



# Mickleham & Westhumble Local History Group NEWSLETTER

Volume 5 – February 2018 Editor: Sue Tatham

## Mickleham Churchyard Lichens

Reprinted from the *July/August 2017 Mickleham Parish Magazine*.

Churchyard memorials and church walls are an important habitat for lichens, associations between a fungus and an alga (or more rarely a cyanobacterium). These give the stonework a patchwork of colours, which vary according to the type of stone. This is easily seen even on a casual glance as limestones tend to have many orange-yellow patches, whereas sandstones and granites tend to have greens, greys and browns. Some species grow just on the surface, while others are immersed, growing just under the surface of the stone.

Mickleham churchyard has been the subject of intensive study by professional lichenologists and citizen scientists since the late 1960s, partly because of its proximity to the Field Studies Council field centre at Juniper Hall. Particularly careful recording was undertaken by the late Peter W. James, lichenologist at the Natural History Museum in London and Joy Fildes who studied it for an MSc degree,

and in the 1970s it had the honour of being the churchyard with the most recorded lichen species in the UK: 153 species were known. Repeated visits have been made by students from the Juniper Hall Centre on specialist lichen courses, for many years led by Frank S Dobson and more recently by myself. Specialists have also visited independently from time to time, including a visit by the British Lichen Society in 1993 when 105 species were seen in one day. On 5<sup>th</sup> September 2016, the site was revisited by Frank along with Mark Powell and Paul F Cannon, and on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2017 by six members of the South-East England Lichen Group.

A staggering 182 species (including six specialised fungi that only grow on lichens) were recorded as present in 2016-17. It therefore still ranks as one of the richest recorded churchyards in the UK. The cumulative total ever recorded there now stands at 251 species, of which 69 were not refound

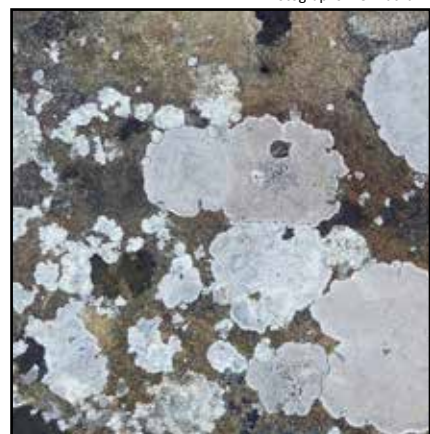
in 2016-17. Most of the species that have not been seen in recent years were ones that occurred on the elms which were lost to Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s or on the ground or mosses.

It has not yet been possible to inventory the stones individually, an extremely time-consuming task, but several memorials of particular note have now been identified. At least maps of the memorials are available, which will help expedite this task in the future.

Lichenologists greatly appreciate the care with which the church authorities continue to manage the churchyard in a way that safeguards its importance as a lichen habitat. The South-East England Lichen Group would also like to thank the Rev'd Malcolm Raby, Carole Brough Fuller, Sue Tatham, Judith Long and Judy Kinloch for allowing us to visit the churchyard and providing so much helpful background information.

Professor/Cllr David L Hawksworth CBE

Photographs: Ben Tatham



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## The Group's website

[www.hugofox.com/community/mickleham-westhumble-local-history-group-13483/](http://www.hugofox.com/community/mickleham-westhumble-local-history-group-13483/)

Manager: Roger Davis

## M&WLHG Programme for 2018

- Friday 16<sup>th</sup> February  
AGM at Mickleham Village Hall followed by a talk by David Langford from Dorking Museum *Time Gentlemen, Please – The story of Dorking Pubs*
- Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> June  
Visit to Abinger Church and Goddards (Lutyens house & Gertrude Jekyll garden) with pub lunch
- Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> October  
Visit to The Spike, Guildford (Old Vagrants and Casuals Ward of Guildford Workhouse).

# Task Group Report: The Village Archives

This year we have donated to the Surrey History Centre (on long loan) the minutes and records of the Westhumble Residents' Association from 1945-2017. They can be viewed at the SHC in Woking, reference nos. 9189/1 and 9189/2. Mick Hallett has produced an extensive account of the contents which we intend to make available to members soon.

Other donations (approved by the PCC) include assorted churchyard plans, a second Bryant photograph album of village scenes and parish-ioners, including the late 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration when the church was closed and services took place in an iron building, and other records of Mickleham history written by Samuel Woods in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These can also be seen at the SHC, reference nos. 9752/1, 9752/1/2, 9752/1/3, 9752/2. If you order the day before, they can be available on arrival. All these documents have been digitally copied for our archive.

After the sad and sudden death of Richard Roberts-Miller, Fiona asked that we take away the records that Richard had kept of Parish Council business over the 20 years that he was chairman. Unless needed by the current PC these papers will be lodged

in the archive and cover many areas of contention that have arisen over the years, such as the plans to reduce the tragic accidents on the A24, and the leasing of Norbury Park to Surrey Wildlife. Ranging from historical planning applications to allotment holdings, the scope is hugely various. Currently these papers are being catalogued and entered on the archive spreadsheets, as are the many items that add to our growing collection of the village's history.

We have dealt with a number of queries over the past year, some of which are covered in the churchyard section. We spent some time looking for the history and whereabouts of a house called simply The Cottage, which is shown on the 1895 Ordnance Survey map but which was very hard to pinpoint. Our enquirer was looking for a guesthouse where Annie Besant and Charles Leadbetter of the \*Theosophist movement had stayed while developing her clairvoyant powers and astral vision. They received important guests of the movement and used to conduct their psychic research in the back garden before walking up the hill. There was a good reason for our difficulty as we finally discovered that it must have been demolished

and Bencomb, now Glenrose, built in its place. Our research showed that it was leased to Allan Chaplin while he was serving in Ootacamund in India in 1898; he and his wife built the new house and lived there until their deaths; both are buried in Mickleham churchyard. Later it was occupied by William Whitely, the department store owner. The name Annie Besant is one we have come across before as she is said to have lead the strike of the matchwork girls who worked for Bryant & May (Bryant being the owner of Juniper Hill in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.)

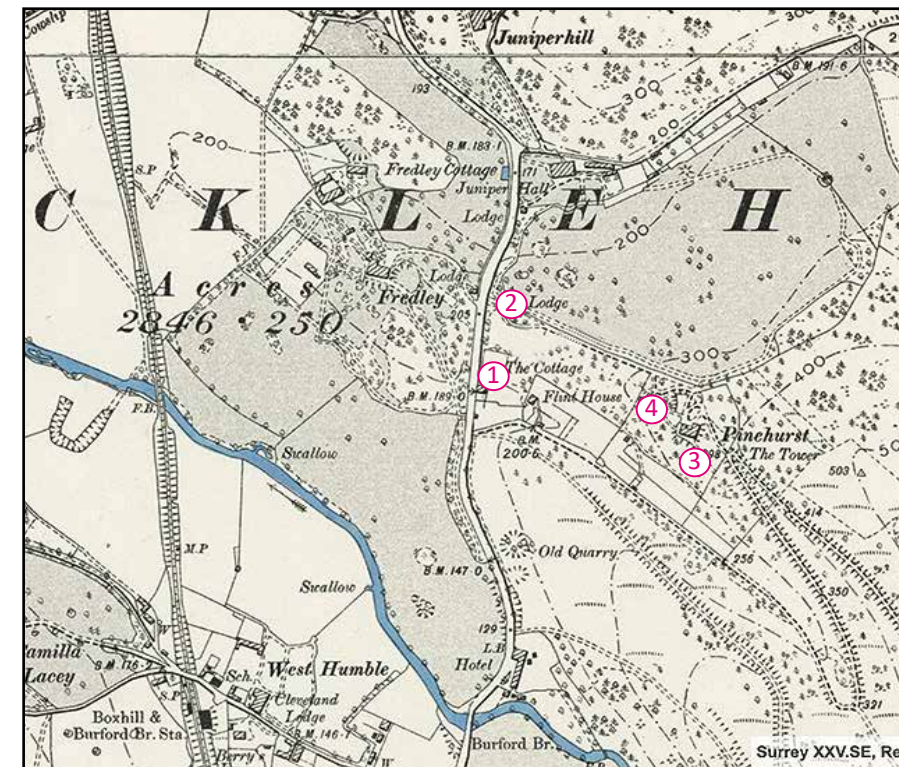
Every bit of research leads to another. Looking for The Cottage we discovered a lot about Pinehurst, the coachman's/gardener's cottage (now Little Pinehurst) and another that was then called Coal House Cottage. There is a tablet in the tower of the church which records a grant of land by Henry Thomas Hope of Deepdene for the benefit of the Mickleham Coal Charity. A cottage was built on the site 'furnishing a lodgement for the coals and the rent of it is appropriated to the funds of the charity'. The grant was made in 1839 and vested in two trustees who charged a peppercorn rent for 99 years, 'reversible to the donor and his heirs when not used for the purpose for which it was given.' The space for coal storage is still to be seen under one of the bedrooms, supported on columns. It is now owned by the National Trust, given in lieu of death duties by the Corbet Hue family who then lived at Pinehurst and was the main benefactor of St Faith's Trust for children in destitute or straitened circumstances and unmarried mothers.

