SURREY HISTORY

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SURREY HISTORY

Vol. 3 No. 3

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Cover illustration: A Dennis bus in use by Puttocks of Guildford, *c.*1913 (GMR 1463)

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PHILLIMORE

THE PARSON, THE PEER, AND THE SCHOOL BOARD (A TURN OF THE CENTURY INCIDENT AT PIRBRIGHT)

Billy Hodge

The quiet, leafy village of Pirbright, close to Guildford had never seen anything quite like it before, a large crowd of parishioners including the complete school board and 'some ladies' gathered in the Cricketers' Club Rooms to protest. The events surrounding that meeting were reported in the *Daily Mail* and even the *Leeds Mercury*. The object of the crowd's anger was none other than the new vicar, the Rev. Arthur Krauss. It was Saturday 31st December 1898 and the *Surrey Advertiser* of the time under a headline of 'VICAR CENSURED BY HIS FLOCK' reveals the result of that meeting as thus:

'This meeting of the parishioners of Pirbright strongly condemn the hostile attitude taken by the vicar in preventing Lord and Lady Pirbright having the use of the Board Schools on Thursday last for the purpose of the children's annual treat; the schools being originally built by subscription of the rate-payers, irrespective of creed, and the sum of £1,200 of the rate-payers' money having since been spent upon them. By the action of the vicar some three hundred children have been deprived of their usual Christmas treat'. How these events came about is the subject of this article.

In 1870 Gladstone's Government passed the Elementary Education Act which set up the Board School system and gave assistance to local agencies to provide schooling for all. The intention was to 'fill up' gaps in the existing voluntary system and give a greater voice in the provision of education to local communities. In the areas where existing education facilities were deficient, School Boards elected by the rate-payers came into existence, and new schools were built and staffed.

In 1871 Pirbright had a school built on common land in what is now known as School Lane; subscriptions were raised to supplement the Government Grant and the 'Sponsors' Grant, that of the 'National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church'. This Church of England 'National Society' School was managed by a body of managers, chairman of which (*ex officio*) was always to be the local vicar. It opened with 42 children and 'under the care of a certificated master and under government inspection'. Although the 'machinery' to set up a local school board was always there it was not required as the new school grew. In 1885 however, the 'National Society' school managers found themselves unable to continue and accordingly the village of Pirbright held elections on 1 April 1885 to elect a school board.

On Thursday 16 April 1885, five local people met in the old school room to form the new Pirbright School Board. (The village of Pyrford was doing the same at this time.)

The five men were the Rev. F. Owston, chairman (incidentally still chairman of the old managers' committee), Vicar of Pirbright; Mr. F. Searle (vice chairman); Mr.

Thompson; Mr. Sherman and a Mr. Fifield. At the first meeting they appointed a clerk (G. White), a treasurer and an attendance officer to the board; they resolved also at the next meeting (to be held in 11 days time), 'the arrangements of terms were to be considered with the managers of Pirbright School for the taking over of that school by this Board'.

At the next meeting the 'National Society' School managers namely, the Rev. Owston, William Rooks, James Faggetter, Edward Joseph Halsey and George Page Cowthorn, offered to transfer the school at 5/- per annum and then to continue to have the use of the school from 6.00 p.m. each night until 9.45 a.m. each morning, also during school holidays. All was agreed and eventually confirmation of the transfer was ratified by the'National Society' and the Education Department at Whitehall.

A master and mistress, Mr. & Mrs. W. Hill, were appointed with a salary of £90 and £40 respectively. The fees for the pupils were fixed as thus:

CLASS 1	Children of Labourers	2 pence per week
CLASS 2	Children of Artizans	3 pence per week
CLASS 3	Children of Farmers etc.	4 pence per week

and cases of hardship were to be left at the Board's discretion.

The school flourished as the minute books show - Mr. Owston continued as chairman until he left the area and resigned by letter on 11 April 1889. His replacement as Vicar of Pirbright was the popular Rev. J.W. Dunn who also became the next chairman of the School Board on 1 July 1889 and remained in that office until his sudden death on 20 April 1898, aged 53 years. A Rev. J.D. Henderson acted as *locum tenens* until a permanent replacement came. This happened on 19 September 1898 when the Rev. Arthur Krauss took over the vicarage and lovely church and automatically became chairman of the now defunct body of managers of the old school, which by now (13 years ago) many had forgotten about. (They had never met since the hand-over.)

The School Board at this time in September 1898 consisted of a Mr. A.J.E. Johnstone (chairman), Mr. J. Cherryman (vice- chairman), Mr. H.M. Briant, Mr.H. Searle and Mr.J.F. Sherman. Also new staff at the school included Mr. & Mrs. Frost, the master and mistress, Mrs. Ball the new infant mistress, and a Miss M. Netherclift, a pupil teacher.

It was in 1895, five years after having moved to the area, that the former Under Secretary for the Colonies, Henry de Worms was created Lord Pirbright by Queen Victoria. Living as he did at Henley Park (now Vokes Works), this friend of royalty and rich philanthropist loved the village and did so much for it – he had built many of its houses and indeed often would throw pennies to the children as he drove past in the first motor car to be seen in the village. He gave the new organ and bells to the church in 1896. By the time of the new vicar's arrival, Lord and Lady Pirbright had established the custom of using the Board School as the venue for giving their annual Christmas treat to the village children. In the run up to Christmas of 1898, it was therefore for the School Board at the meeting before Christmas (Monday 19 December), to discuss a letter from Lord Pirbright requesting permission to use the school premises on Thursday, 29 December 1898 to give his annual treat to the local children.

On the motion of Mr. Sherman seconded by Mr. Searle, it was resolved that permission be granted to Lord Pirbright and a vote of thanks be recorded to the Peer

and his good lady wife for their kindness in entertaining the children – the meeting then continued with 'Other Business'.

On Tuesday 27 December 1898, just two days before the event, the Board called a Special Meeting. Mr. White, the clerk, read a communication he had received from Lord Pirbright, containing a letter from the Rev. A. Krauss, saying that the School Board had no right to give permission to use the school, as the time involved was at the discretion of the managers, not the School Board and they had not had time to discuss the matter and therefore permission must be withheld.

The Board was shocked, and they had to act quickly. They had printed that day a circular which was distributed around the village It was entitled 'To the inhabitants of Pirbright', explaining that the treat was now off, due to the vicar's 'extraordinary action'. Later that day a telegram was received by the clerk of the board from the vicar informing the members that at some trouble to himself he had managed to contact the other managers who had given their consent at last, *but* they hoped the 'omission of the proper technicalities was an accident and must never occur again'. Mr. White was instructed to telegraph back immediately that the consent was too late, that Lord Pirbright had countermanded all his orders for the treat and the children for the first time in nine years had no treat.

Feelings by this time were very high in the village as the news spread and a public meeting was called for Saturday evening at 7.00 p.m. to consider the vicar's action. The members of the School Board were to take the lead. This meeting and its outcome has already been referred to. One direct result was the resignation of the church's noted organist and former vicar's widow, Mrs. Dunn, followed by the choir and bell-ringers' refusal to appear at the church.

Everyone knew how much Lord and Lady Pirbright enjoyed giving the annual treat and they awaited an opportunity to hear him speak on the subject. Their time came in the first few days of January 1899 when a presentation was to be made to the member of the School Board, a Postmaster of the village, Mr. H. Searle, who was leaving. The venue was the *White Hart Hotel*, and after the presentation by Lord Pirbright to Mr. Searle, the Peer addressed the group. As a local paper reported, he said:

'Gentlemen, as we are assembled here tonight, I daresay you expect me to say perhaps one or two words upon an incident which has materially stirred the feeling of this village, and impaired, for a certain time only I hope, its peacefulness. I was not present the other evening at the public meeting, although I had the advantage of reading in the local Press, and also in the London Press, a very excellent report of what took place, and I am happy to see that not only in the local Press, but also in the London Press, the action which you collectively took with regard to the conduct of the Vicar, seems to have met with absolute and general approval. This is the first time in my life that I have ever seen a person not possessed of authority arrogating such authority to himself, and instead of using it for the benefit of those among whom he elected to live taking every opportunity of using it to their disadvantage. I am not interested in the motives which have prompted his personal action against me and against Lady Pirbright. I have never seen him, and I do not know that I wish to see him [*laughter*]. Mr. Krauss came into this village a few months ago. I was willing, in fact ready, to extend to him the hand of friendship, and to work with him for the benefit of the parish in the same friendly way that I did with his late predecessor [*applause*]. But not only did he not avail himself of any offer on my part so to do, but he rejected, I must say discourteously, any advance in that direction [*'shame'*]. All that you have heard, I imagine, with regard to the conduct of the Vicar, is that for reasons best known to himself, arrogating to himself an authority which he did not possess, and

backed up I am afraid by a legendary authority which has long ceased to exist in Pirbright, he took certain steps which led to between 300 and 400 children being disappointed of their annual Christmas treat.'

The *Daily Mail*, after reporting the full account, quoted Lord Pirbright as saying, 'As a result of the vicar's action, I am building at once, a large hall for the use of the inhabitants of the village, who are for the most part, my tenants'. The paper went on to tell that its reporter, when calling at the vicarage, engaged Mr. Krauss behind a chained door and said he declined to see anybody about anything.

The *Leeds Mercury* after giving the facts in a leaderette added, 'It is not surprising to learn that an indignation meeting of the people of Pirbright has been held at which the conduct of the new vicar has been unsparingly condemned. If Mr. Krauss's object was to make the Church of England and himself cordially disliked by those whose souls he is supposed to have the care of, he seems to have succeeded in a wonderful degree.' At one time the School Board was urged to take the whole matter to a Court of Law but this idea was dropped. It is said that Krauss used the back path and the village constable as escort to go to his church at this time, avoiding the street.

The Board instructed its clerk to write a long letter to the Education Department which began: 'Sir, as my Board are labouring under great difficulties with regard to carrying on the school in the proper manner owing to the conditions of the lease under which they hold the school premises, I am directed by them to lay before their Lordships the following statement with respect to the matter, and to ask their Lordships to intervene in such manner as they may deem advisable'. This was followed by a lengthy statement of the events in the dispute, asking for the lease to be changed.

The same letter was sent to the Bishop of Winchester at Farnham Castle asking him also to use his influence in the matter. His reply was one of the subjects discussed at a meeting on 8 February 1899. The Bishop and future Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, replied with a copy of a letter Krauss had sent him which reads:

Pirbright Vicarage
January 28/99

My Lord,

I am sorry to have delayed my answer to your letter of the 21st January in which you enclose a letter from the Clerk of the Pirbright School Board in which you ask for such remarks thereon as I think desirable.

The delay has arisen because I thought it better to consult some of my co-managers before writing to you, I have now done this and hasten to reply to your request.

In the first place, the managers whom I have consulted do not wish to traverse the statements contained in the letter of the School Board, but this unwillingness must not in any way be taken to imply that they accept all the statements as correct.

Secondly the managers regret that they do not feel able to entertain the idea of granting a new lease but I am willing to lay before a meeting of the managers a resolution granting to the School Board all necessary facilities for Educational purposes and also for all needful work connected with the school buildings.

I am, my Lord,
Yours obediently,
(Signed) Arthur Krauss

The Board sent back the following reply:

Fig. 1. Lord Pirbright's Hall opened on 31 May 1899 (a modern photograph).

Fig. 2. Pirbright Board School built in 1901 (a modern photograph).

Guildford
14 Feb. 1899

My Lord,

Pirbright School Board

I am directed by my Board to inform you that they have considered your letter of the 1st instant together with the letter from the Vicar of Pirbright, to your Lordship, my Board wish me to offer your Lordship their sincere thanks for the trouble you have taken in the matter and to assure you that it is their desire to act in a friendly and reasonable spirit so as to bring about if possible an amicable settlement of the existing difficulties.

My Board however, wish me to point out to your Lordship that although they do not consider a new Lease necessary they are of opinion that a mere Resolution of the Managers granting to the Board all necessary facilities for Educational purposes and also for all needful work connected with the school buildings would not obviate the recurrence of existing difficulties as it would leave unsettled the question what the necessary facilities for Educational purposes or needful work connected with such buildings are and would thus probably in a short time bring about further disputes, further, the Resolution might be rescinded at any future time by other managers. My Board are of opinion that a reasonable settlement would be for the managers to grant to the Board the use of the school buildings to 9.0 o'clock in each morning on three evenings in each week and during the holidays and vacation time, this would leave the managers the use of the buildings on all mornings from 9.0 to 9.45, on the whole of Saturdays, Sundays, Christmas Day, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and Ascension Day and three other days in the year and would clearly define the rights of each party to the use of the buildings, further that an endorsement by placed on the present lease embodying these terms.

My Board venture to trust that your Lordship will be of opinion that this suggestion is fair and reasonable on both sides and that you will use your endeavours to persuade the managers to carry it into effect.

I am, my Lord,
Yours obediently,
Gilbert White,
Clerk to the Board.

The Right Reverend
The Lord Bishop of Winchester
Farnham Castle
Surrey

At the same meeting monthly pay cheques were approved and signed by the chairman. Among others, there were Mr. Frost, £8 6s. 8d., Miss Ball, £6 5s. 0d, and £1 0s. 10d. each for Beatrice Tyler and Mildred Netherclift, both pupil teachers.

By March the whole atmosphere was calm and at the School Board meeting of 20 March 1899 it was reported a letter had come from the Education Office, Whitehall, suggesting mutual arrangements be exercised until the lease is terminated with six months' notice given in 1900, when a fresh lease was to be made on settled terms. The government stepped in and the matter was to be discussed at a later meeting.

Lord Pirbright was true to his word as to a new hall, and on 31 May 1899 Lord Pirbright's Hall on the village green was opened amid great jubilation and festivities by H.R.H. Princess Christian of Schleswig Holstein. It cost £2,000. Everybody of importance was there, the Archdeacon of Surrey, the Hon. W. Lowther, gave blessing and Lord Pirbright opened the proceedings. The Rev. C. E. Hoyle, Chaplain to his Grace the Bishop of Winchester, was present as the Bishop had another engagement.

The thousands present did not include the Vicar of Pirbright and indeed, in his address of thanks to Lord Pirbright, the High Sheriff of Surrey, Sir Edward Carbutt, made mention of the church bells being silent on such an august occasion. A few days later a letter appeared in the local paper:

THE CHURCH BELLS AND THE ROYAL VISIT

Why they were not rung. To the Editor.

Sir – At the conclusion of the sports in connection with the opening of Lord Pirbright's Hall by H.R.H. Princess Christian, I was asked by several strangers (who referred to Sir Edward Carbutt's speech about our church bells) why the church bells were not rung in honour of the visit of her Royal Highness. Being unable to reply to them, I afterwards made inquiries of a ringer, who informed me that the church was locked up and the bell ropes pulled up through the floor to prevent the bells being rung.

To show their disapproval of such conduct, the ringers refused to ring the bells on Sunday last, and I am informed that they will not do so again before an apology is offered to them by the Vicar.

