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## George Gissing, Novelist A traumatic life in Epsom - 1894 to 1897

By Curator of Museum

When George Gissing arrived in Epsom in 1894, his domestic life was in tatters. Many people knew the young novelist through his books, which recount the personal and commercial struggles of the lower middle classes. Few were acquainted with him personally, since George had cut off contact with the literary world after his disastrous second marriage.

Born in Wakefield, George went to university at Manchester, where he took with Nell Harrison, a young prostitute, and in a gallant attempt to keep her off the streets he began to give her money – first his own, and then other people's. After a month in prison George was shipped to America where he began a new life as a journalist. Returning to England in 1877, he married Nell, who gave up prostitution and became an alcoholic instead. They separated in 1883 and she died five years later.

A stream of novels brought George to fame but he retained a profound lack of self-worth. Dismissing the possibility of marriage with someone from his own background, he determined to marry 'a decent work-girl' and in 1891 he introduced himself to the first young woman he met on the streets, Edith Underwood of Camden Town, and George was convinced that she was so 'gentle and pliable' that, once she had got used to country life and been trained out of her Cockney accent, she would make an ideal wife. Edith thought otherwise. By the time they were married, in 1891, it was obvious that things were going to go wrong.



On Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> September 1894, they moved to 'Eversley', 48 Worple Road, Epsom. George, characteristically, seems to have decided on the property without asking his wife: he took a yearly tenancy, at £40, which was a bargain as 'it has a bathroom, of which I had begun to despair'.

George took long walks on Epsom Common and the Downs, trying to think up stories. Edith was more or less trapped at home. George was in London every week, negotiating with editors and meeting up with enthusiasts, such as Clara Collet who had researched working-class life in the East End with the earlier Gissing novels as a guide. George mentioned that he'd like her to come down to Epsom; it didn't seem to occur to him that his friendship with a young female admirer might set Edith's nerves on edge.

The calm didn't last. On October 10<sup>th</sup> came the sound of shouting from the kitchen, where Edith was letting fly at the maid-of-all-work about some dirty boots. One evening, 'a maddening drum and fife band, planting itself before the house at 8 o'clock, compelled me out in a rage, and I sent them packing'. The band doesn't seem to have taken kindly to this, and four weeks later the diary says: 'Still pestered by the blackguard drum and fife band. They play tonight *in the garden* of the house opposite. I went again to the police station, but found there is no help'.

November passed in alternate fog and gloom, although George was rising in the world of literature and met up with other authors, as well as publishers and guests like the feminist Eliza Orme, who pulled out her cigar and smoked with the men. It made a change from Worple Road, where a week before Christmas the (formerly) hard-working maid had done a runner – 'good riddance' – so that Edith decided to hire a daily help instead.

Spring 1895 was a bitterly cold, and even indoors the water froze in the cisterns. In April Edith received an invitation – from Clara Collet – asking her to come and stay for a few days at Richmond. George wrote back on her behalf explaining that Edith couldn't come as she was no good at making friends and didn't want to leave home.

Summer holidays in Yarmouth were dampened by a quarrel with the landlady. Then when they returned to Epsom, storms had blown the creeper off the front of the house and flattened the sunflowers. But the gardener soon saw to that. Servants didn't stay long in the household, and they were reduced to hiring young girls, who were less picky.

George then wrote to Clara Collet: would she be prepared to act as guardian for the children if he died? Collet took the opportunity to come down to Epsom and have a talk with Edith. Couldn't they get on a bit better? George wrote back to explain that this was simply impossible because Edith wouldn't do as she was told. Why, with an educated husband to tell her what she should and should not like, would she persist in having such awfully vulgar tastes?

When George's son, Walter, went down with a childhood infection the sanitary inspector was called for to make sure that there was nothing wrong about the house, but reported that he 'could see no sign of defective drainage'. Eversley must have been an uncomfortable house as servants took against the place. In November 'the useless idiot woman named Sparkes happily left', and in her place came Mrs. Mantle from a farm at Leatherhead. For two weeks all went well: 'meals are well cooked and tasty; everything kept clean'. Then the exemplary Mrs. Mantle declared herself dissatisfied and left.

In February, the gasfitters arrived to connect Eversley to the main. This took a week, until at last a man was sent to test the gas pipes, which he did by holding a candle next to the joins. In the resulting explosion, the drawing-room ceiling was completely blown out, a chair and some bedclothes set alight, and the water supply broken open. Everybody had to move to rooms in Dorking while the damage was made good.

Within a month the plasterers had finished repairs and the house was as new. Unfortunately this was not true of the Gissings' marriage, which had reached a state of 'utter misery'. Another servant fled, sending a message that she was ill and couldn't leave a friend's house. On April 8<sup>th</sup> George felt he had had enough and, with his son Walter, got on a train to his sister in Wakefield. Then he wrote to Edith, explaining that it would be much better for her son to leave her and live in Yorkshire instead. 'I shall pay £10 a quarter, and of course cost of clothing'.

