



Mickleham & Westhumble Local History Group NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 – February 2016 Editor: Sue Tatham

In our third year as a local history group we have continued to make progress with recording and making available the history of our local area. I am very pleased that Roger Davis has joined our committee and has been very active. He teamed up with Anne Weaver to take forward the oral history project. They attended a course on oral history at the Surrey History Centre and have since persuaded several people to record their memories. Please say 'yes' if they ask you to agree to being interviewed.

Roger also joined the existing war memorial group who have provided the information for a 68 page report on the personal histories of all those people whose names are recorded on the Mickleham War memorial for WW1 and WW2. Sue Tatham carried out the major task of putting all this into an attractive document. Only final checking of some of the military details remains to be done. However you will see from their detailed report that new information keeps on being found.

The Archives group have continued with their weekly sessions and have moved on from sorting to cataloguing.

Mick Hallett, who has lived in Westhumble for over 50 years and is a former chairman of the Westhumble Residents Association, took on the task of extracting the information from the old WRA minute books. This task is almost complete.

The weather and people going away on holiday has delayed work on the churchyard recording. The group plans to designate set

days each month over the coming summer for the clearance of grass from the graves so that the inscriptions can be read and recorded. The areas to be worked on will form part of the plan of the churchyard. This will enable the work to go forward even if not everyone can be there.

There has also not been as much as much progress on the school history as we had hoped. And, although I have made a start on an outline history of Mickleham Village Hall work has often been interrupted by other more pressing matters so progress has been slow. For the coming year we hope to make headway on converting more recent issues of the parish magazine to a searchable format and indexing old hard copies.

Judith Long has continued to organise events. Everybody enjoyed the talk after the 2015 AGM about WW2 spies in the local area and many people asked interesting questions. Those who went on the Shere walk were surprised by the extent and quality of its ancient buildings and its interesting history. The trip to the Foundling Museum only attracted a select group but they found it a very worthwhile visit.

I am most grateful to all the people who have worked on our projects this last year and helped us to make progress. Our membership stands at 49 households and as always, we would welcome more volunteers to join these task groups and push the work forward. You will find us all very friendly!
Ben Tatham

MICKLEHAM CELEBRATES THE QUEEN'S 90TH BIRTHDAY

Do you have any photographs or memorabilia of local events and /or royal celebrations over the last 90 years that we could use in our display at the

STREET TEA PARTY in Mickleham on Saturday 11th June?

Please contact our librarian, Judy Kinloch 01372 37535 mail@jkinloch.plus.com

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The Group's website

www.surreycommunity.info/mwlocalhistorygroup/

Work has begun on updating and re-vamping our website. Our aim is to make the photographs and information in our archives accessible for people researching our area or working on their family trees. In addition we plan to include membership application forms, copies of our newsletters, accounts of group activities and future events. Judith Long is presently our website manager.

M&WLHG Programme for 2016

Friday 26th February:	AGM followed by presentation on his Group Photograph Project by Andrew Tatham
Saturday 11th June:	Display of photographs and memorabilia for the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations
Saturday 16th July:	Westhumble Walk organised by Judy Kinloch and Ben Tatham
Sunday 25th September:	Guided Tour of St Michael's Church by Sue Tatham
February 2017:	AGM with Martin Higgins talking about Betchworth Castle

Our Second Annual General Meeting

On 23rd February 2015 following the AGM of the M&WLHG at the Stepping Stones we were treated to a fascinating talk by Lorraine Spindler, the Curator of the Leatherhead Museum, in which she described the military activities taking place around Headley Heath during WW2 and their significance in helping the war effort.

Spy training in our area during WW2

Although some of us knew that Canadian Army troops used Headley Heath as a training ground during WW2 most of us were probably unaware of the extent of the operations. We learned that the Royal Canadian Engineers used earth-moving equipment to practise building trenches, roads and even a runway, the idea being that when they arrived in Europe after D-Day they would already be fully trained. The Commanding Officer noted in the War Diaries that the Engineers must not divulge anything about these operations.

Lorraine then described the even more secretive work taking place close to Headley Heath at Villa Bellasis (now Bellasis House), a Special Operations Executive (SOE) training centre. The SOE had been formed in 1940 to conduct espionage, sabotage and reconnaissance in occupied Europe and to help local resistance movements.

In November 1941 two Czech paratroopers, Josef Gabcik and Jan Kubis, arrived at Bellasis for training as part of Operation Anthropoid, the code name for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. Heydrich, a member of the Nazi elite and one of the main architects of the Holocaust, was based in Prague and became known as 'The Butcher of Prague' because of his brutal policies. In December 1941 Gabcik and Kubis parachuted into Czechoslovakia and by May 1942 were ready to attempt the assassination by shooting Heydrich in his chauffeur driven open-topped car. Although Gabcik's Sten gun jammed, Heydrich was wounded by a grenade thrown by Kubis and

died a week later from blood poisoning. Kubis and Gabcik, together with a number of other resistance fighters, took refuge in St Cyril's cathedral in Prague where they died in a battle with the SS. Although the Nazi reprisals were horrific Kubis and Gabcik are regarded as heroes of the Czech resistance and are commemorated on a plaque outside St Cyril's.