I trust the strangers who visited our parish on the 31st May will not consider it was due to any discourtesy on the part of the ringers that the bells were not rung.

Trusting you will insert this in your valuable paper, as it is the only way I have of answering the strangers in question.

Yours faithfully,
ALFRED J. E. JOHNSTONE.
Secretary of the Sports Committee

Cooper's Hill, Pirbright,
6th June 1899.

This follow up article appeared next week:

The ever to be remembered 31st May, the day of the visit of Princess Christian, was coming on, and naturally the bell ringers wanted to sound the bells on that day, but in face of circumstances of the past they felt it would be of no use to ask the vicar's permission, and so nothing was said to him. Be the desires of the ringers what they might they could not have rung the bells, for from early morn till the dewy eve it is a fact that the church door was locked, and the bell-ropes pulled up through the floor. The ringers are indignant at such conduct, and they have marked their disapproval of it by declining to ring any more until the Vicar apologises to them. Their determination was carried into effect on Sunday last, when the bells were silent, save for the one tolled by the sexton.

On other days but this one in question the church has always been open to the public, but why it was closed on the occasion of the Princess's visit is what the inhabitants would like to know.

About this time (Summer 1899) an H.M.I. report on the school highlighted a growing problem, of chronic overcrowding. The school population was 170 and there was accommodation for only 130 children. Would the Board extend the school?

The chairman, Mr. Johnstone, said he would never agree to this, a new school needed to be built. Lord Pirbright donated the land, and in 1901 a new school was completed and this time just to make sure there would never be any doubt as to whose management it was under, a large plaque was placed inside bearing the names of the School Board, and in large letters on the outside, cut into the bricks, was the notice,

Fig. 3. Lord and Lady Pirbright (*centre*) and villagers on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897 (*courtesy of Pirbright Parish Council*).

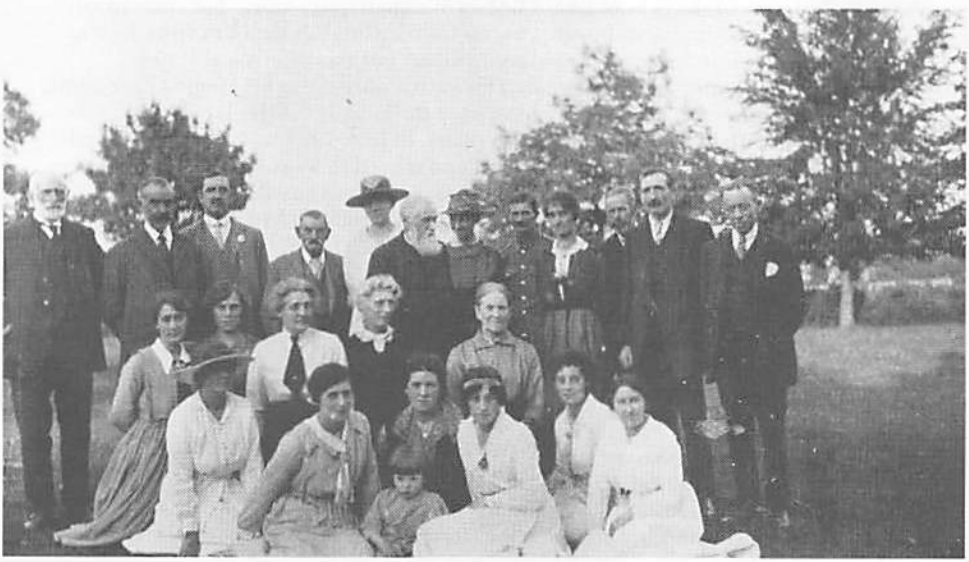

Fig. 4. The Rev. Arthur Neild (Krauss) (*bearded, centre*) and a committee of Pirbright residents formed to welcome back local soldiers after World War I.

'PIRBRIGHT SCHOOL BOARD 1901'. (This building is now used as a Youth Training Scheme Centre.)

It was one of the final acts of the Board, as the next year Balfour's Education Act, 1902, changed everything, the Liberals' grand exercise in community-controlled education came to an end as all School Boards were disbanded, and County Councils with their education committees were given control. Pirbright National Society School, which had become Pirbright Board School, had now become Pirbright Council School, bringing to an end any dispute over its management.

Peace did return to the village, and the Rev. A. Krauss, who had no intention of leaving, displayed his energy in the community. One parishioner remembers him as a bit odd, but a good vicar who had a lovely reading voice. In a letter to the vicar on 11 November 1913, Gilbert White, the long-time clerk to the School Board, informed Krauss that he was retiring, and that he 'desired to thank the vicar for the courtesy and consideration he had always shown him, and that he was pleased to say, the relationship between them had always been of a most cordial nature'.

But Krauss's moment of full acceptance must have come on 14 June 1918 on the village green, just as his 'rival' Lord Pirbright held the hand of Royalty on that same green 19 years earlier, so, too, now the Rev. A. Krauss was the first to welcome the King, George V, and hold his arm as he escorted him from the royal motor car. The sovereign was changing transport at Pirbright during the Great War to inspect large gun trials at nearby Bisley.

Arthur Krauss was born in Manchester of Austrian parents, and changed his name by deed poll to his wife's maiden name of Neild, amidst anti-German feeling during the First World War.

Why did he cause so much resentment all those years ago? Was it because he resented the rich popular Peer, and the only way of asserting his own importance was through the terms of the School Board Lease? We shall never know, but there must have been some continuing animosity, as, on Lord Pirbright's death in 1903, he was not buried in the churchyard of his beloved village, but was interred at Wyke Churchyard, Normandy, the nearest area for such a purpose to his Henley Park home. It seems even at the end, Krauss may have used the location of Henley Park outside the Parish of Pirbright to scotch the Peer's plans. In June 1924, at the age of 75, and suffering badly from asthma, Krauss retired and moved to Swanage in Dorset, where, on 25 April 1925, he died, one time object of suspicion and hostility by nearly all Pirbright people as the man who prevented 300 children from having a Christmas treat. He was buried at Pirbright.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge the help of Miss E. Netherclift of Pirbright, and the Rev. J. Cunningham, Vicar of Pirbright.

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DENNIS OF GUILDFORD
An Introduction to the Firm and its Records

Shirley Corke

Guildford Muniment Room

Introductory

Those who are currently concerned at what will soon, inevitably, cease to be a recurring occasion for grievance, foreign take-over of the 'last British car manufacturing firm', should not forget the factory which has been at Woodbridge Meadows since 1905. Vehicles with Dennis on the bonnet are still being manufactured and can be seen in cities across the world. Take-overs and re-arrangements have not altered the pride of those who work beside Guildford By-Pass, and when Surrey County Council recently bought its new fire engines from Mercedes-Benz protests appeared in both national and local press. It has been some small satisfaction to all those still working, as well as those retired or made redundant, that before the recent sale of half the Woodbridge site, with consequent limitation on manufacturing activities, the bulk of the firm's very fine set of records dating from 1901 had been deposited in Guildford Muniment Room. This article, which is based on those – still far from fully catalogued – records, can do no more than give a summary indication both of the history of the firm and of the scope of the records. It also attempts to indicate very briefly the kind of information the latter can provide, not only for the owners of old vehicles but for all interested in the history of the British motor industry.

Beginnings

The origins of the firm are strikingly like those of Morris Oxford in Cowley. After an apprenticeship to an ironmonger in Bideford, John Dennis (1871-1939) came to work at the ironmongers Filmer & Mason in Guildford High Street. While working for them he assembled and sold bicycles and thereafter spent a period in London with the suppliers of cycle parts before returning to Guildford in 1895 to open his own small bicycle shop, 'The Universal Athletic Stores'. This was at 94 High Street, on the south side close to the bridge.

From the start good publicity was a feature of the Dennis enterprise. A window display with a 'Guess how long the bicycle wheel will spin' competition marked the opening, and sales of the 'Speed King' and 'Speed Queen' bicycles assembled in the back garden were assisted by bicycle lessons from John's brother Raymond (1878-

1939) who had joined him soon after the shop opened. Raymond's prowess as a racing cyclist was the best possible advertisement for the firm's products. The brothers moved on to the manufacture of their own bicycles with the novel features (duly patented) of a pneumatic saddle and improved frame design. In 1897 they exhibited at the Crystal Palace Show. The whole of the space behind the shop soon had to be turned into a workshop, from which a motorised tricycle with a De Dion engine emerged in July 1899. Convicted for driving furiously up Guildford High Street, John Dennis turned the constable's sworn testimony that he drove up Guildford High Street at 16 m.p.h. into a triumphant advertisement for his vehicle!

After the motorised tricycle came the first 4-wheeled motor vehicle, known as a 'Quadricycle'. Again Raymond Dennis's success in race after race brought acclaim to the brothers' vehicles, sales being backed up by maintenance handbooks, service and repairs. A catalogue issued in 1902 by 'The Oldest Motor Makers in England' stressed the 'process of experiment in a firm which had from the first held an unrivalled reputation for a perfect combination of scientific design and accurate workmanship'. Among many improvements mentioned are a new double-acting metal drum brake, a silencer and direct drive. Twelve 'Distinguishing Features of Dennis Cars' are listed. Number nine is 'No belts, no chains'. The vehicles described are the Dennis 8-horse power car, 280 guineas, with detachable awning 25 guineas extra; the 10-horse power car, 320 guineas; the Converted Quadricycle, 115 guineas. Later catalogues and brochures are not always so illuminating to the amateur!

Before turning to the history of the flourishing company they established in 1901 and of which John and Raymond Dennis remained in active control until their deaths in 1939, a word about their subsequent careers. J. C. Dennis was the first Chairman, and until 1913 the brothers alternated in this office. After the company became public, the brothers were joint Managing Directors, fulfilling different and complementary functions. Raymond continued to publicise the firm's achievements and became an inspired Sales Director, making Dennis vehicles known throughout the world. On 10 Feburary 1908 he cabled home from Kiev and the response was entered in the Minute Book 'Board gives you full power to act'. Among other vehicles he then sold to the Russians were buses. More in the public eye than John, when awarded the K.B.E. in 1920 while on a world tour he said that the knighthood should have gone to his brother. As the works expanded it is not easy to say exactly which of the many engineering improvements patented by the company came from the inventive and fertile mind of the founder of the business, and minute books do not tell us. One idea in another sphere we do know was his: to combat unemployment (resulting from the Depression) he put in hand the manufacture of motor mowers in 1920. The adaptability that was a marked characteristic of Dennis Bros. should surely be attributed to him, initially in any case. Awareness of the company's capacities in relation to the market and other manufacturers was presumably behind the decision on 6 April 1905 that cycle manufacture should cease, and similarly in 1913 (apparently), car manufacture was abandoned in favour of fire engines and commercial vehicles. It is odd that this decision is not recorded in the minute books. Both brothers are classic examples of spectacular engineering and industrial and commercial success, achieved with a minimum of specifically engineering education, and should also perhaps be cited to show the persistence well into the 20th century of what is supposed to be the 19th-century 'work ethic'. Both continued at their labours until shortly before they died.

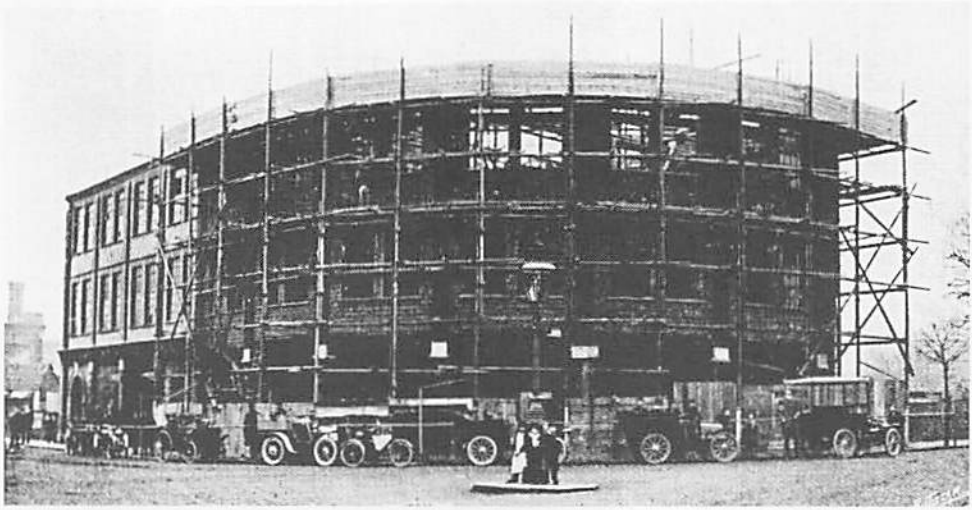


Fig. 1. The first part of the factory on the corner of Onslow Street and Bridge Street under construction, 1902 (GMR 1463).

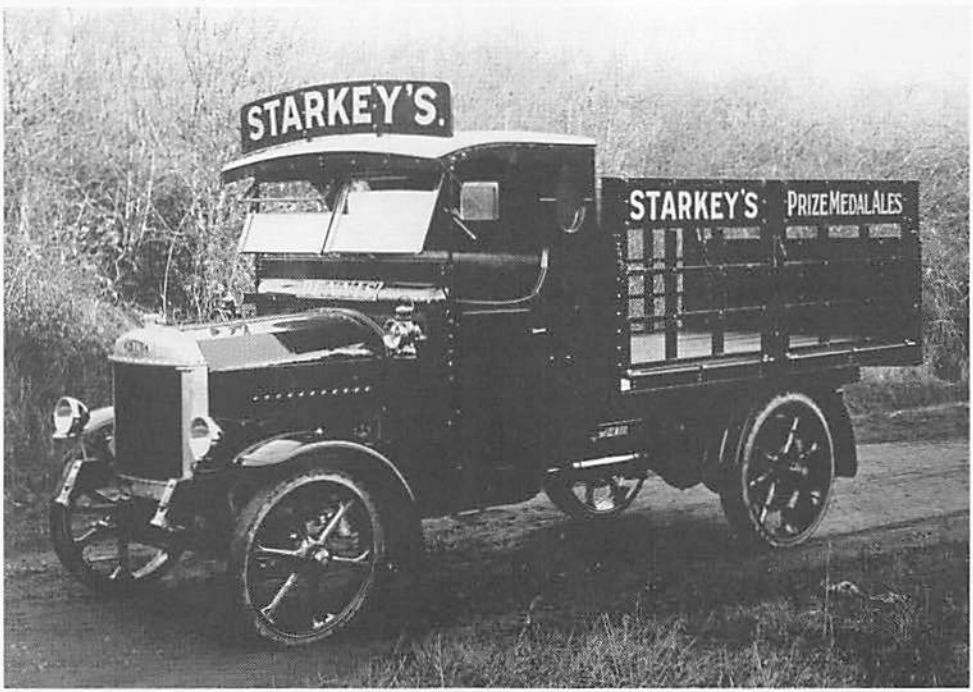


Fig. 2. This example of a small early Dennis lorry is stated to have been built in 1904 and would have cost about £400 (GMR 1463).

