A substantial portion of the trunk and lower branches has been left as a memorial to this iconic tree, and it is hoped that some of the timber can be used in creative ways to make benches and other items. The Bookham Tree Wardens are also investigating the feasibility of planting a replacement tree as a legacy for future generations.

Jenny Wilson, Bookham Tree Warden volunteer

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