We are happy to research any topic of local interest that members would like to explore.

Judy Kinloch

\*Theosophy: occult movement originating in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with roots that can be traced to ancient Gnosticism and Neoplatonism. The term theosophy, derived from the Greek *theos* ('god') and *sophia* ('wisdom'), is generally understood to mean 'divine wisdom'.

Encyclopaedia Britannica



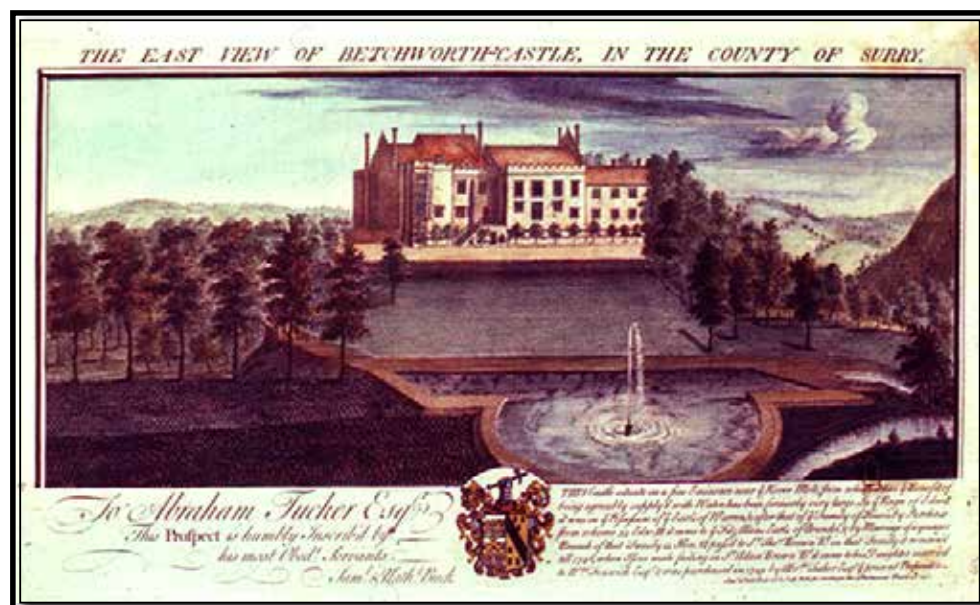
Detail from 1895 OS map showing:  
 1. The Cottage; 2. Coal House Cottage;  
 3. Pinehurst; 4. Pinehurst Cottage.



# Our Fourth Annual General Meeting

On 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017 following the AGM of the M&WLHG in Mickleham Village Hall we were treated to a fascinating presentation about Betchworth Castle by Martin Higgins. The following report appeared in the April 2017 edition of the Mickleham Parish Magazine.

## Betchworth Castle



On 24<sup>th</sup> February following the AGM of the M&WLHG, members were treated to an excellent talk about Betchworth Castle by Martin Higgins, Surrey County Council's Historic Buildings Officer and current owner of the castle. Martin began by telling us that the castle was originally part of the Manor of West Betchworth, whereas Betchworth as we think of it today was in the Manor of East Betchworth.

The castle was not built for defence but was in fact a fortified manor house, built to impress and demonstrate the status of the owner. By the mid-1960s the castle ruins were owned by the local council and were becoming an expensive liability as the structure was in imminent danger of collapse. Several decades later, in 2008, Martin began negotiations with Mole Valley District Council to purchase the castle and thus achieve his ambition to own and restore the castle site, where he had played as a child. The process took three years to complete with a purchase price of £1.

It is not known exactly when, and by whom, the castle was built, but in 1379 Richard II granted John Fitzalan (d'Arundel), Marshal of England, a licence to crenellate his residence on

the site and to empark 360 acres of the surrounding land (part of this is now Betchworth Park Golf Course). In theory, a licence to crenellate gave permission to fortify a building but in practice was often a way to show royal recognition. In 1448 a second licence to crenellate was given to Sir Thomas Browne who had acquired the castle through his marriage to Eleanor Fitzalan of the Arundel family. He was later executed for treason. Eleanor was unlucky in her choice of husbands because her second one, Sir Thomas Vaughan, who had survived capture by pirates while taking the treasure of Henry VI to Ireland, was later executed by the future King Richard III.

Martin then explained how, over the following centuries, numerous additions and alterations were made to the castle. There are several contemporary drawings and paintings of the castle, enabling us to piece together the changes to the building. John Aubrey made a sketch of the castle in 1673 which shows an impressive four-storey gatehouse. The castle also had an enormous hall, four bays long, and a large bay window. Interestingly, part of the castle was constructed

from hard chalk which Martin believes probably came from Westhumble. At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the castle was bought by William Fenwick who demolished a significant section of it, thereby turning it into a much smaller country residence. The engraving (above) of the east view of the castle, produced in the 1730, shows its impressive location on the top of a steep slope, with a commanding view of the surrounding countryside. A line of small yew trees is visible, some of which are still standing today, although considerably larger than in the picture! A terrace can also be seen, an astonishing 300 feet long and 8 feet high, constructed of white chalk with greensand below. There was also a magnificent avenue of lime trees and many beautiful old chestnut trees in the park.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the castle was owned by the banker, Henry Peters. He commissioned Sir John Soane to remodel the house and park and, fortunately for historians, the drawings for these alterations have survived. Soane added a conservatory onto the house and built a separate stable block which was later converted into houses, now located in Castle >>>

Photographs: Ben Tatham



Eastern face of castle today



The stable block in Castle Gardens

## Task Group Report: Oral histories

For those of you unfamiliar with Oral Histories, it is a way of preserving memories of the past so that future generations can glimpse a little of everyday life that might otherwise go unrecorded. The past two projects have been quite specific, the first, by Mari Ottridge, on Rose's Stores and then our 'Feeding the Family' project, which covered all aspects of how food was obtained, stored, prepared and eaten.

With these projects safely stored in the archives of the Surrey History Centre, we decided it was time to dust off the microphone and venture out again. This time however we are not picking a single topic to talk about but instead are asking local residents

to tell us, in their own words, the story of their lives from their earliest memories through to today. You may be surprised what interesting people we have in our community and what fascinating tales they have to tell.

In due course these recordings will also be sent to the archive for us all to share, so watch - or should I say listen? - to this space.

If you know someone who you think has a story to tell and would be willing to contribute please let us know. I think we can say that, without exception, our interviewees have enjoyed the opportunity to recall their past and unlike Paxman, we never interrupt!

Anne Weaver & Roger Davis

>>> Gardens. The next significant chapter in the history of the estate involved the Hope family, known locally for their connection with the Deepdene. Thomas Hope was one of the richest men in England when he acquired the Deepdene at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the estate was enlarged soon afterwards by the addition of Chart Park, a gift from Thomas' brother. Thomas' son Henry inherited the Deepdene on the death of his father and in 1834 bought Betchworth Castle and its estate. The castle itself was surplus to his requirements and he had the roof removed to create a 'romantic ruin'.

When Martin acquired this 'romantic ruin', not only was it unsafe but the whole site was completely overgrown. Through an enormous amount of hard work by Martin and other volunteers, funded mostly by grant money from local councils and organisations such as English Heritage and Surrey Historic Buildings Trust, the area around the castle is now accessible to the public. The castle can be reached through a gate off the south side of the A25, opposite Wyevale Garden Centre, near the entrance to Betchworth Park Golf Course. Martin is hoping that by the time you read this article there will be a signpost pointing the way.

Judith Long



The Village  
Archive is  
looking for a  
new home

If you have a ground floor room with separate access, please get in touch with Mickleham & Westhumble Local History Group Chairman, Ben Tatham on 01306 882547 ben@thetathams.co.uk



## Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

Recently I have enjoyed the interesting task of reading through old copies of parish magazines ranging from the 1880s to the 1960s in order to record the essential information as part of the Local History Group's archiving work. We do not have a complete record but are fortunate to have a full run from 1920 to 1936 thanks to Rev'd A.W. Bedford who had them all bound into one volume.

What struck me most forcibly within a very short time were the similarities between the issues which trouble parishioners both then and now. There are of course ways in which these documents remind one that the world is very different nowadays but also that human nature remains the same.

For me it was particularly interesting to note the concerns relating to church life that which are so similar to our own in 2017. As far back as 1928 a growing indifference to organised Christianity was noted with a reduction in the number of communicants. This continued in 1929 with concerns about poor attendance at evening services as they no longer fitted in with 'modern life' and concern that although church attendance was good on Easter Day, work and alternative attractions kept people away at other times. To me, having grown up during the '50s when there seemed little to do on a Sunday other than go to church, this came as a surprise. Already it was noted in the 1930s that it was more and more difficult to suit everyone in terms of church services and that people's approach to church had changed so that they did not necessarily attend their local church. Again I had not thought of this happening so long ago. In April 1935 the problem of Christians who behave selfishly was aired as this was seen to be discouraging new members from joining the church – a criticism which is still sometimes heard today.

