



Bromleag

The journal of the Bromley Borough Local History Society

Issue 62, June 2022



Bromley Hill House Farm by Amelia Long, 1820

Bromley Hill House — a history



**C19th developments
in Shortlands**

**Orpington nurses'
protest at Westminster**

Bromleag

*The journal of the Bromley Borough
Local History Society*



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Bromleag is published four times a year. The editor welcomes articles along with illustrations and photographs. These can be emailed or a paper copy.

Items remain the copyright of the authors and do not necessarily reflect Society views. Each contributor is responsible for the content of their article. Articles may be edited to meet the constraints of the journal. Articles are not always used immediately as we try to maintain a balance between research, reminiscences and news and features about different subjects and parts of the borough.

A full **INDEX** of articles in Bromleag 1974—2021 can be found at **www.bblhs.org.uk**

Next journal deadline — 15 July 2022

BBLHS Meetings July — December 2022

Meetings are held at 7.45 pm on the first Tuesday of the month (unless otherwise stated) from September to July in the Church Hall at St George's Church in Bickley Park Road, BR1 2BE.

Tuesday 5 July Hitting the Heights — Richard Watkins

A History of the Crystal Palace area

Tuesday 6 September Members' Evening

We will be holding our popular Members' Evening. If you have a project you are working on, or would like to get advice about, why not share it with us in a 10-minute slot at this September's meeting? Contact **Mike Marriott**.
mike.marriott1@ntlworld.com or 07917 101520

Tuesday 1 October Florence Nightingale in London — Julie Chandler

Half her life was spent in London and only two years in the Crimea. Julie explores this time and looks at the background of our most famous nurse.

Summer walks and visits

Tuesday 21 June 2pm — From Iron Age to the 20th Century: a walk around Keston Common with our former chairman Tudor Davies

Starting from the Keston Ponds car park in Westerham Road, the walk will last round 90 minutes. No steep slopes or steps are involved but the walk will be on grass and gravel and crosses the main road a couple of times.

Wednesday 29 June 2.30pm — A Musical Afternoon

An opportunity to hear a selection of music from the 1920s and 30s played on Wurlitzer and Aeolian organs at a private museum in West Wickham. There will be a **charge of £10** to be donated to the owners' charity.

To book, contact **John Barnes**: jcbarnes@waitrose.com or 020 8462 2603.

Wednesday 13 July 2pm — A guided tour of Biggin Hill Museum

A guided tour of the chapel and museum, £11, including tea and biscuits. Booking is required.

Contact **Pam Preedy**: pampreedy@gmail.com or 07944 191 289

Wednesday August 17 11am A walk around the fringes of the City

Mike Marriott will include Postman's Park (see Page 11 for more about this fascinating hidden gem) and Cloth Fair. Meet by the statue of Queen Anne outside the west end of St Paul's Cathedral. To book, contact

Mike Marriott: mike.marriott1@ntlworld.com or 07917 101520

Who's Who on the BBLHS committee

www.bblhs.org.uk

President: The Mayor of Bromley

Vice Presidents: Nicholas Bennett, Tudor Davies,
Paul Rason, Jean Wilson

Chairman	David Hanrahan davidhanrahan50@gmail.com
Vice-Chairman	Michael Rawcliffe 020 8290 1453 jmrawcliffe@outlook.com
Treasurer	Pam Robinson 07732 970 372 pamrobinson@talktalk.net
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Programme co-ordinator	Mike Marriott 01689 820794 or 07917 101520 mike.marriott1@ntlworld.com
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Minutes secretary	Judy Davies
Committee member	Adrian Thomas, Ruth Bennett David Fergusson, Pam Preedy Simon Finch of Bromley Historic Collections

Registered Charity No 273963

AGM — Chairman's report 2022

David Hanrahan

This is my first report for the AGM and signifies the end of my first year as Chairman. As I am expected to read this aloud, you will be relieved that it is mercifully short.

My appointment as Chairman was very unexpected, from my point of view, on two levels. Firstly, the Committee members were all saddened and taken by surprise when Tudor Davies announced his resignation following a health scare. I am pleased to say that Tudor has continued to support the Society and has been a great assistance to me personally. The second unexpected reason was the proposal made to me by the other members of the committee. I was really touched and honoured to assume the role and hope I have lived up to the committee's expectations.



To use a football analogy, my first year has been a game of two halves. The first half was a continuation of the strict pandemic restrictions, meaning that our members' and committee meetings were all presented via Zoom. I have to thank my committee members for the success of these meetings. In particular, special thanks goes to Max Batten for coping with the technical side of Zoom and Mike Marriott for his sterling efforts in recruiting some very interesting speakers.

These remote meetings far exceeded my expectations and were very popular with our more-distanced membership, for whom the physical meetings may not be an option. It is still my long-term plan to be able to offer some online version of our meetings but there are many technical issues to overcome.

During the Covid lockdown months, I spent some time looking for a new, more-suitable meeting venue for the future. It is my opinion that one of the attractions of belonging to the Society is the monthly catch-up with friends to listen to accomplished speakers in, hopefully, pleasant surroundings. St George's Church, I believe, fits the bill with plenty of space, good catering and other facilities, and easy access by both private and public transport. The fact that we have had near-record attendances, even on cold, dark wintry nights, is testament to the success of the venue.

Our newsletter/journal goes from strength to strength, thanks very much to our editor, Christine Hellicar. I have submitted our past year's editions for the Local

BROMLEY BOROUGH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No.273963

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

	2021	2020
<u>INCOME</u>		
Subs,Dons,Door.less Ppal fees	1011	1619 For 2020 1019 For 2021
Gift Aid	293	870
Book sales	54	0
Bank Interest	<u>2</u>	3
Total	<u>1360</u>	<u>3511</u>
Legacy	<u>5042</u>	<u>48</u>
Total income	<u>6402</u>	<u>3559</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
Meetings - speakers	90	190
Hall Rent + refreshments	218	-164
Bromleag - printing	813	570
postage	442	505
Subs out includ insurance	170	175
Computer costs/website	274	252
Miscellaneous	<u>124</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	<u>2131</u>	<u>1528</u>
Net balance 2021	-770	<u>2031</u>
Legacy	<u>5042</u>	
Total	<u>4272</u>	
Balance b/f	10988	8957
Net Income	<u>4272</u>	<u>2031</u>
Balance c/f	<u>15260</u>	<u>10988</u>
<u>Summary of funds</u>		
Natwest Bank Charity a/c	4272	6857
Legacy a/c NW Bank	9173	4131
Scottish Widows Deposit A/C	<u>2500</u>	<u>2500</u>
Total Funds	<u>15945</u>	<u>13488</u>

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

I have examined the accounting records of the Bromley Borough Local History Society in accordance with the general directions of the Charity Commissioners. I hereby certify the accounts above are in accord with the accounting records and properly reflect the financial activities of the Society for the year ended 31st December 2021

 TONY LATHEY

Dated 14th MAR 2022

History Publications Awards for 2022. I think they are worthy of strong consideration. At the end of December we received the very sad news that Tony Allnutt, a beloved founder member of our Society, had passed away after a long illness. He is very much missed.

Tony most recently managed our membership records and, as mentioned before, our membership continues to grow strongly. Elaine Baker has kindly taken over as our membership secretary and is fast getting to grips with records.

Judy Davies has volunteered to step into the role of minutes secretary and I am sure she will be a great asset to the committee.

Both have the full support of the committee, all of whom have given me so much support this past year.

We have an exciting programme of talks/visits and walks in the coming year and I look forward to the continuing success of the Society.

AGM meeting

The Mayor, Councillor Russell L Mellor, chaired our 48th AGM He then oversaw the re-election of the committee and the election of new committee members: membership secretary Elaine Baker; minutes secretary Judy Davies and new members David Fergusson and Pam Preedy.

Treasurer's report

Pam Robinson presented the accounts (Page 6, opposite). Last year the Society made a loss but this was offset by a bequest of £5,000. There were no questions.

New vice-president

At the end of the meeting it was proposed and unanimously approved that Tudor Davies our former Chairman should be made a vice-president of the Society.



A helping hand wanted for website

Our excellent website is currently run by one person, Max Batten, and to provide some resilience in maintaining it (and allow Max to go on holiday), it would be very helpful if another member would like to take on the duties of "Assistant Web Master".

If you are interested in finding out more, please drop a line to Max at admin@bblhs.org.uk

West Wickham history in 16 pictures

A series of watercolour pictures of West Wickham painted by Patricia Knowlden (1927 – 2011) have been added to the picture collections on our website —

<https://www.bblhs.org.uk/>

Patricia, who lived in West Wickham for over 60 years, researched and recorded many aspects of its history. She was an early member of the Bromley Borough Local History Society and she combined her love of history with a passion for the countryside, which can be seen in these illustrations.