He arrived back at Epsom a day after the letter. 'Of course a terrible scene with E; won't bear speaking of'. But he was sure he had done the right thing. After that, things were quiet around the house. Then the servants wanted to leave Eversley – two at once this time – and the sound of angry voices echoed again from the kitchen. George rushed downstairs, paid the girls off and agreed to get a daily charwoman in instead.

After a summer holiday in Mablethorpe, George settled into a steady routine of writing. In October came a letter from Collet. 'This created an uproar in the house'. Edith, whose tolerance for this relationship had reached breaking point, drove her husband out into the rain, where he walked to Ewell. After that, it was hard to return home.

H.G. Wells had just moved to Worcester Park, and that December George went over to see him. It was a friendly house and he stayed until 11.00. Christmas came, but without much fuss. January brought fog and rain, 'ceaseless quarrel and wretchedness'. Wells' house at Heatherleigh was a beacon of domesticity. Next month the servant girl, who had lasted ten months, was about to leave until brought round by an offer of higher wages. George sourly recorded his success at bargaining with a fifteen-year-old 'gutter-child'.

Dr. Beaumont gave him a check-up, and there was bad news: emphysema in one lung. Edith was unsympathetic. Why had he married her at all if he was going to turn out an invalid who couldn't take care of his family?

In the middle of February 1897 George walked out the door, took a train to Budleigh Salterton, and sat on the Devon having totally abandoned any attempt at living with his wife. Meanwhile, Edith was terrified. She was alone with a baby, no family and no possible source of income; her husband was now distant physically as well as mentally; and what guarantee was there that he would support her? On the first day of June George returned to Epsom and began plotting his escape.

That summer, George, and family had taken rooms at Bolton Castle. At first Edith liked it – it was so nice to be somewhere new – but the boys were a nuisance. The food was bad, and country people didn't empty their privies. George had begun clinically writing down Edith's every outburst as events happened.

On September 14<sup>th</sup> 1897, George received an offer of help from Eliza Orme who was now ready to help smooth the break-up of the marriage. On the 17<sup>th</sup> Edith – raging to the end –went to live in Tulse Hill with Eliza, and George went on to Victoria Station. After three traumatic years, the Gissing connection with Epsom was over.

Quotations from:

Paul Delany, *George Gissing: A Life* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2008).

George Gissing, *London and the Life of Literature in late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing. Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Harvest, Hassocks, 1978).

Gillian Tindall, *The Born Exile: George Gissing* (Temple Smith, London, 1974).

*This piece is edited from a longer article by the Curator of Bourne Hall Museum.*

*There is also an article on Gissing by Brian Bouchard on [www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk](http://www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk)*

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## Have you seen the Plaque marking the arrival of The Unknown Warrior?

By a Volunteer

*One of our volunteer was passing through Victoria Station recently when he noticed this plaque on the wall. Another volunteer has been kind enough to provide this background.*

The Western Front Association (WFA) is a charitable organisation formed in 1980 with the aim of furthering interest in The Great War of 1914-1918. It also aims to perpetuate the memory, courage and comradeship of all those on all sides who served their countries during The Great War.



One small gesture towards the aim of furthering interest in the Great War was the unveiling, on 10 November 2000, of a plaque at Platform 8 at Victoria station, to commemorate the arrival of the body of the Unknown Warrior. The body arrived at Victoria Station at about 8.30 pm on 10 November 1920 and remained there with a guard of honour overnight, prior to its journey to Westminster Abbey on the morning of 11 November. On 10 November each year since the plaque was unveiled, at about 8.15 pm, a wreath laying ceremony has been conducted at the plaque by the WFA to commemorate the event.

*Why bury an unknown warrior in Westminster Abbey?* The huge numbers of men killed or maimed by the Great War caused unimaginable suffering to all those touched by it. Not just the men who fought, but also the millions of bereaved parents, wives, orphans, other relatives and friends. The few years immediately after the war saw a great outpouring of grief and mourning, when many thousands of memorials to the dead were erected. The burial, in Westminster Abbey, amongst the 'Great and the Good', of a lowly ordinary warrior was, in a way, part of the Nation's

mourning. Everyone who had been bereaved could believe that the tomb held their loved one.

The notion of honouring an unknown warrior in this way was first suggested by the Reverend David Railton, a chaplain at the front. In 1916, whilst in a back garden in Armentières, he noticed a grave with a rough wooden cross on which were written the words 'An Unknown British Soldier'. In August 1920 he wrote to the Dean of Westminster, Herbert Ryle, with the suggestion of burying an unknown warrior in Westminster Abbey. The Dean took up the idea with enthusiasm and saw to it that the idea was carried out.