Later in the war Bellasis was used as a prisoner of war camp for German officers. Some of these, known as Bonzos, were prepared to work as agents for the Allies and were given interrogation training. They took part in Operation Periwig, where details of a fictional German resistance movement were fed to the Nazi security authorities, and also assisted the Monuments Men in tracking down artworks stolen by the Nazis.

We heard several more anecdotes, including one involving the discovery, in a Surrey chimney, of the remains of a WW2 carrier pigeon with a coded message still strapped to its leg. The evening then ended with a lively discussion where several members of the audience recounted their own wartime memories of this area.

Prior to Lorraine's talk, who would have thought we lived in an area which had been such a hotbed of espionage? Some of the exploits described would not seem out of place in a James Bond film!

Judith Long



Task Group Report: War Memorial

During 2015 our research concentrated primarily on the men who died during WW2. Although we have been able to establish a local connection for all of them, it has been considerably more difficult to find information about WW2 casualties compared with those who died in WW1 because access to WW2 military records is still restricted and 1911 is the latest year for which census

returns have been made available.

After some of the blanks in the information compiled by Fiona Taylor and her team were filled in, Sue Tatham demonstrated her publishing skills once again by putting together a booklet containing all the information about both our WW1 and

WW2 men. This went on display, together with an exhibition of photographs, in St Michael's Church for Heritage Weekend in September. We hope that as more information about these men becomes available we will be able to update our booklet to give a more complete account of their lives.

We have recently been made aware of the Westhumble WW1 and WW2 Roll of Service boards in the Chapel in Westhumble. The names of two men on the WW2 board, marked with a cross to show that they died during the war, are not listed on the War Memorial. These are 2nd Lt Eric Fletcher Waters of the Royal Fusiliers, whose widow was living in Great Bookham at the end of the war (and who was the father of Roger Waters of Pink Floyd fame) and Lt-Col John Simon Symonds of the Royal Artillery, whose sister Eveline and her husband Nathaniel Gordon Clark lived in Westhumble. In Mickleham we have Peter Odhams, who died in December 1940, named on the War Memorial but no mention of his brother Bernard who died a year later. It would be interesting to know how the men whose names appear on the War Memorial were selected. If anyone has information about this please get in touch.

Judith Long

Task Group Report: The Village Archives

The archive continues to grow with donations and information from local families, both past and present. We have continued to research the early beginnings of Rose's Stores and those associated with what was first described as a baker's and grocer's before the Rose family took over. Henry Haynes sold it to them in the 1850s but the Haynes go back much further, Henry's father Benjamin being a prominent landowner and occupier in Mickleham in the early years of the 19th century. It was rewarding, therefore, to hear from Eric Haynes (now over 90) who had researched his family history and with whom we were able to share new information. Much of our research arises from questions that are raised by the documents we have in the archive that spark interest. Who was this auctioneer Crawter who was advertising land for sale in Mickleham in 1813 and who was his client? And who was Samuel Boddington named among others on the auction document? We discovered that he rented a stable and land in 1822 and had a 'sitting' (a seat in a pew) in the church the same year. Moreover, he was a business partner of 'Conversation' Sharp of Fredley.

An inquiry from Trent Bridge asked us if we had any information on Arthur Carr, one time England cricket captain, who was thought to have been born in Mickleham. He was indeed, on 21st May 1893, in the house that is now called The Old Cottage but was then simply The Cottage. His parents clearly did not stay long but there are a few references in the local press to a Mr and Mrs Carr singing at various local events in 1893 and 1894.

The Old Cottage in the Old London Road is where Samuel Woods, the author of 'Mickleham Records' lived. A wealthy stockbroker, he used the vestry records, then kept in the church, to write a series of pieces on the history of the village. He also founded a prize for outstanding pupils at what was then the National Schools which continued for many years.

Our bread and butter activity, however, is to load all the documents, maps, photographs, newspaper articles and scraps that are in the archive on to Excel. These have already been arranged into boxes (e.g. Landscape) and then into individual folders (e.g. River Mole) but each item needs to be entered individually under its box name, folder name, description of item, date, provenance and condition. It's painstaking work and very time-consuming but it is the first stage in getting our



Old Cottage, Old London Road Mickleham 1962
Reproduced by permission of Surrey History Centre © Surrey History Centre

collection on line. Meanwhile, we now have available, on computer, descriptions of individual items, although not the actual content, under the following categories: 'Census Records 1841 to 1881', 'Church, St Michael's', 'Clubs and Societies', a variety of directories dating back to the 19th century, Electoral Rolls 1977-2004, some material on St Michael's School* and some others in the village; 'Houses' and 'People' (in Mickleham and Westhumble) and our Horticultural Society. There a number of memories in the 'People' file and maps are also catalogued. We have now started on 'Landscape'.

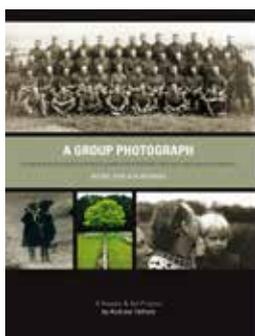
In addition to the above, a record of people and events involved in village life as chronicled in past parish magazines is being compiled. These at the moment cover the early part of the 20th century only and are not complete but this is a work in progress. Magazines from 1984 to 2015 can always be consulted at Warren Farm on request.