She took her inspiration for this watercolour series from a late 20th century exhibition at Bromley Museum. She wrote: “An architect from Orpington returned home later in life and decided to celebrate his town in a special way. He made his own map of the place and divided the area into squares based on the OS maps and began to explore. He was most interested in new buildings that had been erected since he left and proceeded to fill notebooks with text and drawings. He then chose one from each square to develop into a full illustration. I remember being very impressed by the idea of this map and thinking that every parish should have one.

“In time I came round to doing something similar for West Wickham, but mine illustrate its history; I chose one scene from each of my squares, and one topic to go with it.”

Each picture is accompanied by a short history including her own house, *pictured right*, an unassuming mid-20th century property set in an historic landscape.

Harvyles – the name Harvyles is first recorded in a manorial document of 1485. It later became Hardfield and then Hartfield. On early 20th century OS maps Hartfield House is just uphill from Harvest Bottom Bank. The house we call Harvyles dates only from 1955 when it was built on a spare plot occupied only by a big old hawthorn tree and its inhabitants. Which is why we always apologise to invading spiders and woodlice and so on, before taking them out again. We enjoy stunning views across to Well Wood and over the fields to Rouse Farm and Nash. Patricia Knowlden



Peter Heinecke, Alan Hart and Jenny Mewis

Sadly, we have learnt in recent weeks that three of our members, all of whom supported the Society for many years, have died

Peter Heinecke 1936 – 2021

Before his retirement Peter, who trained as a teacher, was the librarian at Colfe's School in Eltham. He took an active part in running BBLHS during the 1980s and 90s when he was membership secretary.

He lived all his life in Orpington but his father's family came from Germany and Poland. He was a meticulous researcher both of Orpington history – particularly the early connections to the Spencer family — and of his family history. He contributed a fascinating article for *Bromleag* on Bromley's twin town of Neuwied, which is on the banks of the Rhein, and several articles on the history of Orpington.

Dr Alan Hart died in April just after his 93rd birthday. He was an early member of BBLHS and wrote articles for the society, but his greatest contribution to local history was as lead Site Director at Scadbury— the Elizabethan manor house in St Paul's Cray — a role he undertook for Orpington and District Archaeological Society.

Paying tribute to Alan, a former research chemist at Queen Mary's University of London, Janet Clayton, the chair of ODAS ,said: "His expertise in academic writing meant that he produced excellent reports on all his excavations. This played an important part in gaining the support of Historic England for ODAS's long-term work at Scadbury."

Jenny Mewis died tragically in a car crash on the A21 at Pratts Bottom in February. Jenny, who lived in Keston, was a keen collector of postcards and ephemera and had been a member of the Society for over 30 years. She was well known to many members as a regular attendee at our meetings.

Do we have your latest email address?

During lockdown we updated our membership list and hopefully we now have everyone's latest email addresses. We contact members by email at least once a month, so if you have not been hearing from us (and wish to do so!), please let us know. A quick note to **admin@bblhs.org.uk** will do the trick.

Saving the Crystal Palace dinosaurs

If you – or your parents or grandparents – took the family to see the dinosaurs at Crystal Palace park and photographed them or you have researched the local history of ballooning you could help Historic England with the Crystal Palace Dinosaur Project.

Bromley's most unusual Grade I listed structures are deteriorating rapidly and the first stage of the project is to find out what happened to them in the past, learning about the causes of the decay, earlier repairs, what worked and what didn't. Historic England need to see how they looked in decades past and would like anyone with pictures of the dinosaurs to let them have copies.

They are particularly seeking aerial shots. Crystal Palace Park was very important in the early development of ballooning, which had close parallels with the history of photography, and they would like anyone with documents or photographs related to ballooning and Crystal Palace to get in touch.

In 2020 the 30 life-size statues of dinosaurs and other extinct animals were added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register because large cracks were appearing in the bodies and limbs of some of the dinosaurs, and they were thought to be in danger of losing toes, teeth and tails.

Following the initial study, Historic England will work with Bromley Council, which owns Crystal Palace Park and therefore the dinosaurs, and local and historical organisations to raise public awareness, fundraising and future projects. The area could be scheduled as an archaeological site. The dinosaurs were constructed between 1852 and 1855 for The Crystal Palace Company. The structures form a unique display of prehistoric life as understood at the time but are deteriorating, probably because of ground movement, vegetation growth and water ingress. Major damage to the Megalosaurus was repaired in 2020, funded by a Historic England Covid-19 Emergency Heritage At Risk Response Fund grant.

The Friends of Crystal Palace Dinosaurs (FCPD) would like any photos too, and these can be submitted to <https://cpdinosaurs.org/projects/dinosaurs-monitor>. They will pass any photos or information to Historic England. Or contact Martyn Barber at customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk

Crystal Palace park – past and present

If you like armchair exploration, these three videos of Crystal Palace Park – not just the dinosaurs – will take you on an imaginative physical exploration of the park by foot and air with some clever merging of old and new photos.

The Palace <https://youtu.be/kRjzcMSuMK8> The Park <https://youtu.be/TafASHFmqf0> and the railways https://youtu.be/-5y_HC1xu0k

The heroes of Postman's Park

Heroes and their medals tend to be military, but John Price has looked at a less well-known group of people who received medals for heroism — civilians who, in the course of their everyday lives, sometimes gave their own life to save others.

John, a cultural and social historian at Goldsmith's College, told our February meeting some of their stories. He introduced us to the Watts Memorial in Postman's Park in the City of London where ordinary heroes have been commemorated.

The Watts memorial was set up by George Frederic Watts in the former churchyard of St Botolph's Aldersgate Church as a memorial to "Heroic Self-Sacrifice". When unveiled in 1900 it consisted of a 50-foot wooden loggia sheltering a wall with space for 120 ceramic memorial tiles to be designed and made by the ceramicist William De Morgan. Postman from the nearby GPO sorting office frequented the park, hence its current name.

John discovered the park when he worked in the City, subsequently researched it for his PhD and has published three books about it. Watts used newspaper reports to identify those like Alice Ayres, whose plaque is pictured right. John sees these "acts of everyday heroism" as small windows that bring the lives of ordinary people into the light of recorded history. He has looked at birth, marriages, deaths census and other records to draw out the lives of all those commemorated. John's research has even thrown up one person commemorated who did not exist.



John has also looked at the records for a second group of "everyday heroes" who, unlike those on the Watts memorial, have copious records. The 440 recipients, over 41 years, of the *Daily Herald* Order of Industrial Heroism. This recognised "the bravery of the toilers ... examples of valour and self-sacrifice in the industrial field". But there were all sorts of caveats around who did and did not get this medal. They had to be members of a Trade Union and some worthy winners were ruled out because they refused to join one and John's research into the back stories of the recipients showed that sometimes the whole tale was not being told.

This talk introduced us to some really interesting and personal social history examples from his books *Heroes of Postman's Park* and *Everyday Heroism* (which are available online).

Mike Marriott will be including a visit to Postman's Park during his City walk on 17 August (See What's On, Page 3).

Sporting history is social history

*Two small publications show how sporting history can reveal a lot about the lives of past generations. First, a great ride at the **Bromley Races***

Family days out, traffic jams, entrepreneurs, rogues, riots, mayhem, sport and fun – it was all there in Bromley's racing heyday, and Jim Beavis' history *The Bromley Races* takes the reader on a brisk and enjoyable canter through the various "race-courses" and some of their very colourful characters.

The first recorded race was at Bromley Common in September 1729 with two- and three-day meetings once a year between then and 1738, with the Tiger's Inn on Mason's Hill the venue for entries. Legend has it that George II's eldest son Frederick, Prince of Wales, attended in 1734. But then changes in the law brought the Bromley races to an end and it was not until the 19th century that racing returned.

In the mid-1840s, Peter Paget of Elmers End hosted "the Beckenham Steeplechases" on a course one writer described as "a glorious specimen of southern sludge". The races, the spectators and the course as it fits into the landscape today are all brought to life in Jim Beavis's tight and amusing prose. And, as he does throughout the book, he moves seamlessly from wider racing and sporting history to the intimate detail of what was happening locally.

Beckenham races lasted only two seasons but just down the road in Bromley "the entrepreneurial landlord of the White Hart had seen enough ... to arrange his own race meeting and make a profit for himself in the process".

Enter William Pawley. He took over the White Hart, a coaching inn on the High Street, when he was 25, completely redeveloped it to become a venue for anything

THE BROMLEY RACES



by Jim Beavis

from court cases to concerts and branched out into organising cricket matches. So having a race course start and end at the inn was an obvious next step.