The church was already struggling to find the money for the 'quota' system whereby money was paid to the diocese to fund its activities – a continuing problem to this day. Over the next two decades resentment over the money requested for the setting up of the new diocese of Guildford

and its new cathedral cropped up with increasing regularity. A consistent theme during the '20s and '30s was the need for more choir members, particularly men – familiar? Previous rectors gave interesting insights into their ambitions and problems. When Rev'd WR Lloyd arrived in 1897 he proclaimed his intention to visit every house in the parish in order to get to know people, something which I know has been repeated in more recent times. In 1920 when Rev'd Bedford arrived he lamented the wilderness of a garden which needed to be maintained (even larger than now of course and another aspect of life at the Rectory which some of you will recognise.)

As far back as the 1930s difficulties in finding volunteers to run such activities as Sunday School are mentioned, as is the lack of children attending Sunday School. Concern was expressed in 1929 at the lack of leaders for boys' activities, then in 1935 at the lack of young men in the village and in 1936 at the scarcity of children in the village. How cyclical these things are, which must give us hope. As far back as October 1929 the unwillingness of young people to help with village organisations is lamented. I suspect that some of you will have heard this (somewhat unfair) criticism in recent times as well. Two village organisations which seem to have been running since the beginning of time are the Choral Society and the Horticultural Society but in 1929 the latter was struggling with the all too familiar difficulty of finding anyone prepared to take over as either secretary or treasurer. Nevertheless, then as now, the same names occur over and over again as contributors to local activities. In the 1880s the names of the Gordon Clarks of Mickleham Hall, Mr Praed of Mickleham Downs (Lord of the Manor of Mickleham and Patron of the Living) and the Bryants at Juniper Hill occur repeatedly and in the 1930s the Gordon Clarks, Miss MacAndrew of Juniper Hall, Mrs Batchelor of the builder's yard, Mrs Child of the timber yard, Miss Cullen of Mickleham Downs, Lady Lawrence of Burford Lodge and

Mr Gordon Pollock of Old House are mentioned over and over again.

In 1887 it was intriguing to read of the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. These were held in the grounds of Mickleham Hall. Then, as now, there were medals and mugs for the children as well as fireworks, sporting events and refreshments, the same formula as has been used for all our current Queen's Jubilee celebrations. In 1934 the possibility of holding a fête in the Rectory garden was proposed, on the basis that there was no reason otherwise to have such a big garden. As we know this happens today although there have been times when it has lapsed.

The ever-familiar criticism of young people appears from time to time, such as in the obituary to Mrs Leonard Cunliffe of Juniper Hill in 1928 where it is noted that the younger generation no longer follows 'rule and duty' in the way that she did. An 'every man for himself' attitude is also noted in 1931 followed in 1932 by a lament that people are 'grumbling and discontented' instead of 'getting on with it'. Higher education and mothers also came in for veiled criticism when cookery classes were started in the village in 1890 in order to 'encourage thrift and remove the sin of waste'.

In my reading of the old magazines I was surprised to learn also of certain other issues, affecting the infrastructure of the village which continue to cause controversy today and are still unresolved. In 1922 there was a proposal to introduce street lighting, strongly supported by the Rector but equally hotly opposed by another reader. In 1932 the residents of Byttom Hill were reported as being unwilling to pay for repairs to the road. (Interesting to note that in 1938 Mr Praed helped with the cost of the repairs from his own pocket.)

In the churchyard the problem that sometimes headstones were erected without gaining approval was noted as far back as 1929. As someone who has lived opposite or next to the churchyard for some years I was intrigued to read of the problem of trees dying in the churchyard for >>>

>>> no apparent reason as far back as 1931. I have observed this problem for the last 18 years and it has not gone away! I was also intrigued to see that bulb planting in the churchyard was carried out in 1924 and again in 1931. This has also been carried out twice in the time that I have been here. As someone who attended the consecration of our latest 'new churchyard' last summer it was interesting to read of the consecration of the 'new churchyard' in 1924, following the previous 'new churchyard' in 1886.

Of particular interest to those who were involved in the construction of the new children's playground last summer were the entries relating to the offer by the Mackworth Praed family to lease the land for a Children's Recreation Ground in 1925. This offer was accepted and the land leased for a few years before being bought by an anonymous donor (later identified as Miss Flora Valentina MacAndrew of Juniper Hall) for the village. Generations of us have enjoyed this facility with our children and grandchildren. Interestingly the problem of dangerous traffic through the village is mentioned on several occasions during the 20s and 30s particularly in relation to the safety of local children. Hard to imagine that the volume of traffic was sufficiently great at that time but of course the by-pass had not been built and children had no alternative but to walk and nowhere else to play.

The Village Hall was already a well-used facility and it is intriguing to note that as far back as 1926 the staging of productions was prevented for a time as a result of new fire regulations. 'Health and Safety' is not entirely new!

In the spring and summer of 1968 the church organ was renovated provoking the comment that 'the organ was in pieces and lying around the church' – a scene that will be familiar to anyone who attended the church a few years ago. The church gates were evidently repainted in 1965 and opinion then, as now, was divided as to the aesthetic attributes of the red and gold.

Beyond the confines of our village it was interesting to see that concerns about globalisation were already being expressed by 1936. It was noted that trade from the Far East was already causing the 'spindles of the North' to lie idle in the mills of Britain.

There were of course some radical differences in the past from the lives we lead today. The parish magazines reveal that throughout the '20s and '30s 'Missionary Sales' were held in the Rectory garden every summer (precursors to the fêtes which began in 1935). The most profitable stall every year was 'Needlework'. Crafts pursued by the young men of the village were ploughing, thatching and rick-making and their success in competitions was noted in April 1928.

Not surprisingly in the days when transport out of the village was more limited there seemed to be more local entertainment such as concerts and

theatre productions in the Village Hall. Despite the oft repeated concern over the diminishing number of churchgoers, 27 candidates were presented for confirmation in 1929 – a very large number for so small a population. There were also many more services held each Sunday both in Mickleham and Westhumble. Rev'd Bedford was assisted by a curate and also several retired clergy, including his predecessor Rev'd Lloyd. As we know, clergy never completely retire! The church organ was causing concern again in 1925 but for a very different reason – it was driven by water power and the building of the new houses in Dell Close had reduced the water pressure. The tenure of churchwardens was much longer than it is today and in October 1936 Mr Gordon Pollock celebrated his 38<sup>th</sup> year as churchwarden. The way the church was funded showed some significant differences in the days when the Rector held the 'living'. I was surprised to read that the Rector planned to use his 'Easter Offering' in 1922 to pay towards the mortgage on the benefice. Later still in 1968 Rev'd Cornell was expressing his dismay at being expected to bear the cost of resurfacing Dell Close – something he was obviously not in a position to do.

Most surprising of all to me was the level of vandalism in the church which was recorded in the 1930s and the 1960s. There had been various instances of theft and also of people picnicking in church and leaving their litter behind. In 1968 the theft of silver from the vestry safe was recorded. As a result the church was kept locked and volunteers were requested to supervise the church on a rota basis on Bank Holidays so that visitors could look around. How lucky we are today to be able to keep the church open every day.

Mr WM Praed who, as previously mentioned, was generous with both his time and his money funded repairs to the church from his own pocket in 1887 in his capacity as churchwarden – something current churchwardens will be relieved not to have to contemplate.

Unlike the present day, there were so many local residents needing places in the Almshouses in 1930 that they were

*Continued overleaf >>>*



*From the village archives: a 1936 postcard of the churchyard east of the church showing the 1924 extension in the foreground.*



>>> Continued from previous page

reserved exclusively for local people. A surprising situation was noted in 1931 whereby six local houses were standing empty. The reasons for this were not disclosed but presumably related to social and economic problems of the times. The life of the village must have been considerably diminished thereby not least because of the loss of employment in the big houses. In 1933 the Parish Council was disbanded when the Dorking Urban Council was set up. In 1935 the parish magazine was reported to be struggling to maintain its popularity. How fortunate we are not to experience problems in any of these areas today.

Of purely historical interest I noted that when the new flats were built by the council in Swanworth Lane in 1967 priority was given to Mickleham people, with the result that several former residents returned.

Way back in 1887 St John's School Leatherhead was frequently mentioned in the magazine as 'St John's Foundation School for the sons of poor clergymen'. The school which my granddaughter now attends is a flourishing and highly sought-after school but still remembers its origins.

Of particular significance at the present



Dell Close in the 1930s

time, when our 465 bus has recently been under threat, is the information that as far back as 1925 an 'early bus service' was introduced so that commuters to London could travel to Leatherhead station in time for the train. How sad to think that this facility has been available to Mickleham residents for nearly 100 years and might have been abandoned in 2017!