The body was selected from unknown British servicemen exhumed from four battle areas, the Aisne, the Somme, Arras and Ypres. Although the number of bodies exhumed varies in different accounts between four and six, the remains were brought to the chapel at St. Pol, on the night of 7 November 1920. The bodies were on stretchers and covered by Union Flags. Brigadier General L.J. Wyatt and Colonel Gell entered the chapel, and having no idea which area the bodies had come from, selected one of them. They placed it in a coffin and sealed it, ready for transportation back to 'Blighty' (the soldiers word for the UK). The other bodies were reburied.

As stated above, the body arrived at about 8.15 pm, at Platform 8 Victoria Station, on 10 November 1920. It was interred at the west end of the Nave of Westminster Abbey the next day, 11 November. A few days later the grave was filled with French earth and covered by a temporary stone. The present stone, made from a slab of black Belgian marble from a quarry near Namur, was unveiled the following year on 11 November 1921. The tomb is still a place of pilgrimage for many thousands of people.

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## News from Oz. Epsom Ave., a racecourse and some old brickworks. By a Volunteer

Well, I'm back. My 7-week trip to Western Australia extended to three months and I loved every minute, and if truth were known, I miss being there with my daughter, son-in-law and gorgeous new granddaughter. Being away for that length of time you could be thinking that I should have been homesick, but I couldn't have been, even if I had tried. Not only did I meet up with so many UK ex-pats (and my 6th cousin whose ancestor left Addington in 1844 bound for Busselton but that's another tale!) but I also kept seeing so many place-names that reminded me of home – Belmont Avenue, Surrey Road, Kingston Street, Shepperton Road, Lansdowne Road, Sevenoaks Street. Rutland Avenue, Guildford Road and Linton Place were just a few names that I spotted in and around Perth.

The one that reminded me the most of home was Epsom Avenue, in the borough of Belmont. Cutting across the Great Eastern Highway and leading into Ascot Place, the north end of Epsom Avenue skirts around the eastside of 'Ascot', Perth's racecourse.

On the south side of the racecourse, I was amazed to see the remains of an old brick making works, with five tall chimneys and eight beehive kilns still preserved.



My photos do not do these beautiful structures justice but they were built between 1905-1910 by the "Bristle" company and were still in use until 1982. These structures are under threat of being demolished as part of the city's renewal projects. The City of Belmont, the National Trust and Local Government are apparently in negotiations.

If only Epsom Surrey had had the foresight to keep our brick works in what is now Kiln Lane, for future generations to admire.

### In search of Epsom

This set us off in search of other Epsoms around the world - Ed. So far we have come across five:

Two in the USA, in New Hampshire and Indiana

Two in Australia, in Victoria and Queensland

One in New Zealand, close to Auckland

As yet, we have had no sighting of any places called Ewell.

### However, whence the Ewells?

Inspired by a Volunteer

On a recent cruise from Basel to Amsterdam, a volunteer and her husband overheard an American woman mention 'Ewell'. At the first opportunity Angela asked if she lived there. 'No, it's my name' she replied. It was a family name supposedly something to do with a General Ewell from the Civil War years. She was most intrigued when I mentioned Ewell village and even more so when I gave her a glimpse of our website.

We googled General Ewell and there is lots about him. Suffice to say, Richard Stoddert Ewell (1817–1872) was a career United States Army officer and a Confederate general during the American Civil War. He achieved fame as a senior commander under Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee and fought effectively through much of the war, but his legacy has been clouded by controversies over his actions at the Battle of Gettysburg and at the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House.



He seems to have no apparent connection with Ewell village, but who knows, in the dim and distant past, maybe it was the family home. Anyway, if you want to know more you can find him at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_S.\\_Ewell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_S._Ewell).

This sent us off on a search of other Ewells. We found the Ewell family of Virginia who originated in Kent <http://www.geneajourney.com/ewellinfo.html> ; a lot more on the Ewell family name at <http://www.houseofnames.com/ewell-family-crest> and you can find 2,201 Ewells at <http://www.ewellfamily.org/genealogy/search.php?mylastname=ewell&lnqualify=&mybool=AND&nr=50&showspouse=&showdeath=&offset=0&tree=&page=1>

Finally, in Harper Lee's 'To Kill a Mockingbird' the Ewell family is described as 'the most wretched family in Maycomb County' – what on earth did HL have against Ewell?

It's ironic that just as we can't find any other places called Ewell, neither can we find any families named Epsom. However, I'm sure that someone will enlighten us with answers to both these contradictions – Ed.

## The Census - 1911 versus 2011

Thanks to a Volunteer

**T**here are many differences between the 1911 and 2011 census. That of a hundred years ago was able to fit on a single sheet. Today's was about 30 pages long.