By the September 1850 races, “hundreds, nay, thousands, were wending their way to the race course”, according to the *Kentish Mercury*.

In the following decade more informal and upmarket horse racing took place in Farnborough at High Elms, the country home of John Lubbock, where once a year the grounds were opened to the public and were said to have attracted thousands of people. It was reported: “from eleven to three, and from six to nine o’clock they kept the road from Bromley to Farnborough in one continuous cloud of dust.”

But it is Pawley and the Bromley races – which, after a break, resumed in the 1860s – that are the centre of Bromley’s racing history. There was no doubt that for Pawley it was profitable and by 1854 the races, still run by him but with professional help, moved to Bromley Common, where he rented Coopers Farm, now the site of Bishop Justus School. The course went across Pawley’s and neighbouring farmers’ land, most of which is now Bromley Golf Course.

And racing became an important part of the Bromley social calendar, though by no means everybody approved, particularly the local press, though the gentry must have been split as many had horses racing at Bromley. The local racegoers, of all classes, were joined by Londoners coming by “special trains” and with them came the pickpockets and thieves as well as hooligans ready to cause trouble.

There was just as much chicanery from owners, jockeys and officials, as reported in the sporting press of the time, that one wonders how any racing ever got done. Details of how the races were run, what was and was not allowed, how bets were laid and manipulated, the shenanigans of owners and riders to ensure that their horse was the winner, are fascinating.

But Bromley was not an enclosed course and so could not charge entry or offer large prize money. By the mid-1870s the problems of running a suburban race course accumulated and new bigger and enclosed courses – such as Sandown Park – were opening, attracting the moneyed clientele.

In 1878 Pawley was fined £20 by Bromley Petty Sessions at a hearing in his own pub, the White Hart, for allowing betting. Now in his 70s, it was time to retire and he moved to Brockley. Racing continued under new management until 1881 and was one of the last suburban racecourses to close. **CH**

I am no racing fan but I loved reading this little book, which is well researched and full of fascinating people and tales bringing 19th century local history – as well as racing history – to life. Copies are available from the book stall at our meetings book or Bromley Local Studies library at the Central Library. A5 booklet, 48 pages, £5 +p&p

Every advert tells a story

Adverts can be very annoying, particularly when they pop up in the middle of the article you are reading on the internet. Even in print media we tend to skip over them and want more news or articles to read.

But what is irksome when published can become

fascinating when seen from a historical distance.

Which is why Jerry

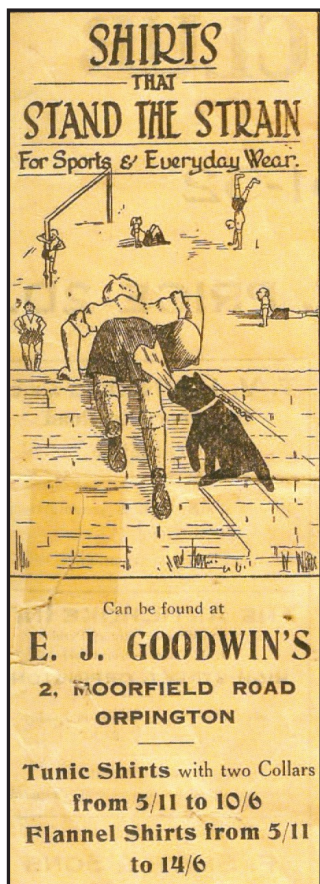
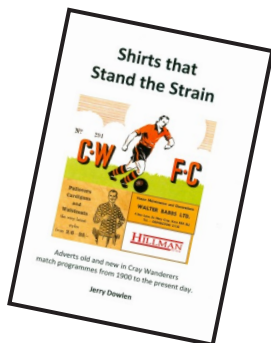
Dowlen's latest book for Cray Wanderers Football Club piqued my interest.

Shirts that Stand the Strain is a compilation of adverts from football programmes dating back to 1900, though the majority are from 1950s onwards. There are adverts from big companies but most interesting are those for local shops and businesses, often their owners have connections to the football club.

The title of the book is a particularly delightful advert, *pictured left*, from an Orpington clothing shop. Jerry says of this, his lockdown project: "It encompasses adverts for the changing types of shops and professions throughout the decades." These run from blacksmiths, bookmakers, broughams and dog carts to PVC systems, software technologies and website designers.

A short history of the club leads to information on some of the shops and businesses and their connections with Cray Wanderers. Included is a biography of Harry Hutchings, a star player who was killed in the 1906 Handcross Disaster (see *Bromleag* December 2021). He was an undertaker and his advert appears in the 1900 programme.

We learn about some of the businessmen owners, a little history of local telephone numbers, off-course betting, how the balance of shop adverts shifted to Orpington post war as St



Mary Cray declined, the growth of big companies along Cray Avenue post-war, such as Morphy Richards – all illustrated with their programme adverts. The 1950s and 60s were a time when Orpington and St Mary Cray were expanding not as commuter towns but as local employment hubs and there was a strong local supporters base for Cray Wanderers.

The supporters and the adverts declined as the Cray Valley industries gave way to the service sector. But since the turn of the century the club has been on the up and so has the advertising, but now linked to the club's website. And after many years of not having their own home ground they will by 2023 have moved to their own home ground on the old Flamingo Park next to the A20.

This combination of interesting illustrations and short items on club and local social history makes for an entertaining, as well as informative read, and that is from a reviewer who is not a football fan. **CH**

The book, priced £2.95, is a Cray 150 publication.

More information at: cray150publications.co.uk

Shortlands – a suburb of two halves

Linda Baldwin

In December 1864 William Arthur Wilkinson, owner of the Shortlands House estate, registered the entire estate with the new Land Registry. Before the Land Registry Act 1862 there was no central registration to prove land ownership in England and Wales and transfers and sales entailed the costly and time-consuming legal scrutiny of hundreds of original deeds, leases and wills.

Shortlands was the first estate in England to be registered under the Act, in Volume 1, Title Number 116. The 136-acre estate was divided into plots and advertised for sale as “freehold building sites” of one acre to 13 acres with “absolutely indisputable” title.

Exceptions, Qualifications and Conditions

When we purchased a post-war house in Shortlands in the 1990s, our solicitor noted that the original title deed prohibited certain land use, including the keeping of pigs or the opening of a tea room. This intriguing information led us to the first volume of the “*Record of Title to Land on the Register*”.

“By Deed dated 24th November 1863 William Arthur Wilkinson the then owner in fee simple covenanted with Joseph Gurney of [26] Abingdon Street in the City of

Feature

Westminster Esquire that he the said William Arthur Wilkinson or his heirs appointees or assigns would not nor should at any time permit or suffer any trade or business whatsoever to be set up or carried on nor any Tavern Hotel or Tea Garden, Livery Stable Beer Shop or Manufactory of any kind to be carried on or opened nor any fair to be held or goods or wares exposed for sale nor any bricks or tiles to be made or burnt ... ”

The document goes on to list the numbered plots on the Land Register map which are covered by these conditions.

Other conditions included a building line at least “30 feet from the road line” and “no house or building in the rear of the houses except stabling of less cost than £300 shall be erected” (£300 was about the salary of a fully qualified surgeon or medical officer of the time, NHS consultants earn around £110,000 today).

Detached houses must not cost less than £800 and semi-detached houses not less than £1,200 the pair, exclusive of stabling and outhouses. These sums were in addition to the price paid for the land.

According to the agents, the restrictions in the deeds “tend to the mutual benefit of



Beckenham Lane from Bromley Valley Coffee House & Mission Hall (near right) towards Bromley, circa 1890

the respective purchasers”, while “gentlemen requiring private residences for their own occupation will be protected from the possibility of having very small houses or factories of any kind upon the estate”.

Advertisements appeared for these “charming” sites for “Gentlemen’s Residences” in the Kent countryside with “pure air”, yet near a railway station with connections via Beckenham Junction to the London stations and the Crystal Palace. Bromley market town was also close by and the railway extended beyond Shortlands further into Kent and the ports.

Consequences

The ban on “very small houses” and any kind of business or manufactory on the estate meant that domestic staff had to be accommodated within the new houses, in the attics or in the lodges and carriage houses which feature prominently in the Victorian maps and census returns for the parish of St Mary, Beckenham. Non-residential workers, “Daily Women” and suppliers had to be housed elsewhere.

Over the parish boundary (Ravensbourne river), the marshy land was developed to house the people who would supply services and goods to the new households on the other side of the railway.

The Beckenham Street Directory of 1885 for Shortlands lists West Kent Water Works, Shortlands Station L.C & D Railway and The Shortlands Tavern (next to the first station building) as the only non-residential addresses.