My huge thanks to Judith Long whose commitment to the archive and research skills have taken us such a long way and also to Angela Ireland who is faithful to us whenever not elsewhere and whose contribution is much valued. If any of this arouses your interest, do get in touch.

Judy Kinloch

*School research material also from Surrey History Centre

SEE YOUR HISTORY IN THEIR HISTORY



Mickleham & Westhumble Local History Group

AGM – Friday 26th February

7.30 p.m. Mickleham Village Hall

followed by

A GROUP PHOTOGRAPH

BEFORE, NOW AND IN BETWEEN

A presentation by Andrew Tatham

Visit to Shere – 15th June

For our Summer Event seventeen members of our group assembled outside the Shere Museum to meet our guide, Elizabeth Rich, who lives in Shere and is a founder of the museum. Elizabeth began by telling us about the agricultural and industrial history of the area, including the rather surprising fact that lavender was grown from the 1920s until WW2 and made into a perfume called 'Essira', the ancient name for Shere.

We set off down Gomshall Lane, passing Cole's Cottage which is named after Sir Henry Cole, the first director of the V&A, who lived there in the mid-nineteenth century. En route to St James' church we paused to admire the picturesque view of the Tillingbourne from the footbridge crossing it, before Elizabeth told us the extraordinary story of Christine the anchoress. In 1329 Christine was granted permission from the Bishop of Winchester to be permanently enclosed in a small cell attached to the wall of the church. The cell had a squint window allowing her to view the altar during church services and a grating through which she could receive gifts of food. A few years later Christine must have changed her mind and was allowed to leave her cell (a tremendously sinful act) before requesting to be re-enclosed.

Our next stop was the lych gate, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens to commemorate a daughter of the Bray family. The manor of Shere was given to Sir Reginald Bray by Henry VII and the Lordship has remained in the family ever since. The emblem of the Bray family, seen on the lych gate, is a flax crusher, known as a brake or bray. Sir Reginald, who built the Bray Chapel in St George's Chapel, Windsor, also bequeathed funds for the completion of St George's which explains why

the family emblem appears 175 times in the chapel! Another member of the Bray family was William Bray, after whom one of the village pubs is named, and well-known to historians as the author, together with Owen Manning, of *The History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey*.



Emblem of the Bray family

We then made our way through the village, intrigued by the fire insurance marks fixed to the front of many of the old buildings. These are metal plaques bearing the emblems of the different insurance companies and were used to guide their fire brigades in the event of a fire. After a stroll down Lower St, where the former wheelwright's shop still has a tyring platform outside, we returned to the museum along Upper St, passing the East Lodge of the Manor House (also designed by Lutyens) on our way. There was just sufficient time left for a quick look round the museum which has an extensive collection of objects of daily life as well as archival and reference material. In the displays relating to the early twentieth century and WW1 in Shere we noticed names familiar to some of us in Mickleham and Westhumble, such as Boxall, Bravery and Batchelor who probably had ancestors in common.

Many thanks go to Elizabeth for such an informative and fascinating tour. Judith Long



Some of the interesting old houses of Shere. Below details of the Guardian Fire Insurance plaque and Listed Building plate seen on house (left).

Centre bottom row: Lutyens-designed lodge to the Bray estate.



Photographs Ben Tatham

Visit to The Foundling Museum



Woodcut by Thomas Bewick

Perhaps we chose an unusually busy weekend for our visit in October. However, those of us who attended were amply rewarded with a guided tour of the museum and free entry to its latest exhibition, *The Fallen Woman*.

The Foundling Museum contains an unusual mix of exhibits. On the ground floor we were introduced to the history of the Foundling Hospital beginning with Thomas Coram, a shipwright born in 1668, who spent a number of years in the American colonies. On returning to England in his early fifties he was horrified by the sight of abandoned babies dying in the filthy streets of London. In 1739 after seventeen years of tireless campaigning he received a Royal Charter from King George II to establish the Foundling Hospital. The first babies were admitted two years later and due to the demand for admissions a lottery system was soon introduced.

Upon admission each baby was baptised and given a new name chosen by the governors. It is difficult to imagine how desperate a woman must have been to give up her baby and there is a poignant display of the small tokens, such as pieces of fabric, ribbons and buttons, which mothers left with their babies in the hope of identifying and claiming them at a later date. The babies were sent to a wet nurse or foster family, usually in the countryside, where they would remain until the age of five or six before returning to the Hospital. How traumatic for these young children to be uprooted from the only family they knew and taken to an institution. Once back at the Foundling Hospital they were provided with an education which would prepare the girls for domestic service and the boys for an apprenticeship or service at sea. The governors checked on their progress until the girls were twenty-one and the boys twenty-five. We saw a number of displays relating to the everyday lives of the children, including photographs and uniforms, and it was interesting and often rather sad to read and hear about the lives of individual foundlings, both during and after they left the Hospital.