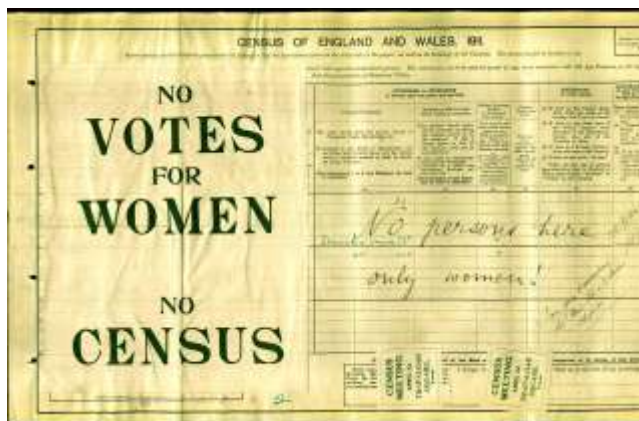
That of 1911 might be regarded as sexist, implying that if there was a husband in the household he would be head of it. And its language on infirmity, asking householders if they were "lunatic, imbecile or feeble-minded", would be unlikely to pass muster with today's disability campaigners. In 1911, as far as work went, the government just wanted to know occupation, industry, and status. In 2011, the census has 15 nuanced questions on work and employment.

And yet there is a great similarity - they both represent expansion in what the authorities want to know about the population.

1911	2011
If any person included in this schedule is: 1) "Totally deaf" or "deaf and dumb", 2) "totally blind", 3) "lunatic", 4) "imbecile" or "feeble-minded", state the infirmity opposite that person's name, and the age at which he or she became inflicted.	How is your health in general?
State for each married woman entered on this schedule, the number of: - Completed years the present marriage has lasted.	What is your legal marital or same-sex civil partnership status?
Birthplace of every person. 1) If born in the United Kingdom, write the name of the County, and Town and Parish. 2) If born in any other part of the British Empire, write the name of the Dependency, Colony etc and of the Province or State. 3) if born in a Foreign Country, write the name of the Country. 4) If born at sea, write "At Sea".	What is your ethnic group? A. White. B. Mixed/multiple ethnic groups. C. Asian/Asian British. D. Black/African/Caribbean/Black British E. Other ethnic group
Profession or Occupation of persons aged 10 and upwards	Have you ever worked?

The 1911 census also offers an insight into one of the great political movements of 20th Century Britain, the efforts by suffragettes to get the vote for women.

The activists tried to get women to refuse to fill out the census, organising a mass avoidance session near London's Trafalgar Square, prompting a heartfelt plea from the registrar in the Times. "It furnishes statistics and materials on which are based most of the measures by which the health and happiness of the community are promoted. In the struggle with disease and poverty and the work for the benefit of the children and the helpless the Census statistics are invaluable," he wrote.



And afterwards, the Times was delighted to report that the suffragettes had failed to avoid being counted. It puts the recent international Jedi census stunt - where people listed their religion as Jedi in tribute to Star Wars - into perspective.

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## Tragedy On Derby Day - May 31<sup>st</sup> 1911

By a Volunteer

Owing to the coronation of King George V in early June, the Derby of 1911 was held a week earlier than usual on the 31<sup>st</sup> May. Despite this, an estimated gathering of over 100,000, surpassing all previous records, had made their way to the Downs for the races on a warm sultry afternoon.

After the main race had been run, a few hailstones bouncing around the feet of the crowd interrupted the oppressive heat. Suddenly there was a vivid flash of lightning followed by a terrific crash of thunder and it appeared "to let loose all the elements of rain and hail in a merciless torrent" People trying to leave the course on foot or in open carriages were soaked to the skin and women in their fine summer dresses were left drenched and bedraggled. The roads into Epsom became muddy flowing rivers and people were forced to a standstill.



A group of 20 people who had already left the Downs, ran to take shelter against the wall of the reservoir on Banstead Downs, eight of them were struck by lightning and two killed outright, George Curran from West Ham and William Storr from Lower Sydenham. The coroner at the inquest later said that he thought a wet bowler hat that was being worn by one of the deceased had attracted the lightning. A bicycle nearby had its handlebars broken by the lightning and the boots of one of the victims were split apart.

As another cyclist coming from the Downs approached the reservoir he decided to stop there, remarking to a colleague, "I think I'll get off and shelter under this wall" No sooner had he spoken then he was struck and knocked unconscious, suffering severe injuries.

