

# Leatherhead & District Local History Society

Registered Charity No. 802409

## Registered Office

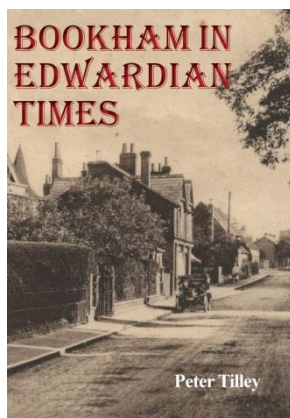
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## Press Release



### **Bookham in Edwardian times by Peter Tilley**

#### **(A snapshot of Great and Little Bookham, Surrey Based on the 1911 Census)**

The villages of Great Bookham and Little Bookham are included in the Domesday survey of 1086 although settlements existed well before that time. Their original name was Bocheham or hamlet of the beech trees. The limited records available to us show that from 8th century Great Bookham was part of the Manor of Chertsey Abbey. Following the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, in 1550 the Manor of Great Bookham was granted to Lord William Howard. After passing through several families it ended up in the hands of William Keswick M.P. in 1882. The Manor of Little Bookham, whilst previously linked to Chertsey Abbey, had by 1498 come into the possession of Thomas Howard. On his death it passed to his son, Lord William Howard, this being the only time the two manors were joined. In 1637 it was acquired by the Maddox family and remained associated with this family until 1937 when Edward Pollen sold the Manor House for it to become a school.

The Bookhams are two in the line of a dozen 'strip' parishes between Epsom and Guildford which extend from the crest of the North Downs northwards down the dip slope. Two roads form a rectangular pattern with the two main axes running parallel from east-north-east to west south- west. The Lower Road links the village centres of Fetcham, Great and Little Bookham and Effingham. It follows approximately the two hundred foot contour and coincides with the narrow outcrop of Reading and Thanet Beds which lie between the chalk of the Downs and the clay of the Common. The Guildford Road runs across the Downs further south, half a mile away from the Lower Road in Little Bookham, but under three hundred yards away in Great Bookham. These two roads were described in 1882 in C. Howard's 'The Roads of England and Wales' as alternative routes between Leatherhead and Guildford, both being 'undulating' with 'hard smooth surfaces'.

Up to the late nineteenth century the two villages were typical of agricultural communities in the South of England having developed from a feudal system of manorial based agriculture dominant in the middle ages into a system of mainly tenant farmers renting their farms from a local landowner and employing labourers. A few small farmers even owned their own farms.

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However, the 1870s and 1880s saw a major change in village life, not just in Bookham but over the whole of Britain. Cheap imports of grain from North America and frozen meat from Australia and South America meant that many tenant farmers were unable to compete and Britain lapsed into what was known as the agricultural depression. When farming became unprofitable many farmers gave up their tenancy and ceased paying their rent to the landowners. Some landowners had been financing their extravagant life style directly from these rents, whilst many others were living on bank loans with interest paid by rental incomes. In these latter cases, when landowners could no longer pay the interest banks would call in the loans forcing the landowners to sell off large chunks of land at a time when agricultural land values were poor. Especially in the Home Counties, their buyers were often *nouveau riche* business men (and women) who could break up their purchases and offer plots of highly desirable building land to well paid professionals who wished to commute to London on the newly established railway network.

From 1801 National Censuses were held every ten years in the spring of the second year of the decade. Until 1841 these were simple body counts by a parish official but from then on each household was required to complete a schedule recording details of all those present in the house on census night. Between 1841 and 1901 these were collected by an enumerator who was then required to transcribe these details into a ledger known as the Census Enumerator's Book (CEB). The original schedules were then destroyed whilst the CEBs were sent to the Registrar General in London for analysis and storage. For the 1911 census the original schedules were not transcribed on to CEBs but were sent as individual documents for analysis and archiving. Copies of all the archived CEBs and schedules are available to the public once 100 years have passed.

For Bookham these have been digitised onto a computer database. Civil registration of births, deaths and marriages became compulsory from 1837 but certificates are only available as individual documents upon payment of a fee. Hence it is not feasible to collect registration data for whole communities and it is necessary to rely on the baptism, marriage and burial registers of the parish churches and the very limited information from the indexes of the civil registers. Such information as there is has been added to the database.

Another source of information is Lloyd George's 'Domesday' land survey resulting from the 1910 Finance Act. This is a record of 1909 property values, ownership and occupancy intended for assessment of capital gains on any future disposals.

In the 1860s the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps on a scale of 1:2,500 was issued. At this scale the shape of individual buildings are clearly visible. The maps for Bookham were updated about 1895, again about 1912 and finally in 1934. Copies were obtained from the Surrey History Centre in Woking. Unfortunately Bookham is spread over four maps and the joins are sometimes obvious.

Finally, many photographs and postcards from the turn of the century which have views of the local area have been copied.

For the 1911 census Bookham was divided into two enumeration districts. The enumerator for District 11 was Thomas Hamshar who was a blacksmith and engineer living in the Red House on Lower Road. For District 12 it was Charles Pearce who was a carpenter living on the High Street. This book will retrace the routes taken by those two men to collect the records making up the 1911 census. Their journeys have been broken down into manageable segments and each segment allocated a chapter. Because the enumeration districts shared the same schedule numbers these have been prefixed by the district number, hence 11/001 refers to Station House in district 11 whilst 12/001 refers to Cordingly's shop in the High Street which is in district 12.

The narrative in the book gives a brief summary of each household, preceded by the schedule number in square brackets. The maps at the beginning of each chapter are annotated to show the relevant schedule numbers for each property or group of properties. However, the files on the CD give full life histories of all the individuals making up each schedule. A guide on how to retrieve information from the CD is given at the end of the book.

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This book will attempt to present a picture of Edwardian Bookham which is likely to be very different from Victorian Bookham and bear only a passing resemblance to the modern Elizabethan Bookham we know and enjoy. However, it is hoped that your imagination will enable you to conjure up images of what life was like for the inhabitants of our village a hundred years ago.