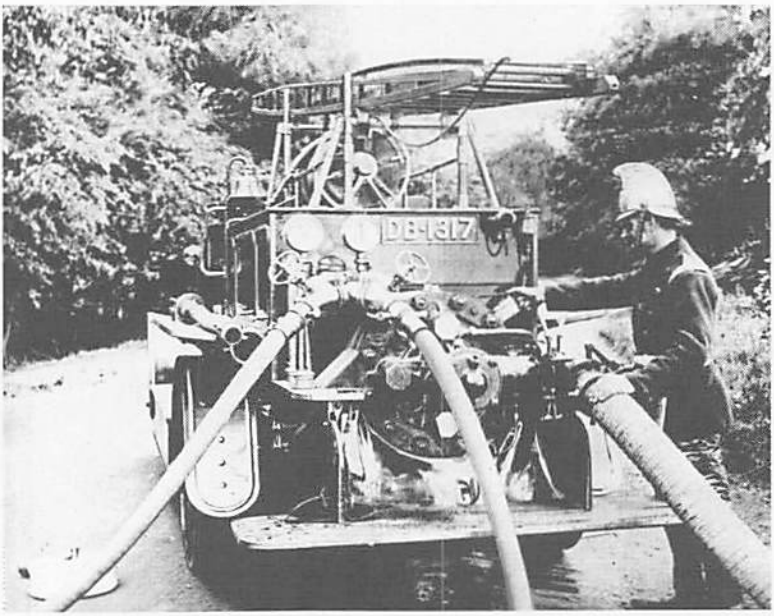


Fig. 3. From a 1920 brochure for Dennis Motor Turbine Fire Engines. This shows the 60 h.p. model 'capable of accelerating to 35 m.p.h.'. The pump was capable of delivering 450 gallons per minute at 120 lbs. pressure (GMR 1463).

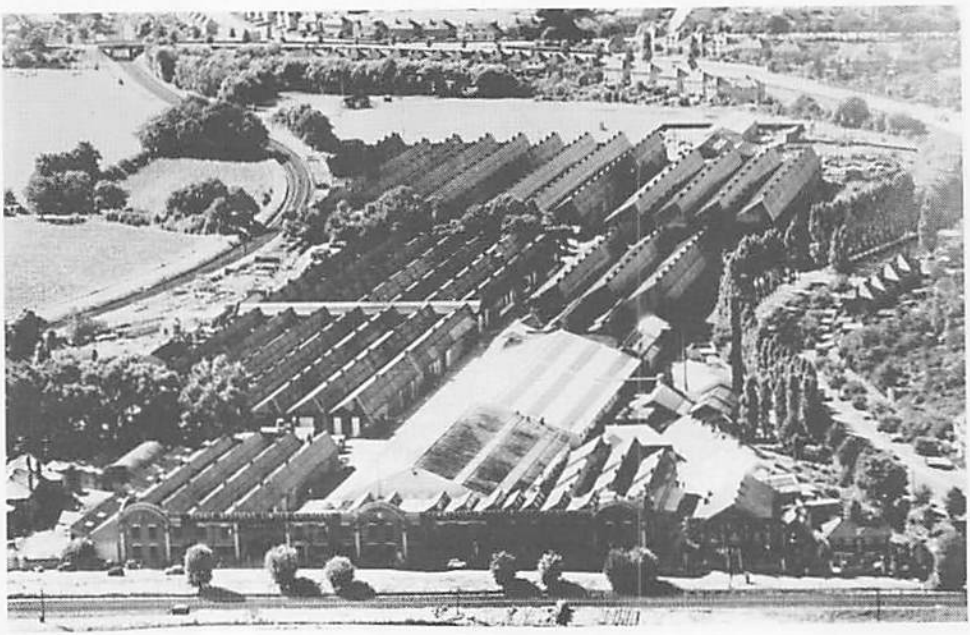


Fig. 4. The Woodbridge Works seen from the east in the 1950s (GMR 1463).

Sites and Buildings

In the absence of records it can only be a likely hypothesis that it was a great increase in production, as well as the change-over to motorised vehicles in the last years of the 19th century, which led first to the leasing of premises in the old barracks at the end of Friary Street (1900) and then, less than twelve months later, to the construction of a purpose-built factory beyond, on the corner of Onslow Street and Bridge Street. This works, now known as Rodboro Buildings from the Boot and Shoe Company to whom it was sold in 1919, was erected by Drowley & Co., of Woking, to designs by John Lake, architect, in 1901. In 1903 land for an extension on the west was bought and, after initial objections by Guildford Borough Council, two additions were made in 1903 and 1905. It was nonetheless soon found inadequate, and early in 1905 the first part of what became a 31-acre site on Woodbridge Hill was acquired, and the first workshop, the huge iron Terrey-Alexander mission hall from Brixton, bought in June. It continued in use until 1985. Ten additional workshops were built between 1910 and 1936, and a 'power house' added in 1915. The factory in Onslow Street was used as an office only from 1911-1919. The extension to No. 9 shop authorised on 15 March 1932 was a landmark. Into a new space was moved from Coventry the entire engine manufacture of White & Poppe, whose engines had been powering many Dennis vehicles since at least 1909. To accommodate the work-force 102 houses, 'Dennisville', were built just west of the factory, an addition to the 121 the company already owned. It was the older and eastern half of the factory site, including the fine scheduled facade beside the railway line that was sold in 1985.

The Company

Dennis Bros. Ltd., a private company, was formed in July 1901 with four directors, seven subscribers and a capital of £7,500, increased to £100,000 in 1906. Dennis Bros (1913) Ltd. was floated as a public company with £300,000 of share capital in March 1913. George Clare, who had supervised the setting up of this new company, and Reginald Downing joined the Board, Clare becoming Chairman until the company was established. Downing had worked for Dennis since 1902 as draughtsman and trials driver, with a particular interest in fire engines. In 1918 the company returned to its original name of Dennis Bros. Ltd. Several new developments were introduced with the end of wartime production. A new engine was needed, and in 1919 a 'fusion of interests' led to an amalgamation with White & Poppe. Production was rationalised between the two factories, engines, clutches and gear boxes being manufactured in Coventry. A subsidiary company, Dennis Portland, was floated to market the 2/2½ ton chassis, re-christened the Dennis Portland. In 1920 the company had agents in Bombay, Singapore, Batavia, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Sydney, Wellington, Honolulu, Valparaiso, Buenos Aires and New York. In 1929 another subsidiary company, Dennis Contracts, was created to operate a hire-purchase scheme. The years before the Second World War saw many new models and patents (seven applications in 1932), including a diesel engine in 1931, and increasing output sold through an ever growing number of foreign outlets. Several royal warrants were awarded.

During the First World War the factory had made the subvention vehicle for the War Office, and in the Second also all production – in this case lorries, agricultural vehicles, bombs and the Churchill tank – was for the war effort.

The best years of the company were 1946-1951, with improvements in bus design and new refuse collectors and a new series of fire engines. In 1962 the Fire Appliance Section of Alfred Miles was acquired, and in 1964 the Mercury Truck & Tractor Company and other Mercury Companies. A programme of modernisation was pursued, but in 1965 there was a large trading loss. Recovery was assisted by a contract in 1968 to supply the entire quota of frontline machines to the London Fire Brigade. A re-organisation of company structure and production from 1969 to 1972 did not succeed in keeping the company in the black, in spite of continuing large orders, and in 1972 it was taken over by Hestair and the name changed to Dennis Motors Ltd., and then, from 1973 to 1985, Hestair Dennis. Mercury was sold in 1972 and the motor mower production – today called Dennis Derby – also hived off. An extensive re-organisation involving redundancies and the sale of some land reached a climax with the Sale of 1985. The company now called Dennis Specialist Vehicles Ltd. manufactures chassis for buses, coaches and fire-engines on what is left of the Woodbridge site. Other sections of production have been moved to Warwick and Blackpool. John Dennis, grandson of the founder, has started his own works elsewhere in Guildford, with many Dennis craftsmen, making and repairing bodywork for fire engines and other vehicles; his firm is called John Dennis Coachbuilders.

Vehicles and Production

Its present name, Dennis Specialist Vehicles Ltd., aptly describes the company throughout its life. In 1913 the chairman said 'we only make cars [i.e. all vehicles] to order'; the company was 'a highly specialised producer of quality vehicles to specific requirements'. Although the company's engineers were always active in devising new models and new components in anticipation of demand, they did not (apart from prototypes) go into production until orders were received and contracts signed. Minute books and annual reports of the company record the value of the advance orders in order books. There was – except in war-time – no production line in the generally accepted sense; each vehicle, as the works production orders make clear, had its own individual features as specified by the customer. Those with experience of vehicle manufacture have suggested to the present writer that engineering ingenuity and a high quality product were the distinguishing features of Dennis, the latter characteristic working to some extent to their own detriment in a world of built-in obsolescence: their vehicles did not need replacing. Only an examination of all the many patents taken out by the company will show their true place in the history of the British motor industry. The first, and much-publicised, was that for the worm drive and worm gear (1904), ensuring a long-lasting and smooth transmission and being, the company claimed, silent.

To mention briefly the main types of vehicles manufactured, and their dates: cars 1901-*c.*1913; buses since 1903; vans and lorries since 1904; fire engines – with which the name of Dennis is especially associated, and the type of which most examples survive – since 1908; ambulances since 1909; cesspool and gully-emptiers – the company seems to have been a pioneer in the manufacture of vehicles of a kind categorised in the works as 'Muni' – since 1921. New models in all these fields appeared almost every year, and in addition old types – notably the 'Max' and 'Pax'

commercial and municipal chassis, went through a large number of variants, with different wheel-base lengths, and different engines, etc.

Although engines were not, until 1933, manufactured in Guildford, and the Woodbridge works never had a foundry to cast its own chassis, until 1939 all vehicles were assembled and built in Guildford, where bodywork and transmission parts were made.

The Records

Company Records: Seven Minute Books 1901-1955 (include major decisions taken by the Board relating to Directors, shares, production policy, property, etc.; early volumes also include details of vehicle contracts signed with local authorities, Apprenticeship and patents); Directors' Reports and Balance Sheets 1913-1971; Registers of Directors, Shareholders etc. kept under Companies Acts 1901-1951; Articles of Association at various dates; Seal Book 1927-1974.

Financial Records: Seven 'journals' 1901-1965 (day books of all expenditure); five Ledgers 1901-1942 (items entered under many headings, including Land and Buildings, Deposit, Dividend, Trading and Profit and Loss accounts, Salaries, and apprenticeships Premiums, with names); Petty Cash and General account books etc. 1934-1969, and some other account books, including one of Sir Raymond Dennis's household at Graffham Grange.

Customers and Orders: Fifty-one Customer Order Books (an incomplete series) for all types of vehicles and lawn mowers 1905-1908, 1910-1914 and 1928-1966; card index of customers, chiefly municipal vehicles, *c.*1924-1962.

Vehicles built: Early contracts are entered in the minute books and seal register including some for cars; volume with notes of vehicles on order 1910-1914; Works Production Orders (giving date, purchaser's name, type of vehicle, chassis and engine numbers and all individual features): for Fire Engines *c.*1913-*c.*1946 (arranged alphabetically by purchaser), 1951-1953, 1961-1966 (arranged in number order), Commercial and Municipal *c.*1949-*c.*1972 (in number order); W.P.O. Register Book 1946-1967; five Chassis Register Books 1921-1965 (giving chassis number, engine number, name of purchaser, type of vehicle and date when it left the works – the vital finding aid for owners of old vehicles who know only the chassis number); five Engine Register Books 1920-1965 (giving engine number and type, maker – White & Poppe, Dodge, Meadows, Perkins, Bedford, Ford and others – chassis number of vehicle, customer, and date of leaving the works); some finding aids used in the works; vehicle performance data (after 1954); registration papers of Dennis' own vehicles 1905-1917.

Engineering drawings: A huge number, dating from 1905 to the 1960s, not yet arranged, listed or indexed.

Printed Company Brochure and Vehicle Handbooks, Spare Parts Books and Service Manuals: A large but not complete collection from 1901 to date. The spare parts books act as an index to the plans of all the parts of any specific vehicle.

Personnel: Wages and Salaries books 1904-1940; Accident Books 1902-1940 (these are all closed for the present); Apprenticeship papers 1930s, 1940s and 1950s;

Minutes and other records of Dennis Athletic Club and Dennis Employees Benevolent Fund, 1913-1960s; Pensions papers (closed).

Factory and House Property: As well as references in minute books and entries in ledgers, some title deeds for the Woodbridge property (1920s-1950s), contracts for building Factories 4, 2, 8 & 9 (1912, 1914, 1925 and 1927), and some plans; Agreements and plans for building Dennisville houses (1934 and 1936), and subsequent papers; a schedule 1902-1953; photographs.

Photographs: Chiefly of vehicles, also of the factory and personnel, about eleven thousand, some in albums, some loose, with many glass and other negatives, *c.*1910-*c.*1978.

Files: A small number, taken as specimens, and mostly recent and therefore closed.

Newspaper cutting albums: 1907-1912, 1914-1919 (including the company's own advertisements); 1913-1933 (financial only); 1964-1967, and 1976 and 1977.

Records of subsidiary companies: Dennis Portland and Dennis Contracts, also Dennis Motor Holdings, including certificates of incorporation, minute books and financial records. There are also brochures and papers for the companies from whom Dennis bought engines and pumps for fire engines, such as the Tamini pump (1925), and some White & Poppe accounts (1919-1932).

* * * * *

Only the main classes are noted in the above necessarily brief description of the records, which are not only large in quantity but a remarkably complete record of at least the first 51 years of a major British vehicle-building firm, albeit not one of the largest. Indeed, it seems not at all unlikely that in years to come the comprehensive survival of the Dennis records may make it not only the best documented of British motor firms, but that its records may become its own best claim to historical importance. Meanwhile a rather bemused Guildford Muniment Room finds itself the focus of attention from Dennis owners all over the world.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

The extent to which the above is based on the company's own records now in Guildford Muniment Room can be inferred from the dates of the different classes given above. Nothing has been deposited before 1901, and little after 1955. Information from deposited sources has been supplemented by various typed histories written up in the Company offices, and by printed works. The most important of these is *Why Dennis – & How* by R. Twelvetrees and P. Squire. This appeared in 1945 and evidently includes much information from members of staff. Studies of individual Dennis vehicle types are: Pat Kennet, *Dennis World Trucks No. 6* (1979); R. N. Hannay, *Dennis Buses in Camera* (1980); *75 Years of Dennis Buses & Coaches*, Autobus Review (1980). Some of the statements in these last three books need to be checked against the records.