Back at the racecourse, one of the victims of the violent storm was a young greengrocer named Wilfrid Noah Wetherall, aged just 17 and who came from Beddington near Croydon. The fate of young Wilfrid, who was sitting in the back of his employers horse drawn cart at Buckle's Gap, went unnoticed for some time as the thunder and lightning crashed all around. The terrified horse began to panic and several people tried to restrain it, calling to Wilfrid to help them. It was then that he was seen sitting with his hands raised as if to ward off a blow. The crown of his straw hat had been cut out by the lightning and the brim had slipped over his face. The horse was also struck and killed but amazingly people sitting around them were unaffected

Later at the Epsom mortuary the boy was found to have a fern-leaf design on his body as a result of the lightning strike. A survivor said he had seen a ball of fire and that he tasted sulphuric acid in his mouth. Several others were said to have been "rendered quite deaf for a considerable time".

At Tattenham Corner a group of eight men working as job-masters were standing in a tent when they were struck. One man was seriously injured with severe shock to the system, burns to his arms and legs and loss of muscle action down the right side. Another man was leaning on the rails by the course when he was struck; he remained unconscious for over two hours and was taken to Epsom Cottage Hospital.

The chaos was not only restricted to the Downs as the storm reached out as far as Mitcham, Morden, Bletchingly, Godstone and Redhill it caused immense damage to property and several people were seriously injured. Among them was a ten-year-old boy in Bletchingly who was hit and was found to have a scar in the shape of a fern-leaf, similar to that of Wilfrid Weatherall. Fortunately the boy survived.

Water rose to over three feet high in places and in Godstone, hail the size of marbles lay six inches deep, bringing traffic to a standstill. In nearby Tadworth the hail was so fierce that people were left with bleeding hands and faces and in the North Looe smallholdings in Ewell, 50 chickens were drowned.

Huge amounts of rain fell that afternoon but the greatest downpour was at Banstead where 3.59ins [92mm] fell. By the end of that awful afternoon, five people were dead and scores were severely injured many of them needing hospital treatment. At the inquest into the Derby deaths the coroner said he had heard many people say that the storm was a judgement on those who visited the races He described the remark as “a very foolish one”.

*Source: The Surrey Weather Book by Mark Davison & Ian Currie*

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## Re-cycling, 16<sup>th</sup> Century style - So that's where it went!

By a Volunteer

Recently I had an opportunity to visit Loseley Park, a rather grand house near Guildford. Although the estate was acquired by the ancestors of the current owners, the More-Molyneux family, back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is currently under the care of the Royal Horticultural Society, and it was for this reason that, my wife was really interested in visiting the gardens; and so not for a moment was I thinking of the History Centre.

This promptly changed when we took a tour around the house and walked into the Great Hall. This was a splendid room and most impressive, but what really struck me was that we were told that the panelling came from Henry VIII's Palace of Nonsuch. How, when or why it got there, or what the family paid for it, was not explained. The intricate panelling was carved from wood no more than half an inch thick, but made to look as if the view created went much deeper. I hope that you can get an impression of that from the attached picture; if not, then I can recommend a visit; I thought it well worthwhile; oh yes, the gardens were quite good as well!



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## JSYK - Tweeters and Texters were not the first - LoL, BFN

By the Curator of the Museum

Safety standards at the Ewell gunpowder mills were alarming low, and local people seem to have been resigned to the sight of a carter casually stubbing out his cigarette before taking the latest consignment of barrels to London. But I hadn't realised that explosions were everyday events in the industry.

This is suggested by a list of abbreviations for use by Victorian penny-pinchers when sending telegrams. A frugal respondent could save shillings by writing Titmouse when they really meant 'I accept with pleasure your invitation for the theatre tomorrow evening' and Emication for 'the epidemic has broken out again'.

And there, in a list of the most common abbreviations, is **Evidential**, 'a gunpowder explosion has occurred'. Just how common were they?

*The list of abbreviations has been published in Schott's Quintessential Miscellany (Bloomsbury, 2011) JSYK – Just so you know. LoL – Laugh out loud. BFN – Bye for now.*

## The Denials of Yorkshire

By the Curator of the Museum

The best-researched family tree sometimes seems to come to a dead end, but seldom one as final as that recorded for the Denials of Yorkshire. All genealogical lines lead to Daniel Denial, christened at Ecclesfield in 1746 – and Daniel, according to his grandson, 'was found when an infant deserted in a church porch; and was surnamed Denial, as one whom all deny; and was christened Daniel, which is composed of the same letters. This is the tradition of the origin of a surname now common in the parish'.

