How to Trace the History of Your House

You can begin, if you have access to the title deeds, by examining them to discover the recent ownership of the house. If it has been held for preservation, its architecture and its approximate age will be briefly noted in the List of Buildings of Architectural or Historical interest produced by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in 1947. A copy of which is available at the Bromley Library.

On proceeding further, you will find a very helpful short guide in D. Iredale's booklet, "The Old House" (Shire Publications, Aylesbury, 1970, 25p). For general information on Kent architecture, there are J. Newman's two books published by Penguin in 1969, "North East and East Kent £2.10 and more important to this area is "West Kent and the Weald" £2.25 "Some Kentish Houses" (Kentish Sources V. Kent County Council, 1965, 50p) edited by E. Melling and illustrated by A.M. Oakley, shows how to use documents to trace the architectural history of a house. All these publications can either be borrowed from the library or are available for consultation in the library reference rooms.

The maps are the best documents with which to start more detailed work. Surveyed mostly in the late 1830s and early 1840s, they are the earliest series of large-scale maps of (Continued on page 2, column 1)

HISTORY SOCIETY
PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

It is hoped that members will assist with this photographic survey; the aim of which is to produce a comprehensive record of the area for the benefit of future local historians. What is required are good photographs of a reasonably high technical standard showing the significant features of the subjects and their setting.

The photographer should make a note of his picture at the time they are taken, and the subsequent print should have recorded on the back the date of the photograph, details of the location and any other useful information. A mass of unidentified photographs can be very frustrating.

A notable house or object might be recorded by photographing several views showing each elevation if it is a building and (if it is possible), the interior. In a more limited situation, however, just one or two good pictures of a number of suitable subjects would be of greater use to a greater number of future students of local history, than an exhaustive recording of every viewpoint and details of just one building.

The subject photographed should be marked on a map, and it is considered by local history societies who have carried out photographic surveys, that the six inch ordnance survey maps are very suitable for this purpose.

Any member who has a selection of photographs of the area, or who knows someone who has such a collection, should consider where such a collection should ultimately be kept. For it is not entrusted to a suitable organisation, such as the Society or the Bromley Library Service, it may easily be lost or disposed of — and valuable historical records are then gone for ever.

Members who are searching for pictures of old buildings, some of which may no longer exist, may like to know that:

(1) the National Buildings Record at Fielden House, Great College Street, S.W.1. has a collection of half a million photographs.

(2) the Greater London Council has a selection of photographs of local buildings of architectural interest.

(3) the Bromley Library has a collection of prints of the Orpington area, taken by the Orpington Photographic Society.

(4) there is in existence an extensive collection of photographs of the Beckenham area.

(5) the Central Library, Tweedy Road, has a collection of old slides and photographs, and the Orpington and Penge Libraries have collections of pictures or slides of those localities.

"Two and Three Dimensions"

One of our members, Marcus Arman, will have an exhibition of Bas-Relief, Sculpture and Collage in the St. Blaise Gallery, Stockwell College of Education, from 4th to 14th March, 1975. Mr. Arman will be pleased to see any members of this Society who care to attend the private view which is from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on 4th March.
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parishes. The Bromley Library has a wide range of these maps, or photographic copies, so it is well worth your while seeking the advice of Miss Plinke, the Local History Librarian, at the Central Library, on this. The Keeper of Public Records, Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, W.C.2., has custody of a series for the whole country; these maps can be seen by appointment, though it may be necessary to specify that the maps (and not microfilm copies are required).

Having found the direction of north on the relevant map, use the road pattern and landmarks such as streams and churches to identify the site of your house, which you should find marked by a number. The same number will appear on the title award associated with the map, together with the name of the landowner and of the occupier. Tithe maps do not show in detail land which was exempt from or which had been redeemed from tithes, as was often the case with waste land or built-up areas. The names of houses, unlike those of fields, are not usually given. The next step will be to see if there is in existence any title deeds or estate papers relating to the site of your house. The Library holds only those title deeds which have been deposited in it and it must be pointed out that many title deeds have failed to survive or their location is unknown, especially if the property which they concerned was small.