Strong’s Bromley Directory of 1887, lists for Beckenham Lane (known locally as Swan Hill) a plethora of shops – baker & corn dealer, tobacconist, greengrocer, butchers, florist and provisions stores. There were also services such as a plumber, plasterer, several gardeners and dressmakers, a fly [light carriage] proprietor and the London Parcel Delivery Office. At No 81 there was the Bromley Valley Tavern and the Bromley Valley Mission Room. In Martin’s Road there were a dressmaker, a bootmaker and a fly [light carriage] proprietor.

The estate of Shortlands is listed in the Beckenham section and has only one business: “J Bryant, nurseryman, 6 Shortlands cottages”. These six cottages no longer exist, but were between the station and the farmhouse, where the station and car park now sit.

My grandmother, who arrived in Beckenham before WW1, remembered the cottages in Shortlands Village with front gardens filled with flowers and vegetables behind fences and gates. These are now the hardstanding forecourts of the shops between the footpath and the railway bridge.

Tubbenden — the chicken years

Nick Reynolds, writing on Tubbendence/Tubbenden House, Farnborough, in the March Issue of *Bromleag*, charted the well-to-do residents of this idyllic country abode. Unfortunately, like so many of the grand houses in the borough, Tubbendence had a rather sad end.

Not long before the First World War the estate became the business premises of William Henry Cook who, following in his father's footsteps, bred the famous Orpington Buff chicken and exported it all over the world. He was in "acrimonious rivalry" with his sister Elizabeth Jane Taylor, who continued to run her chicken business at the original premises in St Mary Cray.

Elizabeth Jane's business went into liquidation in 1935 but William Henry carried on trading at Tubbenden until his death in 1947. Cook, however, did not run his business from the main house but from the Lodge House. The main house was split into "high class" flats.

The Girl Guides used Cook's field for camping in the 1920s and Orpington Cricket club played there. The house is pictured here tucked away behind chicken coops and huts. In the 1920s the manager at the farm was Harry Cousins and in the 1980s his widow Alice recalled in the *Kentish Times*:

"Tubbenden House was filled with gentry when we left in the 1920s and it went on as flats for some time. People with lots of money, millionaires and their fancy ladies. "There were grand parties and socialising in the flats ... this may have given rise to the rumour the house was used for dances." One has to wonder what was wrong with them holding dances!

During the war the house became a refuge for Londoners bombed out of their homes —as did other big properties in Tubbenden Lane — and eventually as the property deteriorated it was used for storing furniture for the homeless until it was demolished in the 1950s, house and grounds making way for a housing estate. **CH**



Racing driver connections in Chislehurst

I'm wondering why Leeson's Corner and Leeson's Hill are so named. I have some Leeson relatives who had a butcher's shop along the Burlington Parade, Chislehurst in the 1911 census and I thought there might be a connection.

Harry Leeson, my great uncle, was born in Chigwell Row, Essex, in 1889 but seems to have grown up in Chislehurst. I note that this is also the boyhood home of racing legend Malcolm Campbell. Harry met his untimely death during the 1000 Mile Race at Brooklands in June, 1932 and Campbell was also in that race. They both had Gipsy Moth planes at Brooklands Flying Club, I believe. Harry had four Bentleys and two MGs. His Blower Bentley sold a few years ago for 4.6 million US dollars.

Anything you might have to add about his time in Chislehurst, including the Leeson's Hill/Corner question and any possible childhood ties to Malcolm Campbell, would be much appreciated. **Zoe fftmc@yahoo.com**

Leeson's House was a substantial property on St Paul's Cray Common, just over the border from Chislehurst near the junction of St Paul's Wood Hill and Leeson's Hill. It stood in 59 acres, had 20 rooms and the estate also consisted of a coach-house, stables, entrance lodge, gardeners lodge and labourers' cottages.

There had been a property on the site from at least the 18th century and was once called Pheasant Lodge. It stood near an old inn, parts of which remain in a more modern building called Robin Hood Cottages.

It was on the old coach road from Chislehurst to Sevenoaks which went via St Mary Cray to Sevenoaks. When Richard Patterson bought the estate in the 19th century he changed the route of the road so it no longer passed in front of the house. In 1918, after being empty for several years, Leeson's was destroyed in a fire.

Today a house called Leeson's Corner is on part of the site. The Leeson family and the house are unlikely to have any connection but if anyone has more information on any link between Malcolm Campbell and Harry Leeson or on Leeson's House please drop a line to Zoe or the editor



My thanks to Joanna Friel of the Chislehurst Society for the information on Leeson's and the picture of the house

Website highlights literature in the suburbs

Sarah Bilston, a professor of English Literature at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, wrote to our website asking permission to use some of “your wonderful photographs”.

“I am in the process of building an interactive online map of Shortlands/Bromley (for research/teaching purposes. I am especially keen to use Beckenham Lane, Shortlands, Shortlands Station, Church Road Shortlands, St Mary's Church. I'd also love Beckenham Lane Bromley, Aberdeen Buildings, Foresters and the 1902 High Street image. I could go on, but that would be a wonderful start!

“I have landed on Shortlands for two reasons. Firstly, Jane Ellen Panton (an interior designer) and Dinah Craik (author) not only lived there, but were friends, and Panton wrote about the sociability of the suburb.

“This is useful for my purposes because my book *The Promise of the Suburbs* was about the sociability of the Victorian suburbs, so Shortlands became a great case study in the book and in subsequent spin-off projects. And secondly the resources on the BBLHS site are just transformative. They have made it possible for me to study, in a really granular way, daily life and on-the-ground geography of the streets in the late Victorian period, especially through the street directories. I'm so grateful.”

We are happy for Sarah to use the pictures and to have had the courtesy to have asked permission. It will certainly alert American researchers to our fantastic online resources.

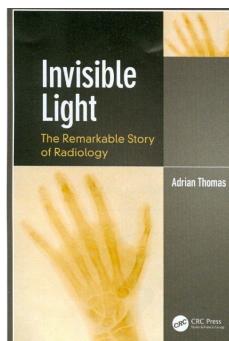
An article on Dinah Craik which appeared in our March 2004 issue of *Bromleag* is available on our website.

A history of radiology

Our member Dr Adrian Thomas, who has given us some fascinating talks in recent years on Bromley hospitals and on the wider history of his own speciality, Radiography, has published a new book *Invisible Light — The Remarkable Story of Radiology*.

It covers the discovery of radiology leading to classical radiology (the pre-digital world) its immediate reception and on to the development of CT, MRI and modern interventional radiology. It is written to appeal to both those working in the field and to historians of medicine and science.

More information from www.routledge.com A 20% discount available to BBLHS members with code FLE22.



Postmaster's gun shock for PO raiders

Max Batten recalls how a touch of the Wild West came to Downe in the early morning of 8 September 1938 as robbers attempted to break into the village post office and were repelled by the armed postmaster. A fusillade of shots followed them along the road past St Mary's church as they made their escape.

In 1931, Postmaster George Thomas May had taken over two adjoining premises in Downe High Street (now No 15, somewhat altered) which were Downe's grocery and post office. He made himself part of the community, become a local councillor, and was still running his shop 10 years later. But his time there was not without incident.

In October 1937, an attempt to break in had been thwarted by his 25 year-old daughter Gladys (mistakenly described as his wife in one photo) who slept on the ground floor. The thieves had been trapped in the shop and held there until the police arrived.

Almost a year later, at around 2.45 am, Gladys's slumbers were again disturbed (but not those of her dog Pio), and she quietly went upstairs to wake her father. Mr May, now better prepared, armed himself with an old Belgian .22 pistol (a wartime trophy perhaps*) and went down to the post office to find the front door open and a car, facing towards the church, standing outside with its nearside door open.

Although there was a gas street lamp outside the shop, it would have gone out by this time and it was only when Mr May turned on the shop lights that a man in his late 20s—"and most respectably dressed"—was seen to be sitting at the steering wheel of the car. While Mr May approached the vehicle, a second man ran out of the shop. As the driver moved off, he jumped on to the running board and clung on as the car set off up the High Street. At this point Mr May fired several shots, hitting the car, cracking windows and bursting a tyre. To his disappointment he was not able to penetrate the toughened glass with the bullets. However, he chased up the road in his pyjamas and grabbed a door handle but was unable to open the door before the car, with some difficulty, disappeared in the direction of Cudham.

The incident caught the imagination of the national press and various accounts appeared in, among others, the *Daily Mirror* and the *Yorkshire Post*. The *Mirror's* account, somewhat excitedly reported Mr May "emptying his eight-chambered revolver" at the car which he "riddled with bullets". The paper revealed that the 64 year-old (actually he was just over 50) had carefully aimed to puncture the tyre and had tried to shoot the man on the running board but just missed.