*Not much hope of getting beyond that! The story's in Notes & Queries 1851 p323 and Sidney Addy's Hallamshire. Some Sheffield genealogists hoped it wasn't true, but apparently it is*

<http://pub11.bravenet.com/forum/static/show.php?usernum=907514572&frmid=22&msgid=1049371&cmd=show>  
<http://pub11.bravenet.com/forum/static/show.php?usernum=907514572&frmid=22&msgid=1049371&cmd=show>

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## More Interesting Snippets, proving History is Fun

Thanks to a Volunteer

*In the last issue of the newsletter we included some amusing sources of well-known sayings. Here's some more:*

In George Washington's days, there were no cameras. One's image was either sculpted or painted. Prices charged by painters were not based on how many people were to be painted, but by how many limbs were to be painted. Arms and legs are 'limbs,' therefore painting them would cost the buyer more. Hence the expression, 'Okay, but it'll cost you an arm and a leg.' (Artists know hands and arms are more difficult to paint)

Personal hygiene left much room for improvement. As a result, many women and men had developed acne scars by adulthood. The women would spread wax over their facial skin to smooth out their complexions. When they were speaking to each other, if a woman began to stare at another woman's face she was told, 'mind your own bee's wax.' Should the woman smile, the wax would crack, hence the term 'crack a smile'. In addition, when they sat too close to the fire, the wax would melt . . . Therefore, the expression 'losing face.'

Ladies wore corsets, which would lace up in the front. A proper and dignified woman, as in 'straight laced', wore a tightly tied lace.

Early politicians required feedback from the public to determine what the people considered important. Since there were no telephones, TV's or radios, the politicians sent their assistants to local taverns, pubs, and bars. They were told to 'go sip some ale' and listen to people's conversations and political concerns. Many assistants were dispatched at different times. 'You go sip here' and 'You go sip there.' The two words 'go sip' were eventually combined when referring to the local opinion and, thus we have the term 'gossip.'

At local taverns, pubs, and bars, people drank from pint and quart-sized containers. A bar maid's job was to keep an eye on the customers and keep the drinks coming. She had to pay close attention and remember who was drinking in 'pints' and who was drinking in 'quarts,' hence the term minding your 'P's and 'Q's

And finally ... In the heyday of sailing ships, all war ships and many freighters carried iron cannons. Those cannons fired round iron cannon balls. It was necessary to keep a good supply near the cannon. However, how to prevent them from rolling about the deck? The best storage method devised was a square-based pyramid with one ball on top, resting on four resting on nine, which rested on sixteen. Thus, a supply of 30 cannon balls could be stacked in a small area right next to the cannon. There was only one problem...how to prevent the bottom layer from sliding or rolling from under the others. The solution was a metal plate called a 'Monkey' with 16 round indentations. However, if this plate were made of iron, the iron balls would quickly rust to it. The solution to the rusting problem was to make 'Brass Monkeys.' However, brass contracts much more and much faster than iron when chilled. Consequently, when the temperature dropped too far, the brass indentations would shrink so much that the iron cannonballs would come right off the monkey. Thus, it was quite literally, 'Cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey.' (All this time, you thought it meant something else, didn't you.)



# A Strange Entry in the 1881 Census

Thanks to a Volunteer

Recently, perusing the 1881 Census for Wilton in Wiltshire, the volunteer came across the following strange entry between those for the Bains family – John (Baker and Grocer), his wife and two children – and the Hoare family – William (Ag Lab), his wife and two lodgers.

“Wesleyan Chapel, Divine Service twice on Sunday by Local preacher. Average attendance 160”

27	Lo	1	John Bains	Head	Man	61	Walter 9-4 roads	Wesleyan Chapel
			Mary Lo	Wife	Woman	62	Lo Wife	Wesleyan Chapel
			John Bains	Servant	Man	21	Lo Wife	Wesleyan Chapel
			John Bains	Servant	Man	7x	General	Wesleyan Chapel
28	Wesleyan Chapel	1	Wesleyan Chapel	Head	Man	61	Walter 9-4 roads	Wesleyan Chapel
29	Wesleyan Chapel	1	Wesleyan Chapel	Head	Man	61	Walter 9-4 roads	Wesleyan Chapel
30	Wesleyan Chapel	1	Wesleyan Chapel	Head	Man	61	Walter 9-4 roads	Wesleyan Chapel

Parish - Gt. Bedwyn., Hamlet - Wilton Wilts, Rural District – Hungerford, Ecclesiastical Parish District - East Grafton. RG11/1274/page 6

Was this a crafty advertisement, was the census taker the preacher, or did the census taker look at a congregation of 160 and think, blow this, I'll be here all day? I'll leave you to work it out – Ed.

## Another well-deserved accolade for History Explorer.

Time for some more self-congratulation. The August issue of ‘Your Family Tree’ magazine focused on Surrey in its ‘How to Research’ feature. Within this, [www.EpsomandEwellHistoryExplorer.org.uk](http://www.EpsomandEwellHistoryExplorer.org.uk) was noted as being one of the top three Surrey websites.



That deserves a big ‘thank you’ to the Webmaster and all contributors to our website.