These old parish magazines are a most fascinating source of information about our very special village of Mickleham. Sadly, but for obvious

reasons, there is much less information about Westhumble in the older magazines although Sunday services at the Chapel of Ease (then known quite simply as 'The Barn') and the Infant School (attached to Catbells) are mentioned quite frequently. It would be wonderful to fill in the gaps in our knowledge if any readers have copies of magazines from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century or from the '40s, '50s or '70s hidden away in their attics.

Angela Ireland

## Suffragettes in the Surrey Hills

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence acted as the organization's treasurer, providing the stable leadership that allowed the Pankhurst campaign to flourish. She was always at Mrs Pankhurst's side, marching beside her, and responsible for most of the running of the organization. She and her husband's London home became the organization's headquarters and their Surrey house its unofficial country home, where tactics were formulated and women recuperated from forcible feeding. The house was at the centre of dramatic events in 1912 when the government sued the couple for the costs of their trial for conspiracy, putting bailiffs into the house and selling the contents at public auction. The WSPU ran a six-week-long campaign in Dorking and the surrounding villages to protest

at the injustice of these actions. Emmeline was imprisoned six times for the cause. Also imprisoned, her husband was nicknamed 'Godfather' by the women, standing bail for hundreds with his own money. He was the only man to play a significant role in the WSPU.

It is therefore proposed to place a blue plaque, in the style of the English Heritage scheme in London, on the house where the couple lived throughout the campaign for the vote and which played such a significant part in the story of the militant campaign. The Museum is seeking to raise £700 to cover the costs of design, production, and installation of the plaque to be installed in the centenary year. If you would like to make a donation see the museum's website:

[www.dorkingmuseum.org.uk](http://www.dorkingmuseum.org.uk)

## June Visit to Warren House

Although the visit to Warren House was organised for the History Group, a treat was in store for gardeners too. The house is now a conference centre and wedding venue but was originally one of the finest country houses on the Coombe Estate in Kingston. Our visit began with coffee in the old billiard room where Edward VII had played and where we were introduced to Vicky Good, whose family bought the property in 2005. Vicky has researched the history of the house and its owners and recently published a book on the subject.

Vicky told us that the house was built in the 1860s for Hugh Hammersley, a wealthy banker with Cox & Co (and the uncle of Gertrude Jekyll), on part of 14 acres of land on the Coombe Estate. Several years later Hammersley acquired an adjoining piece of land containing a Japanese water garden, which had been part of the renowned James Veitch & Sons Coombe Wood Nursery. The water garden was the first of its kind in the country and quite a status symbol.

Substantial additions were made to the house in the 1880s by the next owner, George Grenfell Glyn, 2nd Baron Wolverton and Paymaster-General in Gladstone's government. In 1907 the house was bought by General Sir Arthur Paget and his wife Mary, a wealthy American heiress and society hostess. The Pagets were part of Edward VII's Marlborough House Set and the King made several visits to Warren House. After the deaths of Arthur and Mary, the house passed to their daughter Dame Leila Paget and her husband Sir Ralph Paget, a diplomat and Leila's distant relative. Leila was very different from her mother and found her calling running a military hospital in Serbia during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, after Ralph had been posted to Belgrade. She continued to help with the Serbian Relief Fund and maintained a lifelong connection to Serbia. During WW2 she converted Warren House into a convalescence home for the military. In 1954, when it was becoming increasingly expensive to maintain such a large house, Leila sold Warren House to ICI who used



The original house built in 1876 has black brick decoration

it as a management training centre. For financial reasons ICI later sold off some of the land next to the house, including the famous Japanese water gardens. Fortunately, these are still open to the public twice a year under the National Gardens Scheme. The house was briefly owned by a group of businessmen before Vicky's family acquired it.

The second part of our visit began with a talk by garden designer, Andrew Fisher Tomlin, who has recently designed the Veitch Heritage Garden at Warren House. Andrew explained that the new garden features plants introduced by pioneering plant hunters who were sent all over the world by the famous Veitch Nurseries. Their main propagation nursery was in Coombe Wood near Warren House and they introduced an astonishing number of plants to Europe, including orchids, magnolias and rhododendrons. Five generations of the Veitch family were involved in the nursery business and the RHS continues to award the Veitch Memorial Medal for outstanding contributions to the advancement of the art, science or practice of horticulture. One member of the family, Harry Veitch, was instrumental in founding the Chelsea Flower Show and was knighted for his services to horticulture.

Andrew then took us on a tour of the garden. *En route* to the Veitch

Heritage Garden we stopped to look at the winter garden, which contains a stone grotto made from Pulhamite, an artificial cement render familiar to some of us from the winter garden at Juniper Hill. Next stop was the Veitch Garden itself where established trees, including quinces and a row of pleached limes, mix with new additions such as the handkerchief tree, *Davidia involucrata*, and a grove of *Acer griseum*. The new perennial borders were in full bloom and several of us could not resist making a purchase at the plant stall (*Astrantia 'Shaggy'* being a popular choice). After a walk through the rest of the grounds it was time to say our goodbyes. For me it had been the ideal outing – history and horticulture together in one morning!

Judith Long



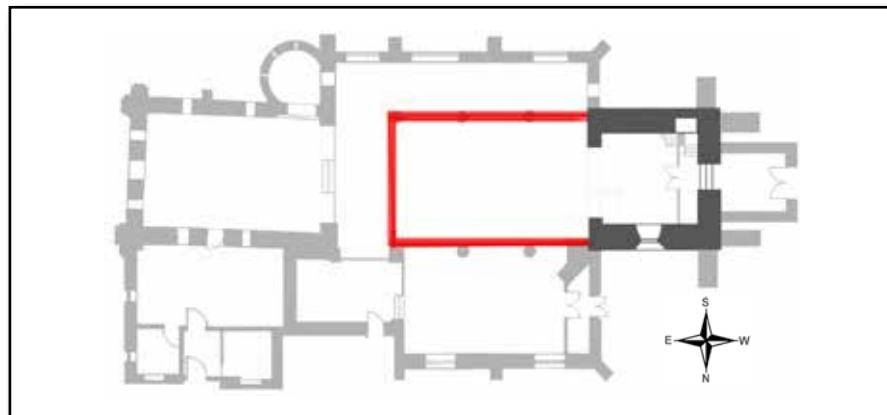
Veitch Memorial Medal  
now awarded by the RHS



# Just how old is Mickleham Church?

First of a series of occasional articles on the history of St Michael's Church by Sue Tatham

Following his conquest of England in 1066, Duke William II of Normandy ordered a great survey of England and parts of Wales to find out what or how much each landholder had in land and livestock and what it was worth, so that they could be taxed accordingly. The information from this survey conducted between 1080 and 1086 was recorded in what is now called the Domesday Book (*domes* meaning 'house'). The entry for Mickleham reads thus: *Nigel holds of the Bishop Micleham. Anafrig held it of King Edward [the Confessor]. Then, and now, it is assessed for 5 hides. The land is for 4 ploughs and 4 bordars and two serfs. There is a Church and 2 acres of meadow. Wood worth 3 hogs.* A 'hide' was the standard unit of assessment used for tax purposes. It was meant to represent the amount of land that could support a household, roughly 120 acres. (So Mickleham covered an area of around 600 acres) The significant phrase for us is **'there is a church'**. Historians have described this as having a tower and a nave about half the length of the present one. It is highly likely that the nave was built of wood, no vestige of which survives. But parts of the original flint-built tower still exist. Evidence of this is a blocked-up window 'of Saxon construction' above the west door which can still be seen from the inside.



Plan of the 1086 church according to early records, superimposed on the footprint of today's church

Archibald Gordon Pollock (1850-1936) who lived at The Old House and was a churchwarden for many years, made a study of church and parish records. In his papers, held in the village archives, he reports that 'in the rebuilding of the church in 1823, on removing the old west casing by the tower, east side, the date 1018 was found marked in red on the old plaster coating. Antiquarians are doubtful if the marking was actually made at that date; it would imply that at that date the nave was being rebuilt.' There was a major Viking invasion at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the nave may have been damaged then.

So when could the first church have been built? Although Christianity came to Britain during the Roman occupation, paganism dominated

during the ensuing years of conflict – the Dark Ages. However, by the 7<sup>th</sup> century a strong alliance between Christianity and Kingship had been established and continued despite subsequent Viking invasions which often targeted monasteries and churches. Remarkably there were no invasions during the reign of Edgar (959-975) – later known as 'Edgar the Peaceful'. One of Edgar's first actions as king was to recall Dunstan, former Abbot of Glastonbury, from exile. Dunstan (later the Archbishop of Canterbury) was Edgar's advisor throughout his reign. This was the time when many village churches were built. Therefore, it is possible that the first church in Mickleham was built as early as 970 AD.