The police having been alerted by the redoubtable Gladys, "Scotland Yard had

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wirelessed all Flying Squad cars to concentrate on the area” but without immediate success.

However, the following morning Herbert A Root of St George’s, Horns Green (just south of Cudham), and former headmaster of Knockholt School, reported finding an abandoned car in nearby woods. The spot is not further identified but probably between Cudham Lane South and Newbarn Lane. It was a black Standard Flying 10, registration DGT 404, and fortunately the “bullet-ridden” car still had most of the stolen cigarettes and tobacco inside. It appeared the robbers had tried to change the tyre but, in the dark, had not been able to and had fled on foot.

It is not reported how they were tracked down, but by the 22 October, Andrew Charles Edward Stephens, a shopkeeper aged 29 and, confusingly, Richard Strevens, aged 20, were pleading guilty at Maidstone Quarter Sessions to the robbery.

Stephens, from Kirkman(s) Place, a small alley off Tottenham Court Road, admitted his guilt on arrest and complained: “The postmaster nearly got me with a bullet.” He had been born in India, had only arrived in England the year before after fighting in the Spanish Civil War and was apparently making a living as a “professional dancing partner”. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison.

Strevens, from Weedington Road (misreported as Weddington Road) in Kentish Town, who also pleaded guilty to stealing a car, was sent to Borstal for three years.

Strevens was similarly co-operative and was also to report: “I nearly got a bullet in my head. It passed through my hat.” Both men had previous convictions but why they ventured into darkest Kent for their latest foray remains a mystery.

It was reported that in the first robbery Gladys had lost a silver pen given to her for her 21st birthday which was recovered by the police. It was again stolen in the 1938 raid but there was no report of its recovery.

Copyright photos which we can’t print here show Mr May and his gun— in one picture it is alarmingly pointed at his daughter— are on www.topfoto.co.uk. Search for “Downe robbery”. Others show the abandoned car with a missing front window and bullet mark on the edge of the door and three very posed policemen gazing at the incriminating evidence.

** The 1920 Firearms Act removed the right to bear arms “according to law” of the 1689 Bill of Rights but it was only in 1937 this was extended to smooth bore weapons like the pistol. The same year, the Home Secretary ruled that self-defence was no longer a suitable reason for applying for a firearm certificate and directed police to refuse such applications on the grounds that “firearms cannot be regarded as a suitable means of protection and may be a source of danger”. No mention is made of any police concern about Mr May’s ballistic efforts or whether his weapon was licensed.*

Sources: *Kentish Times* of 9 September and 28 October 1938 (courtesy Bromley Archives); *Daily Mirror* 9 September 1938; Wikipedia

How Eric Lubbock spoke up for Orpington's nurses

Patrick Hellicar

Sixty years ago, on 14 March 1962, Orpington left an indelible mark on the political landscape. Eric Lubbock, the 33 year-old Liberal councillor for Downe whose family had owned the High Elms estate at Farnborough since 1808, was propelled into parliament as Orpington's MP, having captured the true-blue constituency from the Conservatives with a sensational by-election victory.

The event still resounds today and Lubbock (who later became Lord Avebury and died in 2016 at the age of 87) will forever be remembered as "Orpington Man" who overturned a 15,000 Tory majority to take the seat by a margin of 8,000 votes, a massive swing for those days of 22%.

When Lubbock stood up in the Commons 13 days after that political earthquake to make his maiden speech, he flouted the convention that a new Member should say nothing controversial in his first address to the House. Instead, he delivered a 14-minute speech packed with criticism of Harold Macmillan's Tory government. Next morning, the *Guardian* newspaper called it "a pugnacious start".

For his combative debut, Lubbock chose a subject about which he felt strongly – nurses' pay. He attacked three ministers in particular – including Enoch Powell, who was Health Minister at the time – blasting them with scorching examples from Orpington Hospital of how hard nurses had to work and how badly they were treated.

It was, he said, a microcosm of the situation throughout the country, describing the 2½% pay rise offered to nurses as an "outrageous insult" presuming on the profession's noble ideals of service.

He pointed out that a male ward orderly in the London area received £10-0s-8d basic pay for a 42-hour week, but got 100% extra for Sundays, 25% extra for nights, 50% extra for Saturday afternoons, 100% extra for Bank Holidays and a day off in lieu of the holiday as well. If he worked more than 42 hours in a week, he was also paid overtime.

By contrast, a State Enrolled Nurse at the top of the scale received £11-13s-3d. for a basic week two hours longer and did not receive one penny extra, even if he or she worked round the clock. And the orderly had no responsibility whatever, "whereas the trained nurse has the greatest responsibility any person can possibly undertake—protecting human life".

Payslips passed to him by a constituent – a male nurse at Orpington Hospital with 25 years' service – showed he received the maximum £11-13s-3d a week while the payslip of a ward orderly employed at the hospital for only five weeks showed he

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worked two hours less and received £13.

A staff nurse's maximum salary was £656, a ward sister's £840, he said. A State Enrolled Nurse's maximum of £578 was earned after two years' training and six years of qualified service – roughly £1 a week less than a shorthand typist received right at the beginning of her career.

"We have trained nurses who are leaving the service in Orpington and going to industry ... There are nearly as many trained nurses in Orpington's factories as there are in Orpington Hospital," he declared.

Orpington Hospital, Lubbock told the House, had 58 vacancies in its establishment of 168 trained people. In the country as a whole, there were 25,000 such vacancies. At Orpington, three night sisters covered 500-530 patients in 23 wards. First-year students were left in charge after only nine months' training; sometimes nursing auxiliaries had to take on that role.

In a total of 510 patients at Orpington, there were 350 geriatric cases, many totally incapable and needing constant skilled attention. "Superhuman efforts are necessary to cope with any emergency," he said.

To illustrate the dangers of such staff shortages, Lubbock told MPs of a serious motor accident which occurred on Sunday, 11 March at Badgers Mount, the casualties being taken to Orpington Hospital.

The theatre sister, who had already done two spells of duty that Sunday, from 7.45 am to 1.15 pm and from 4.30 to 8.15 pm, was summoned from home and worked from 10 pm until 7 am next day, assisting at two major operations. Monday was a busy day and it was not possible to allow that sister to go home, so she was back on duty from 9 am until 1.15 pm. By then she had been on duty, on and off, for 22½ hours without sleep.

"How many professions or occupations are there," Lubbock demanded, "in which people would not only stand for this kind of treatment, but would do so without asking for a penny extra?"

Plus ça change!



Source: *Hansard* Volume 656 — Report of debate on 27 March 1962

Nurses' protest at Westminster

Christine Hellicar

Seven years after Eric Lubbock highlighted the plight of Orpington nurses in the Commons he was again giving his support when they took their protest to the streets of Westminster.

In 1969 nurses in the crisp, sharp uniforms of the time made a very dignified protest about the shortage of nurses by handing over a petition via Lubbock to the Government — and in the process garnered a lot of national publicity.

Nine nurses carried the 30,000-name petition to parliament in large white boxes, each painted with a letter from the word ORPINGTON on one side and a red cross on the reverse.

Although the petition referred specifically to Orpington, there was a shortage of nurses at many hospitals in 1969. A report at the time said: "The nurses were not agitating for more pay and less working hours, but they were calling specifically for



Nurses from Orpington made quite an impact when they protested at Westminster and then handed over a 30,000-signature petition to their MP Eric Lubbock, pictured opposite

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increased nursing establishment – in other words authority to recruit more nurses.”

Orpington Ward Sister Elsa Farrier told *The Times* in May 1969: “We are not talking to patients as we should. We haven’t the time to talk to relatives when they are worried. We have little time to be humane or kind.”

The issue of understaffing was the subject of debate in Parliament in May 1969 when Lord Amulree wanted to know what steps the government was proposing to take to improve conditions under which nurses worked: “We have heard of Orpington Hospital, in Kent, with one student nurse looking after 90 patients in a long ward,” he said.

That ward was, of course, one of the original Ontario Military Hospital “huts” built in the First World War and still in use, taken over by the Ministry of Pensions in 1919 and part of the NHS since 1948.

In his 2011 book *The Ontario Military Hospital*, John Pateman noted: “The very antiquity of the buildings is one of the secrets of its success. This has been a factor in establishing a high degree of staff morale and a singular co-operation between staff, patients and local citizens.”