## New Additions to the Website

Since the last newsletter in May 2011, webmaster Peter Reed, has added a wealth of new information and pages to the website covering some 29 different subjects. Rather than list these here, it is probably easier to look at the ‘What’s New’ page at <http://www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/WhatsNew.html>

## Epsom & Ewell Local History Centre - Upcoming Events

### Who Do You Think You Are? 2011

Our increasingly popular, annual 'Who Do You Think You Are?' day will be held **Saturday, 22nd October 2011** between 10.00am and 4.00pm. Make a note in your diary as nearer the date we will need to rota volunteers to help meet and deal with enquiries from the public. Also, we'll be emailing you a copy of a poster promoting the event in the hope you can print some off and find places to use them.

### Memories of the Fifties - Open Day in November

The programme of displays has included **Fashion** - March/April, **Living** and **National Service** - May/June, **Childhood** - July/August and **Entertainment** - September/October.

From 30<sup>th</sup> August to 3<sup>rd</sup> September we were fortunate to have all the displays featured in the lobby of Bourne Hall (except Fashion which was in the Museum) and we understand the displays have attracted considerable attention. We congratulate everyone who has been involved in putting the displays together to such a professional standard - Carol, Margaret B, Linda and Tony, Glenda, Margaret J, Bert and Gillian - and would especially like to thank Bourne Hall Museum for their assistance with the printing of the finished displays.

**This series of displays culminates with an Open Day in November when we will invite members of the public to come and record their own memories of the 1950s with us.**



Some 26 people have already provided fascinating and delightful anecdotal, personal histories of life in the fifties either through the website <http://www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/EpsomEwell1950s.html> or by completing the forms that are available from local libraries - Ewell, Epsom, Tattenham Corner, Stoneleigh and Ewell Court.

Do please encourage people to provide their own memories as they are a vital part of local history and are of importance for future researchers, scholars and enthusiasts. Just tell them they are being recorded for posterity and in some 200 years time a 22<sup>nd</sup> Century David Starkey could be poring over their reminiscences to produce a landmark 'History of Everyday Life in Elizabeth's 1950s' - now that's an eBook to think about.

*The November Open Day will be discussed at the next committee meeting in mid-September and we will advise you all of the date, time and format as soon as it has been agreed - Ed.*

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## Surrey Heritage Events Autumn 2011 ...

The Surrey History Centre in Woking has advised us of the following events and activities. Seems there's a lot going on and plenty to enjoy. Our thanks to the SHC for keeping us informed.

### **Identification and Recording of Finds**

Second Saturday of each month 11am to 1pm at Guildford Museum (01483 444750).

As part of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, come along to Guildford Museum and see David Williams, Surrey Finds Liaison Officer. For metal detectorists and other finders of objects of archaeological interest.

### **Owen Manning, William Bray and the Writing of Surrey's County History, 1760-1832**

Saturday 10 September 2.30pm at the Mansion Claremont Fan Court School, Esher.

A talk by Julian Pooley

Manning and Bray's History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey took more than forty years to research and thirteen to publish. Though acknowledged as one of the finest county histories of its day, its production was fraught with difficulties. The papers of those involved testify to the support given by a national network of antiquaries. This paper, drawing on the rich archive materials of Manning and Bray, the antiquary Richard Gough and the printer, John Nichols charts the research and production of a county history which remains a basic tool for students of Surrey's past. The Mansion, Claremont drive, Claremont Fan Court School, Esher KT10 9L. Free



### **650<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Justices of the Peace Exhibition**

Tuesday 20 September – Wednesday 5 October at Surrey History Centre

To commemorate the 650<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Justices of the Peace Surrey, a special exhibition recording the history of local justice in the county has been superbly researched by Matthew Alexander, Honorary Remembrancer for Guildford, with support from the Lord-Lieutenant, HH John Bull, the Surrey History Trust and Surrey County Council. Free in the foyer of the Surrey History Centre. Available during normal hours.

### **650<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Justices of the Peace an afternoon of talks**

Saturday 24 September 2pm – 4pm at Surrey History Centre

650 years ago this year, a statute of Edward III created the office of Justice of the Peace in every county of England. These “most worthy” persons were to preserve the King’s Peace by dealing with offenders according to law, thus removing the threat and fear of violence or other disturbance. To commemorate this event we are holding two talks; one by Nigel Saul, Professor of Medieval History at Royal Holloway, University of London entitled ‘**Tough on Crime in the Fourteenth Century**’ and the other by Mike Page, Head of Stewardship and Preservation at Surrey History Centre entitled ‘**The Lash or the Long Voyage: the court of Quarter Sessions at the turn of the 19th century**’. Tickets £5 will include refreshments.

Places are limited. To book please call 01483 518737



### **Blast from the Past 1980’s BBC Domesday Flashback**

Tuesday 25 October – Saturday 29 October 2011 at Surrey History Centre. Free drop in October Half Term activities

Come along to the Surrey History Centre and enjoy an 80’s themed family activity session inspired by the Domesday reloaded project run by the BBC. Learn about the original Domesday project that took place in the 80’s while getting creative with plenty of craft activities. The activities are suitable for all ages from the very young to older. Parents and guardians are responsible for children at all times.