And finally, a clue as to why the early Christians built the church where they did. In 2009 when excavations for the vestry extension uncovered human bones, work had to be stopped for an archaeological survey. This confirmed that the bodies had been buried in the late 18<sup>th</sup> / early 19<sup>th</sup> century. But more significantly for us is that among the bones were pieces of Roman pottery, including box flue tile remains, and ceramic, dating from AD250 – 400. The archaeologist concluded that 'the presence of box flue tiles suggests a heated building, raising the possibility of a villa or bath-house at or close to the site. Given the early (Saxon) origins of the church, it is possible that it was built on a previous high-status Roman site'.

Sue Tatham



Photograph: Ben Tatham

Blocked-up Saxon window on inside west wall of church tower.

The white stone is rock chalk, probably from the mine in Westhumble (now the bat caves)

## Task Group Report: The Churchyard

During 2017 Judy Kinloch and I concentrated on recording the inscriptions in the oldest part of the churchyard. This includes the graves in front of the church and on the south and north sides. We soon realised that progress would be quite slow as the lettering on many of the graves has worn away to a significant extent. Some of the graves required several visits under different weather conditions because the legibility of the inscriptions was very dependent on the amount of sunlight and shade.

Ian Wright generously donated his time to draw up a numbered plan of the graves in the old churchyard, which greatly facilitated our progress. Ian's plan was based on one presented on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1913 by the Rector's Warden, Archibald Gordon Pollock (of the Old House, Mickleham), at the Mickleham Easter Vestry meeting. There are almost 200 graves identified and at this point we have recorded the inscriptions on about half of them.

In September we were fortunate to discover the work of Alfred Ridley Bax (1844-1918), a barrister of the Middle Temple and active member of the Surrey Archaeological Society. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Bax spent much of his time on historical research. He transcribed many parish registers and recorded gravestone inscriptions throughout Surrey and Sussex. Luckily for us, between June 1893 and September 1894, he recorded 196 inscriptions in St Michael's churchyard, plus the memorial tablets in the church. He left his notebooks to the Surrey Archaeological Society, whose Archives are now kept at the Surrey History Centre (SHC). We photographed his Mickleham inscriptions at the SHC and Judy has been comparing them with the ones we recorded. We are very grateful to Mr Bax; without him a number of inscriptions would have been lost without trace.

We have had several interesting requests for information about people buried in the churchyard. A former Dorking resident, now living in Marple near Stockport, was hoping to find the graves of three members of the

Hudson family, thought to be buried in Mickleham. Ann Hudson, together with her daughter and granddaughter, provided the funds to build and furnish St Martin's Church in Low Marple. The church was built in the Arts and Crafts style and contains stained glass designed by William Morris and several of the Pre-Raphaelites. We established that Ann is the only one of these women buried in Mickleham churchyard, and that her husband, Thomas, bought Camilla Lacey in 1816, the year of their marriage, and became Lord of the Manor of Westhumble. It was surprising to find that Thomas died in Pau, in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region of France, in 1868 but this was soon explained in a document describing how Thomas, who was receiver and accountant for Bridewell Hospital in the 1830s, diverted £10,000 of hospital funds into his own pocket

and disappeared to the Continent when this was discovered! Fortunately for Ann she inherited a large estate in Marple from her cousin.

Another enquiry came from a researcher looking for a photograph of the grave of Sir John Leigh for the centenary of John Leigh Park in Altrincham. John Leigh made his fortune in the Lancashire cotton industry and in the early 1950s moved to Juniper Hill. Both he and his wife are buried in our churchyard. In addition to the photograph of the grave we were also able to send one of Juniper Hill.

Two of the grandchildren of Bernard Salwey Grissell (who is commemorated on the Mickleham War Memorial along with his brother Francis) contacted us hoping to find information about the Grissell family who owned Norbury Park in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We were

delighted to meet them in Mickleham and show them some of the many documents from our Archive relating to their family. They also looked at the Grissell memorials and Norbury Pew in St Michael's church and the eight graves in the churchyard where eighteen family members are buried. In return, they were able to answer some of our questions and bring us up to date on the more recent history of the family.

Finally, we would like to thank Eric Flint and his team for their continuing maintenance of the churchyard.

Judith Long

PS We would welcome more help with this very interesting task. If you would like to join the group, please get in touch with me or Judy Kinloch – contact details on page 2.

Photograph: Judith Long





## Spare the rod and spoil the child

The first entry in the Punishment Book for Mickleham School, Mixed Department, was completed by Thomas Viney, Headteacher in 1911, and was dated 11<sup>th</sup> May when he dealt out two strokes to an 8-year-old boy in Standard 3 for 'Habitual Idleness'. A Punishment Book only recorded corporal punishment and did so under strict conditions. It was necessary to record the date, the name of the offender, the class or standard of the pupil, the offence, the date and nature of the punishment and by whom it was inflicted, finishing with a manager's signature.

This is the only Punishment book for the school which survives, but it is more than likely that there was at least one previous book, probably starting in 1844 with Caleb Howard, the first Head, who stayed for 28 years, and continuing with Robert Mortimore, Head for 33 years, before Thomas was appointed in 1907 and stayed until 1920. It would have been interesting to compare punishments meted out in the early years of the school but the information we have in the School Log books only mentions suspension and detention. Entries following Thomas Viney are made by Alan Piper from 1923 until 1933 and there is then a gap until 1948 when Charles D Webb was appointed; he remained for 21 years until 1969 by which time corporal punishment was almost extinct. Looking at the years for which we have records, it is notable that up until 1918 these were always in double figures, the highest being 1917 when 34 children were punished. During the twenties and thirties, the maximum was 10, all the rest being in single figures and often only one. We do have a gap then until 1948 and with one or two blips (1953 seems to have been a bad year with 15 children punished) there are seldom more than one or two until our records cease in 1969 and in 1986 the practice was abolished in all state-run schools.

It is interesting, and probably important for the villages of Mickleham and Westhumble, that the headmasters of the National Day Schools, as they were called early on, stayed in their positions for considerable lengths of

time. This enabled them to play an important role in village life, and to gain the respect and trust of parents, many of whom will have received a negligible amount of schooling themselves. They held a highly regarded position that was closely linked to the church, the school itself being part of the church establishment and subject to diocesan inspections, and they did of course live in the village, at the school master's house, constructed next to the school building, as was common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Both these school houses, and the small village schools they were attached have been converted into very desirable residences!).

Most of the offences that called for punishment are quite predictable: time-wasting, idleness, lateness, inattention, rudeness, talking, all are common and, depending on their frequency or severity, merited different degrees of punishment. The usual punishment was between one and four strokes: the vast majority was of one stroke only, although two were quite common. Between three and five were administered occasionally and I have only found one at six. The highest number was ten strokes given once for thieving, and once for 'writing filth'. It is not clear from the book where these strokes were administered until the 1960s when the distinction between posterior and hand was made.

It would seem that 'Infants' (under 7) were not physically punished but once a child reached Standard 3 (typically aged 8-10), the system kicked in. Standards do not necessarily reflect ages and children from 8 to 13 might achieve anything from Standard 4, 5, 6 or 7 before leaving. Only two children during this time reached Standard 7 when aged 12. This appears to have been the highest standard children from Mickleham could achieve but those considered academically able might be entered for the county scholarships. If they did well they could be awarded a scholarship which entitled them to a free place and travel expenses at the Dorking High School or alternatively a Technical Scholarship. Few punishments were meted out to girls. Nora Christison, a bright girl who

went on to become a pupil teacher, received one stroke for disobedience in 1914. This was not carried out by the Headteacher but by Miss Aldridge who taught the Infant class. Another example of girls receiving one stroke each was administered when a group of three girls ganged up and were rude to a teacher. This ganging up was more common among the boys: four were punished for interfering with a pony in Common Fields, five for trespassing to obtain apples from Batchelors, four boys were charged with removing ice from a pond and putting it down a younger boy's neck, and eight were involved in stone throwing in the playground. Horseplay with girls on the Rec is also recorded. Six of one and half a dozen of another I suspect!

One boy stands out for being in trouble consistently throughout his time at school from 1911 – 1914. His first offence, aged 10, was for being habitually late. In 1912 and 1913 he was found guilty of careless work, being late and disobedience. In 1914, aged 13, he had reached Standard 7 so he was well above average. Possibly he was bored at school, but he continued to be a serious headache, damaging school property, kicking another boy, playing truant and finally thieving. From January to September he managed a grand total of 25 strokes. This young boy was one of a family of 12 (two died young) whose father was a gardener/labourer, and who had two brothers killed in WW1, one only days after being awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. After leaving school he worked on Box Hill and was involved in an incident cutting a boy's football in half (worth 16/6d) after snatching it. On his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (1919) he joined the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment, a decision which may have been influenced by his father's suicide, and stayed in the army until 1931 but we do not know what happened to him after that.

Judy Kinloch

Footnote: the very last recorded punishment was carried out on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1969, the crime 'refusing to get up from the floor of the cloakroom'! One stroke. He shall be nameless...