UNEARTHING SURREY FOLKLORE

J. N. Morris

Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society

Folklore was as fashionable a subject to the Victorians as it is to us today. They wrote numerous books about the folk customs and superstitions of Britain and founded learned societies to foster the systematic study of them. As a result there is a considerable amount of information to hand about the folklore of various parts of the country, and yet, strangely, Surrey is largely absent from existing lists of publications. From a relatively early period the county was regarded as something of a victim of urban growth: the railways opened up parts of the north and east of the county to those who desired a pleasant residence in the country with a convenient and rapid line of communication to their places of work in the metropolis, and provided an easy means of access for the reverse flow of metropolitan residents seeking weekend pleasure trips and walks in the countryside. As a result, just at the time when folklore studies were beginning to gather momentum in England, the early 1850s, Surrey was already beginning to acquire a reputation amongst the Victorian middle class of being a county whose principal feature was its natural beauty. The more turbulent and even disturbing aspects of the history of the county – and above all the history of the Surrey labourer – were played down or ignored altogether as inconvenient intrusions upon this rural idyll.

There is a further problem in that much of folklore material that does exist and which local historians may utilise – and there is a considerable amount buried in local newspapers, histories and autobiographies – needs to be handled with great care. It has been a recurrent complaint of historians in recent years that folklorists have hitherto paid far too little attention to the context and meaning of the customs and beliefs they have recorded and far too much to valueless (because unproven) speculation about their origins. Even in the late 19th century, in the heyday of the 'new science' of folklore, some were sceptical about the usefulness of much of the data their contemporaries were collecting when torn out of context: 'It is of very little use recording items of folklore unless a note is given of the place where each custom or belief obtains,' complained G. L. Gomme (one of the founders of the Folklore Society) in 1890 about a number of contributions to *Notes and Queries*. If the collections of Victorian folklorists were analogous to the huge collections of insect specimens amassed by Victorian naturalists, then only rarely were the folklorists' specimens accurately and precisely labelled.

In this article I intend to study only one form of folk or 'traditional' activity, seasonal rituals, and to attempt to set some examples I have found in Surrey in the late 18th and 19th centuries in their social and economic contexts.

The ceremonies and 'bizarre' activities which could be classed under seasonal ritual provide evidence of a sophisticated popular calendar of customary actions which fitted closely into the patterns of work and culture of village life. The calendar was composed of practices relating to the cycles of work, leisure and religion; its structure varied from locality to locality according to the incidence and pattern of each of these elements. There were for example quite complicated harvest and farming rituals still to be found in the late 19th century in the county; the comparative poverty of soil for grain production in the Low Weald, the Downland and the heaths of western Surrey was offset at least by a great diversity in agricultural production in the county, ranging from hop-growing in the west, sheep-farming on the Downs, mixed and dairy farming in the Weald, to market gardening on the Metropolitan fringe, and each of these occupations frequently exhibited their own forms of seasonal, customary celebrations and work disciplines. There is also considerable scattered evidence of other ritual practices which were not directly related to agricultural work.

Highmarks in the religious calendar: Easter and Christmas

Festivals in the Christian year were often marked with popular customs that to educated observers appeared to have little to do with orthodox religion. They were particularly clustered around Easter and Christmas. George Sturt recorded the baking of Hot Cross Buns on Good Friday in his boyhood, so that certainly is not a modern invention – the symbolism of the cross can of course be readily explained, but the baking of a cake on this day should be seen as another application of a custom that could be used to mark other seasonal events: on All Soul's Eve in some parts of England, for example, small cakes were handed out to those who chanted a rhyme the form of which varied but which frequently contained strong religious references, a custom called 'going a-souling'. Dancing on Good Friday occurred well into the 19th century at Tyting near St. Martha's Hill; there have been attempts to explain this by reference to vestiges of pagan worship and witchcraft, but these must fall flat on their face in the absence of any evidence whatsoever to bear this out. What is certain however is that the procession and dancing were accompanied with a fair, offering stalls with goods for sale on the village green, that the dancing was considered '... boisterous and unseemly, riotous and noisy', and that on one occasion at least the participants in the dancing turned it into a way of breaking up a revivalist meeting in St. Martha's church. Other games, such as hockey, shying orange-peel and 'kiss-in-the-ring' were also played. There is really no need to go much further than this. Good Friday fairs and games were common in England at this time, and their significance is two-fold: they marked a symbolic end to the austerity of Lent, therefore they possessed a calendrical religious importance, and they could provide a ritualised, contained expression of popular dissatisfaction with authority. The dancers who broke up the revivalist meeting in St. Martha's church were really expressing the same kind of resentment at attempts to impose upon them stricter notions of religious morality that the 'Skeleton Armies' who attempted to break up Salvation Army meetings in the 1880s and 1890s felt. The Skeleton Armies were extremely active in towns and villages throughout Surrey in the late 19th century.

Christmas was anticipated at least in some northern villages of Surrey, around Chertsey, in the early 1850s by the custom of 'going a-gooding' on St. Thomas's Day,

the 21st of December. A 'stout old dame' described in 1881 as follows:

> 'I remember it as if it was yesterday ... we used to go with our sacks and our bags; and mother, she always worked on the farm at hoeing and couching or anything, and she did have a train of children after her! Some folks 'ud say, Well, and what do you want? when we knocked at the door, pretending as they didn't know; and then we made our curtseys, and says, 'Please to remember the Gooders, ma'am!' And some 'ud give money and some flour, or currants and raisins, and shovel 'em into our bags; there was farmer Johnson, as mother worked for, he always ground two stacks o' corn for the Gooders; and he used to stand at his door with a strike in his hand and give it out. 'Now then, Nan, hold up your bag.' he used to say to me, a-laughing. Ah, farmers was different i' them days.'[1]

The same custom, variously known as 'a-doleing', 'a-mumping', 'a-corning' or 'a-Thomasin' was reported widely in Britain. Although the choice of the day may well indicate some connection with pre-reformation religious festivals, the general seasonal significance of the custom was that it came at a period which for agricultural labourers could be the hardest in the year, when the cost of food and fuel might be high and work would be relatively scarce; it was matched by the Christmas gifts or 'doles' given to the mummers and waits, and to shop assistants and apprentices in the towns. The account cited above implies that 'going a-gooding' was not merely institutionalised, regularised begging, but a customary act which depended on a mutual recognition of need: the farmer 'ground two stacks o'corn' in anticipation of the gooders calling, and the good humour with which he (and it is implied others) gave to them is a far cry from the disapproval with which, by this period, clergymen and educated townsmen were beginning to regard doleing. Since doleing was dependent upon good neighbourly relations, it invariably operated within the framework of familiarity presented by the geographical boundaries of the community, usually those of the parish, and in this sense it had a further function of reaffirming the interdependence of farmers and labourers within the community. The visits of the mummers and waits at Christmas illustrated the same dependence upon close community relationships; waits (known today simply as carol-singers) were usually too common and widely spread to be paid much attention by contemporary observers, although a close reading of local newspapers has revealed a number of references to them at Croydon for example; mummers were also found throughout the country, for example near Farnham in the 1860s, in Coulsdon in the 1870s and in Barnes in 1891. To some extent however in providing entertainment – waits by singing carols and mummers by acting out their traditional plays – these groups were perhaps less dependent for economic reward upon familiarity with those on whom they were calling, and could therefore sometimes survive in large towns, as was clearly the case at Barnes. A comparison of the following account of George Sturt with texts from Worcestershire and Hampshire, accounts from Sussex (it has been estimated that some forty-five towns and villages in that county at one time had mummers performing in them) and even Thomas Hardy's description in *The Return of the Native* indicates that if the precise wording varied considerably the characters and the sentiments expressed were usually much the same:

> 'I didn't see all the show ... yet plucked up courage to see that it had to do with a feud between a Turkish Knight and King George, with a Doctor and others intervening. I saw their dread wooden-sword play on the space cleared for them before the hearth; saw King

George (I expect he was "Gearge") fall down with a flump, dead; saw the Doctor come forward then and bring him to life again, with a patent application. "Some calls it 'Okum-pocum'," the Doctor said solemnly as he bent over the body, "some calls it 'Okum-pocum", some calls it 'Inkum-pinkum'; but the right name is 'Elicompayne' ".'[2]

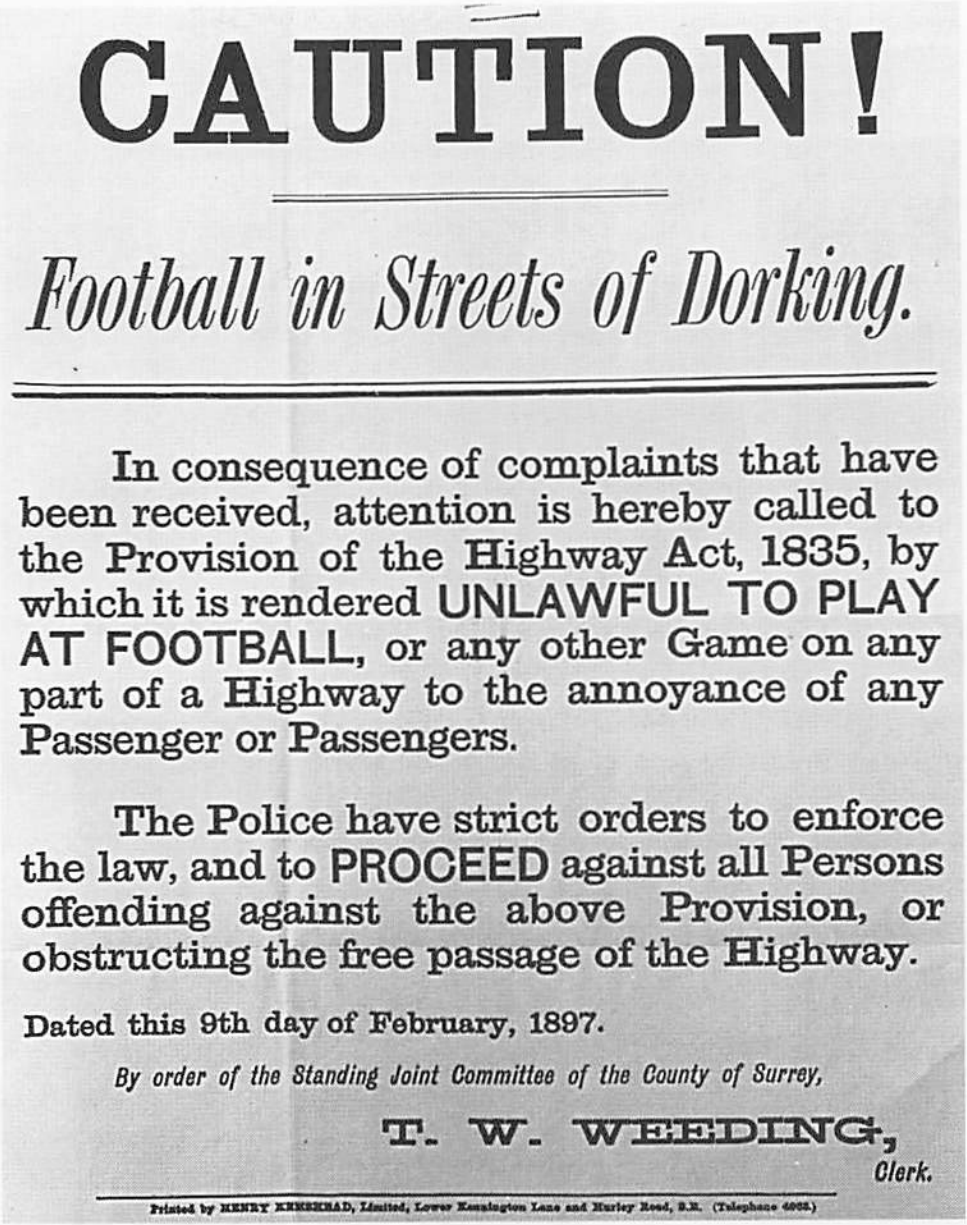
The substance of mummers' plays would probably reward a more systematic analysis than I have space to give here; suffice it to say at this stage that the melodramatic, mock-heroic texts could well have been intended to satirise the sentiments expressed by the characters, as well as to state clearly and unmistakably 'popular' prejudice. What is interesting too about these plays is that they do not seem to have become a means for immediate, contemporary political comment, and this relatively low political content is a common feature of English folk culture, in contrast for example with France where, during and after the Revolution of 1789, folk customs were frequently used as a way of expressing political allegiances.

Religion and popular festivity: Shrove Tuesday, Oak Apple Day and Guy Fawkes Night

Three other seasonal rituals found in Surrey indicate at least a semi-religious calendrical location. On Shrove Tuesday in at least four Surrey towns and villages – Epsom, Dorking, Kingston and Richmond – in the early and mid-19th century an extremely rough game of football was played. The Dorking example is the best known and best described; the following description of the ceremony before the 1897 game is a modern one:

'As the Shrove Tuesday came round the first thing to attract attention was the barricading of shop windows where no shutters existed, and as the morning wore on the sound of a drum and pipes caught the ear, this was 'Taffer Boult's Band' consisting of about half-a-dozen grotesquely dressed men, one with a side drum, others with whistle pipes, pipes and a triangle – the leader, a well-known character named Phil Stedman, carried a collecting box and donations were invited against possible window breaking or other damage. The band was conducted through the streets by a man carrying a cross-shaped framework upon which was suspended, in the fashion of a pawn-broker's sign, three painted footballs, one red and green, the second red, white and blue, and the third, a large one, in gold leaf, and on the crossbar of the framework was the inscription:
'Wind and water is Dorking's glory.'[3]

The game itself was played in the streets of Dorking in the afternoon, many men and boys joining in. A contributor to *Notes and Queries* noted that for several years before 1862 the tolling of the 'pancake bell' had been dispensed with – the pancake bell in fact was the church bell. Again this custom was not one peculiar to Surrey, and the game is still played in at least five villages in England. The timing is not easy to explain: possibly it again marks a reaction against the coming symbolic austerity of Lent, and in this sense there may be a parallel with the more elaborate, flamboyant rites of the pre-Lenten Carnivals in France; Le Roy Ladurie described the role of Carnival as '... burying one's pagan ways, having one last pagan fling before embarking on the penitential rigors of the catachumen's lententide, which would result in spiritual and baptismal rebirth at Easter. In short, the rites of Carnival were a logical prelude to their opposite: Lenten fasting and preaching.' The comparative modesty of the English shrovetide games could have been a result of a more relaxed attitude to Lent on the part of the Reformed Church. The 'pancake bell' was a toll



CAUTION!

Football in Streets of Dorking.

In consequence of complaints that have been received, attention is hereby called to the Provision of the Highway Act, 1835, by which it is rendered UNLAWFUL TO PLAY AT FOOTBALL, or any other Game on any part of a Highway to the annoyance of any Passenger or Passengers.

The Police have strict orders to enforce the law, and to PROCEED against all Persons offending against the above Provision, or obstructing the free passage of the Highway.

Dated this 9th day of February, 1897.