Upstairs, on the first floor, numerous paintings, ceramics and other works of art are displayed in the magnificent Court Room and Picture Gallery which were reconstructed from the original eighteenth century Hospital building (and are now available to hire for your wedding!). There are a number of works by Hogarth who was a patron of the Hospital, including his portrait of Thomas Coram which shows Coram firmly clasping the seal

of the Hospital's Royal Charter.

Hogarth donated several of his paintings to the Hospital and encouraged other leading artists of the day to do the same and thus the country's first public

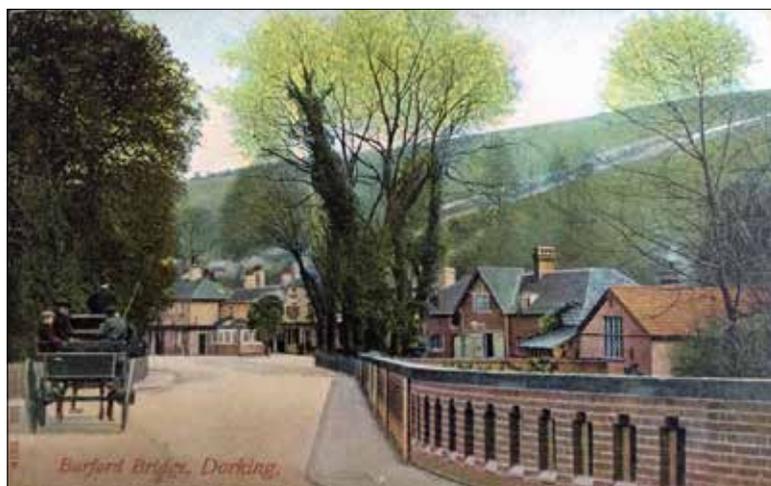
art gallery was established. Handel was also a patron and the second floor of the museum houses the Gerald Coke Handel Collection including Handel's will and the manuscript score of *Messiah*. The room also contains comfortable armchairs where visitors can relax and listen to various pieces of Handel's music.

After our tour of the museum we enjoyed lunch in the café, run by a local not-for-profit organisation. It occupies a bright, airy room whose walls are decorated with the names of fictional characters (including Jane Eyre, Batman and Luke Skywalker) who were orphaned, fostered or adopted.

We then went to see the museum's current exhibition, *The Fallen Woman*, which explores the myth and reality of the 'fallen woman' in Victorian society and its relevance to the Foundling Hospital. It was a popular subject in Victorian literature and art, sometimes shown literally as in George Cruikshank's depiction of a destitute girl throwing herself off a bridge. By the mid-nineteenth century in order for a woman to have her child accepted into the Foundling Hospital she had to show that she had been a respectable woman and had the potential to live a virtuous life. This was in contrast to the Hospital's original policy which did not give 'preference to any person'. Applicants had to complete a lengthy petition and were then questioned by an all-male Hospital committee about the intimate details of their relationship with the baby's father. The exhibition includes a sound installation where words and phrases from the petitions and transcripts are voiced by well-known actors including Maxine Peake and Ruth Jones which brings the women's voices to life.

By the time the Foundling Hospital closed its doors in 1954 more than 25,000 children had been cared for by the charity. Its work continues today as the children's charity Coram which aims to improve the lives of the UK's most vulnerable children and young people.

Judith Long



Additions to our photograph archive

We are grateful to Bruce Herring, a National Trust Volunteer on Box Hill who has given us a large number of scans of postcards with locals scenes for our archives. This one of Burford Bridge is dated 1905. Note the stables and other buildings nearest the bridge where the Tithe Barn now stands.

Treasures in the Loft

The first of what we hope will be a series of articles about family 'treasures' which might be of interest to our readers

Uncle Trevor's Uniform



Andrew as Horatio Nelson c 1974

In 1980 when my mother-in-law, Patricia Tatham, moved from Little Pinehurst to a flat in Dorking we acquired two tin boxes containing a Royal Naval Officer's No 2 Uniform circa 1908, including a double breasted tail coat, fore and aft hat and splendid golden epaulettes. The No 2 uniform was worn for ceremonial dinners and balls. This uniform last saw light of day when it was worn by our son, Andrew, when he played Nelson in Nower Lodge School's production of 'Hip, Hip Horatio'.

The boxes bore the name T H S Tatham. My husband Ben's Uncle Trevor was born in 1887. He entered the

Royal Navy as a Midshipman in 1904 and became a Lieutenant in 1908, specialising in torpedo work. Trevor was one of 547 men who lost their lives on HMS Formidable in the early hours of New Year's Day 1915.

According to family legend his mother, when awoken to be told the news, announced 'I know Trevor's dead – he appeared at the foot of my bed in the night'. Poor woman, her husband had died just eight weeks earlier and her second son, Lawrence (born in 1895) a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps was shot down and killed in January 1918. Her one surviving son, Berrisford (Ben's father) joined the Royal Artillery in 1918, but mercifully the war ended before he entered active service.