## Guided Walk Around Dorking

For our final event of the year 18 members of our group met outside Dorking Museum for a guided walk around the town. Our guides, Jennifer Langford and Wendy Foley, explained that the museum occupies the site of the Old Foundry, where munitions were produced during WW2. Outside the building is a piece of decorative ironwork which used to sit on top of St Martin's church spire.

Along West Street, Jennifer pointed out the house of William Mullins, a shoemaker who sailed on the Mayflower in 1620 with several members of his family. It is thought to be the only remaining house of a Pilgrim Father in this country. William, his wife and son died soon after reaching the New World but his daughter Priscilla survived and had ten children. Her descendants include the US presidents John Adams and his son, John Quincy Adams.

Next stop was the United Reformed Church, built on the site of an older Congregational Church. Dorking was always a centre for non-conformism; John Wesley preached in the town on numerous occasions. Further down the street lies the King's Arms, the oldest pub in Dorking. In 1890 a Temperance Hotel (now Harman's) opened, directly opposite the King's Arms, where locally brewed ginger beer was a popular drink, especially with visiting groups of cyclists.

On our way up Junction Road to South Street (pictured) we spotted the old sign on the wall for Gilliams, the stonemasons, a name familiar to some of us from several headstones in St Michael's churchyard. We paused to reflect on the long list of names on the South Street war memorial, including those of Valentine Joe Strudwick, one of the youngest of the war dead at 15 years and 11 months, and the three Cubitt brothers, sons of Henry Cubitt, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Ashcombe. On a lighter note, Jennifer pointed out that Reginald Boggis, whose name is also listed, in fact survived the war.

At Pump Corner our group was surprised to be shown a paving stone with the word 'WELL' stamped into it, marking the source of water for the pump. We must all have walked on it countless times without spotting the



lettering. Pump Corner was the old town centre where North, South, West and East Streets converged (East Street is now the High Street. Nearby in the road stood the market hall, which had fallen into disrepair by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Lord of the Manor, the 11<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk, had promised to rebuild it but died before this could be accomplished and so the building was demolished.

The construction of the turnpike road in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century greatly improved travelling conditions and several Dorking coaching inns offered a daily coach service to and from London, taking about three hours each way. The King's Head on the corner of High Street and North Street is believed to be the inspiration for the Marquis of Granby in Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*, with Tony Weller in the book modelled on William Broad, a well-known Dorking coachman.

Behind the High Street we meandered down some of Dorking's picturesque alleys, catching glimpses of hidden cottages and colourful gardens before stopping at the Old Pumphouse. Here a plaque marked with the initials RP commemorates Resta Patching, the founder of the waterworks where water was pumped through wooden pipes from the Pipp Brook.

Passing St Martin's church on our way back to the High Street we learned that the 64m spire is thought to be the tallest in South East England. It stands as a memorial to Samuel Wilberforce,

the Bishop of Winchester and son of the anti-slavery campaigner William Wilberforce. Samuel died after being thrown from his horse in Abinger Roughts in 1873 and is remembered today for his strong opposition to Darwin's theory of evolution.

Some sporting history then followed. Jackie and Wendy explained that an annual west v east Shrove Tuesday football match was played in the town. Shopkeepers barricaded their properties and a collection was made before the match to cover the costs of any resulting damage. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the game was banned due to the damage caused and the riotous behaviour of the supporters. At Cotmandene we discovered another sporting tradition. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, cricket matches were played there and a painting hanging in the Long Room at Lord's cricket ground depicts one of these matches.

Those of us keen to see more made our way through the alleys behind the High St up to Rose Hill. Here, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, an attractive collection of houses was built by the Dorking Villa Company around a sloping grass paddock in the grounds of Rose Hill House. On our visit, lying contentedly on the grass, were several sheep! It was hard to believe we were only a few metres from Sainsbury's car park. By then it was time to head back to the Museum and to thank our guides for a fascinating experience. Judith Long



# Occupations in Mickleham 1914–1934

In the Vestry, there is a book bound in white with gold tooled lettering on the cover announcing that it belongs to St. Michael's Church, Mickleham. This is followed by the Royal Court of Arms, and then 'Register of Baptisms'. It has brass clasps which close it and lovely marbled paper on the inside covers that is common in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century books. The label inside announces that the book is made by Shaw & Sons, Poor Law Printers and Law Stationers based in Fetter Lane. It is numbered 14491 and dated 1913. A volume with a pedigree.

Page 1 is headed 'BAPTISMS solemnised in the Parish of Mickleham in the County of Surrey in the Year One thousand nine hundred and thirteen. 'Mickleham' 'Surrey' and 'thirteen' are all completed by the then Rector, WR Lloyd, whose handwriting is large and angular and whose spelling is a little insecure. The first entry records the baptism on November 16<sup>th</sup> 1912, of Nigel Frank, son of Albert Thomas and Teresa Martha Clifton, and goes on to record the date of baptism, when the child was born, his given Christian names, parents' names and surname, abode and then Quality, Trade or Profession. In this case, Albert was a telegraphist. Finally, comes the signature of the Rector, 'by whom the Ceremony was performed'. The book finishes on December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1974 when John Cornell was Rector.

This is a book that can tell us so much. As well as names, dates and addresses we have the occupations of all those who had their children baptised during this time. All of these categories would repay many kinds of study but

here I have limited myself to 20 years and the occupations recorded as it is this period, I think, that demonstrates most clearly the changes and the social differences that were at the heart of village life.

Gardeners lead the list of occupations, numbering thirty in all. In the early years which we are covering this is by far the greatest area of employment for villagers. These are all married couples as one would expect. To add bachelor gardeners would I am sure vastly increase the numbers. The addresses do not of course tell us who these gardeners worked for but they lived in the cottages, such as Chalkpit and Elm Cottages in the village and were employed locally by the big estates, such as Mickleham Downs and Norbury Park, as well as by the Mickleham gentry with large houses and gardens. It is interesting to be able to chart the gradual rise of the motor car. Only three grooms and one coachman are recorded over this period but there are eight chauffeurs, clearly a rising trend. Often the coachman had to switch from horses to motor cars, quite a different beast. His role, for example, had always been to hold the horses' heads while a footman would be responsible for opening the carriage doors, letting down the step and escorting the ladies. With the introduction of the motor car, it is recorded that however absurd it may seem the chauffeur often remained in the car (metaphorically holding the horses) while it was the job of the footman to open the car doors.

Many occupations are linked to the land and farming. Ten cowmen, one

stockman and one dairyman are recorded plus nine milkmen. There was a dairy herd at Mickleham Hall Farm, and a much bigger one at Norbury Park Farm. Swanworth (called the Stud Farm in Leopold Saloman's time where he famously bred shire horses) became a dairy farm probably during the 1920s. Certainly milking took place at Cowslip Farm during WW2, if not earlier, and milk was bottled on site. Six agricultural labourers, and six carters are listed as well as one farmer and one bailiff. Both of the latter would be employed, probably by the owners of large estates, and would have been in what we would now call managerial positions. Two gamekeepers and one forester show us that the traditional sports of the landed gentry were still in evidence. Keeper's Cottages are still so named in Norbury Park, there is another on Box Hill, and the census records list a succession of gamekeepers who lived in Lodge Farm (then two cottages). The 19<sup>th</sup> century OS maps show an aviary in the garden; the remains of a brick building (with stove) for the rearing of pheasants, and an outside area that must once have been cages still exist. The floor of the outside area is covered by terracotta tiles.

Other manual jobs are related to the railway, such as a platelayer, one who was responsible for the maintenance of track, and a signaller who might have manned and lived at the Mickleham Crossing. Railway Cottages were tied cottages built next to the level crossing and the signaller was responsible for opening and closing the gates and operating the

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>>> signals at the entrance to the tunnel. There was an unsuccessful move by villagers in the thirties to create a halt here, so that Mickleham folk might avoid the daily journey to Westhumble. To this day, trains sound their imminent arrival at its entrance but the crossing box was demolished in the 1970s and the gates closed for the last time. Only one blacksmith, an important member of the community, is recorded during this time, at the forge on the site of the current Frascati. Mickleham was also noted for a number of building families, such as the six Batchelor brothers (there were two sisters as well and child number seven was named Septimus) who lived in various village houses, in particular 'Mon Repose' which they built, and ran their business from Batchelors' Yard at the top of School Lane. The Child family who arrived in Mickleham in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century are another success story. William Child rose from arriving as a lodger/carpenter to owning houses and running a highly successful timber yard and building business. Similarly, the Bravery family also ran the Timber Yard in the London Road. These entrepreneurs worked and prospered, employing brickmakers, carpenters and painters.

Then there is what I think of as the middle ground, or white collar workers, for example storeman, licensed victualler, publican, police constable (living in the village at the police house), butler, chef, garage proprietor, electrician, grocer, waiter –



Burford Bridge Hotel staff with Boxhill to London Coach 1930

the variety is huge. One such waiter was Jesse Fuller, who worked for many years at the Burford Bridge Hotel, although on another occasion he styles himself Club Steward. Jesse was the father of Bill Fuller, waiter at the Running Horses for many years. Both attended Mickleham School and lived in the village all their lives.