The legal phraseology in which they were written together with the occasional differences between apparent and real meanings, can make it difficult to interpret title deeds, so you may find it useful to read A.A. Dibben’s pamphlet “Title Deeds” (Historical Association, 59a, Kennington Road, S.E.11; 1968, 25p) From the mid-nineteenth century, deeds often include small plans or references to tithe maps to that it is easier to identify the land mentioned. Estate papers may sometimes provide architectural information.

If you find that your house was ever connected with a manor, manorial records, such as court rolls, may refer to your house or its site. A few such records are at the Library. Manorial records in the area, by comparison with those of some areas are brief and few in number, especially after the seventeenth century. Little land was held by the tenure called copyhold.

Estate maps of fields, farms or estates were prepared from the late sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century and sometimes represented important buildings by little illustrations or block plans. There are some estate maps at the Library, so again it may be worth your while to ask Miss Plinke.

Printed maps of the area begin in the late sixteenth century. At first, they, and printed maps of towns were on a small scale but by the eighteenth century some maps of the county of Kent were being produced on scales of about 2” to the mile, sufficient to indicate large, isolated buildings. The first Ordnance Survey map of Kent, on a scale of 1” to the mile, was published in 1801. Many sheets of the Ordnance Survey 6” and 25” maps which have been published in several editions since the 1860s, are available at the Library for inspection.

If you know the name of a household or a family owning the house, these records may give you further particulars on the buildings. Wills normally refer only to, say, the house “in which I now dwell” but probate inventories were drawn up to list and value a deceased person’s goods and in so doing often described in great detail the house or buildings containing these goods. They were prepared in large numbers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries but became uncommon towards 1750. These documents with other records of the church courts in the Rochester dioceses which proved local wills up to 1857 have been deposited in the Kent Archives Office.

Lists of householders or owners are provided by rate books of parish officers among the parish records, especially for the

Steening and Paper Hangings at Bromley College

The Revd. F. McBride, Chaplain of the Bromley College, who is a member of the Society, has supplied the following extracts from the minutes of meetings held at the Deanery, Westminster, about the Bromley College:-

Feb. 23, 1724. Ordered that Mr. James and Mr. Emmett be desired to give immediate orders for the steening of the well and lengthening the pipe which serves the pump and twining the drains which now run through the cloister, through the Court.

(Note: the Oxford Dictionary gives the meaning of “steening” as “to line a well... with stone, brick or other material” Apparently the word came into use in 1720).

June 19, 1764. Agreed and ordered that no paper hangings pasted to the wall of the apartment of any widow shall upon her decease be taken and considered as ye property of ye widow who caused such pasted paper hangings to be put up; nor shall any successor in ye said apartment be obliged to purchase the same, they being considered as a part of ye said apartment. And it was agreed that this should be a standing rule for the future.

(Note: present at this meeting were: the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury; the Bishop of Rochester; Jones Raymond, Esq., and Jeffery Hetherington, Esq.)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

These are now due, and it is hoped that all members will renew their subscriptions as quickly as possible. These may be paid to any officer of the Society or sent to the Hon. Treasurer at the Central Library. A form is enclosed for members to use if they wish.

early nineteenth century, by similar records for some boroughs and by the Hearth Tax returns, 1664, and the Land Tax assessments, especially 1780 — 1832, in the Quarter Sessions records. The Quarter Sessions records also contain references to licences for public houses though a search for these would be very laborious particularly as the sign is rarely stated. These records too are available for inspection at the Library.

There is a series of Kent directories available for reference. They are very easy to use but as a rule they do not include every house in a locality or add any information to the address and name of the owner or occupier.

Remember that Miss Plinke will always be glad to advise you on the steps you should take and the nature of the documents which you will require for the purpose of the study of the history of your house.

Bromley College quadrangle with pump in foreground
SYDENHAM

by Doris E. Pullen

Mrs. Pullen (who is a member of the Society) has written a book which describes the rise of Sydenham from a hamlet to a suburban town, and tells the story of some of the people who have lived there.