Giving support to the nurses on their 1969 trip to Westminster were members of the Orpington Nurses and Citizens Association (ONCA), which was clearly very good at attracting publicity as the petition received national media coverage. ONCA was set up to ensure that Orpington Hospital was re-built and not shut down. In December 1970 the Regional Hospital Board assured them it had no intention of closing the hospital and the following year confirmed that it would remain on the site.

However, it was not until 1979 that work began on the new Canada Wing. The £7.8 million project was completed in 1983 and opened by the Canadian High Commissioner as a district hospital. The building contained an outpatients department, A&E, five wards and operating theatres. By 1990 it had 400 beds and all the old huts, constructed of timber frames and asbestos panels, had gone.

A year earlier, in 1982, the League of Friends of Orpington Hospital funded the Ontario Centre to provide extra facilities for the hospital and staff. They also ensured that the last reminder of the original hutted hospital – the clock — was preserved. It remains in the garden of the current Orpington Hospital.

I have been unable to establish whether the Orpington Nurses and Citizens Association was wound-up after the hospital was saved or changed its name to the Friends of Orpington Hospital.

If anyone knows the answer, please let me know.

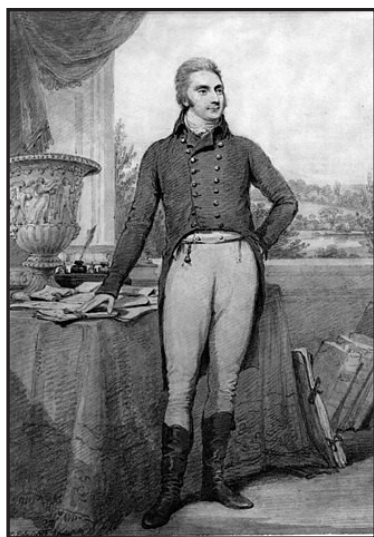
The changing fortunes of Bromley Hill House

Michael Rawcliffe

Bromley Hill House is known to many as a restaurant and hotel [Bromley Court Hotel] situated on the Bromley/Lewisham boundary. This article seeks to explore the house and grounds from the early 19th century. It will look at the various owners, changes to the house and to the estate, which once extended to Beckenham Lane to the south, northwards to the Cator Estate and westwards to the Ravensbourne.

It is significant the estate was developed on the major coach road from London via Lewisham and Bromley to the south coast. Today this is the A21.

The estate is of interest to both Bromley and neighbouring Lewisham. The house at the top of Bromley Hill is in Lewisham whilst the estate to the south is in Bromley and to the north Lewisham.



Charles Long, 1st Lord Farnborough

Lord and Lady Farnborough

Charles Long purchased Bromley Hill in 1801. He was born in 1761 and in 1789 entered Parliament as MP for Rye in Sussex. The purchase of the estate may well be because of the access to London and his friendship with William Pitt, who lived at Holwood in Keston.

Long was a noted connoisseur of the Arts, as was his wife Amelia Hume. Together they built up a broad collection of paintings, including works by Gainsborough, Poussin, Reynolds and Teniers. This was in addition to various statuary for both house and garden.

In order to display their collections they improved and enlarged the existing house.¹ For example, a tower was added, which not only

provided extra rooms but gave excellent views of St Paul's Cathedral and Hampstead.

To the rear of the house a long glass-faced gallery was added, which enabled them to display their acquisitions.

Charles Long was not only an MP and avid collector of art and sculpture, he also held important positions which reflected his talents and his public duties. He was a

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trustee of the British Museum and the National Gallery, chairman of the committee for the inspection of National Monuments, President of the British Institution and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA).

The estate was visited by both George IV and William IV and Queen Adelaide. He also advised the Royal Family on the interiors of Buckingham Palace and the Brighton Pavilion. On the occasion of William IV's visit the Chislehurst Yeomanry provided the Guard of Honour.

Long held the position of Postmaster General, which he relinquished in 1826 when he became Lord Farnborough of Bromley Hill. He was now able to devote more time both to the house and estate.

Thomas Wilson, in his *Description of Bromley*, published in 1797 (Page 104) described the view coming down Bromley Hill from the Town: "On the left hand, you arrive at the gravel pits ... and the windmill (opposite the present London Lane) and then the handsome seat of Charles Long Esquire."². Wilson was impressed by the views to the north but also, "the most astonishing views break out at once, such a prodigious valley, everywhere painted with the first verdure, intermixed with numerous villas and hamlets that it is past description".

The house, gardens and the woods were fully described by George Cumberland in a



Bromley Hill House in 1898, showing the tower added by Lord Farnborough, from an album belonging to a later resident of the house, Katherine Cawston.

sketch in 1811³. Cumberland had, “looked for a small estate in the neighbourhood of the Metropolis ... found Bromley Hill a small but varied estate ... a villa of no mean pretension ... founded in superior knowledge and travelled experience ... the estate was upon a fine rising knoll ... three or four meadows, a winding brook ... and a small head of pure water”.

There were two entrances, “one by a fanciful park gate on the top of the hill leading to a private way which crosses the entrance to the mansion. The other from the south of the main road which was its proper entrance, which conducts by a gently rising road, where gravel is dug on the spot ... judiciously broken with groups of trees concealing the boundary up to the Mansion”.

The entrance had “no porch, opens into a covered and glazed corridor to a breakfasting room ... and library drawing room” (1816). Cumberland went on to describe the views “nothing of London except the spires” that were ever better after “the tower” was built. This still exists on the southern corner of the present house.

From the Knoll (on which the house stood) were carefully mowed lawns and flower beds, edged by groups of oaks, acacias and firs. Along the paths to the south were “judiciously placed statuary, one magnificent vase twelve feet high (1816) ... garden seats and a “root house overhanging with vines”.

To the south there were several paths, one leading to a farm “in the deep bottom” nearly a mile from the house. Another path continued “to a mill and through various woods practically to Bromley” (Beckenham Lane).

Above the Ravensbourne “were pools, ice houses, glimpses of water supplied by springs on the slopes down to the river. A waterfall had been created “two yards in height and ten in breadth” (1816). This was “a garden among springs” seen from “a rustic temple of six ample sides from which a spring issues”.⁴

The present north side of Elstree Hill contains part of a wall which was the “walled kitchen garden, conservatory and a hot house”.

Amelia Long, *pictured above* who became Lady Farnborough, was, along with her



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husband, a supporter of the Arts, as well as being a landscape designer. .

She designed the South Lodge on Beckenham Lane in 1825. She was also an artist in her own right and studied under Thomas Girtton.⁵ Lady Farnborough painted local views and several of the gardens on the estate.

One of her paintings, Bromley Hill Farm, 1820, is pictured on the front cover of this edition of Bromleag.

In 2011 the British Museum acquired several of her paintings and Bromley Historic Collections also hold a number of them. Both collections can be viewed on request. Her talent as an artist was shown by her exhibiting four times at the Royal Academy between 1811 and 1817. [Three of her paintings can be seen on the [ArtUK.org](https://www.artuk.org) website]

Freeman, in his *History of the Parish Bromley* (1832) said: "On every Thursday from the 1st of May until the 1st of November his Lordship's gates are open for all respectable persons who may be desirous of viewing the ground which are of the most pleasing description." (Page32)

Samuel Long

Lady Farnborough died in 1837 and her husband in the following year. They died childless and the property was mainly divided among his three nephews, sons of his younger brother Samuel. The eldest, Colonel Samuel Long of the Grenadier Guards, succeeded to Bromley Hill.

Samuel Long played a prominent part in Bromley for 40 years. He married four times and Horsburgh in his *History of Bromley* quotes a story that before his last marriage he told Lord Sydney that he would be unable to attend the Quarter Sessions on Thursday because he was going to be married.

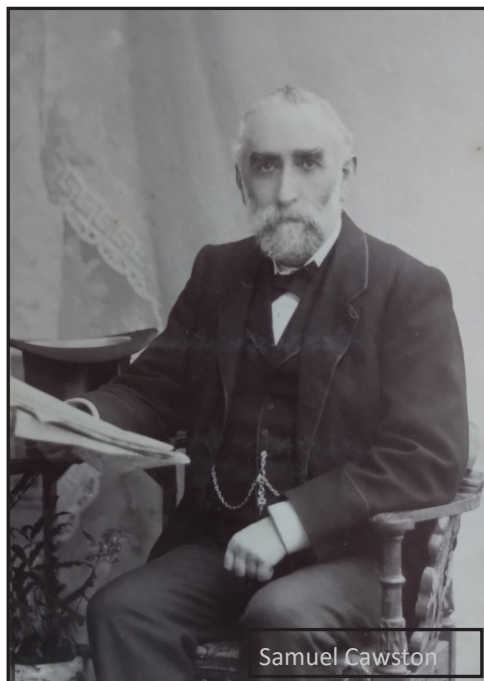
"Thursday!" replied Lord Sydney, "I thought that you were always married on a Tuesday." (Page 246). Colonel Long died in 1881. He had three daughters but was without a son. The estate was sold to Samuel Cawston.