Moving up the social scale, we have those in positions of recognised authority in the community such as the rector, the doctor and the headteacher. Four residents describe themselves as 'gentlemen' while three put down 'independent'. Is this a quality, trade or profession, I wonder? However, the professions are well represented with an architect, civil servant, solicitor, various kinds of engineer, merchant, barrister, member of the Stock Exchange, the armed services, to name just some. So Mickleham was a very mixed, one might say divided,

community between those who lived and worked in the village on the one hand and on the other those whose occupations involved travel to work and wider horizons.

Most interesting: what were a pearl merchant and a wharfinger\* doing in land-locked Mickleham?

(Some notable families, eg the Roses of Rose's Stores are not mentioned as they are not recorded in this book, the youngest Rose being born in 1901).

Judy Kinloch

*\*The wharfinger takes custody of and is responsible for goods delivered to the wharf, typically has an office on the wharf or dock, and is responsible for day-to-day activities including slipways, keeping tide tables and resolving disputes. The term is obsolescent; today a wharfinger is usually called a 'harbourmaster'.*

Wikipedia.

Photographs: Village archives



Photographs: Village archives

Left: Gardeners at Cherkley Right: Farmworkers with their carts at bottom of Byttom Hill, Mickleham



View from Byttom Hill looking south before the by-pass (built in 1938). Dell Close cottages present, so picture taken after 1921. Amazing to see that the only traffic is a horse and cart.





**Shocking Suicide at Mickleham** was the headline in the *Dorking & Leatherhead Advertiser* of 21<sup>st</sup> May 1892 which reported the proceedings of the inquest into the suicide of Sarah Elizabeth Pack in Mickleham.

Sarah was a cook, aged 37 at the time of her suicide, and had been working for a Mr and Mrs Blythe of White Lodge, Esher. A week before her death she had arrived at Rectory Cottage in Mickleham, where her brother and sister-in-law, George and Mary, lived. He was the church sexton who would have been responsible for the churchyard and digging graves and was also employed as coachman to the then incumbent, the Rev'd WH Harke, while Mary was the church caretaker, responsible for the interior of the church. She was known in the village as Mrs Pack the pew-opener (this was when the pews were boxed in with doors). They would have been a respected couple.

The first newspaper report of the events appeared on 14<sup>th</sup> May. The Packs had noticed that when Sarah arrived she had appeared worried but had thought it would pass off. On the morning of her death, after breakfast together, the women had cleared the things away and then Mary went to see George in the stable yard. On her return she could not find her sister-in-law and after telling her husband they both set out to find her. She crossed the fields at the back of the house adjoining the Rectory where there was an unused pit while he went in another direction. Nearing the pit she saw her sister-in-law lying in it and ran to tell George who then ran to the police house. The woman's

## Hidden Histories

*Members of the Mickleham & Westhumble Local History Group are in the process of recording the grave inscriptions in St Michael's churchyard. Some of the names recorded are familiar, others new to us and it is impossible not to be intrigued by the personal stories behind these gravestones. We have researched some of these 'hidden histories' and in this article we relate the sad story of*

### Sarah Elizabeth Pack

throat was terribly cut, the head being nearly severed from the body, and an ordinary table knife which had been roughly sharpened lay nearby. Mr Potts, a medical practitioner, was summoned from Leatherhead but she was dead before he arrived.

On 21<sup>st</sup> May, the Coroner held an inquiry into Sarah's death at The Running Horses. Mr Mortimore, head-master of the National School, was foreman of the jury and the Rector of Mickleham and the curate, his son, were also present. A Croydon solicitor watched the case on behalf of the relatives.

The first witness was George Pack and it is at this point that the story's complications and contradictions start to arise. He said Sarah claimed she had been dismissed by Mr Blythe with no notice after having been required to sign a paper which retracted certain statements she had made concerning the 'intemperate' habits of Mrs Blythe and her inability to keep servants for any length of time. This was said to have been made in the presence of other servants. Sarah swore not to know what was in the paper and in addition Mr Blythe told her that if she did not sign she would be taken into custody for slander. He gave her notice for the next day and paid her to date but gave her no money in lieu of the month's notice that would have been due. George also commented on his sister's state of mind; he says she woke up every morning afraid that the police would come for her and was convinced the Blythes would blacken her name so that she would never be employed again. Among various other strange behaviours she was found reading the Psalms, crying by herself and literally shaking with fear.

Mr Blythe, a solicitor by profession, was the next witness. He said that a housemaid had complained to Mrs Blythe that the cook (Sarah) had

made charges against her which were entirely untrue and had gone on to accuse Mrs Blythe herself. Sarah was then given a month's notice by her mistress but asked for it to be taken back, explaining that she was only repeating what she had been told although she would not say who by. Further pressed she said she had forgotten. Eventually she signed the document which was read aloud by Mr Blythe in front of the servants. It said that her accusations were completely false. He said he had told Sarah he could not give her a character reference without mentioning why she left and advised her to get a reference from a previous employer. (This she appears to have misunderstood.) He finished by saying she was a very good cook and an extremely nice woman.

After a few questions from Mr Dennis, the Coroner summed up. He considered Mr Blythe had behaved reasonably given the serious accusations made against his wife's character. He had done no more than the Coroner would have done. There was no evidence that Mrs Blythe could not keep servants, indeed the cook had been employed for 18 months. If he had known the consequences of his actions Mr Blythe had said he would have acted differently. In fact, the Coroner could find no fault with Mr Blythe's actions although he sympathised with the deceased's family. The Court was then cleared but after consultation the jury desired that the enquiry should be adjourned until the following Friday, at which hour the other servants from Esher should be in attendance as witnesses.

The Coroner's court reconvened a week later. Present on this occasion were Mr Dennis and the Rev'd WH Harke as before as well as three servants in the employ of the Blythes. On this occasion both husband and wife also attended the inquest. In order to fulfil the jury's

desire to know what had taken place in the drawing room on the day the retraction had been signed, the first servant to be called was Priscilla Mace, house parlour maid, who had been employed for several months. She had seen the paper signed and identified it. Sarah had not said anything to it being read out but had signed it. Also present on this occasion were the nurse and the kitchen maid. Further questioned, Priscilla said she had got on fairly well with Sarah although she found her rather domineering and had been accused of spilling beer in the pantry, a matter she spoke to Mrs Blythe about. She made further references of intemperance and told of Sarah's mention of suffering from rheumatic fever. At this point the Coroner intervened saying he only wished to ascertain whether Sarah knew what she had signed.

Emily Fulbrook was the next witness. She had been hired as a temporary nurse while there were children at home. She said she was rather deaf but had heard most of what had been read of the paper's contents. On leaving the room Sarah had asked the witness if she could tell her what it had meant; witness said she thought Sarah had not understood it and had been confused. Mr Blythe then claimed Sarah had accused his wife of 'ungovernable temper' but the other servants had never had cause for complaint. There follows claim and counter-claim about whether or not 15 servants had been dismissed in a year, whether the Blythes 'gave way to drink' and the reason for Sarah's excessive crying. The witnesses which the jury had wished to hear had now finished their evidence.

Mr Blythe was then allowed to call further evidence. Firstly Ethel Toms, parlour maid of two years, mostly during the time Sarah was employed. She said that the Blythes were most kind to their servants and she never saw either of them any the worse for wear from drink. She had only left to nurse a relative. She also talked of Sarah crying and of going out to buy gin, a pint bottle at a time, which she kept in her bedroom and would last her about two days.

Henry Arthur Forman, gardener, was next. He had been employed for over

three years and had seen the cook crying when he took vegetables to the kitchen. He had also heard her claiming that after Mrs Blythe had been suffering from diphtheria she had gone away drunk to Folkestone with a hospital nurse. Mr Dennis questioned why he had not reported these facts at the time.

Mrs Blythe was in court with two personal friends who had known her for several years to say what they thought of these charges but the Coroner thought the court need not be troubled with further evidence as to Mrs Blythe's bearing towards her servants. Mr Blythe was concerned that if the jury believed Sarah's statements about his wife they would think pressure had been put on her which would tell against them. The Coroner said that the jury on the previous occasion had thought that Sarah had signed the paper under pressure and did not know its contents but in the light of further evidence there could be little doubt that she knew what she was doing and why she had been asked to sign the paper. She had acknowledged that the statements

she had made about Mrs Blythe were wrongful and had both apologised and asked that proceedings might not be taken. What the jury had to consider was whether she had signed under compulsion. He felt there must have been something wrong, some mental weakness, as he could not imagine why she felt pursued, or that the unhinging of her mind was a result of signing the document.