The HMS Formidable was a battleship launched in 1898. She was 132m long (432 feet) and had a crew of 758. At the outbreak of war in August 1914 she became part of the Fifth Battle Squadron defending the English Channel. On 31st December 1914 the squadron was carrying out exercises in Lyme Bay. A warning of an attack from German submarines was disregarded because the weather conditions were so poor. At 2.20 a.m. on 1st January 1915, Formidable was 20 miles off Start Point on the Devon Coast. Without warning the ship was struck by a torpedo fired by U-24, a German U-Boat that had been tracking the British ships. Formidable's captain gave the order to abandon ship and small boats called 'pinnaces' were lowered into the sea. Hampered by darkness and awful weather, many of these boats capsized. A second torpedo hit the ship and at 4.40 a.m. Formidable began to keel over. The captain stayed with his ship as it sank.



HMS Formidable

There is a permanent HMS Formidable exhibit in the Lyme Regis Museum and to mark the centenary of its sinking this has been augmented to include Uncle Trevor's uniform and two large panels about him and further information about the tragedy.

Only 156 sailors survived the sinking. The most remarkable escape was made by the 48 men who after 22 hours in freezing stormy seas reached Lyme Regis. Their boat was guided in by a Lyme resident breaking 'the blackout'.

Six of the men who did not survive were buried in Lyme Regis cemetery where there is a memorial to those lost on the Formidable. Their funeral took place on 6th January 1915 and on 6th January this year members of our family attended the service at the memorial organised by the Royal British Legion to mark the centenary of Formidable's loss. Afterwards there was a reception at 'The Pilot Boat Inn' opposite Cobb Gate which had been used as the first aid station during the rescue. It was here that one of the casualties, thought to be dead, had been revived by the landlord's dog nuzzling and licking him. The dog, a rough collie, was called 'Lassie' and it is believed that this story was the inspiration for the famous Lassie of Hollywood films.



Lt Trevor Hodgson Stanley Tatham RN

Sue Tatham

‘Eclipse first – and the rest nowhere!’



Many readers will be aware that Mickleham has a strong link with horseracing. Mickleham Downs, because of its proximity to Epsom, has been used for training horses since the beginning of the sport in the 18th century and our local pub *The Running Horses* gets its name from the 'Dead Heat Derby' in 1828 when locally trained *Cadland* was the ultimate winner. But few will know that *Eclipse*, considered by many to be the most successful Thoroughbred of all times ran his first races from stables in Mickleham.

Thoroughbreds are a specific breed, developed in the early 18th century by selective breeding with Arab and Barb horses. They are sensitive, high-spirited and outstanding for speed and stamina. The breed was registered in the *General Stud Book of the English Jockey Club*, organized about 1750.

In 1764 there was a lunar eclipse on 17th March and an annular eclipse of the sun on 1st April. Around this time (the Royal Stud Book has no birth record) a foal was born at the Duke of Cumberland's stables at Cranbourne Lodge, Berkshire. The chestnut colt with a white blaze and an 'off hind leg white up to the stock' appears to have been named after these recent astronomical events. A year later, following the Duke's death *Eclipse* was bought for 75 guineas by William Wildman of Gibbon's Grove, Mickleham.

At the time of his marriage in 1741, William Wildman (born 1718) was described as a butcher, but in reality he was a livestock middleman who made his fortune by buying up young cattle, rearing them and then selling them at Smithfield. Through his contacts with sporting landlords he became a very good judge of horses as well as cattle. Sometime in the early 1760s he leased, Gibbons Grove (later the Givons Grove Estate), described as a stud farm of '220 acres with a farmhouse sporting a clocktower and parapet and stabling for 60 horses'.

Despite his lowly standing compared to other wealthy racehorse owners of his day, Wildman's record was impressive having owned three outstanding Thoroughbreds. His first was *Gimcrack*, bought in 1763 for £35, who won seven times in 1764 and his first race in 1765, after which Wildman sold him for 800 guineas. By the time *Gimcrack* retired to stud in 1771 he had won 26 of his 36 races. He is commemorated by the Gimcrack Stakes at York. (Could there be a connection with Gimcrack Hill, Leatherhead?)

When *Eclipse* arrived at Mickleham he was a leggy, unprepossessing horse whose pedigree was no more

distinguished than his appearance. His handlers found him so ill tempered and unruly that they considered gelding him. But, instead they hired George Elton, a rough rider who specialised in training difficult horses. Fortunately at that time horses were not raced until they were four- or five-year-olds, which gave sufficient time for *Eclipse* to be prepared.

Training was very arduous as sweating was considered good. Throughout the year horses were kept in enclosed, heated stables. Exercise involved gallops and walks – all with the horse wearing heavy rugs.

Every week or so they were subjected to a 'sweat': a four-mile gallop again wearing heavy rugs. All this was aimed at developing stamina as well as speed because, at this time, races were commonly over a four-mile course and many events involved heats. In a single afternoon a horse might be expected to run four four-mile races with only a half-hour break between.

Eclipse seemed to thrive on this tough regime. He had his own groom, John Oakley, who exercised and cared for him throughout his training. Oakley soon learned that this horse required deferential treatment and would rebel against any use of the whip or spur. Canny Wildman seeing *Eclipse* showing such promise took advantage of the opportunity to buy his sire, *Marske*, from a farmer in Hampshire for 20 guineas. In 1768 he advertised *Marske's* stud fee as five guineas; this was soon to rise.