By order of the Standing Joint Committee of the County of Surrey,

T. W. WEEDING,
Clerk.

Printed by HENRY KENNERAD, Limited, Lower Kennington Lane and Hurley Road, S.E. (Telephone 4903.)

Fig. 1. Shrovetide football in Dorking is banned in 1897 (*courtesy of Surrey Record Office, PS7/2/8*).

Fig. 2. Shrovetide football in Kingston, mid-19th century (*courtesy of Surrey Record Office*).

Fig. 3. Shrovetide football in Dorking being suppressed by police in 1901 (*courtesy of Croydon Public Library*).

from the parish church which is thought to have originated in the pre-Reformation calling of the people to confession for Lent. The band was a common way of announcing popular action and attracting attention: hence its use by waits, and in the inverted form of 'rough-musicking', in which people who attracted popular hostility would be 'serenaded' by a band producing a cacophony of sound from instruments, old pots, pans, and anything in fact which could make a loud, unwelcome noise. Enthusiasts of Thomas Hardy will recall the 'skimmington ride', or rough-musicking, performed outside Michael Henchard's house by the people of Casterbridge in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

The 29th May, 'Oak-Apple Day', was still celebrated in the late 19th century in some parts of Surrey – George Sturt refers to it near Farnham, and a resident of Warlingham in the east of the county remembered celebrating it in the 1870s. Again it was a custom widely celebrated throughout England. One of three State services abolished by Royal Warrant in 1859 provided for a form of service to mark the day, which was intended to celebrate the 'martyrdom' of Charles I and the restoration of the monarchy but which also became popularly associated with Charles II's escape from the Battle of Worcester by hiding in an oak tree. 'Shik-shak Day' as it was also called was celebrated by wearing sprigs of oak or an actual oak-apple; Sturt refers to the prerogative of hitting someone not seen wearing one, or suspected of wearing maple instead. The significance of 'Shik-shak' was loosely political: to wear oak leaves was regarded as showing support for the monarchy, to wear plane leaves (and possibly maple in Sturt's description) support for republicanism. The political overtones were mitigated however in two respects: firstly, in the 18th century 'Shik-shak' had during the Jacobite rebellions been turned in some places into a way of defying the Hanoverians (because of course it was the Stuarts who had been restored in 1660), so that its history as an indication of popular loyalty was chequered, to say the least; and secondly, except for the turbulent years from the 1790s to the 1820s, republicanism never really became an active issue in English popular politics in the 18th and 19th centuries, so that the affirmation of loyalty involved in wearing oak leaves on 'Shik-shak Day' was probably not very strong as it had little to fight against. It may still have possessed a religious meaning: the origin of the name 'Shik-shak' most probably lies in the 17th-century 'shit-sack' an insult applied to dissenters (who in the 17th-century context would have been anti-monarchists), and in certain parts of England in the 19th century rhymes were still chanted on Oak Apple Day which embodied sentiments of popular aversion to Nonconformity.

Guy Fawkes Day, the 5th November, was also partly legitimated in the popular view by reference to one of the State services abolished in 1859. As in the case with many of the seasonal rituals described here, the problem for the historian of popular culture as far as Guy Fawkes Day is concerned is that it was so widely celebrated that few people bothered to record specific instances. Sturt described graphically the procession and bonfire in Farnham in *A Small Boy in the Sixties*, a ritual which for noise and rowdiness probably approached the more famous event at Lewes in Sussex (still celebrated); a similar procession was performed at Dorking and at Reigate. In 1888 at an unidentified village in East Surrey feeling between rival bands celebrating the day with different effigies, one of Gladstone and one of Balfour, ran so high that they actually came to blows, an incident which shows an unusual adaption of a 'folk' form to party political expression, and an elderly resident of the hamlet of Shirley, near Croydon, described to me how as a child before the First World War she was kept

indoors by her mother and grandmother because of the rowdiness of the celebrations there. An instance recorded from Redhill in 1858 also illustrates how the Guy Fawkes celebrations could be turned into a means of protest and criticism, with the ritual burning of effigies of specific local individuals. A lifelike effigy of a Mr. Norman Wilkinson was hung from a tree in the grounds of a Mr. Webb, and a crowd called at Webb's house for money carrying the effigy of a more humble neighbour; Webb refused to give, objecting to the effigy; the crowd pointed to the effigy of Wilkinson and when a fire was lit beneath it, rushed over to salvage it, parading it around the streets for several hours in triumph.

Although none of these Surrey examples shows particularly strong religious sentiments, the Guy Fawkes celebrations were notoriously a way of giving vent to anti-Catholic feeling: in Lewes an effigy of the Pope was burned alongside the Guy; when Cardinal Wiseman provoked a storm of indignation in England with the issue of his proclamation 'Out of the Flaminian Gate of Rome' in 1850 on the restoration of a Roman Catholic episcopal hierarchy in England and landed in England on 11 November, he was horrified to learn that effigies of himself and the Pope had been burnt in English villages on 5 November, in some places the windows of Catholic houses smashed, and even Anglican ritualist churches attacked.

May Day, Valentines and Wassailing

Other seasonal rituals can perhaps be dealt with more briefly. Celebrations of May Day were still quite widespread in Surrey towns and villages in the 19th century. The maypole for example was used in the streets of Croydon in the 1850s. George Sturt has a description of 'garlanding', the custom of small children carrying posies of flowers round to houses, chanting a rhyme and collecting money. Sturt's comment on the social origins of the children – 'Not that any of us Sturts ever carried garlands. That was a sign of poverty; for on May Morning (a school holiday) little troops and families of cottage children, gay as the spring, carried round to all houses their posies ...' – once again illustrates that this was a poor man's custom. Sturt adds, interestingly enough, that on the same morning the chimney sweeps would also call round, sing and dance:

> 'Yet though they were bedecked with ribbons and laughed and made merry, the merriment was rather obviously 'made'. Perhaps the contrast with their usual sootiness was too great; perhaps they were too plainly conscious of having but this one day's holiday in the year, and of being obliged to use it for foolishness and for appealing for alms.'[4]

Valentine's Day also had its own rituals. Cards were made for Valentine's Day, not purchased commercially as today. At an unidentified village in Surrey in the late 18th century on the same day the boys burnt an effigy called the 'ivy girl' which they had stolen from the girls, and the girls a 'holly boy' which they in turn had stolen from the boys. Apart from the obvious symbolic connection of holly and ivy as male and female, there is a problem in trying to explain what the burning of the effigies was actually for, because in other instances the burning of an effigy was a means of expressing popular disapproval; possibly then in this case the seizure and burning by one sex of the other sex's effigy was an assertion of sexual dominance, an association

Fig. 4. Maypole dancing in 1905, an annual treat for the Guildford Congregational Sunday Schools (*courtesy of Croydon Public Library*).

Fig. 5. An 18th-century election in Camberwell – an illustration of the kind of political uproar caricatured by the London mob in the election of the mock mayor of Garrat (*courtesy of Croydon Public Library*).

of sexuality with power – although by this account the rivalry was unresolved, with neither sex ritually 'defeating' the other once and for all.

Another ceremony recorded in Surrey was wassailing. It was recorded in the *Gentleman's Magazine* that at Warlingham in 1782 sometime in the early spring boys toured the orchards in the parish and whipped the apple trees in order to ensure a plentiful crop, after which they were given oatmeal (and presumably other food and drink) at the farmhouse. On New Year's Eve at Anstead Brook, near Haslemere, a very similar ceremony was carried out. Wassailing was widespread in England at various times of the year (unlike other rituals described here it did not necessarily happen at one fixed time in the year and in this respect, in addition to the emphasis laid upon the crops, was more akin to harvest rituals), and although the stated function was often to ensure a good crop by ritual incantations, beating the trees, and so on, it was equally important as a festive occasion, with food and drink often being provided in considerable quantities by farmers for their labourers, an action which once again was designed to bolster up good feeling between farmers and their workers. Whatever religious significance, if any, the ritual may have had was very weak: it was much more important as part of the customary cycle of work and leisure which helped to regularise rural life, stabilise social relations and reduce the possibility of conflict.

The mock-mayor: popular custom as popular politics

Finally there is the unusual and interesting ceremony of the annual election of mock mayor at the hamlet of Garrat, near Wandsworth in north-east Surrey, between 1747 at least and 1797. The account of one writer, W. H. Moyes, is as follows:

> 'The candidates for the position were either idiotic or deformed, but their election was accompanied by all the showy paraphernalia of a serious installation ... The order for the election was issued by the Clerk and Recorder from an imaginary Town Hall, and the rivals published handbills in which each glorified his own merits and vigorously abused his opponent. In one of the bills issued, the candidate informed the electors that he entertained his friends at all the public-houses in Wandsworth on the day of the election, "without any other expense than that of every one paying for what they called." '[5]

Moyes was probably right when he described the innkeepers of the district as the principal promoters of the ceremony – it attracted hordes of the 'London mob' down to Garrat for the day – yet in calling it a 'quaint but apparently absurd custom' was surely missing the mark altogether. The ceremony has all the signs of a popular satire on town government, outside the reach of the city authorities: candidates would tend to adopt showy, mocking names such as 'Squire Blowmedown', 'Lord Twankum', 'Kit Noisy' and 'Sir John Crambo'; the candidates were, as Moyes says, often 'idiotic and deformed'; Moyes cites a handbill issued in 1761 by one of the candidates which promised that:

> 'I will order yet undiscovered regions to resound with your fame; in your borough I will erect non-existent depots for the transaction of your timber business; and in your suburbs I will plant an imaginary grove for your private affairs. My unknown fortune shall be ever ready for your assistance; my useless sword drawn in your defence, and my waste blood I will freely spill in your protection.'[6]

The 'Garrat Cavalry' who occupied the road at elections had the smallest boys on the largest horses, and the largest men on ponies, and were commanded by a 'small Master of the Horse in showy regimentals, with a sword seven feet long, boots reaching to the hips, and enormous spurs, and mounted on the largest dray horse that could be obtained.' The ceremony was a caricature, a ridiculing of authority and the nobility, and the great interest of the London mob suggests that it was really a custom whose origins and significance are to be found in the politics of the metropolis rather than in rural Surrey. The last election was held in 1796, and exactly why the custom ended is not explained; it is quite possible, however, that it was suppressed by government and magistrates because of the potential it possessed for political unrest in a decade which witnessed a high degree of radical activity amongst the poor and artisans of the city. If this is the case, its suppression would simply have been yet another aspect of the campaign of repression carried out against radical groups by Pitt's government.

Conclusion

This has been a brief and somewhat sketchy survey of some instances of seasonal popular customs in Surrey. In interpreting these customs I have tried to suggest a different emphasis from that usually given by many writers of folklore, stressing the importance of need and of the sense of community solidarity which underlay much popular action in the 18th and 19th centuries, rather than trying to trace connections with supposed pagan ceremonies and fertility rites – connections for which I think there is little, if any, substantial evidence. Much remains to be done in the way of research on Surrey folklore, and in the writing of this article (and in the research I have conducted since it was written) I have come to think that the 'way forward' perhaps lies in individual, intensively-researched studies either of particular clusters of customs and beliefs or (and I think more valuably) of the mesh of custom and popular culture in particular parts of Surrey. In this way the field is thrown open to the local historian.

Sources

There is a huge variety of documentation which will yield information on folklore in Surrey; the following is a list of those kinds of source I have found particularly useful:

Notes and Queries – published regularly throughout the 19th century.
Local newspapers – good for seasonal rituals.
Town and parish histories.
Autobiographies.
Interviews with elderly people.

In addition to the above, the following are a very good starting-point for studying Surrey folklore:

The published writings and diaries of George Sturt.
G. Leveson-Gower, *Surrey Provincialisms* (pub. 1876).
G. Clinch & S. W. Kershaw, *Bygone Surrey* (pub. 1895).

Bibliography

Readers who wish to pursue the subject of folklore in general will find the following interesting:

W. Boase, *The Folklore of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (pub. 1976)

R. W. Bushaway, *By Rite:Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880* (pub. 1982)

J. Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society in South Lindsey 1825-1875* (pub. 1976)

J. Simpson, *The Folklore of Sussex* (pub. 1973)

K. V. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (pub. 1970)

NOTES

1. *Notes and Queries*, 6th Series, Vol.3, 9 April 1881.
2. G. Sturt, *A Small Boy in the Sixties* (pub. 1927)
3. *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, Vol. 54, 1955.
4. G. Sturt, *A Small Boy in the Sixties.*
5. W. H. Moyes, 'Quaint Surrey Retrospects' in the *Surrey Magazine*, 1901.
6. Moyes, op. cit.

NOTE

In Vol. III no. 2 we published a reproduction of the William of Occam stained-glass window in Ockham parish church. We should have added 'designed, constructed and erected by Lawrence Lee, ARCA, of Penshurst, Tonbridge, Kent'.

NEW MATERIAL FOR SURREY HISTORIANS
Accessions of Records in Surrey Record Office, 1985

D. B. Robinson, County Archivist

'Henry Marshall has devoted his whole time and attention to the business of said partnership of Mellersh Marshall and Mellersh since I first entered their employ. He has upon an average devoted at least 9 hours a day to transact that business either at home or abroad and in many occasions he has continued occupied in such business up to a late hour at night. I have repeatedly been engaged with him upon such business up to 12 and 1 o'Clock at Night'.

'[Thomas Mellersh] jeered said Mr Marshall calling him a 'fine fellow Mr my Lord Mayor' and other terms of ridicule and ending with slamming the door against him as he was standing just within it.'

Records from solicitors' offices are not usually regarded as the most exciting contents of a record office. The large body of title deeds, drafts of legal documents and similar material, although of great value for the researcher interested in a particular area or subject, is not seen as containing much immediate 'human interest'. The examples quoted at the head of this article show that some solicitors' records can be more immediately appealing. The partnership of Thomas Mellersh and Henry Marshall was established in Godalming in 1817, and the articles of co-partnership are among the records. Mellersh had for some years exercised 'the profession or business of Attorney and Solicitor and Conveyancer' at Godalming. Marshall paid Mellersh £1200 to join him as partner, Mellersh advancing part of the money to him. Mellersh, who was also a banker in Godalming, was required to spend only Wednesdays, Saturdays and 'other necessary and particular occasions' on partnership business.

Mellersh's son Henry Mellersh later joined the partnership and in the 1830s was plaintiff in a lawsuit against the two original partners. He had fallen out with his father and left home, living first at the *Red Lion Inn* and then taking lodgings in the town. When, as town clerk of Godalming, he made some error regarding the burgess list, his father 'expressed great pleasure' to one of the clerks, and Henry later commented to the clerk: 'don't you know that he would ruin me if he could?'