In conclusion the Coroner expressed his regrets to the Pack relatives and also to the Blythes and their servants that they had been put to so much trouble. He considered that there was sufficient evidence to warrant the jury finding deceased of unsound mind when she committed suicide but if they wanted to add a rider based on the evidence they were free to do so. The Court was cleared and after a short deliberation, the jury agreed on a verdict 'that deceased committed suicide when of unsound mind, and they further considered that her mind was unhinged prior to signing the paper retracting her statements.'

*Continued on following page >>>*

Photograph: Village Archives



*Mr Mortimore, head-master of Mickleham National School and foreman of the jury with Mrs Mary Pack, Sarah's sister-in-law.*



>>> continued from previous page

Sarah's burial on 17<sup>th</sup> May was reported in the parish magazine of June 1892 with the comment: 'We demur strongly to the insinuations of the Coroner at the inquest lately held in this village on the sad death of Sarah E Pack. We repudiate his suggestion about the possible cause of the deceased's mental condition as unwarranted by facts, and directly opposed to the opinion of all who knew her best. Her relatives may rely upon the sympathy of the whole village with heavy sorrow.'

Sarah's grave may be seen in Mickleham churchyard. The inscription reads 'In loving memory of our sister, Sarah Elizabeth Pack' with the date of her death and her age. This is followed by the poem 'Crossing the Bar' by Alfred Lord Tennyson, the last four lines of which read:

*For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place/The flood may bear me far,/I hope to see my Pilot face to face/When I have crost the bar.*

Judy Kinloch

Author's comments: Village feelings are strongly in favour of the Pack family. The jury, headed by Mr Mortimore, insisted on further evidence by the servants to back up Mr Blythe's statements. Sarah as a servant in the household would be considered socially inferior, almost certainly less educated, and therefore more vulnerable to pressure. The Coroner, on the other hand, identifies with the Blythes, finding Mr Blythe's actions eminently reasonable and what he himself would do. The presence of the Rev'd Harke and his curate would seem to show support for Mr and Mrs Pack, trusted servants of the church. The church's attitude to suicide had changed and it was no longer a mortal sin; daylight burial was permitted to suicides from 1882 but the full burial service from the Book of Common Prayer was not used. The servants' evidence is equivocal. They make statements that suggest Sarah's behaviour was certainly not normal but it is impossible to say whether or not she was of unsound mind before she was dismissed. The mention of custody if she did not sign the retraction would seem to



Photograph: Judith Long

Sarah Pack's headstone

have triggered an acute anxiety that ultimately led to her suicide – but the method she chose was horrific which would suggest a mental condition. There could surely be no other reason for her accusations unless of course they were true.

## Task Group Report: Website

In April we launched our new website – [www.micklehamwesthumblehistory.co.uk](http://www.micklehamwesthumblehistory.co.uk) If you have visited it you may have noticed that it has a rather more modern appearance and hopefully it is now more user friendly. The main

reason for the change however is that in future we will be able to allow users to access many more of the photographs and articles that we have in our archives. We have made a start by putting on several photographs

of local characters ranging from the 1890s through to the mid-1900s. As well as adding to this we plan to have pages dedicated to photographs of the church, schools, events and local landmarks, plus links to many of the interesting articles on local history that have been published in the Mickleham Parish Magazine over the last 33 years.

You will also be able to find details of many of our activities including details of the Oral History projects, newsletters, up coming events and a link to our 50-page publication about the Mickleham War Memorial. Already several people, often from outside the area, have used the Contact Us page to make enquires, usually relating to their own historical research and of course we are happy to help them whenever we can. So please do have a look at our website, feel free to make comments or let us know if you have any photographs or documents of local historical interest that we could consider for inclusion. Roger Davis



The Bridger's wedding circa 1940, with members of the local volunteer fire brigade as guards of honour. Mr Bridger was the gardener at Dalewood.

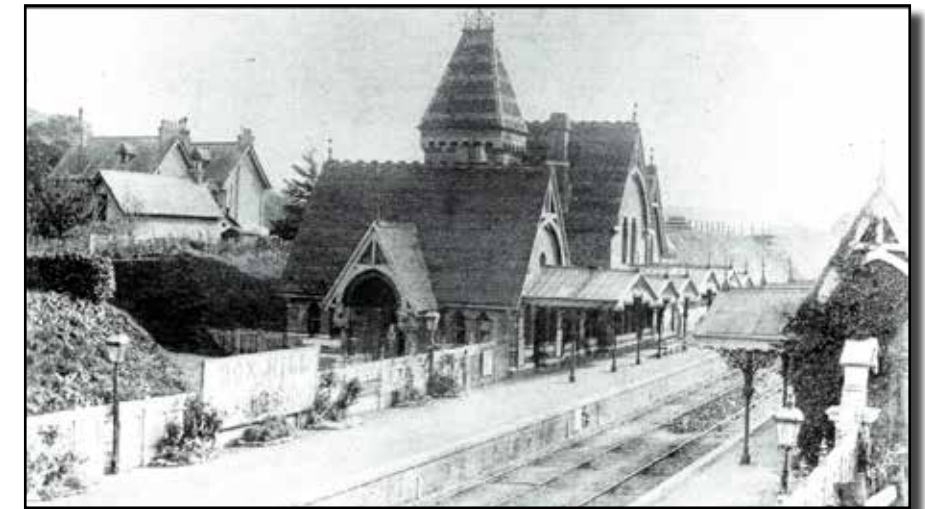
## Our Railway Station included in the Top 10 in Britain

Having written books on Britain's 1,000 best churches and 1,000 best houses, former Times editor Simon Jenkins has now taken on railway stations. In a recent review of his latest book, Britain's 100 Best Railway Stations\*, the Guardian chose its top 10 – one of which was Box Hill and Westhumble.

Rather than describe the article, it is easier for me to use Simon Jenkin's own words:

*Were I to tire of travel, I should apply, Betjeman-like, for the post of stationmaster at Box Hill & Westhumble. My visit was on a warm summer's day, with the soft outline of Box Hill on the North Downs in the distance. Passing trains were mere irritants. The manor in which Fanny Burney lived, a pub and a scatter of cottages were hardly visible. This is as perfect a rural halt as I know.*

*It was not until the 1860s that the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway (LBSCR) built a line from Leatherhead to Horsham. The station, by company architect Charles Driver, is a marriage of his favourite styles, French château with elements of Venetian Gothic. There appears to be more roof than wall, the building being composed of sweeping gables covered in layered patterns of*



Box Hill for Burford Bridge Station from an original 1900 postcard photograph published by Action Packs. Note striped tiles on roof of tower and middle gable.

slate. The facade to the platform is of two steeply gabled wings, separated by a large off-centre bay with ornamental tower. At one end is an elaborate porch resting on extravagantly floral Venetian columns.

The station sits in a dell, so thickly treed that to wander to the end of the platform is to feel lost in the woods. The platform sign carries lines from local Victorian author George Meredith, declaring: 'Nowhere in England is there a richer foliage, or wilder downs and fresher woodlands.' The former ticket hall, with roof

rafters as in a medieval hall-house, is occupied by a friendly coffee bar cum bicycle shop called Pilgrim Cycles. The Pilgrims' Way runs nearby.

Which I think is a pretty accurate reflection. I can particularly recommend arriving a few minutes early to catch a train, and wandering to the far end of the (now-extended) platform – it really does have a 'deep-in-the-country' feel.

Chris Budleigh  
Station occupant

\*Jenkins, Simon (2017) *Britain's 100 Best Railway Stations*, Viking

Editor's note: In 1861 when the proposed route of the railway from Leatherhead included parts of Norbury Park, the then owner was Thomas Grissell (1801-1874) who made his fortune as a public works contractor. His firm was responsible for constructing a number of prestigious buildings in England, including railway stations. Thomas laid down stringent conditions for the proposed railway, including a tunnel which should have no shafts and the company was forbidden to disturb the surface above it. At his behest the railway station at Westhumble was built in the French château style.

Photograph Ben Tatham



Box Hill and Westhumble station today.

Far left: The porch leading to what was the booking hall. Note description in text above.

Left: The station looking north from the 'up' platform



From the archives

# Westhumble Chapel of Ease



*Gate to Camilla Lacey, Mrs Ball's Cottage and Barn Mission Room – contemporary views circa 1870.*

*The railway through Westhumble was opened in 1867. During the building of the railway this late 17<sup>th</sup>- early 18<sup>th</sup> century barn on the Norbury Park estate was used by Elizabeth Vulliamy to provide a rest room for the navvies during their spare time. From about 1870 it became a mission hall. The painting on the right is in the Dorking Museum archive.*



*Left: Chapel of Ease in 1904*

*In 1884 the mission hall was renovated and the rustic porch added. At the turn of the century the interior was transformed and a simple altar added and in 1904 it was licensed and consecrated as a Chapel of Ease to the Parish Church.*

*Below left: The Chapel of Ease in 1979.*

*The extension on the southern end replacing the porch was built in 1950.*

*Below right: Mrs Ball's Cottage (Camilla Lacey Lodge) today.*