Five-year-old *Eclipse's* first public race was to be at Epsom. Following the discovery of the mineral water well on Epsom Common by a herdsman in 1618 (apparently his cattle refused to drink the magnesium sulphate laden water) Epsom became a famed spa town. People swarmed there to take the waters and naturally they needed other entertainments during their stay. There were sporting events, concerts and balls, hunting and horseracing. When sea-bathing for health became popular in the 1750s pleasure seekers moved to Brighton and Epsom became unfashionable as a resort, but by then horseracing at Epsom was firmly established.

As today the 1769 course at Epsom had its finishing straight running from Tattenham Corner towards the rubbing-house, but the starting line for the four-mile course was actually in Banstead. Between heats the horses had to be walked back to Banstead. If three different horses won separate heats then a fourth decider heat was run. This is quite a contrast to today's flat races which may be as short as five furlongs (1 furlong =

1/8 mile). The Derby is over 12 furlongs. In the early days at Epsom a distance post was placed 240 yards from the finish and any horse that had not passed this post by the time the winner reached the finishing line was eliminated ('distanced').

On 3rd May 1769 there were four other horses in *Eclipse's* first public race. He won the first two heats easily. On the third Oakley gave him his head and he distanced all the other contenders, giving rise to the oft repeated phrase *Eclipse first – and the rest nowhere!*

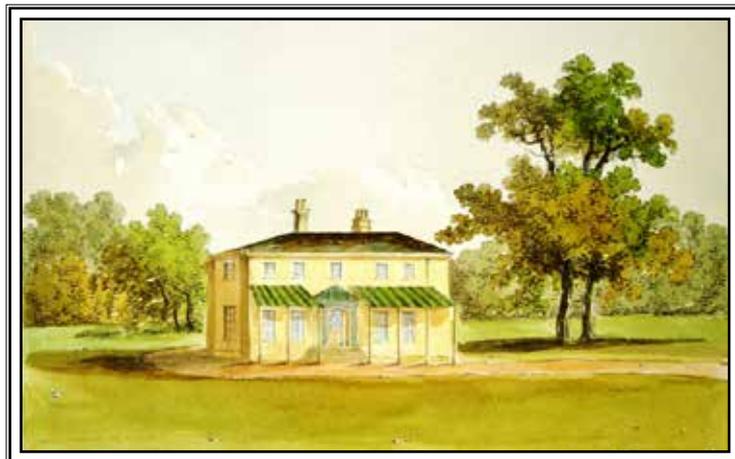
Upon his return to Mickleham the routine of uphill gallops and 'sweats' would have started again – all with the aim of maintaining form for his next race which was to be at Ascot at the beginning of June. Before the coming of the railway, horses had to walk to the race course. And so about five days before the race *Eclipse* and Oakley would have set off for Ascot, a trip of about two days, done in stages with an overnight stop at an inn. (Incidentally, *The Running Horses* website says that the inn, then called *The Chequers*, was a favourite stabling for horses racing at Epsom at this time.) *Eclipse* won his Ascot race easily on the second heat and afterwards Wildman accepted 650 guineas from the Irish adventurer Dennis O'Kelly, for a part share in the horse. By the end of the season *Eclipse* was undefeated in nine races. Some of the wins had been 'walkovers', when the unopposed horse merely had to walk over the course and the finishing line to win the plate.

In the spring of 1770 Dennis O'Kelly bought *Eclipse* outright, paying Wildman 1,100 guineas for his outstanding share. And soon *Eclipse* started on his five-day walk to Newmarket. He never raced at Epsom again.

In his short racing career *Eclipse* won 18 races, including 11 King's Plates, supposedly without ever being fully extended and without the use of whip or spur. He is attested to have covered 83 feet per second at top speed, which would equate to 25 feet in a single stride. His prize money totalled £2,863 (£304,00 today). During this time he raced over 63 miles and walked 1,400 miles to race meetings across England. After about 17 months he was retired to stud as no one was betting on rival horses. His stud fee rapidly rose to 50 guineas a mare. Successful racehorses do not always make good breeders. However overall, *Eclipse* sired 344 winners of more than £158,000; most of today's winners can trace their origins to *Eclipse*. In 1970 The Royal Veterinary College determined that nearly 80% of Thoroughbred racehorses had *Eclipse* in their pedigree. The *Eclipse* line has been deemed the most significant genetic factor in the history of horseracing.

Task Group Report: MPM Millennium Project

Long-time residents may recall that for an eighteen-month period from mid-1999 to 2001 a group of people photographed local events, buildings and landscapes as a record of our parish at the time of the millennium. The result was a collection of nearly 2000 images. As this was in the pre-digital age of photography, the record was in the form of slides and prints. Although the photographers indexed their particular



Gibbons Grove watercolour by John Hassel 1823

Much of the information in this article has been taken from Nicholas Clee's book *Eclipse: the story of the rogue, the madam and the horse that changed racing*. The rogue, of course is Dennis O'Kelly, one of 18th century England's colourful characters who made his fortune through gambling and other questionable pursuits.