Part of the evidence in the lawsuit concerned Thomas Mellersh's hasty temper and its effect on his partners and their staff and clients. Charles Weeden, a 24-year-old clerk, gave evidence as to clients attending Marshall at his house, from 'their desire not to come into contact with said Defendant Thomas Mellersh whose temper is notoriously violent'. He described Marshall's assiduity in rising early and writing several letters before 9 a.m., then going to a tithe meeting or to attend a client and 'upon his return to the Office has taken up the general business that required to be done in the Office and continued to be so occupied with the exception of a short

interval for his dinner up to a late hour at Night'. It must be admitted that these witnesses were testifying on behalf of Marshall and may not have been totally impartial.

The records throw light on the activities of country attorneys and solicitors in the 1830s. The Earl of Midleton in his evidence described the agency work carried out for him by Marshall on his Peper Harow and Irish estates and accounts. Accounts also survive for registration and other electoral work carried out on behalf of James Mangles for the Guildford election of 1837. The latter include also a notice to William Baxter to quit his house in Friary Place: perhaps he had voted for the wrong candidate.

The records also include a court roll for the manor of Rowleys (in Wonersh), 1777-1839, and 19th-century draft court rolls for the manor of Utworth (in Cranleigh), and there are some 700 deeds, leases and mortgages, most of them 19th century but some 17th and 18th century. These relate mainly to south-western Surrey, roughly the area bounded by Guildford, Shere, Cranleigh and Haslemere. The documents were purchased from a dealer with the aid of a grant from the Purchase Grant Fund administered by the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the collection also includes deeds relating to mid and north Surrey and a group for an estate at Peckham, which are probably not related to the south-western Surrey records.

We have also received an important deposit from the Guildford firm of Smallpeice and Merriman. They have occupied their present premises close to Tunsgate in Guildford High Street for at least a century and a half and for much of that time the office of town clerk was held by a member of the firm. They have now deposited a Guildford Borough Justices' minute book, 1836-44, which fills in eight years of the 10 years' gap before 1846 in the series among the Borough records. They have also deposited the magistrates' court book, 1840-1868, for Guildford petty sessional division, including Godalming, Woking and Blackheath hundreds. The court dealt with highways, poor law and licensing matters. Also among the records were a militia roll, 1810-27, listing those who were chosen by lot to serve in the militia, together with the substitutes whom the better-off chose to serve instead of themselves: most of the recruits were unable to sign their names. There was also a book of accounts for building the House of Correction on Castle Hill, 1819-22, kept by John Smallpeice, the County Treasurer, and there was a small draft account book for the Wey and Arun Canal, 1836-42.

In some respects the most interesting of the books is the firm's own ledger, which shows the range of business of the established local firm of solicitors in a country town in the early 19th century. Their clients included the Deputy Lieutenants for the Western half of the county, together with the Earl of Onslow and Lord King, and parish officers such as the churchwardens of Stoke-next-Guildford, the overseers of West Horsley and the waywardens of Woking: '11 April 1809. Attending Sessions at Reigate making application for a Commission of Justices to view examine and report on the state of and liability to repair Mayford Bridge which the Court refused. Journey and expenses self and waywardens £2 18s 6d'. Another client was Richard Fulk, shoemaker: '16 November 1808. Received letter from General Norton that the reason your Bill is not paid is the exorbitancy of the charge. Attending you hereon.' One small tin box with 'Mr L. Pimm' on the lid contained the title deeds to a number of properties between North Street and Chertsey Street, including the original premises of the firm of Pimms.

Sugar candy and English champagne

A 19th-century manuscript recipe book was transferred to us by the County Librarian. The recipes include apple snow and apple bread, blancmange, almond cheesecake, 'a rich Plum Cake', mock turtle soup, jugged hare, carrot pudding (including ½ lb. fresh butter, ½ pint cream and ½ pint wine) and compotes of pears and greengages. They also include a variety of wines, including 'Whitecurrent wine, or English Champaigne', 'English sherry' (made from water, sugar, new ale wort, sugar candy, raisins, brandy and isinglass – after it had stood for eight months 'rack it off, and put in as much Brandy as you think proper') 'Madiera Wine', green gooseberry wine and the brewing of porter. There are formulae for a wide variety of household needs – cleaning mahogany ('one pint of cold drawn linseed oil, one gill of turpentine, black lead, Pontypool varnish and lamp black'), a scarlet cloak (fuller's earth, soap and turmeric) and teeth ('chalk, the inside of a cuttlefish bone, myrrh and orris root, with essence of cinnamon for flavering'). Medicinal remedies include one for whooping cough, consisting of honey, vinegar and laudanum (alcoholic tincture of opium), and one for inflamed eyes, based on friar's balsam and sugar of lead (lead acetate).

There is also a 'great Restorative': 'Bake two calf's feet in two pints of water and the same of new milk in a jar closely covered three hours and half. When cold remove the fat, Give a teacupful the first and last thing.'

The book does not show signs of any Surrey connection, but seems most probably to have been compiled by a lady in north-east Shropshire. Nonetheless it illustrates the wide area of responsibility of the mistress of a 19th-century household and the range of applications for home made, rather than purchased, products.

The Gresham Press, Chilworth and Old Woking

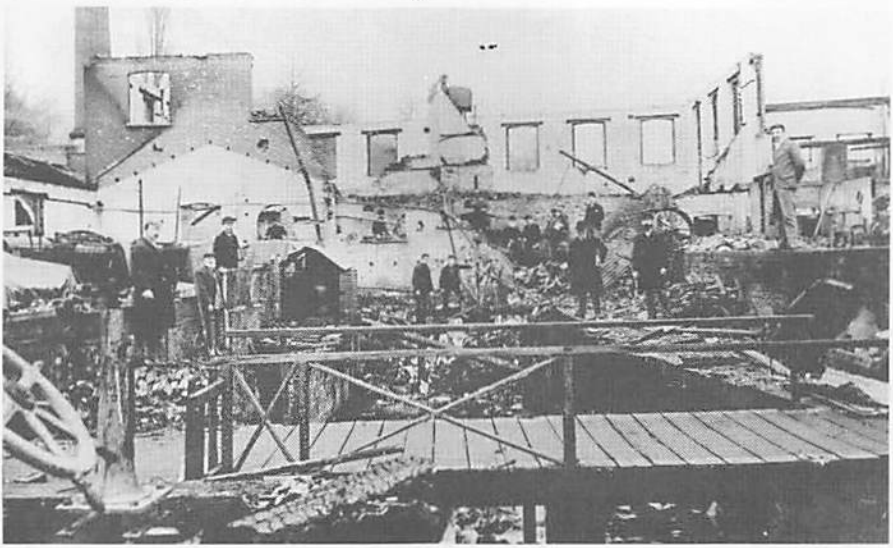


Fig. 1. After the fire, Unwin Brothers' printing works, Chilworth, 1895 (SRO 3137).

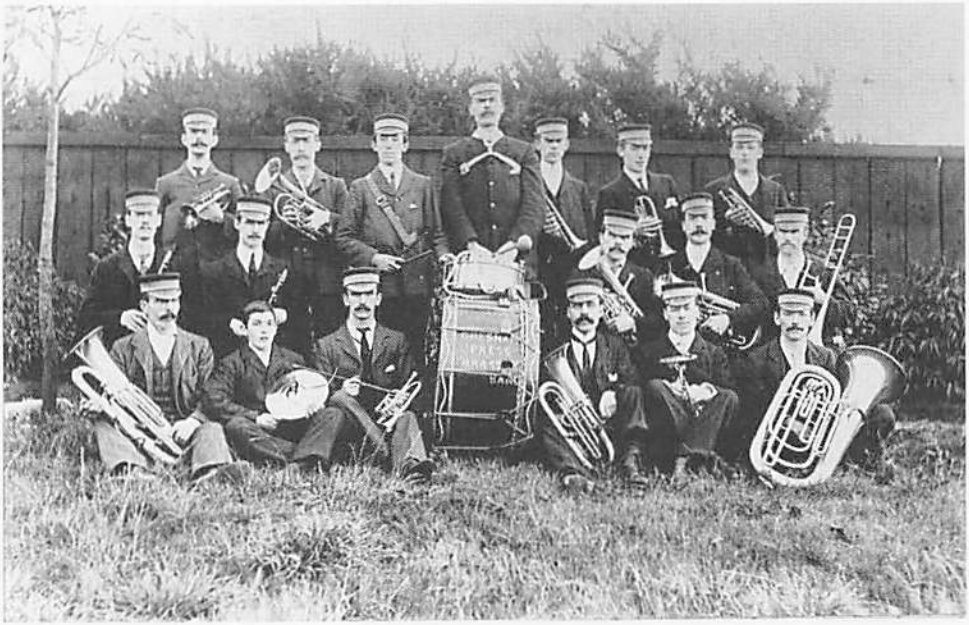


Fig. 2. Gresham Press Brass Band, Old Woking, 1906 (SRO 3137).

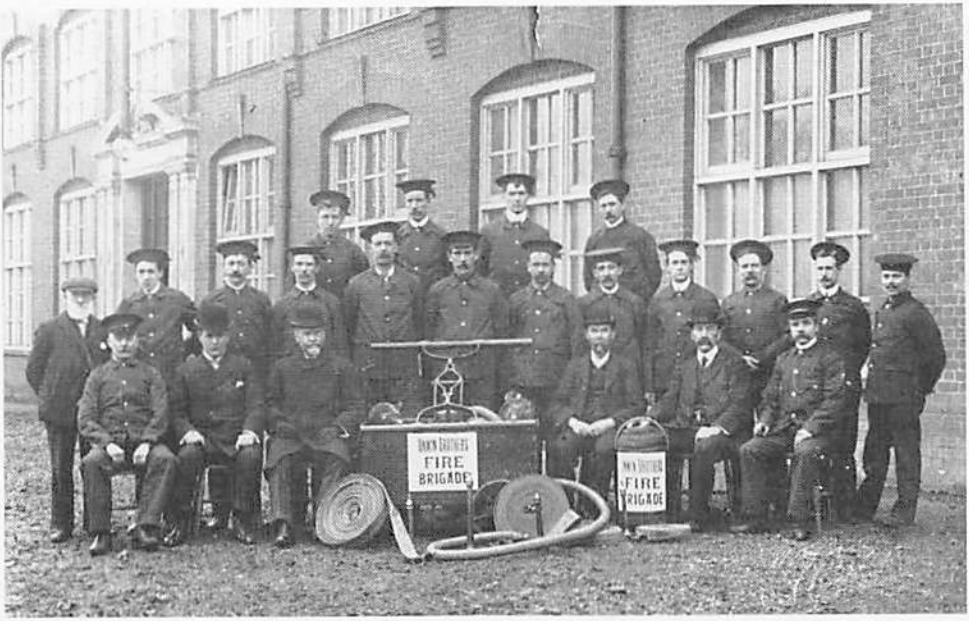


Fig. 3. Unwin Brothers' Fire Brigade, Old Woking, about 1909 (SRO 3137).

Jacob Unwin was apprenticed as a printer in London in 1816 and set up as a master-printer in 1826. In 1871 his sons, George and Edward Unwin, leased a disused paper mill at Chilworth, where they printed by water power. After the destruction of their works by fire in 1895, they bought a disused paper mill at Old Woking and the firm has continued there to the present day. The records deposited include a number of personal items of Jacob and his sons and also include letters from 1800, ledgers from 1888, despatch books, partnership deeds, minute books and accounts and also photographs from the 19th century onwards.

A wealthy Reigate tanner

Last year I described the interesting series of inventories showing changes at Kentwyns in Nutfield between the 16th and 18th centuries. We have now received the probate inventory of a Reigate tanner, William Blatt. Blatt, who died in 1695, was a very prosperous man. His house included a hall, parlour, kitchen, buttery, bakehouse and brewhouse and cellar, with chambers over the parlour, hall, kitchen and brewhouse and a maid's garret and a man's garret. It was well furnished, with 'a Clock with its Case' in the hall and 'Turkey Worke' carpet and chairs in the parlour together with a map. The kitchen contained a jack and chain and three spits, two dripping pans, candlesticks of iron, brass and pewter, a brass tinder box, 'a bacon cask with three peeces of beife and bacon in it', earthen dripping pots and cleavers; there were also two Bibles and 20 other books in the room. The buttery included a 'sillabub pott', 'three dozen and four Trenchers' and five 'Alchemy spoons'. There were two 'furnaces with lidds', three mashing tubs and a cooler in the brewhouse, and eight barrels and 13 dozen glass bottles in the cellar. The main bedroom, the 'Chamber over the Parlour', contained a down bed and bolster, pillow, three blankets and a quilt, eight Turkey work chairs, table, chest of drawers, dressing box, looking glass, hangings of 'printed linsey stuffe' and a close stool. Out in the yard were Blatt's hides, 445 in number, worth £504 12s, his 'butts' (logs) for fuel, £147 4s worth, and his bark for tanning, worth £186 15s, his tan baskets, scuttle, coal tubs, forks, shovels and sieve, drying poles, sacks and cart. He leased Linkfield Wood, perhaps as a source of timber and bark, and also owned fields with five cows, a horse, two mares and a colt and a rick of hay. In his mother's barn he kept oats, peas, rye, hay and a 'hog in the stye'. He had two watches. His total worth was £2309 3s 10d, of which nearly half was in debts 'sperat and desparate': presumably money owed by customers and perhaps also including loans and investments.

Evelyn estate accounts

We hold many records of the Evelyn estates in Wotton and Abinger, although many others are at Christ Church, Oxford. We have now purchased an estate account book for the estate covering 1720-32. The book includes lists of tenants and their payments of rent, other sources of income, such as sales of wood (including hop poles), pigs (sometimes 4 shillings), cows (about £4), and a horse (£6 but 'received for the ould Blind Horse £2'). Items of expenditure include 'for a pound of tobaco 1s 8d', 'for Christmas boxis 19s', paid to Freeman 'for carriage of 2,000 of fagits out of the Park to

the Brick Kilne £1 10s', and paid for burning the kiln of lime, 10s. Much of the expenditure was on estate work, tax and rates, but the estate seems to have borne the cost of local welfare (1725, 'paid Mrs Chelsey for schouling of the Pore Children 0-13-10') and the church – presumably either Abinger or Wotton (1726, 'paid the Plumers bill for Church work 1-10-0'; 'paid the payntors bill for Church work 2-5-0').

Claud Powell and the County School of Music

On the recent closure of the County School of Music, Guildford, records of the school's founder, Claud Powell, have been deposited. Powell founded and conducted the Guildford Symphony Orchestra and Guildford Repertory Company of Light Opera and Drama and conducted Guildford Choral Society. He was a motive force behind the 1925 Guildford Pageant, 'The Town of the Ford', and many productions at the Guildford Theatre in North Street. The records consist of letters, photographs, programmes and prospectuses, including 78 r.p.m. gramophone records of recordings, some made by the Guildford Symphony Orchestra. Records of the school itself include programmes of pupil's concerts, 1921-84.