It contains chapters on the history of the area; how it rose from a hamlet to its highest peak in the days of the Crystal Palace, and the great and wide-ranging activities at the Palace during its hey-day. The history of the churches, schools and other institutions are recorded, as are also the memories of old residents. The book contains a remarkable collection of photographs and some excellent sketches of noteworthy buildings of the area, drawn by George Pullen. It is written in a charming and friendly style, which makes for pleasant and easy reading.

The book, which has over 100 pages, will be available in March and will cost approximately £1.50. Copies will be obtainable from Mrs. Pullen, 155, Venner Road, Sydenham.

Recent photographs of Hayes required

I am at present engaged in a contemporary photographic survey of Hayes. Very soon after commencing I realised that I was already too late to record many things of recent interest. I would be glad to hear from anyone who has photographs (I could copy) of any of the following: The Odeon cinema (formerly the Rex); the army camp on Hayes Common; the fields bordering Bourne Vale; the engine turn-table at Hayes Station; the last horse drawn milk float in Hayes; pre-War building work on the 'Hayes Place Estate'.

If anyone has information that might lead to obtaining these, Gordon Wright, 12 Sylvan Way, West Wickham, Kent (01-462 5845).

If anyone has a photograph or picture of Pickhurst Manor (Hayes), please contact Miss Plincke at the library who is at present trying to trace same.

West Wickham - The Cottages

In the November Newsletter, members were asked if they could identify these two photographs:

...Dr. R.C.W. Cox has supplied the following information:

Victoria Cottages stood on the south side of the High Street, just east of the roundabout. The building with the tall chimney stacks beneath the words "West Wickham" was Smith's Farm and stood (stands?) more or less opposite the roundabout, shortly before the junction with The Alders.

In the early 1930's in one of the Cottages — either the one nearest to the camera or the one just off the picture — there lived a little old man called Gee. He repaired violins and possibly did general joinery work in a little workshop at the back of his house. I still have a violin that my mother bought from him; I play it only at Christmas but that is a reflection of my musicianship rather than of his skill as a workman.

The photo is of interest for another reason. It shows that the High Street led not PAST but TO the White Hart Pond and, just short of the Pond, the road can be seen curving round to the left. I have always maintained that the Pond was, in medieval times, a (if not the only) millpond and may well indicate the site of the Domesday mill though it is of course a long way from the manor house. When I was still living in West Wickham in the 1950's a 17th century steel yard weight was found in the backgarden of a house to the north of the site. The dereliction of the White Hart Pond must presumably be blamed equally upon the Corporation and the brewers.

The second photo, of The Cottage, is one I am familiar with as I have quite a large copy that I inherited. The houses in the distance, on the extreme left of the picture, are those standing on the north side of the High Street between Kent and Sussex Roads. I think that the large black gate on the extreme right of the picture led at an angle into the stables of Mellin's house, Wickham Hall (which is illustrated on p.16 of Ida L. Watson, THE HISTORY OF WEST WICKHAM, KENT, 1959). The stables were vast, extending to the eastern frontage of Kent Road and including the United Dairies Depot. Judging by the distance of the houses between Kent and Sussex Roads in the photo, I should think The Cottage stood roughly between the entrance to the United Dairies depot and the junction of High Street and Braemar Gardens. I do not remember The Cottage though I do remember a tarred fence that stood between it and the Kent Road junction (c. 1930 or a little later) and I remember being taken to the sale of the contents of Wickham Hall by my mother (c. 1931 or 1932) and, although only seven or eight at the time, came away with the impression that it was a very gloomy house.

