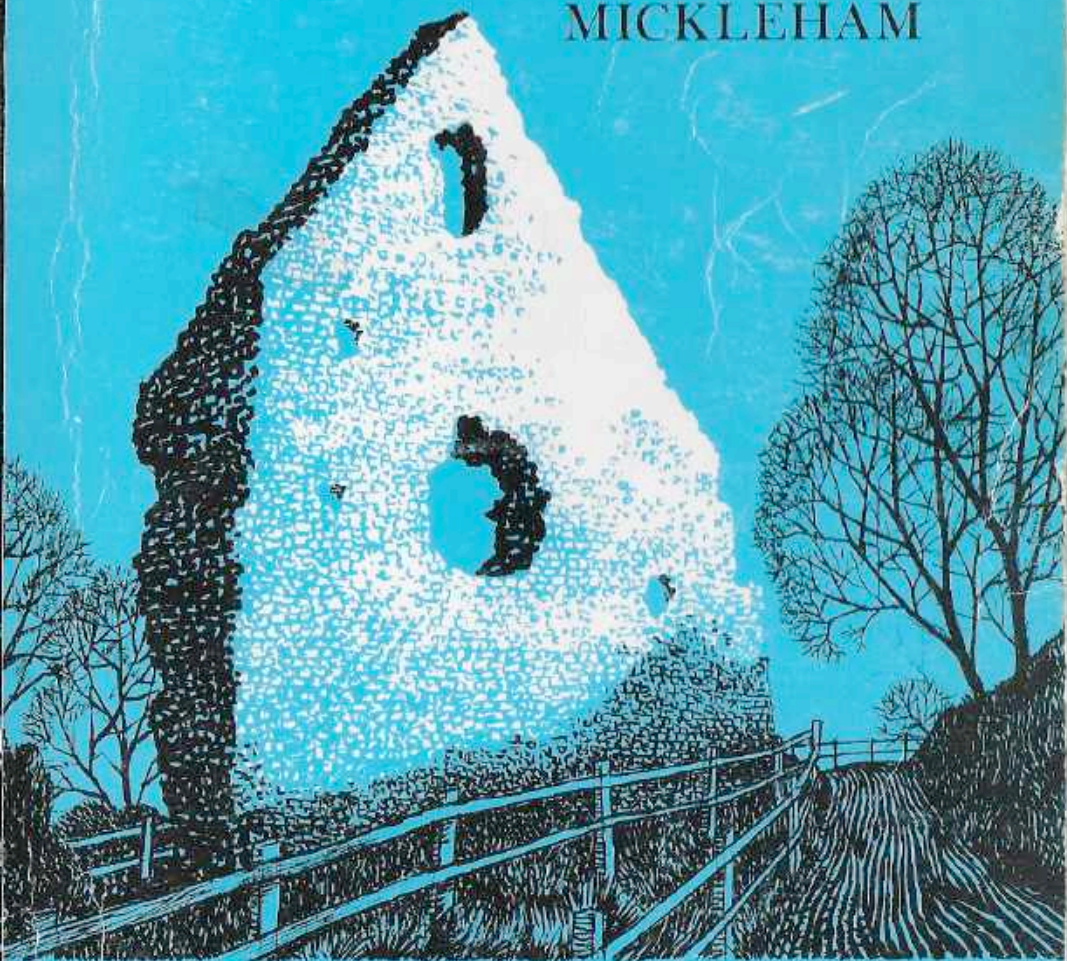


The Manor of WISTOMBLE

in the Parish of
MICKLEHAM



A local history by Ronald Shepperd

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MICKLEHAM

A local History

Ronald Shepperd

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First published in 1982
by the Westhumble Association

Printed in Great Britain by
Charles Clarke, Haywards Heath

*To my Wife Joy
for all her help*

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*FOREWORD**by Sir Carl Aarvold**President of the Westhumble Association*

It was, I think, Tolstoy who commented that History would be an excellent thing if only it was true, but in this charming sketch of the history of the Manor of Westhumble we have the excellent advantage of a history that is completely fascinating and that defies our disbelief. The long-since past and the immediate present are linked by indisputable facts and irrefutable speculation – inspired imagination is based on research and discovery.

We who have the good fortune to live in this happy and glorious part of Surrey owe a deep debt of gratitude to Ronnie Shepperd for all the labour he has so clearly put into the production of this volume and for the enjoyment he has so clearly derived from doing so. The result is not only a work of erudition, but one that streams with interest and happiness, and gives to this reader not only a sense of pleasure but the cheerful feeling of being so much better informed than he ever thought he could be.

Those of us who know the places of which the author writes are thrilled to learn how and why they became the places that we know. Those who pick up this book for easy and pleasant reading will very readily become engrossed in its story, and will find an account of social habits and change over a period stretching from the Ice Age to the present time. The author has the happy knack of displaying 'eternity in a grain of sand'.

There is much more to be revealed and written about this small patch in the tapestry of the countryside of Surrey. We must look forward to the author steadily enlarging the horizon

of his researches, to tell us more of what happened and is happening to Norbury – Polesden – Fredley – Mickleham and so on, so that we can enjoy his further dissertations, and future generations will know what we of this age were really like. At least they will know from this book that there never was such a place as West Humble. Go back if they so desire to the Manor of Wistomble, but let there be no further corruption of its name than the Westhumble we are so proud of to-day.

Carl Aarvold

Sept. 3rd 1981

INTRODUCTION

Some three years ago I was asked by a group of local residents to give a talk on 'The early days of Westhumble'. This request came, not because I had any specialised knowledge of local history, but by virtue of the fact that having lived here for forty years, one might be expected to remember what life was like in the hamlet during the late thirties when the present residential estate was being established.

As my thoughts wandered back over those years I became aware that I knew very little about the place, and still less about its early history; certain features had always interested me – the ruins opposite Chapel Farm, reputed to have been built as a chapel for Pilgrims; the beautiful little chapel by the railway bridge we attended each Sunday, which we were told had originally been a barn, but nobody seemed quite sure; or the Infant School, looking like a Wendy House, built on to the side of an old cottage – what was their true history? And what about the house at the corner of Westhumble Street where, it was said, Daniel Defoe once lived, and the archway leading into Camilla Drive with the word 'LELADENE' on it; who built it, and what did the letters V.F. emblazoned on each side stand for?

These and many other questions suddenly became important and demanded answers, and thus began a delightful journey back into the past; and the facts which I gathered on the way have been set down in the following pages in the form of a story.

Although the whole parish of Mickleham comes into the story, its main theme is Westhumble, a small hamlet built on rising ground on the western bank of the River Mole; here it faces, across the river, its neighbour Boxhill which towers above it, not only in height but in grandeur and fame. Everybody has heard of Boxhill, one of the most renowned beauty spots in Southern England; how many have heard of Westhumble? Even the Local Authorities seem a little uncertain, if we may judge from the fact that they have not yet made up