Church and chapel

We have received deposits of records from Shamley Green, Ash Vale, Hale, Wrecclesham, Woking Christ Church, Seale, Shere, Burpham, Chiddingfold, Leatherhead, Ockham, Croydon St James, St Michael (architectural drawings by J. L. Pearson), and St Andrew, Holy Trinity, Selhurst and St Paul, Thornton Heath, Farleigh, Warlingham, Chobham, Epsom St Martin, Esher, Sutton Christ Church, Morden and Merton St Lawrence and St Mary. Most of these deposits are additional to previous deposits of records.

We have also received vestry books for Egham, 1843-1910, from Egham Museum.

We have received records of Gomshall Congregational church, 1825-1968, and Guildford Congregational church, 1812-1973. We have also received records from a number of Methodist circuits and churches. Records deposited by Woking and Walton Methodist circuit include the minute book for Chertsey Wesleyan Methodist church beginning in 1862. The church was founded because 'the cause of Methodism in Chertsey has long suffered from the want of a Commodious and suitable place in which to worship and the hopes and efforts of its members have experienced more than one disappointment.' Joshua Richards of Addlestone offered to build a chapel to the value of £500. A site in London Street was purchased and, with the aid of additional donations, a church was built for £865 by Mr. Newland of Cobham. Worshippers paid 1s 6d per quarter for seats in the nave and in the five front pews in the aisles, the other pews cost 1s per seat. Schools were built in 1867 for £310. The minute book itself and two cash books were bought in 1862 with the proceeds of disposal of 'two old Tea Urns'. The list of signatories to the trust deed shows the social standing of the earliest leading members and the geographical range from which they came. There were two gentlemen (T. W. Pocock, Esq. of Virginia Water and W. W. Pocock, Esq. of Guildford), one minister, three builders, estate agent, farmer, draper, baker, jeweller, mason and tailor. Five came from Chertsey, two from Sunninghill, and one each from Slough, Staines, Laleham, Virginia Water and Guildford.

Other records

We continue to receive a wide range of deeds relating to various parts of the county. A 13th-century deed of John de Burstowe conveying four virgates of land perhaps in Nutfield has a fine seal appended. The late Colonel Gerald de Gaury, who over many years has deposited documents of Surrey interest in the Record Office, has bequeathed to us a late 19th-century deed relating to land in Limpsfield. We have received additional deposits of deeds relating to the More-Molyneux, Lomax, Bray and Onslow families in West Surrey, and deeds of properties in High Street and Swan Lane, Guildford. Mr. R. C. Gill has kindly arranged for the deposit of deeds of the Wigan family estate in Mortlake.

The manorial records of West Bramley include a fine series of rent rolls which show changes in property ownership within the manor between 1682 and 1860. The manor included properties scattered throughout Bramley, Dunsfold and Hascombe. The records include a rough plan of Dunsfold Common made for Lord Grantley in 1839. This shows the locations at which clay, stone, furze and fern were dug, the area of land 'inclosed ... for a school and afterwards thrown out again' and a number of elm and oak trees, including a 'great Elm Tree on which the Carrion was hung'. Finding a suitable large piece of paper to sketch a map must frequently have been a problem. Lord Grantley's steward solved it by using a piece of wallpaper.

Fig. 4. Thirteenth-century deed and seal of John de Burstowe (SRO 3128).

We, and the researchers who use our resources, are as always grateful to those who place records in our care for preservation and study.

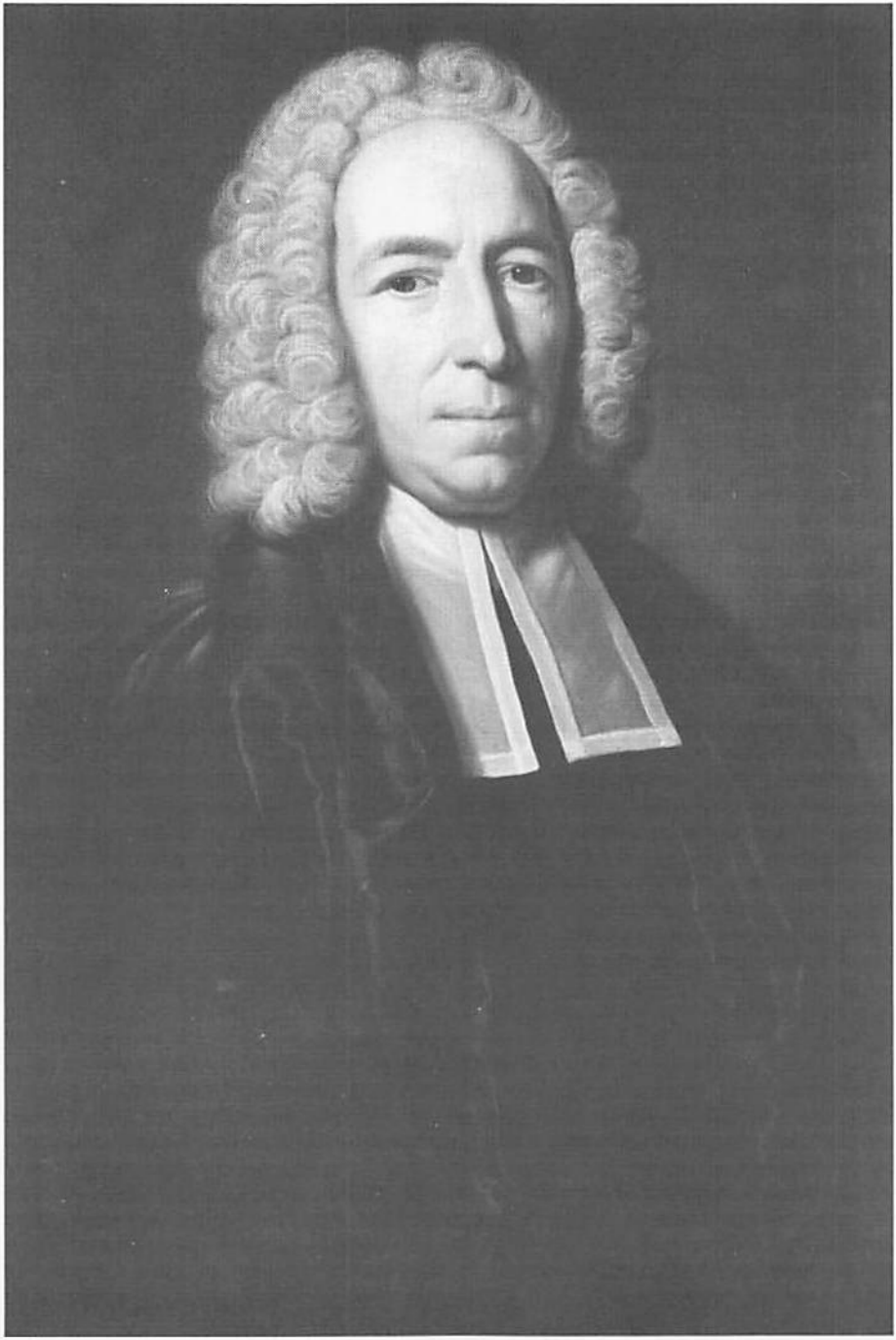


Fig. 1. Conyers Middleton, 1683-1750 (*courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery*).

A TALE OF TWO RECTORS

Winifred D. Ashton

West Surrey Society

Conyers Middleton DD, Rector 1747-1750

Absentee and pluralist incumbents are so familiar in the history of Surrey churches in the 18th and the early 19th centuries that Dr. Conyers Middleton,[1] rector of Hascombe from 1747-1750, can by no means be described as unique on the grounds that he neither lived nor officiated in the parish. He was certainly unusual – but for quite different reasons.

As Hascombe's absentee rector he was a fairly typical example of a numerous section of 18th-century clergy. Non-resident and pluralist rectors and vicars owed their benefices to the favour of a patron who might be a family connection, or a social acquaintance, or perhaps to a college of Oxford or Cambridge universities. Livings were bestowed as gifts, solicited or otherwise, apparently without any obligation for the receiver to perform his clerical duties in person.

Conyers Middleton owed his preferment to the Lord of the Manor of Hascombe, Sir John Frederick.[2] The Fredericks held the manor and the advowson for a century. They were wealthy East India merchants. Sir John, the first baronet, had a house in London and another in Hampton, Middlesex. He bought Burwood Park, Walton-on-Thames, and he invested in land in south-west Surrey. The manor of Hascombe was bought in 1723; there is no record that he actually lived there but two rather romantic pictures were painted of him by Peter Jan Van Reyschoot, both described as 'Sir John Frederick hunting with his stags at Hascombe'.

Sir John was a patron of the arts and it may be that he offered the living at Hascombe to Conyers Middleton in 1746 out of admiration for his literary skill. The gift brought little pecuniary advantage for it was worth only £50 a year out of which a curate had to be paid. The living was such a poor one and the parish so tiny that it seems unlikely that Middleton himself can have sought such a preferment. According to a visitation of the Bishop of Winchester 20 years before, the population of the parish was only 135, with no more than 27 houses. 'There is no chapel', the report said, 'no dissenter, no school, no person of note residing'. Almost a non-parish. There was, indeed, no reason for Conyers Middleton even to visit his new parish; his life was centred on Cambridge, as it had been ever since he entered Trinity College in 1700. Besides, in 1747 he was already 64 years of age and in poor health.

But it is not really strange that a wealthy patron should have expressed his admiration of Conyers Middleton in such a way. In the 1740s Middleton was something of a literary lion. His reputation as a man of letters reached its zenith after his *Life of Cicero* was published in 1741. It became an immediate bestseller, so to speak. Manning and Bray are most flattering – 'a work', they say, 'which will be read as long as taste and polite literature shall prevail amongst us'.

Not everyone, perhaps, would have gone quite so far in praise of Middleton's literary style – 'as a writer he has seldom been exceeded in spirit, perspicuity, correctness and elegance', wrote Manning and Bray. His output was prolific – printed books, pamphlets and manuscripts – but the *Dictionary of National Biography*, which contains no less than 72 column inches about his life and career, comments rather doubtfully about his literary merits and recounts suggestions that Middleton was guilty of plagiarism. His fame as a writer of pure English, the *Dictionary* says (nearly 150 years after his death) 'has rather faded'.

Successful as the *Life of Cicero* was as a specimen of English prose writing, it was the content of Middleton's works which aroused widespread and profound criticism. Manning and Bray, for all their admiration of his style, described his publications as obnoxious. Certainly, they involved him in acute controversy for over 25 years.

He appears to have been a man who enjoyed controversy for its own sake. Almost every account of his life refers to the 15-year feud he had with Dr. Richard Bentley, a great Cambridge classical scholar and Master of Trinity College – a dispute conducted with great acrimony on both sides. Yet he was said to be a man of great charm, musical, well-bred and courteous – a scholar and a gentleman. His house in Cambridge became a centre of Cambridge society, especially after his marriage in 1710 to a lady of good fortune. Two later marriages were equally well-favoured.

But from the early 1730s onwards, he was a controversial figure in the field of theological doctrine. His writings, both anonymous and signed, were seen to be clearly in support of the deist philosophy. Deism, which was more than half way to rationalism, was in Britain part of a more tolerant approach to religious belief than the previous century had allowed. In continental Europe, the deists were more uncompromising and more anti-Christian; in Britain, deism was described as 'a holy alliance of science and religion' and though it did not have, as in Europe, the support of most of the greatest 18th-century intellectuals, nevertheless there were many scholars who could be called deists.

Throughout the 1730s, Conyers Middleton found himself under fire, from the Establishment particularly, for his disbelief in revelation and his general scepticism. He had attacked the traditionalists for endeavouring to maintain the accuracy of every statement in the Bible and serious doubts were cast on his orthodoxy. He was threatened with the loss of his Cambridge degrees and the destruction of his books by burning. He was never offered any major preferment in the church, despite his undoubted ability. His patron in Hascombe, Sir John Frederick, was presumably among the minority who were at least indifferent to his unorthodox religious views.

After the furore of the 1730s, Middleton kept a low profile on theological matters and it was in this period that he wrote his *Life of Cicero*. His critics were temporarily silenced by the widespread acclaim for this work. It was a financial as well as a literary success and with the proceeds he bought an estate six miles south of Cambridge and rebuilt the house on it. This, along with his three houses in Cambridge and the estate in the Isle of Ely that he had had from his first wife, were not negligible assets though in his will he lamented that his wife had 'deserved much more from me than what my diminished circumstances and ill conditioned rents will be able to afford her'.

The *Life of Cicero* appeared in 1741. Afterwards, fortified by its success, he returned to the deist theme. This was just before and during his Hascombe incumbency and, piling Ossa upon Pelion, he invited controversy up to the time of his death with a flow of books and pamphlets doubting the credibility of miracles in the early years of the

Christian church and attacking the orthodox views of prophecy and the doctrine of original sin.

He may or may not have been sincere; perhaps his love of controversy overcame his integrity. But he had admirers as well as critics and he certainly made himself celebrated, famous, infamous, notorious – all the adjectives have been used.

This was the rector of Hascombe 1747-1750. If the three-year incumbency had been the end of the connection between this extraordinary man and a small Surrey parish, the story might not amount to very much. His name would merely have appeared in the list of rectors. But Hascombe had not heard the last of Conyers Middleton.

Vernon Musgrave MA, Rector 1862-1906

More than 100 years after Middleton's death, a new rector arrived in Hascombe. He found a parish not very different from what it had been at the time of the Bishop of Winchester's visitation in 1724. The new rector, Vernon Musgrave,[3] was young, enthusiastic and wealthy. His immediate task, as he saw it, was to pull his parish into the 19th century and within five years – by persuasion, encouragement and exhortation, backed up by his own and others' money – he had demolished the crumbling church, replaced it with a larger one, built a new and imposing rectory, established a school, and in many smaller ways infused new life into the parish. Indeed, for 44 years he *was* Hascombe.