Available during normal hours.



### **1980’s Flashback Party Workshop**

Friday 28 October 2011 2pm – 3pm at Surrey History Centre. Free family workshop

As part of the BBC ‘Doomsday reloaded’ project we are hosting an 80’s themed party. So come along and learn about the Domesday Book and the 1980’s. Free craft activities and puzzles exploring local history. Have a go at our ‘Rubix Cube Challenge’ and get into the 80’s spirit. The activities are suitable for children of all ages.

Booking is preferred. To book your free place please call 01483 518737



### **RC Sherriff and Journey’s End**

Tuesday 6 September – Saturday 1 October at Surrey History Centre

Surrey History Centre holds the papers of this famous playwright, including his letters from the trenches and scripts for the many stage, screen and radio adaptations of *Journey's End*. To celebrate the touring production of *Journey's End* coming to Woking there will be a small display relating to RC Sherriff in the Surrey History Centre foyer. Free.

Available during normal hours.

Monday 26 September – Saturday 1 October

First performed in 1929, with a then unknown Laurence Olivier as Captain Stanhope, the play *Journey's End* convinced audiences that they were being shown trench life as it really was. Now David Grindley's superb production of this searing drama is coming to The New Victoria Theatre, Woking.

Ticket information can be obtained at [www.ambassadortickets.com/woking](http://www.ambassadortickets.com/woking)

Tel: 0844 871 7645

For further details of the play itself see [www.journeysendtheplay.com](http://www.journeysendtheplay.com)

### **Excavations at Woking Palace**

Saturday 19 November 3pm - 4pm at Surrey History Centre

A talk by Rob Poulton of Surrey County Archaeological Unit discussing the community excavations that took place at Woking Palace in the summer of 2011.

Tickets £5.00 including refreshments.



### Reading Old Handwriting

Saturday 26 November at the Surrey History Centre, 10.30-12.30

Another introductory session with archivists from Surrey Heritage to help you read 16th and 17th century handwriting. You will have the chance to practice reading from copies of items held in the archive. Aimed at beginners and those wishing to brush up their skills.

Tickets £7. Places are limited. To book please call 01483 518737

## ... and Surrey's Sporting Life

If you are interested in learning about more of Surrey's great sporting heritage visit:

<http://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/>

### 'Owzat!' - a celebration of centuries of cricket in Dorking

Sunday 11 September 2.30 - 5pm at Cotmandene, Dorking RH4 2BL, no booking required.

Dorking Cricket Club invites a team from the surrounding area to participate in an old style 'two-stump' game using a curved bat and underarm bowling, as played in Georgian times. This year Newdigate Cricket Club has been chosen to compete against Dorking. Afternoon tea will be served in aid of the KIDS FOR KIDS charity.

<http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>.

There will be an exhibition: *Dorking's Olympic Dream* - Dorking and the 1948 Olympics.

Email [mole\\_valley\\_hods@hotmail.com](mailto:mole_valley_hods@hotmail.com) or call 01306 889051 for further information.

### Brooklands Cycle Festival

Sunday 18 September at Brooklands Museum

The 2011 Brooklands Cycle Festival will include races for Penny Farthings, solid tyre safety cycles, pre-1940 cycles, Rally Choppers and a Brooklands Handicap race for all. Energetic cyclists will be encouraged to try the Test Hill Challenge!

Brooklands Museum, Brooklands Road, Weybridge, KT13 0QN. Contact Valerie Mills at Brooklands Museum on 01932 857381 or e-mail

[valeriemills@brooklandsmuseum.com](mailto:valeriemills@brooklandsmuseum.com) for further information.



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## Have You Got News for Me?

We hope you've enjoyed reading this newsletter. Thanks to all those who provided information, anecdotes and stories .

But to keep the momentum going we need more, so I make no apologies in repeating this message, as it often seems to be the same people providing material.

Actually, I'm delighted to say we have some new contributors for this edition, for which I thank you – wasn't difficult, was it?

And, I'm sure many more of you have experiences, contacts with enquirers or local or family history information that would interest us all, so let's have them - you can see from this current issue, we like gossip and comments as much as more serious subjects.

So, please don't be shy. If you have any

- reports on visits to various sites or centres
- interesting facts about local history or genealogy
- intriguing Information Requests
- new research documents the LFHC has received
- forthcoming projects or events
- or just strange tales to tell

please let the Editor know - supporting photographs and pictures, if available, would be most welcome. It will help make the newsletter more interesting for us all.

The next publication date will be in January 2012, so you have plenty of time to think of something.

*IRP September 2011*