Horsburgh has little to say about Samuel Cawston, except that he was a developer and a strong evangelical.⁶

Samuel Cawston — City wealth

Samuel Cawston was born in Stockwell, South London, in April 1848. In the 1871 census he was living at 8 Overton Road, Lambeth. In the same year he married Agnes Isabella Boys who was born in Bombay and was the daughter of Archdeacon Boys of Bombay.

In the 1871 census Samuel Cawston gave his occupation as stockbroker. He was 22, and had two servants – a cook and a housemaid. By 1874 he must have moved to Beckenham, as five of his children were born there between 1874 and 1879. During



the latter year he moved to Bromley Lodge.

The 1881 census illustrates his continued success: he was listed as a member of the Stock Exchange. He must have had a very lucrative 10 years. He now had six children and 10 servants, of whom seven were described as general servants. In addition, there was a nurse, a coachman and a gardener. The coachman's wife and 13 year-old son were domestic servants.

Bromley Lodge was the largest house on the station side of the High Street. It was set back from the road, with gardens at the rear extending as far as the Coles Child estate. It had been the home of Chares Devas, the first chairman of Bromley Local Board. With Bromley's

continued development, the house was later fronted by housing and shops. It became the Conservative Club and in the 1960/70s it was replaced by a modern building.

Within two years the Cawston family had moved, as Cawston regarded Bromley Lodge as being too small for a large family and "live-in" servants. Of the 10, only two were locally born, one in Beckenham and one in Croydon.

In 1881 Bromley Hill House and estate came on to the market and the young stockbroker bought it. The new owner moved into a house and grounds that had already been adapted and extended in the light of the needs and interests of the previous owner. The natural slope above the Ravensbourne had been exploited, several ponds had been formed and the natural springs utilised, as we have seen. The estate had paths created through the wooded area and around the house, gardens had been laid and new trees planted. The estate still included a farm and several outbuildings.

Alterations were made to the house before the family moved in. A front porch was added and a new entrance created at the front of the house. The old kitchens in the basement were abandoned and a new one was created in the basement of the tower. The picture gallery at the rear was converted into a dining room. The new porch and entrance hall still led to what is now a restaurant in the present hotel and gives views of the gardens.

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One of Cawston's younger children, William Boys Behrens,⁷ recalled that in the summer months the gardens were open to the people of Bromley. A large garden party was also held in September 1885 with around 100 guests. Games were played on the two tennis courts and croquet on the lawn. Generous refreshments were provided.

Cawston was a strict evangelical Christian. Prayers were held each day at 8.15am for not only the large family but also for the nurse, cook, parlourmaid, head housemaid, scullery maid and boot boy. They were all given bibles and Cawston led the prayers. They were all called to evening prayers at 9.30pm.

Each day at 8.55am Cawston left by brougham for the station, for work in the City. His strictness is seen in that he would not travel on a Sunday to the Parish Church, and it was too far to walk. This led him to provide a chapel and a children's church on Highland Road. His influence was weakened when it was licensed as a chapel by the Bishop of Rochester. In 1886 it became Christchurch. In the 1920s the children's chapel became a Reformed Synagogue and in recent years has been developed as housing.

Earlier, in 1881, Cawston had purchased freehold land at the junction of the Hastings



The extensive Bromley Hill House site. The grounds stretch from the top of the map along Bromley Hill and London Road to Beckenham Lane. The oval shows the site of the house

Road (A21) and Addison Road and had built an Iron Church. In time this became St Luke's.

Cawston also provided funds for the building of a coffee house in Beckenham Lane, Shortlands. The architect was Ernest Newton. Coffee houses were set up by those believing in temperance, and often required people to "take the pledge".

His daughter Lillian said that as time passed her father became less strict. Card games such as whist were allowed as well as dancing, and servants were no longer required to attend evening prayers. Before then, Lillian had once secretly cycled to the Parish Church on a Sunday for communion. When her father found out he threatened to put the cycle in the dog kennel. Cawston celebrated all the great Church occasions except Lent, which he said was not in the bible.

In the summer of 1885 the house was rented to Lord Shrewsbury for three months. The Cawston family rented a house at Herne Bay. By this time two of their sons were at boarding school in Brighton and they joined the family. On August Bank Holiday they returned home. They must have been quite a sight – 16 people and 25 boxes and parcels. On their return they found that even Lords could be unkempt. The house was dirty, unmade beds and blankets in the cellars.

The 1891 census gives a clear indication of the scale of Cawston's holdings, in spite of the fact that part of the woodland area to the south of the estate had already been sold for development. Six children were living at home. Others listed in the house were a school governess, aged 22, born in Chiswick. There were also seven domestic servants, four of whom were under 20. One of the older ones was probably the housekeeper. None had been employed at Bromley Lodge. On the estate there were the following separate households.

Laundry: a Bromley-born stonemason and his wife, a laundress

Stables: a "domestic groom" who probably lived in an attic above the horses

Farm buildings: "farm servant/carman" with his wife and six children. They had moved from Devon and only four of the children were Bromley-born

Another house: "a handyman" and his wife and a sister who was a domestic servant

Another house: a "farm bailiff" and his wife

Southend Lodge: a "cowman and his wife" who was born in Downe, and a nine year-old Bromley-born daughter. Also a lodger who was a farm labourer

Lower Lodge: "a landscape gardener" born in Lanark and his wife born in Stoke Newington. They had four children, a five year-old born in Ireland, a four and a two year-old born in Highgate and Muswell Hill and Sophie, a one year-old born in Bromley.

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Holloway farm: This was on the eastern side of Bromley Hill. The land is now part of the Downham Estate. A farmer and his wife from Herts and a seven-year-old born in Lewisham

There were also two “merchant clerks”, who were probably boarders, one born in Angus and the other in Enfield. Also an Enfield born domestic servant and two farm labourers.

Descriptions of an estate may well vary between each census. Thus in 1901 the five live-in servants are now described by Cawston in more detail who, as Head of the Household, filled in the census form. The domestic servants are replaced by cook/domestic servant, two housemaids, parlourmaid and kitchen maid. Cawston himself now describes himself as a Stock Exchange Agent, as opposed to Stockbroker (1871) and Stock Exchange Dealer (1891). These all describe the same occupation, but sometimes farmer may mean farm worker.

Apart from the servants listed, Lillian Boys writes that several Bromley tradesmen came regularly to the house. There was Dotter, the town clockmaker who came every Saturday morning to wind six or seven clocks; Hellimore came to the house to sew silks, while the family went into Bromley to have their photographs taken. She also recalls that a policeman always stood at the top of Bromley Hill “until he suddenly died of a bad cold”.

The outbuildings on the estate are similar to those of 1891, except that in the 1901 census the two unnamed houses are now listed as a coachman’s cottage and a gardener’s cottage. There is no mention of a farm bailiff.

Development of the estate

The coming of the railway to Bromley and Beckenham had seen a rapid rise in the population, as indicated in the censuses from 1871 – 1911. Bromley Hill was relatively close to a variety of stations at Bromley North (1878), Bromley South (1858), Shortlands (1858), Grove Park and Ravensbourne in Beckenham.

Bromley North had seen the building of not only large villas, but smaller properties lived in by those in the service industries. Cawston saw the potential that would come from the sale of much of the woodland to the south of the house and gardens as far as Beckenham Lane and the higher ground above the Ravensbourne.

In *Kelly’s Directory* for Bromley in 1894, Oakland Road, Highland Road and Park end had been largely developed, while Grasmere had been laid out but had only four houses. Both Oakland and Highland Roads had access to Bromley and Highland to Beckenham Lane as well. This development saw the building of Christchurch and the Children’s Church. Most of the building was large detached villas with extensive gardens. Only Park End was a road of smaller terraced houses, with a few semis. The

development was advertised as “Bromley Hill Park”.

The various directories list the heads of household of each house, and in some cases the occupation. Park End was the only road that had house numbers from the start. The other roads had names only. Oakland Road had 28 houses in 1894, but by 1902 *Bush's Directory* lists four more houses and in 1908 one more. Ernest Newton was the architect of at least one house in the road.

It is tempting to suggest that the house names may indicate the birthplace of the owner or even a favourite holiday place; some reflect the nature of the area. In Oakland Road there were two brothers, Major E Sattersthwaite and next door Major C Sattersthwaite. Their houses were named Whitegate and Windermere respectively. The latter was a warden at St Mary's, Plaistow. In 1902 *Bush's Directory* shows that in Oakland Road there were now four new owners, and in 1908 the same directory lists a further nine, with two houses vacant.