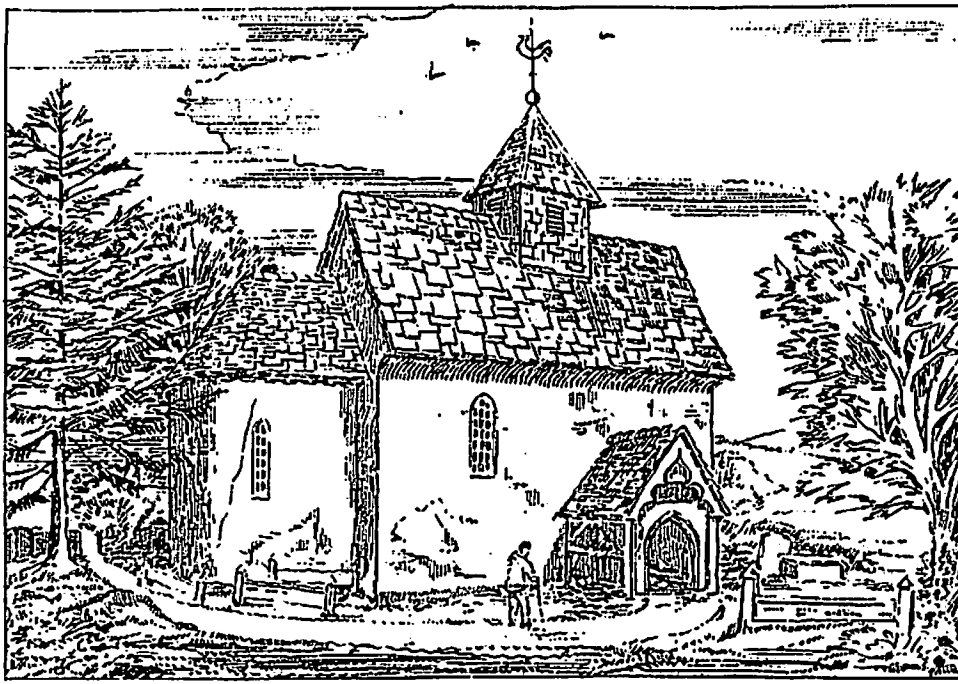
He was a traditionalist and a High Churchman. There is more than a hint of Trollope's Dr. Grantley about him; if like Theophilus Grantley he was ambitious and yearned for wider scope for his undoubted ability, then his fate too was to remain in his Plumstead Episcopi, the rectory at Hascombe. He did not even become Archdeacon, like his father, though he was made canon of Winchester in 1881. It was no doubt a real personal blow to Vernon Musgrave when his bishop, Samuel Wilberforce, himself a High Churchman, died from a fall from his horse in 1873 and was succeeded by less controversial and more middle of the road clerics. 'Soapy Sam' was not, perhaps, universally mourned but to High Churchmen his death was a bitter blow.

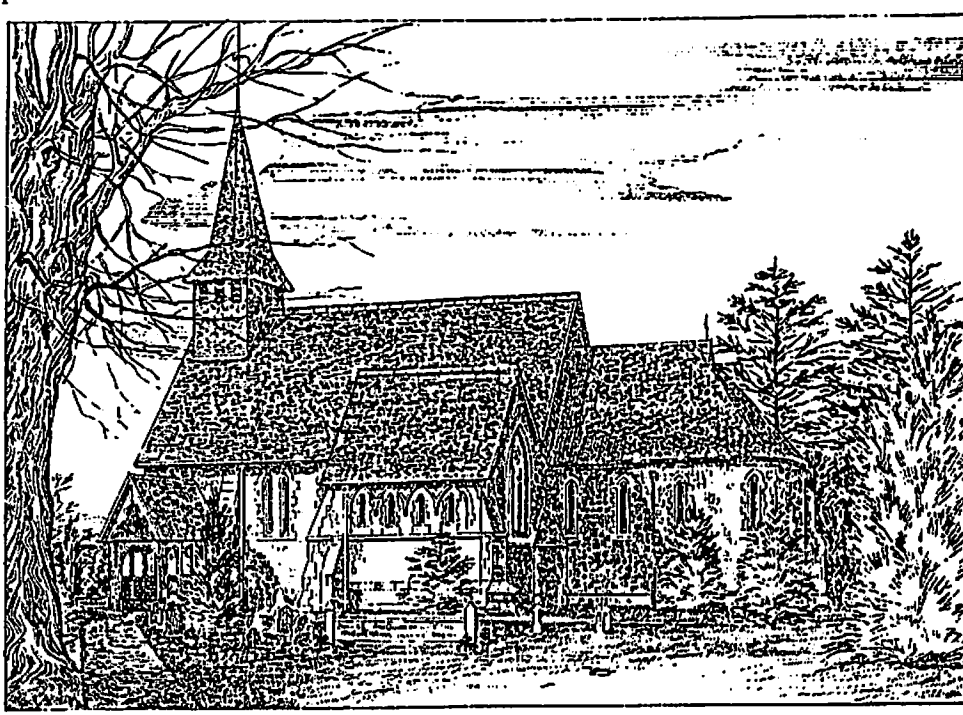
So for over 40 years Vernon Musgrave's life was concentrated on his small Surrey parish. In no way did he depart from his High Church approach; indeed by the 1890s he had by degrees transformed his new church into the 'Tractarian work of art'[4] which it still is.

When the new church was built in 1864, in accordance with custom the chancel was the financial responsibility of the rector while parishioners were expected to pay for the nave. In practice at Hascombe – and no doubt elsewhere – the cost of the nave was mostly met by the larger landowners, contributing according to the acreage owned in the parish. There were in fact only four men who owned substantial areas of land and one of them was Sir Henry Austen,[5] of Shalford Park. His total estates were very large indeed but in Hascombe parish he was the owner of a relatively small area so that his contribution was itself relatively modest. But quite apart from his share of the cost of the nave he made a munificent gift to the new church – he provided the west window, the largest in the church.

Very little indeed is known about this west window of 1864. Alas, no photographs have survived but a Surrey Directory of the late 1860s said that it was placed there by

Fig. 2. Vernon Musgrave, 1831-1906, and his wife (*courtesy of Surrey Archaeological Society*).





Figs. 3 & 4. Two views of St Peter's church, Hascombe, before and after rebuilding, taken from Vernon Musgrave's *The Church of St Peter, Hascombe, Diocese of Winchester*, published 1885

Sir Henry Austen and was of stained glass. And astonishingly, the window was 'to the memory of Dr. Conyers Middleton'.

What made Sir Henry Austen do it? This was a large and imposing window dedicated to the memory of a man described by some as an 'infidel'. Vernon Musgrave, High Churchman, must have been nonplussed. He must have been well acquainted with Middleton's reputation; they were both Yorkshiremen and Middleton had been a pupil at the school to which Vernon Musgrave's father and uncles were sent – Richmond Grammar School. All were, moreover, alumni of Trinity College, Cambridge, where Middleton's exploits were long remembered and related.

In 1885, when most of the interior decoration of the church, including other stained windows, had been completed, Vernon Musgrave wrote and published a book describing the church and what had been achieved during his incumbency. The wall paintings and the windows are described in minute detail, with a full explanation of their imagery and symbolism. But with one exception – there is no mention whatever of the stained glass west window. It must be that Vernon Musgrave did not think it worthy of mention; he just ignored it.

He could not, of course, ignore Dr. Coyners Middleton in his chapter about the rectors of Hascombe over the centuries. Conyers Middleton is among the rest; the text is based largely on Manning and Bray's account of Middleton – but without their adjective obnoxious describing the content of his writings.

Nearly ten years after the book was published Vernon Musgrave wrote in the parish almanac that the art of stained glass had made much technical progress in recent years. Accordingly, the west window was to be replaced with one of 'much greater artistic skill and higher devotional treatment'. Describing the new window, which he paid for out of his own pocket, he wrote in the parish almanac that 'the original window was given by a good and kind benefactor to our church, the late Sir Henry Edmund Austen, Knight, in memory of a former and distinguished rector. The new window will commemorate not only Dr. Conyers Middleton, but give its tribute to Sir Henry also'.

This was diplomacy handled with a masterly skill. All parties were appeased; the 1864 window had been cast aside but without abandoning Dr. Conyers Middleton, a graceful tribute had been paid to Sir Henry Austen and the church had gained a window aesthetically superior and devotionally appropriate.

As for the two rectors, this west window is in fact Dr. Coyners Middleton's only memorial. In his beloved Cambridge there was once a brief inscription on a slab in the floor of the church where he was buried; this has long disappeared.[6] But for Vernon Musgrave, as visitors to Hascombe church will agree, 'si monumentum requiris, circumspice'.

NOTES

1. Conyers Middleton, 1683-1750. His strange Christian name is the surname of a friend of his father.
2. Sir John Frederick, 1678-1755.
3. Vernon Musgrave, 1831-1906.
4. John Betjeman, *Guide to Selected English Parish Churches*, 1980.
5. Sir Henry Edmund Austen, 1785-1871.
6. St. Michael's Church, Cambridge; now no longer used as a church.

TUDOR WEAPONS IN SURREY MUSTER ROLLS

R. A. Lever

Military records known as Muster Rolls and Books have survived for periods of national crisis from the early 16th to the mid-17th century. Their content and reliability are seen to vary a great deal but they are basically lists of men between the ages of 16 and 60 with the weapons each man would be able to provide in the event or threat of war. For example, a muster roll of 1627 listed 100 Surrey names for service in the Low Countries.[1] All were footmen.

The lord lieutenant of the shire was generally responsible for the administration of the musters. Exceptions to this system occurred in the reign of Elizabeth I who sometimes nominated the sheriff or even the Justices of the Peace for the Commission of Lieutenancy which replaced the former Commission of Array.

Among some interesting Surrey muster rolls are those in the Loseley Manuscripts. Those for 1569 to 1596 have been edited by the Surrey Record Society.[2] Another Loseley Manuscript, apparently an abstract of the original returns of the Commissioners for Musters, *c.*1522, has been edited by Craib for the *Surrey Archaeological Collections*.[3] The present account has been compiled from the Loseley Manuscripts and from a volume in two parts among the State Papers of 1569 in the Public Record Office,[4] the first 120 pages of which give a nominal roll by parish followed by an inventory of weapons with the names of their holders. The person in charge was known as the common or parish governor.

Difficulties often occurred in compiling the muster rolls. Two instances are quoted by Baynton.[5] Sir Charles Howard (1536-1624), with overall responsibility for the Surrey returns, admitted rating a Mr. Ofield as both a cuirassier (heavy cavalryman) and as a dragoon (light horseman) so as to ensure getting at least one horse. However, Ofield, having already been charged for two horses on his Lincoln estates, was excused any contribution for Surrey. A certain Mr. Squibb of Henley Park 'contemptuously refused' for two years to produce the arms allotted to him by pleading privilege as an Excise officer! In a muster roll of 1569 entries occur of 'mortuus' (dead) or 'gone away' after certain names,[2] while a roll for 1584 lists Surrey and Hertfordshire as maritime counties.[6]

Both Hoskins[7] and Stephens[8] refer to the possible use of muster rolls for population studies, a multiplier of six or seven is recommended. Attention is also drawn to the information available to the family historian, for example in the first part of the 1569 muster rolls and in the Loseley Manuscripts. Provided the parish of a particular militiaman is known, details about him may be given. Thus for the parish of Ashtead for just two well-recorded local families, we have the names of Edward, Henry, James and John Otway with Edward and William Hilder (Hiller), all being pikemen who are entered as being of 'the best sort' or 'second sort'; individual weapons held may also

TABLE 1: Weapons and men available in the County of Surrey, c. 1522

Personnel and Weapons	*Blackheath*	*Brixton*	*Copthorne*	*Effingham*	*Elmbridge*	*Farnham*	*Godalming*	*Kingston*	*Reigate*	*Southwark*	*Tandridge*	*Wallington*	*Woking*	*Wotton*	*County Total (b)*
Archers	28	48	19	40	27	26	58	42	54	73	95	69	37	12	628
Billmen	96	257	49	82	105	94	248	200	121	254	154	112	201	65	2038
Demilaunces										1					1
Gunners										13		2	1		16
Mariners										1					1
Total Men (a)	124	305	68	122	132	120	306	242	175	342	249	183	239	77	2684[2682]
Harness	64		42	34	9	4	67	48	90	(c) 179	71	29	32	121	862[858]
Horses	22		9	8				3	6	6	29	1		17	101
Jacks					1										

This list of men and armour is from the *c.* 1522 muster roll abstracted by Craib.[3] While it is to be expected that the highest numbers of men would come from Southwark and Brixton hundreds it is surprising to find the more rural Godalming and Tandridge hundreds exceeding that of Kingston.

(a) Where there are discrepancies in the original text, totals have been corrected.
(b) In the original text, totals for each hundred are given at the end of the entry relating to that hundred. Totals for the County of Surrey as a whole are written on the dorse of the document. Discrepancies have been noted. The figures in square brackets above are the endorsement figures.
(c) The total harness for Southwark, 179, has been broken down into the following types: almain rivets and breckners, 165, demilaunces' harness, 2, and Jacks, 8, but note the discrepancy in the two totals.

TABLE 2: Weapons provided by seven parishes in Copthorne Hundred, 1569

Weapons	*Ashtead*	*Great Bookham*	*Little Bookham*	*Effing-ham*	*Fetcham*	*Leather-head*	*Mickle-ham*
Almain Rivets	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
Arquebus		1	1			1	1
Arrows, sheafs	1	4	1	1	1	5	1
Bills	2				1	5	
Black Bills	1	4	1	2	2	5	
Bows	1	4	1	1	1	5	1
Caps, steel		4	1	1			1
Coats of plate						3	
Corslets		1	1			1	1
Morions, sallets		1	1	1			1
Pikes		1	1			1	1

A list of weapons available to seven parishes in Copthorne Hundred.

GLOSSARY

Almain rivets: light, flexible body armour, later replaced by the corslet
Arquebus: see Harquebus
Bill: a halberd-like weapon with a concave-edged blade
Breckner: plates of iron or horn fastened to a canvas jacket
Corslet: armour protecting the upper half of the body
Demilaunce: light body armour for lancers
Harness: a general term for unspecified armour
Harquebus: the typical mid-16th century armour; this was the original spelling
Jack: a leather jacket often with flexible plates held in position with cord network
Morion: a steel helmet with a crest
Pike: a spear 16 to 18 feet in length
Sallet: a globular steel helmet

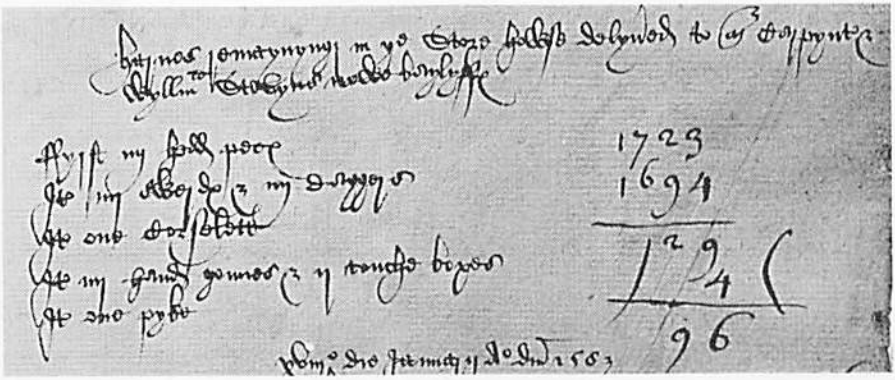


Fig. 1. A 16th-century list of Kingston's town armour (*courtesy of Kingston Borough Council*)

Harnes remaynyng in ye Store House delyvered to Mr Carpynter & Wylliam Stevyns newe bay liffes.

Fyrst iiii hedd peces
Item iiii swerdes & iiii daggers
Item one corselett
Item iiii hand gonnes & ii touche boxes
Item one pyke

be cited. Inevitably, one is reminded of the Home Guardsman of the last war who was similarly issued with arms and equipment with 'helmet, steel' being equivalent to a crested morion or globular sallet.

The two tables overleaf are concerned with Tudor weapons and are included as examples of the information researchers may expect to find in these records.

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