And what of William Wildman? Why did this astute judge of horseflesh sell all three of his fine horses as soon as they showed their worth? (He even sold *Marske* before his value had reached its peak.) Clee describes Wildman as a decent, determined and energetic man, but essentially cautious. Villains were known to break into stables and 'nobbles' horses. They must have been very vulnerable during their walks between race courses and overnight stays in inns along the way. Perhaps Wildman did not want to be bothered with such risks.

Despite missing out on the vast income these horses might have brought him, William Wildman seems to have prospered. The dispersal sale at Christies following his death in 1784 included 19 paintings by Stubbs (Wildman was an early patron) and 150 other paintings including a Reubens and a da Vinci. Not bad for a 'meat salesman'.

According to Clee, Wildman was as solid a man as his business which turned over between £40,000 and £70,000 a year, saying he sat on parish committees and supported charities. It would be interesting to find out more about his local activities – a future project?
Sue Tatham

Source: Clee, N (2009) *Eclipse*. Bantam Press

Note: My thanks to Maureen Cole of Dorking who first told me about *Eclipse's* connection with Mickleham. Maureen's father, Jack O'Donoghue of Priory Racing Stables in Reigate, trained for the Queen Mother. His horses for her included *Gay Record*, who was successful in nine races and gave the Queen Mother her 100th winner.

shots, these have never been put together as a searchable database. Earlier this year Roger Davis set about scanning all the slides, although some more have come to light since then. The next step will be to scan the prints and then we hope to bring all the data together so that these views are accessible to the public. If you would like to help with this, please get in touch with me.

Sue Tatham

Marie Corelli: Mickleham's Forgotten Celebrity



Photograph in the frontispiece to 'Temporal Power', published in 1906

At the height of her success, Marie Corelli, author of over 30 gothic, fantasy, scientific and romance novels, was known as the Queen of Victorian Bestsellers. Only after her death in 1924, did the world discover the mystery surrounding the famous writer.

As the press searched for the truth about Marie Corelli, the Daily Mail published a story told by an elderly Mickleham resident. On a snowy winter's

night about 60 years earlier, someone knocked on the door of Fern Dell Cottage (where St Jude's Lodge now stands) at the foot of Box Hill. A servant answered but found only a basket on the doorstep. The basket contained a baby girl, with a £10 note tucked underneath her. The householder, Dr Charles Mackay, a poet, journalist and editor of the *Illustrated London News*, decided he would take the baby to the Dorking Union the following day. In the end, he kept the baby a while longer, thinking someone might come for her, but grew fond of her and adopted her instead.

In reality Marie did live at Fern Dell Cottage, but not until she was about ten years old. Perhaps the story the Mickleham resident remembered had been an attempt to hide a dark secret.

While married, Charles Mackay had fallen in love with Mary Elizabeth Mills (known as Ellen), a woman with little education and of lower social status than himself. Ellen had a daughter, Isabella Mary, born on 27th April 1855. When Charles's wife died, he spent a year in mourning, then married Ellen and 'adopted' her daughter (possibly his own child), who became known as Minnie. Later Minnie changed her name to Marie Corelli and claimed it was her legal name.

When Ellen died in 1876, the name on her death certificate was changed from Ellen to Elizabeth Mary. The confusion about Ellen's name and the fact she was treated more as a housekeeper than a wife has led some to suggest that she may have been the servant of Charles's lover, looking after the baby when her mistress died and marrying Charles to give the child a stable home.

Whoever was Marie's mother, it seems certain Marie was born out of wedlock. Victorian society considered illegitimacy an

unforgivable sin and this may have driven Marie to build a web of lies about her birth. Sometimes she claimed her father had died before she was born and that Charles had adopted her at the age of three months when he married her mother. Other times she said he had adopted her out of the kindness of his heart because he'd known her parents before they died.

On various occasions, Marie claimed that she was of Scottish, American and Italian heritage. She also claimed she had never visited America, despite proof she had lived there for two years as a young child.

Marie appeared to have no qualms about hiding the truth when it suited her. She dropped several years from her real age, recording in the 1881 census that she was 22 instead of 26, and informing a publisher she was 17 instead of 31. She also took great pains to conceal her short stature (she was only about 4ft tall) in photographs by the arrangement of the furniture or by standing on the top of stairs with a sweeping train, so it was not clear where the stairs ended and she began.

In 1865, Charles and his family moved to Fern Dell Cottage, a charming wooden house with lovely gardens and tall box hedges between it and its neighbour, Flint Cottage, home to the author George Meredith. It burnt down in 1894 – some years after the Mackays had left Mickleham – and was later replaced with St Jude's Lodge.

At first Marie was taught by a governess but proved a challenging pupil and was sent to a Paris convent for four years. Like most Victorian girls, Marie was not expected to earn her living and had only minimal formal education.

She had a good voice and people from Mickleham remembered a slim girl with a mass of fair hair singing at local concerts. Some remembered her calling herself Rose Trevor (which was the name of one of Mackay's character's names in his poem, *A Man's Heart*). When it looked like her literary career would not succeed, she embarked on a short musical career, giving public piano recitals as Signorina Marie di Corelli.

In 1874 Ellen became too ill to look after her husband and daughter, and Bertha Van de Vyver, one of Marie's childhood friends, moved into Fern Dell Cottage. Marie and Bertha stayed together until Marie's death in 1924. In 1876, Ellen died and was buried in Mickleham churchyard.