In *Kelly's Directory* for 1894, Highland Road had a vicar at Christ Church Lodge and houses had been built as far as the Children's Church. The road contained two educational establishments, one of which was a school run by Miss Miles. By 1902 it had expanded into the adjoining vacant plot and was named Bromley Park College. In 1894 there was a St Varda's Home for Trained Nurses, which in 1902 was in private use and named Sunny Courts. On the high ground above Beckenham Lane one large house, Coverdale, had by 1902 become the Glen Lawn Tennis Club, indicating the size

of the plot. By 1908 the new owner was a Major General O'Connell and it has reverted to a house. By contrast, the houses in Park End are much smaller and compact. In 1894 it comprised 84 houses between London Road and Christ Church. Of the occupations that are listed there was a draper, a builder, a grocer and tea dealer, a stonemason and a decorator. In *Bush* (1902) almost half have new heads of household



The Sunday School, Highland Road, c1898. This picture taken from the rear shows the land being laid out for development

Feature

and one new house has been added in the gap between 22 and 24. The new occupant of No 8 was a Kent Water Company Inspector, while at 84 was an engineer. In the house occupied by a builder in 1894 was now an engineer. The house occupied by a builder in 1894, by 1902 was now occupied by a builder and decorator. At No 38 in 1894 was Mr Harbridge, who described himself as a grocer and tea dealer. In 1902 the house had a new owner, a grocer and provision dealer. The house may also have been a shop.

With the development of Bromley Park, Samuel Cawston reduced his property, especially on the Bromley Road side. A new access was needed and a new drive was cut to the house.

The supply of water to the house had always been a problem. From the waterfall a stream way had been cut, taking the full force of the waterfall to the waterwheel and then, via a lake, back to the Ravensbourne. In time a new pump was installed to reduce the distance of the uphill flow and the water to the Tower, where it was kept. With the later development of Warren and Madeira Avenues the supply was linked with the West Kent Water Company which by the 1920s ran mains under the new Cawston Road which ran past the house to Southend Lodge by the Beech Tree which is now a McDonald's.

In the 1901 census Cawston was still living at Bromley Hill but later in the year he moved to Warren House, Catford. In 1911 he was in Kensington. He died two years later in Paddington. His wife had died in 1905. The reduced estate was still in Cawston's ownership.

The Bromley Hill Estate had seen many changes since Lord Farnborough's time, and so had Bromley town.

The proximity to London and the nearby stations had seen the development of New Bromley, with its fringe of suburban villas on the perimeter of Bromley. The Sundridge Park Estate was developing, as was North Bromley with the creation of Tweedy Road. Across the Ravensbourne, Beckenham was expanding, as was Chislehurst.

It is quite possible that both Coles Child's acquisition of the Palace Estate in 1846 and Samuel Cawston's of Bromley Hill estate had been made with development and prestige in mind.

Both Lord Farnborough and Samuel Cawston played a part in Bromley's life.



Cawston became a church warden at Christ Church and gave land for the creation of Bromley (Plaistow) cemetery. He was also Vice President of the Bromley Literary Society.

Edward Percy Cawston — house to hotel

Cawston's son Edward Percy, pictured on opposite page, inherited the estate. He was born in 1882 and died in 1972. In 1884 his elder sister had described him as "Edward Percy, a fat and lovely boy. Who seemed to be his mother's joy" (Boys Page 3)

Edward attended boarding school and university. During the First World War he saw action on the Western Front and rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in April 1920. When he was in France the house was used as a hospital, as were many other large houses in Bromley, Beckenham and Chislehurst. This was probably because the wounded from the Western Front were brought from Dover to stations along the line to London. Bromley Hill housed Canadian wounded.

After the war Cawston returned to live at and run the estate. He was soon to find the water consumption was extremely high and on investigation he discovered considerable leakage in the tower. It had previously been the laundry, which he had converted into a residential suite. Below the flooring was "a tangled mess of heavy leaden pipe from which a stream flowed down the stone steps into the basement of the mansion, which had been the Cawstons' dining room"

Edward had this converted into a billiards room. "That was before the dining room became a tea lounge and the dining room was moved to the larger room, which the author used as a Dance Hall and Roller Skating Rink."⁸

The drive running direct from the mansion to Bromley Hill was cut in 1920 when a new direct way to Bromley Hill was required (CP Cawston). Samuel Cawston had planted a row of horse chestnuts along the new Coniston Road where it ran past the house, and his executors had decreed that more building should take place between Coniston Road and Bromley Hill. Thus EP Cawston felt it essential to give the Mansion direct access to the main road.

It would appear that Edward had tried to convert the house into a hotel. He was clearly a talented man. He was author of a pamphlet on the *Mobile Spigot – Mortar Tactics* and on several occasions had contact with the Bureau of Emergency Legislation during the war (Imperial War Museum).

In 1931 the house was sold and it continued as a commercially-run hotel. In 1934 Cawston bought the old vicarage of Christ Church in Ottershaw, which he converted into a preparatory school. He also bought the Drill Hall, which he converted into a "tea room and place of refreshment" which was disliked by the local residents as it had been used for various local activities.

Feature

In an article in the *Kentish Times* of 29 August 1969, the writer describes the flourishing hotel with a range of guests. In an interview with the Resident Director, Mr P Ibanz, he declared: "There is no other hotel nearby of the same high standard." In 1966 it had 22,400 guests with 15% from overseas. At the peak of the tourist season in July and the first part of August "we receive the overspill from the fully-booked London hotels".

Each year the Biggin Hill Air Show attracted guests and the New Theatre (once in Bromley High Street) saw players staying there, including Margaret Rutherford and Michael Bentine.

The Bromley Court Hotel's present website describes how Harold Macmillan, when he was Bromley MP, held Cabinet meetings in a flat in the hotel. In addition to Bromley Jazz Club having their meetings at the hotel, famous groups and artists appeared there, including The Who, The Rolling Stones, David Bowie, Pink Floyd and Jimi Hendrix.

Today the Bromley Court Hotel still attracts many guests as a restaurant, a conference centre and a venue for weddings, with the gardens making it a very attractive site.

As the hotel expanded, many additional rooms were built and a large car park replaced the earlier carriage front. In spite of all the changes the large entrance lobby and one of the adjoining side rooms have been kept, reflecting a former prosperous Victorian house.

¹ *The Pevsner guide for south London states that "the house was built in 1796 and remodelled 1801 – 11".*

² *Long had proposed to purchase the property in 1796 but the necessary documents had been destroyed by fire and thus he had to wait until 1801 for the title to be proved. Hence Wilson's assumption of Long's ownership.*

³ *Cumberland, G Bromley Hill. There were two editions in 1811 and 1816. The latter had more detail on the house, the wood and the water scenery.*

⁴ *All Bromley's histories – Dunkin's, Strong's, Clinch and Horsbrugh have lengthy extracts from Cumberland. Clinch also has the dates of Long's appointments.*

⁵ *Girton's painting of the Old Lodge, Widmore is illustrated in colour by Horsbrugh.*

⁶ *My own interest in Bromley Hill derives from the purchase of a large volume of photographs on Samuel Cawston and Bromley Hill. I had seen a copy in the Local History library and was pleased that they still had theirs. They must have been produced to be given to the family c1900 -1911. My copy belonged to one of the daughters, Katherine Sophy.*

⁷ *LB Behrens Echoes of a Turbulent Victorian Childhood, 1953. An interesting social history of a Victorian family.*

⁸ *EP Cawston. I have in my possession the "preliminary editions" of his work on Bromley Hill*

inviting comment, prior to publication. I cannot find any evidence that the final work was every published. He was 90 years-old at his death in 1972.

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Photographs Bromley Hill 1848 – 1898, album circulated to the family

All the above material is in Bromley Local Studies Library

Further details on EP Cawston's war experience in the Imperial War Museum

Ravensbourne Valley Preservation Society website



The house of Lord Farnborough and its later remodelling by Samuel Cawston can still be seen in the facade of Bromley Hill House's current incarnation as the Bromley Court Hotel.

Bromley Borough Local History Society



Keeping track of our walking history

Many of us have enjoyed exploring the borough by following the guides in various Bromley Council walks booklets. Every few years the guides run out and are updated. Unfortunately, there have not always been any original guides left when a copy is sought for the archives. If you have any of the older guides — particularly the early non-full colour guides — Simon Finch at Bromley Historic Collections would be delighted if you could donate them to Local Studies. Please send them to Simon at
Central library, High Street, Bromley, BR1 1EX

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