Incidentally, reverting to the White Hart Pond an excellent photo in Ida Watson's book shows how attractive the pond was still in the 1950's. I believe that the roadway in front of the pub (where the bike is in the photo) led to the mill which would have been about on the left-hand edge of the photo.
The Waters of Hayes

Hayes is a very good example of how much we rely upon a complex system of drains and culverts to keep our feet dry. A quick glance at the Hayes tithe map of 1841 shows that the old village was built on the higher ground along Hayes Street, whilst the only other buildings of note were on the higher ground at the Beckenham Green end of Pickhurst Lane then known as Beckenham Green. "Hayes Bottoms" — the area around Bourne Vale — contained some buildings, but was notably wet and marshy, too wet to be considered good farmland, although cattle were grazed on the sides of the hills. The River Bourne flowed through this area, having its source somewhere around Tice Pigs Lane and receiving a tributary from Husseywell Park pond (according to the 1862-1868 Ordnance map). Bourne Vale almost copies the original course of the river from which it takes its name, but today the river has been diverted into culverts and is almost forgotten. However, it sometimes reminds some of the residents in Dartmouth Road of its existence: The gardens backing onto the Victory Social Club grounds have often flooded under the unequal efforts of the culvert there to control the river in times of exceptionally heavy rainfall. When the Hayes Place Estate was developed in the 1930's the builders found the area around Bourne Vale infested with rats and snakes.

The area along Hayes Lane and Hayes Street has also a 'wet' reputation. Hayes Lane was often impassable to traffic in winter. From 1884-1908 (there were even questions asked about the House of Commons in the Times "). The legendary dampness of this part of Hayes gave rise to the expression in the 1920's "a man buried in the Hayes churchyard on a Saturday morning would arrive at the Bromley Football Ground in time for the afternoon kick-off". Even today in periods of heavy rain, surplus water from the poorly drained Baston Road and West Common Road causes flooding in Hayes Lane. Whilst Bourne Vale, Chatham Avenue and the general area around "Hayes Bottoms" haven't flooded for over 30 years (proof of the effectiveness of ground drainage).

The waters of Hayes have also had some value. The ponds of Husseywell Park and Ridgeway Park are born of natural springs and form an important ornamental part of the parks. In 1867 a wealthy Australian newspaper proprietor, Edmund Wilson became tenant of Hayes Place, which included Husseywell Park, the pond there was given an island and he installed monkeys on it.

Women were not allowed to take part in public or professional stage shows, and boys acted female parts. But women cast in such performances were not unknown. In 1617 "Young Gentlewomen" of the Ladies Hall at Deptford, some kind of senior school, presented a masque called "Cupid's Banishment" to Anne of Denmark, Queen of James I, and followed it with an "Anti-Maske" of Bacchus's children, which revealed (a strange theme for nice young ladies) "the severall hunters of drunkards and many pretty figures belitting that wayne".

Of Masques and Triumphs

The people of the Elizabethan age had an unquenchable appetite for dressing up and putting on most extravagant shows. In Shakespeare's earlier comedies the gentility are always ready for a masque or a triumph, Queen Elizabeth was constantly "on progress" through the estates of her loyal and wealthy subjects who arranged pageants, "triumphs" and masquerades of all kinds. Musical performances, poetical honours and the pageants were lavish. Elizabeth is reported to have greatly enjoyed the appearance of nymphs and "wild men" who would be waiting to greet her arrival at most country mansions.

Sir Francis Bacon is typical of his time in his equal dedication to affairs of state, law, philosophy and, surprisingly, the detailed study of scenic effects, lighting and costumes for theatrical shows and masquerades. His essay "Of Masques and Triumphs" reveals both the extravagant nature of the masquerades produced at high social levels, and the careful artistry devoted to them by those who loved to sing, dance and act, and by those who so loved to watch the performances.

In one of the Queen's royal progresses, she came to Orpington on her way to Canterbury, and here on the 2nd July, 1573, she was magnificently entertained by Sir Percival Hart. On her reception at his mansion, she was addressed by a nymph, personating the genius of the house. Then it is reported, the scene shifted and from several chambers which, as they contrived, represented a bark or ship; a sea conflict was represented to her view, which delighted the Queen so much, that at her departure, to perpetuate both the memory of the owner, and of the entertainment, she gave the house the name of "Bark Hart".