Charles had a stroke in 1883 and in 1884 he, Marie and Bertha left Fern Dell Cottage and moved back to London to be nearer good medical care.

Marie's first book *A Romance of Two Worlds* was published in 1886. She told her publisher that she had an Italian father, was descended from Arcangelo Corelli and had been educated in Italy and France. Although the book did not meet the critics' approval, Marie's claim that she wrote directly from her heart to the hearts of the people was borne out by the public who loved it. The introduction of compulsory education in 1876 meant that many ordinary people were able to read and Marie was able to take advantage of the public's desire for new books.

Marie went on to write another 30 books, tackling great themes – heaven and hell, joy and despair, good rewarded and

evil punished. In 1895 she became the best-selling author in Britain. Fiercely protective of her reputation, Marie did battle with the critics, refusing to have her picture taken, writing her own publicity notices, refusing to send out review copies of her new books and training her Yorkshire terrier to tear up reviews. Unlike her critics, her readers loved her. Her fans included Queen Victoria (who requested all of Marie's books be sent to her on publication), the Prince of Wales, Gladstone, the prime minister Lord Salisbury and his wife, who claimed that 'everybody is reading *The Soul of Lilith*'.

Oscar Wilde told her not to worry about the critics and said he found her writing enchanting. Queen Margarita of Italy sent a signed photo and asked for a copy of *The Romance of Two Worlds*.

In 1895 Marie Corelli wrote her most successful novel, *The Sorrows of Satan*, which was priced at six shillings (£30 today). The press gave grudging approval to the book's narrative skill and greatness of theme.

In 1899, after a serious illness, Marie moved to Stratford-upon-Avon with Bertha. Marie entered into the social life of the town, giving speeches and acting as guest of honour at public functions. She became one of the first conservationists, bestowing money on worthy causes and fighting to preserve the town's historic buildings. She objected to the proposed siting of a memorial opposite Shakespeare's bust in Holy Trinity Church and vigorously opposed the site chosen for the Andrew Carnegie library as it was close to Shakespeare's birthplace and one of the cottages earmarked for demolition had been occupied by Shakespeare's granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall. Marie was instrumental in establishing the Guild of Stratford-on-Avon to help preserve historic buildings and the character of the town.

Marie often caused controversy. On one occasion she won a libel case after a letter was published accusing her of hypocrisy, but was only awarded a farthing in damages and made enemies of many influential figures in the town in the process.

During the war, Marie was accused of food hoarding and summarily convicted in the local magistrate's court on 2nd January 1918, apparently without taking account of evidence to the contrary from her staff. She was fined £50, plus 20 guineas

costs. The press had a field day at her expense.

By 1918, the sales of *The Sorrows of Satan*, her best seller, were over 200,000, with many other titles having sold well over 100,000. However annual sales were declining as tastes in reading changed and Marie Corelli's style of writing fell out of fashion.

Marie had a heart attack in January 1924 and died, aged 69, on 21st April. She is buried in the main cemetery in Stratford, under a white marble monument bearing her name and a verse from one of her poems. Bertha ordered a marble angel from Italy to watch over her tomb with one outstretched arm pointing the way to heaven. In 2012 the angel was pushed to the ground and smashed. It is not known if it can be repaired.

After Marie's death, she faded from public memory. She now receives some recognition for her extraordinary place in Victorian society and her remarkable ability to captivate the reading public, although the mystery of her birth has never been solved.

She once said, 'I have made up my mind to be "Somebody" and will be as unlike anyone else as I can'. She certainly succeeded in that.

Alison Walton

Sources: <http://mariecorelli.org.uk>, Teresa Ransom, *The Mysterious Miss Marie Corelli: Queen of Victorian Bestsellers Photographs* courtesy of: <http://mariecorelli.org.uk>



Marie Corelli's grave in Stratford Cemetery before the angel was toppled in 2012

Task Group Report: Oral Histories

Following on from Mari Ottridge's excellent oral history on Rose's Store, a second project has been started, this time with the theme of "Feeding the Family". Anne Weaver, with the assistance of Roger Davis, has begun the task of interviewing and recording local residents, asking them to recall their memories about all aspects of



how food was obtained, stored, prepared and eaten.

It is surprising how much has changed. It would appear that, especially in the war years, there was more reliance on home grown vegetables and many people kept chickens to supply eggs as well as occasionally for the pot. Lack of refrigeration meant that shopping had to

be done several times a week if not daily. Deliveries of meat, groceries and of course milk were commonplace. When it came to the kitchen it would seem that it was very much a woman's domain – the idea of men cooking in the home would appear to be a fairly recent idea. Compared with today alcohol intake was minimal and eating out, other than an occasional picnic, was a rarity.

It has been fascinating to hear how the daily routine of feeding the family has changed enormously over the years. Nowadays many people jump into their cars for a weekly "big shop", convenience foods have become commonplace and the idea of the whole family sitting down for a meal together is almost unknown in some households. By looking at and recording details of these everyday events we hope to provide future generations with a record of the past and maybe give the current generation some food for thought?

Roger Davis